

Chapter 1 : William Ellery Channing and Unitarian Identity

Channing, the Reluctant Radical. by Jack Mendelsohn (Author) â€º Visit Amazon's Jack Mendelsohn Page. Find all the books, read about the author, and more.

Jared Sparks in , and is considered by many the official birth of American Unitarianism. We indeed grant, that the use of reason in religion is accompanied with danger. But we ask any honest man to look back on the history of the church, and say, whether the renunciation of it be not still more dangerous. Besides, it is a plain fact, that men reason as erroneously on all subjects, as on religion. Who does not know the wild and groundless theories, which have been framed in physical and political science? But who ever supposed, that we must cease to exercise reason on nature and society, because men have erred for ages in explaining them? We grant, that the passions continually, and sometimes fatally, disturb the rational faculty in its inquiries into revelation. The ambitious contrive to find doctrines in the Bible, which favor their love of dominion. The timid and dejected discover there a gloomy system, and the mystical and fanatical, a visionary theology. The vicious can find examples or assertions on which to build the hope of a late repentance, or of acceptance on easy terms. The falsely refined contrive to light on doctrines which have not been soiled by vulgar handling. But the passions do not distract the reason in religious, any more than in other inquiries, which excite strong and general interest; and this faculty, of consequence, is not to be renounced in religion, unless we are prepared to discard it universally. The true inference from the almost endless errors, which have darkened theology, is, not that we are to neglect and disparage our powers, but to exert them more patiently, circumspectly, uprightly. The worst errors, after all, having sprung up in that church, which proscribes reason, and demands from its members implicit faith. We do this for many reasons, not the least of which is our own ego. Anthony, and Clara Barton is indeed a heady thing. It gives you a sense of connection, to know that those that came before you accomplished so much, being so few. It is an example to us as we live, to never doubt that a few, intelligent, dedicated, and well-intentioned people really can change the world. In fact, it is the only thing that ever has. When I returned to Unitarian Universalism some ten years ago, I too was subjected to the parade of UU Saints, and it did inspire the awe in me that it does in many. I do remember though that there were some names in that list that I had never heard of. One of those names was William Ellery Channing. Let us not kid ourselvesâ€ outside of scholarly circles and our own Unitarian Universalist community, it is not a name well known. Certainly not like some of his students, such as Ralph Waldo Emerson. In retrospect, it was not surprising that I had never heard of him. My ignorance inspired me to a study of this Father of our Faith. It let me take him as I found him. Let us start off by saying that, by the standards of his day or by our modern standards, no one could doubt that Channing was a Christian. In fact, were he dropped into even the more religiously Christian of UU congregations, he would seem a bit out of place. He believed in God, but that Jesus was a man, even if a divine one. He believed in Miracles, and that his job in this world was to save souls. He believed that the bible must be understood through reason, but still believed it was the greatest guide in existence on how to live life. I could see the seeds of our modern faith in the thought and ideas of Channing, but nothing direct. In many ways Channing opened the doors for transcendentalists such as Emerson and Henry David Thoreauâ€. And our current theological ideas trace more to them than to Channing. Later in his life, he came to believe that all institutions are corrupt, and even began to doubt in the power of order and law. Many times, he found himself in conflict with the Board of Trustees of his own Federal Street Church, and often all but dictated to them. So, I could not see in Channing the beginnings of our national organization, or even our system of congregational polity, where by the members are the authority in the church, not the minister or the denomination. Sure, his thought was an early form of Humanismâ€ but still very tied to Christianity. And many of the more conservative ministers in Boston certainly thought Channing was a heretic, and that would endear him to us. But I began to wonder why, other than that he called himself a Unitarian, we claimed him at allâ€. And yet, there are two aspects of our faith in which the example of William Ellery Channing shines like a Beaconâ€ One of them is in our dedication to the education of children. He built a separate building for the education of children, and invited all children to attend, not just those

