THE RESTORATION OF OUR PAST:
The Influence of Mysticism on Universalism

Let not your sense scatter this and that;
Your spirit must be completely gathered in God.
Soul, if you are to rejoice in a deeper peace
Enter continually into the One.
There you will find an altar and temple to contemplate
There the priest stands continually adorned before God.
Leave yourself and your self-centeredness
And you will in the world be freed from the world.[1]

Mysticism seems to hold a fascination for many Unitarian Universalists lately. It is related to the recent call in our congregations today, especially among newcomers, for more spirituality. Interest is increasing in the first of the sources of our living traditions from the 1984 statement of Unitarian Universalist principles and purposes: "Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces which create and uphold life."

What is not well known is that mysticism plays an important role in our own Universalist heritage. The influence of mysticism on Universalism is significant. Indeed, the earliest post-Reformation formulations of the universalist doctrine were by mystics, and the influence of these mystics can be traced to the beginnings of institutionalized American Universalism. It became closely associated with German Pietism and in fact many of the figures in this history could be called either mystics or pietists or both. Pietism was a reform movement that started within the Lutheran church and developed two main strands: Churchly Pietism, which stayed within the orthodox church, and Radical Pietism, which broke with the orthodox church. Like the Mysticism of the time, Pietism was a reaction to the dry theology of Scholasticism, the elitism of the priesthood and the empty practice that orthodoxy had become, particularly in Germany in the wake of the Thirty Years War. Both Mystics and Pietists emphasized the importance of the heart as well as the head in religion, the experiential, spiritual aspect of religion. Mysticism and Pietism differ in that mysticism is primarily concerned with the mystical experience as a source of information about reality, while Pietism is more concerned with living a life of piety, i.e. a life of close relationship to God. It is in the Radical Pietists that we find mysticism and Pietism most closely merged, and it is this strain that most directly influences Universalism.

More recent Universalist histories have ignored this heritage. While Thomas Whittemore's 1860 *The Modern History of Universalism* and Richard Eddy's 1884 *Universalism in America, A History* included the pietist past, more recent ones disregard and dismiss it: Ernest Cassara's 1971 *Universalism in America: A Documentary History,* Charles Howe's 1993 *The*

[1]Arnold, Gottfried, "True Solitude", from *Pietists: Selected Writings*, ed. by Peter C. Erb (New York: PaulistPress,1983). Trans from Gottfried Arnold, *Poetische Lob-und Liebes Sprüche* (Leipzig, 1700), no.7.

Larger Faith, and Russell Miller's 1979 *The Larger Hope.* Clinton Lee Scott's 1957 *The Universalist Church of America: A Short History* talks only of the Pennsylvanian pietists, primarily DeBenneville. Ernest Cassara says that "the Universalist movement in America cannot be said to have begun before the landing of John Murray in 1770 and his subsequent missionary and organizational activity,. . ." and dismisses the earlier universalist movements, saying they "did not stress belief in universal salvation above other elements in their creeds, so are not included within the Universalist movement." He also talks a bit disparagingly about "mystical and pietistic elements" in DeBenneville's "Universalist conviction," dismissing "an emotional experience of religion" as "quite rare among Universalists" and saying, "Universalism has generally been defended on grounds of reasoned scriptural exposition."[2] In his recent book, *The Devotional Heart*, John Morgan has lifted up the Pietist background, but specifically excluded mysticism.

Mysticism was the primary source of universalist thought for over one hundred years. It began to fall out of favor with the onset of the Enlightenment, which first asserted itself in Universalism in Hosea Ballou's 1805 *Treatise on Atonement*. It fell further into disrespect with the humanism of the twentieth century. Now reason has reigned for a hundred years, and Unitarian Universalists are experiencing a hunger for the emotional and experiential side of religion. It is like a pendulum whose momentum causes it to swing past the center until it goes so far in one direction that it must come back the other way. There is always a tension between the head and the heart in religion; the challenge for both individuals and institutions is to find a balance. Right now it seems Unitarian Universalism needs a small dose of the experiential to counteract an overdose of Enlightenment rationalism. It is time to reclaim and honor the mystics and the mysticism of our past.

Most of the players in this story are Philadelphians. This does not mean they are from the city of Philadelphia, but rather members of a movement that started with a small society in England. They used the name "Philadelphia" because of biblical references that indicate the Philadelphian church to be "the one which has preserved the true spirit of Christ, and which will be there at His second coming. . . . This movement also made use of the meaning of the word in Greek: brotherly love."[3] All of the Philadelphians are chiliasts. The strict chiliasts believe that the world will end violently and suddenly, followed by the millennium, or thousand-year reign of Christ on earth. The "mild" chiliasts believe, on the other hand, that the millennium will come about gradually, through the purification and unification of churches. They both believe the end is near, extremists believing it is the corruption of the churches that is bringing it on. Because of this attitude toward the church, chiliasts were seen as a threat to the established institutional churches and were often persecuted. Most of the Philadelphians are also Boehmenists, which means they studied the works of the mystic Jacob Boehme (1575-1624). The story starts out in England, but takes place primarily in Germany, and eventually finds its way to America. There is an almost small-town feel, however, in the way that so many of the characters know each other.

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[2] Cassara, Ernest, ed, *Universalism in America: A Documentary History*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), pp. 6-7.

[3] Walker, D.P., *The Decline of Hell, Seventeenth-Century Discussions of Eternal Torment*, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1964), p. 218.

The universalism that these people believed in was based on their chiliasm. Unlike the Calvinist universalism, which extends the concept of the elect to include all, these universalists believed that the wicked must be punished by burning in hell, but it is a restorative punishment, and after it has gone on long enough--and they differ widely on how many thousands of years is enough--the wicked will be taken up into heaven. This applies to fallen angels as well. Many who held the doctrine were afraid to preach it because they believed it would endanger social morality for people to know they would be saved no matter how they behaved. The Philadelphians were on principle opposed to organizing institutional churches, because such sectarian activity worked against their principle of brotherly love, which sought to unify not separate, and because many believed that the unity of the churches was a necessary condition for the millennium.

Universalist mysticism begins in late 17th century England with Jane Leade (1624-1704), a widow who was the leader of the first Philadelphia Society. The Philadelphia Society was a "small group of chiliastic mystics" whose meetings were in Leade's home and resembled Quaker meetings in that the members sat in silence until one was moved to speak.[4] They were devoted to the ideas of Jacob Boehme, a German mystic shoemaker whose writings had been published at his death in 1624, but had only recently (1661) been translated into English. Boehme's work, in spite of being universally acknowledged to be extremely difficult to understand in his own time as well as today, was widely influential. "The path on which Boehme wished to lead an earnest reader was a path of experience, a path that led from self-knowledge to conversion and patience in persecution, expressed properly in love for God and neighbor."[5] His emphasis is on experience and practice, but there is a significant metaphysical, or speculative content to his work as well which had its origin in mystical revelation.

One of the most salient features of Boehme's theosophy is the use of the goddess Sophia, who represents wisdom. This feature appears in later universalist writers, and is the most telling mark of Boehmenist influence. But most important to a discussion of universal salvation is Boehme's dualism, his light and dark principles existing together within God. According to D. P. Walker, dualism results from Boehme's "attempt to solve the problem of evil by putting the origin of evil, the dark fiery principle, into the godhead, where, before creation, it was harmlessly harmonized with its opposite, the principle of light. In creation the dark fire comes forth as sin in fallen angels and men and as avenging anger in God."[6] For Walker this shows that Boehme believes in the eternity of hell.

Charlotte Irwin describes Boehme's philosophy thus: "If the individual soul desires to unite with the will of God, he will rise into the eternal kingdom of the lightness of God; otherwise he will fall down into the fire anger of God, into eternal destruction."[7] It is the choice of the individual soul whether to merge with the divine reality like a drop of water that loses itself in the ocean, or sin by asserting its individuality. Irwin also says that, for Boehme, the sinner's hell takes place on earth:

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[4] Walker, p. 218, 220-221.

[5] Erb, Peter, in introduction to Jacob Boehme, *The Way to Christ*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), p. 8.

[6] Walker, p. 222.

[7] Irwin, Charlotte, *Pietist Origins of American Universalism*, Unpublished master's theses, (Boston: Tufts University, 1966), p. 40.

> The fire anger principle creates the only Hell which mankind [sic] can know. Since it is not possible to reform the repentant sinner after death, according to Boehme, the torment of Hell takes place on earth in the soul of the individual who commits evil. But since the fire anger principle has roots in eternity it, unlike the Universalist Hell, can never be destroyed...[8]

Though Leade was a follower of Boehme, she was a mystic in her own right, having visions that disclosed to her ideas not found in Boehme's writings. Chief among these was the doctrine of universal salvation, or universal restoration to be more precise. For it is not a belief in the salvation of individual souls as they die, but the notion of universal salvation was for Leade connected to the belief in the end time, when all would be restored to an original harmony. There was still punishment in hell for the wicked for thousands and thousands of years, but it was not eternal. According to Leade, sin begins in time and so cannot be eternal-- "Behold, saith the Lord, 'I will make all things new, the End shall return to its Original-Primary-Being...for as there was neither Sin, nor Center to it, so it must be again...."[9] She defends the doctrine with the chiliastic belief that

> in the Last Days there will be a new revelation of religious truth, that the 'Everlasting Gospel', which the angel in the Apocalypse is to preach to all nations (Rev. XIV,6), is not identical with the New Testament, but something new and surprising added to it or discovered in it. This new truth, the salvation of all men and all angels, is both a sign of the nearness of the Parousia and a means of bringing it about.[10]

Walker and Irwin both stress the incompatibility of Leade's universal restoration doctrine with Boehme's dualistic theosophy; indeed, Walker says, "Mrs. Lead herself realized that universal salvation went against Boehmenist principles and against his express assertion of the eternity of hell; but she made no attempt to resolve the conflict, merely remarking that in Boehme's day the time was not yet ripe for this revelation."[11] Is it possible, however, to understand Boehme's cosmology in a way that no such conflict exists? Walker, as noted above, shows that the dark principle is originally "harmlessly harmonized with its opposite" and it is only "in creation" that it becomes sin in men. I am taking "in creation" to mean "at the time of creation." Irwin describes Boehme's "mild chiliasm," saying "he believed that ultimately the principle of the Light world would completely regain its dominion over darkness and the present terrestrial world would disappear." It seems to me that this dominion of the "Light world" over "darkness" contradicts a concept of eternal hell, while I have seen nothing yet in Boehme's thought to support such a concept. Leade's notion that sin begins in time seems compatible with Boehme's notion that the "dark fire principle" becomes sin at the time of creation. And her idea that in the end there will be no more sin, as opposites unite in harmony again, sounds very much like Boehme's idea of what will happen in the end.

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[8]Irwin, p. 41.
[9]Leade, Jane, cited in Walker, p. 223.
[10]Walker, p. 226.
[11]Walker, p. 223. Note: Some sources spell the name "Leade", some "Lead".

The Philadelphia Society was a pietistic movement, and its principles, including universal restoration, became popular with many German Pietists. Pietism, as mentioned above, was an important reform movement. By the late 1600s, there were many seeking to renew the religious vitality that they felt the church had lost, most notably Johann Arndt (1555-1621), who wrote *True Christianity*. But Pietism as a movement is generally recognized to begin with the publication of Philipp Jacob Spener's *Pia Desideria* in 1675, a wonderfully readable book, in which "the basic premises of all practically directed reform groups in seventeenth-century Protestantism found expression."[12]

Though Spener (1635-1705) was a Churchly Pietist, because he was addressing the renewal for the Lutheran church, his work had a major impact on the movement in general. He is known as the "father" of Pietism, and the originator of the movement. *Pia Desideria* addressed the "decline in moral life at the time," and "the defects of political and clerical authorities as well as those of the populace;" it also "clarified the possibility of reform, and set down proposals to enact it." Spener's reforms emphasized the importance of right living over correct doctrine (the practice of piety), a renewal of the spiritual priesthood of all believers, renewed study of the scriptures, interfaith toleration, and the establishment of small groups, or conventicles to stimulate Christian growth.[13] Spener's emphasis on reform *within* the church is evident in that when the formation of conventicals outside the churches began to foster separatism, Spener moved their meetings from private homes to the church buildings.[14]

Three influential figures, all lifelong friends of Spener, wedded Pietism with the Philadelphian mysticism of Jane Leade: Gottfried Arnold (1676-1714), Johanna Eleonora von und zu Merlau (1649-1727, as of 1680, Mrs. Petersen) and Dr. Johann Wilhelm Petersen (1649-1727). Peter Erb says of Arnold, "of all the first-generation Pietists, Gottfried Arnold is the most important for students of pietist spirituality, because of his interest in mysticism, his dissemination of mystical texts, and his wide influence on both Church and Radical Pietists."[15] Arnold was very much influenced by Boehme and Leade, and was instrumental in spreading Philadelphianism in Germany. Walker notes that by 1699, when Arnold's *History of Church and Heresy* began to come out, Arnold was a believer in universal salvation, and that a 1700 publication on Sophia clearly shows that he was also a Boehmenist.[16] Arnold's history is very favorable to heretics, saying that they are the true witnesses to the truth, the true followers of Christ and successors to his apostles. He had a deep distrust for the institutional church. For Arnold, "the true witnesses experienced the working of the divine, by the guidance of the Spirit in them were able to interpret the Scriptures properly and make correct theological judgements, and, established as the true Church, witnessed against the institutional heresy about them."[17]

Johanna Eleonora von und zu Merlau had since youth been "deeply troubled by the difficulty of reconciling God as love with the eternal torment of all unbelievers, especially of 'the

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[12] Erb, Peter, ed, *Pietists: Selected Writings*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), pp. 4-5.

[13] Erb, *Pietists*, p. 5.

[14] Tappert, Theodore G., ed. in Spener, Philipp Jakob, *Pia Desideria*, (Philadelphia:Fortress Press, 1967), p. 20.

[15] Erb, *Pietists*, p. 11.

[16] Walker, p. 237.

[17] Erb, *Pietists*, p. 14.

poor children of the heathen, who had never had the opportunity of knowing God'."[18] The influence of Pietism shows in the importance to her of the belief in God as love, its priority causing her to question long-held Christian tenets. This emphasis on God as love in fact helps explain the attraction of many Pietists to the doctrine of universal salvation. That doctrine was especially accepted by the Radical, or Separatist Pietists, because they were the ones who embraced Philadelphianism. Also because universal salvation was still considered a heretical belief (though not a serious offence), those wishing to remain within the church would not dare espouse it, but for those outside the church it did not matter. Also, some Separatist Pietists did not leave the church by choice, but because of persecution for their beliefs. Johanna Eleonora von und zu Merlau was attracted to William Penn's experiment in religious liberty in America, and "was one of ten to purchase 25,000 acres for the purpose of establishing thereon the town of Germantown." She, and Dr. Petersen too after they were married, intended to go, but never did.[19]

The Petersens were converted together to chiliasm because of a dream that Mrs. Petersen had. When Dr. Petersen started to preach it, he was dismissed from his post as Superintendent at Lüneburg, a position within the Lutheran church. He immediately, however, received an offer of patronage from Baron von Knyphausen, which enabled him then to write and teach chiliasm, and later Philadelphianism. The Baron at one point sent the Petersens a manuscript of Leade's to get their opinion on it. Rejecting the doctrine of universal salvation because it was not from scripture but only personal revelation, they prepared to refute it with scripture passages.

> But suddenly there was a stillness in both their spirits, as if someone had interrupted them...and there came into their minds the words spoken by Him who sat on the throne (Rev. XXI, 5): 'Behold, I make all things new.' This led rapidly to other similar texts, and they were overjoyed to find that they need not refute their dear friend and her very probable opinion."[20]

The Petersens provided the texts from scripture to support the doctrine, making it acceptable to many who would not adopt it before, and they became closely connected with Leade's group. Their friend Spener never did accept the doctrine, and urged the Petersens not to publish it, but "he never wrote against it and remained on very good terms with the Petersens."[21]

Mrs. Petersen published a work entitled *The Everlasting Gospel*, not to be confused with the *Everlasting Gospel*, a treatise by Georg Klein-Nicolai, which was included in Dr. Petersen's three-volume *Mystery of the Restoration of All Things* which came out a few years later. Georg Klein-Nicolai (whose pseudonym was Paul Siegvolck) was a disciple of Dr. Petersen and his work became the single most effective thing to spread universalism. Dr. Petersen's work counts as the largest universalist work, and lifted up all the earlier and contemporary writings that suggested a doctrine of universal salvation. Walker tells us that Dr. Petersen was not a Boehmenist, though he had read Boehme. He says Petersen "realized that universal salvation was incompatible with Boehmenist dualism," and that "In consequence, unlike the English Philadelphians, he was able to argue without impediments that sin and punishment, evil, and

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[18]Walker and Petersen, cited in Walker, pp. 231-232.
[19] Eddy, Richard, *Universalism in America, A History*, (Boston: Universalist Publishing House, 1884), p. 35.
[20]Walker, p. 234.
[21]Walker, p. 235.

vengeance, have no eternal roots in God and must therefore have an end."[22] Universalist historian Thomas Whittemore says that Dr. Petersen believed universal salvation to be a divine doctrine, and that "it was the great aim for which he lived, after he came to the knowledge of the truth. It is impossible not to do honor to his memory."[23]

The mysticism of Jacob Boehme and Jane Leade thus converged with the Pietism of Spener and others in Arnold and the Petersens. Due to the influence of the written works of Arnold and the Petersens and of their personalities, this Philadelphian Pietism had quite a following in Germany. Many groups who adopted it ended up in America, in particular in Pennsylvania, and contributed to the Universalist understanding that eventually organized into an institutional denomination. These groups did not organize denominationally themselves, because they were decidedly anti-sectarian, believing in the Philadelphian principle of brotherly love and the millennial requirement of the churches to unite. Organization of the Universalist Church in America took John Murray's coming with a different kind of belief in universal salvation that had roots in Pietism but not in the Mysticism of Boehme and Leade.

One of the groups that followed Arnold and the Petersens were Philadelphians who were radical Pietists and extreme chiliasts, who believed that it was possible for people to become perfect in this world and "consequently become the Saints who would rule with Christ in the new Jerusalem."[24] The group felt the Last Days were upon them and that they had three choices: to destroy the non-elect (they were not yet universalist), to convert all the wicked, or to find a place free from worldly corruption in which to wait out the millennium.[25] They decided for the third option and went to Pennsylvania in 1693, led by Johann Jakob Zimmermann, a Boehmenist. Zimmermann died en route, leaving the leadership to Johannes Kelpius (1673-1708), also a Boehmenist. Most interestingly, and quite mysteriously, by the time they reached America, they were converted to the doctrine of universal restoration. Some think it was through Leade, some through Petersen, but according to Irwin, "it remains one of the unsolved problems in the history of Universalism."[26]

Ernst Hochmann von Hochenau (1670-1721), a disciple of Dr. Petersen and also acquainted with Arnold, was an itinerant preacher with a most winning personality. Hochmann co-founded the first Philadelphian Society at Berleburg in 1700, and preached the universal restoration doctrine of Leade. Berleburg was a town in the county of Wittgenstein which had a policy of toleration of religious dissenters. The Philadelphian community published the Berleburg Bible, "an entirely new translation and interpretation of the Bible according to restorationist doctrines."[27] Hochmann periodically left the sanctuary of Berleburg to preach to the wider world, and on one of these excursions was arrested. While he was in prison, his followers decided to baptize themselves, having rejected infant baptism, and became known as the German Baptist Brethren, or Dunkers. They also adopted the Detmold Creed, which Hochmann wrote on his release from prison in 1702. Hochmann differed with the group

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[22]Walker, pp. 240-241.

[23] Whittemore, Thomas, *The Modern History of Universalism, extending from the Epoch of the Reformation to the Present Time*, (Boston: Abel Tompkins, 1860), p. 266, footnote.

[24]Irwin, p. 44.

[25] Irwin, p. 44-45.

[26] Irwin, p. 48.

[27]Irwin, p. 61.

however, on the issue of baptism, believing it should not be "a necessity for everyone," because that was a step towards making them a separate sect and so was against the Philadelphian principles.[28]

The Dunkers became subjected to persecution, and began migrating to America in 1719, settling in Germantown, Pennsylvania. They continued to hold the doctrine of universal restoration. In 1732 the Ephrata monastic community was founded in Pennsylvania by Johann Conrad Biessel (1690-1708) in order to practice celibacy and a Saturday Sabbath. In the publications of and about this community, "there is an obvious relationship between the Ephrata doctrine and the Philadelphianism and Boehmenism of Jane Lead's English society."[29] Like Leade, the Ephrata community believed in a millennium on earth and in continuing revelations to individuals. They preached universal restoration far and wide, including New Jersey, "even to the shores of Barnegat Bay, in the region of Good Luck where the Potter family resided."[30] It was Thomas Potter who had built a meeting house and was awaiting a preacher of the universalist doctrine when John Murray washed up in the shores of Good Luck Point, and preached his own version of universal salvation.

There were other groups of German Philadelphians and Separatist Pietists settling in Pennsylvania who held, "with the Dunkers, the doctrine of universal salvation."[31] They were non-sectarian, believing in a universal brotherhood which was beyond creeds and ceremonies.[32] The man who did the most to unite all these diverse groups in Pennsylvania was George DeBenneville (1703-1793).

DeBenneville arrived in America in 1741, after having escaped persecution in France (and even the guillotine by a close call), spent time in Germany with the radical Pietists and Restorationists, and even helped work on the Berleburg Bible. In Pennsylvania, his work as a lay preacher and as a doctor, both to the European and to the native populations, "succeeded in fulfilling the Philadelphian ideal of brotherly love, in great contrast to the other Philadelphian leaders, accomplishing much valuable work in the name of universal brotherhood."[33] Perhaps the most far-reaching of his efforts to spread Leade's doctrine of universal restoration was his American publication in 1753 of the *Everlasting Gospel* by Klein-Nicolai, the disciple of Petersen.

This was the book responsible for the conversion of one of the original leaders of the Universalist Church, Elhanan Winchester (1751-1797). Winchester converted from Calvinist Baptism. He lived for some time in Philadelphia and befriended DeBenneville there. The two went on missionary journeys together,[34] and Winchester translated and oversaw the publication of DeBenneville's spiritual autobiography. Winchester spread the doctrine of universal restoration in England, and wrote *The Universal Restoration*. When in 1790 there was a convention to "unite Universalists 'in one General Church in bands of love and uniformity'," the

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[28]Irwin, p. 65.
[29]Irwin, p. 72.
[30] Scott, Clinton Lee, *The Universalist Church of America: A Short History,* (Boston: Universalist Historical Society, 1957), p. 9.
[31]Irwin, p. 76.
[32]Irwin, p. 75.
[33]Irwin, p. 83.
[34] Lee, p. 11.

first session was held "in the meeting house of Winchester's Society of Universalist Baptists in Philadelphia."[35]

Soon after this, Universalism became a denomination, and its statement of belief (known as the Winchester Profession, for the town in New Hampshire where it was drawn up) was made sufficiently broad to include all the different doctrines of universal salvation, including the universal restoration that began with Jane Leade's mystical vision. But meanwhile the Enlightenment was having its effect in America, with its emphasis on reason over revelation, and Hosea Ballou's 1805 *Treatise on Atonement* marked a turning point in Universalism. Ever since, rationalism has been on the ascendent, and mysticism has fallen into disfavor.

Hosea Ballou (1771-1852), though still a pietist, served as a bridge to the rationalism that has taken hold in Universalism through the influence of the Enlightenment. Like Winchester, he converted from Calvinist Baptism. Ballou was influenced by Deism, which asserted the humanity of Jesus, among other things, and his work has been called "the first book published in America setting forth the Unitarian theological position."[36] Ballou also believed in a universalist doctrine of no future punishment, unlike the Restorationists we have been following, but he argued for "the right of individual opinion without demanding uniformity" when the differences threatened to divide the new church.[37] According to Irwin,

> Though Ballou can be defined as a consistent pietist in attitude, it must be concluded that he brought Universalism as a movement out of Pietism as a movement, because as his basic approach he taught Universalists to use their reasoning powers in the examination of their faith; he taught that sin was a deficiency in the understanding which destroyed man's moral wholeness. The emphasis upon understanding, upon reason was the whole rationale of the age of Enlightenment[38]

So in 1805 the pendulum started its swing toward reason, and new ideas and ways of thinking influenced Universalism. One reason Pietism and mysticism appear so disreputable to our time is because since the Enlightenment they have been opposed to reason, whereas the original Pietism was opposed to orthodoxy. The Philadelphian Pietists were unwilling to accept a church that was corrupt, and whose life had been taken out of it by years of fighting (including thirty years of war) over fine points of theology. They lifted up the authority of the individual conscience, but not to the exclusion of reason. And there is no need to fear that feeling admiration for the Separatist Pietists in our background will lead to separatist tendencies within Unitarian Universalism today. There is no comparison between our living, vital, pluralistic movement and the institution that people like Arnold and Kelpius distrusted and broke away from.

These heroes of our past deserve our notice. Clinton Lee Scott says:

> When Universalists today emphasize individual freedom in belief, the unrestricted use of reason, religion as a way of living, man [sic] and his welfare as central in

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[35] Howe, Charles A., *The Larger Faith, A Short History of American Universalism,* (Boston: Skinner House Books, 1993), p. 10.

[36]Scott, p. 37.

[37]Scott, pp. 38-39

[38]Irwin, p. 220.

organized life, truth as the only authority, the nurture of the inner spirit, and the Bible as one of many forms of revelation, they are stressing principles that were central in the faith and practice of the Spiritual Reformers. To leave this heritage out of consideration is to render difficult the understanding of the Universalism of the present day.[39]

[39] Scott, Clinton Lee, *The Universalist Church of America: A Short History*, (Boston: Universalist Historical Society, 1957), p. 12.