whose parents were members of the Federal Street Church. I would even say that William Ellery Channing was one of the tributaries that led into the stream that forced the creation of a Public Education System in New England during the succeeding 60 years. It did not answer why, it is his pulpit that is in the chapel at 25 Beacon Street, our denominational headquarters in Boston. There had to be something else, something more attuned to the fabric of what it means to be a Unitarian Universalist. For you see, he was a radical – even if he often had to be dragged kicking and screaming into such a position. And though he was a Radical theologically. He was an even greater radical in the Equality, Justice, and Charity issues of his day. An idea we have garnered from the Transcendentalists of our past. We each have many experiences in our lives, but certain ones are deeply moving and life changing in nature. Let me take a few minutes to mention another such experience in his life. After graduating from Harvard at 18 years old, Channing took a job as a tutor to two young aristocratic children in Richmond Virginia. He had never been out of New England, and wanted to travel – and in those days, Virginia was just as exotic to him as New Zealand would be to me. But seeing it, experiencing it, and seeing that, far from being less than a man, the slaves were just as much, if not more truly human than the people that held them. By the end of his time there, he had retreated into his own personal studies, having no social contact with the elite of Virginia. He was wracked with guilt. You see, Channing could never escape his own mind. He saw the brutality and evil of Slavery, and he saw how the system was not only supported by the culture of the South, but also by the culture of the North. He saw the hand of his friends in New England, who after all purchased the products of the South – products created by slave labor. He felt utterly ashamed, and his health faltered – never to fully recover. So, to get away from these worldly concerns, he threw himself into religious study and thought – but the first-hand experience of slavery never left him, and would later have a profound effect upon his life – and upon our nation. Channing was never one to seek controversy. However, it often found him. Often, it chased after him like a rabid dog, and he could not escape it. The first such Controversy was to be found during the War of 1812. It was to be the only pulpit he ever called his own – and it was his until his death 40 years later. Those first few years were a kind of love affair between Channing and his congregation. He was a great, inspiring preacher, despite his slight frame and ill health. He encouraged the well to do in Boston to charitable works, not through dictates, but through sermons that reminded them of the duties of Christian Charity. His first real political foray came with the advent of the War of 1812. In the time leading up to the war, Channing felt that it could be avoided, and believed when war broke out it was the fault of American politicians and diplomats as much as the British. As the war continued, Channing wrestled with his inherent pacifism and his patriotism. Channing was gaining respect in Boston as a minister, and indeed both the pro-war and the more pacifist activists campaigned for his support. It was well known that he hated war. But he did believe that at times war might be necessary. What Channing did in this controversy was a prelude for his style of taking a stand on all such issues of social significance. He took his time, developed and researched his position, refused to be carried away in a tide of enthusiasm, and then chose sides. Often much later than many of his hot-headed contemporaries would have wished. When he had decided upon his position, he let it be known in a rational, reasoned manner, always keeping proper decorum, and yet with a passion that no one could deny. Channing would never have been found in a street protest! More likely he would have organized a series of lectures on the topic, brought leaders together to meet and discuss it, and used his contacts in government and society to persuade others to his point of view. All of these things, he did in opposition to the War of 1812 – and he did so with a level of esteem and respect that allowed him to accomplish much more than vindictive and enthusiastic protest would ever have allowed. And he did so with all the authority, respect, and stature that could have been asked for. Even those who most disagreed with his views showed great respect for him. Because of that respect, he was able to bring the ideas behind the controversy out of the private meetings of ministers and to make them topics of public discussion among the people of New England. In all of these issues he refused to be moved by those who were passionate on either side, calmly studied the issue, arrived at what he felt was a rational, justifiable position, and then used his experience, passion, authority, and reputation to affect the issue in anyway he could. And, it can be shown that, in every one of these issues, this one, well meaning and dedicated man did indeed make a difference. But the issue that was to show this system of social action and social witness the most – in which

Channing would have the greatest affect, and which would have the greatest affect upon him, was the issue of Slavery. The question of the Evil of Slavery had burned in Channing since his time in Richmond and though it had died down a bit, it had never gone out. In fact, much of his theological views of Evil and of Satan had focused around the institution of slavery. Though he disliked using his Pulpit for political purposes, he had often discussed evil in terms of slavery and felt that America could never be a righteous, moral nation so long as slavery was allowed to exist. But, he had never taken his abolitionist tendencies beyond his own congregation and friends. This, I think, was due in part to the guilt that he felt over the issue because he viewed himself as being partially responsible, as all Americans were. It was also because he was focused on his ministry, and on affecting things that were closer to home but those were just excuses. The real reason for his reluctance had nothing to do with slavery, but rather to do with those who opposed slavery. You see, William Ellery Channing distrusted anyone who was too emotionally enthusiastic about a cause. He preferred a more rational, directed approach to making a difference in the world, and the rhetoric and vindictiveness found in many of those who opposed slavery turned him off. And yet, he began to see that all of his friends, those he respected and loved, all of his students, and even his own wife had left him behind on this issue. In fact, they were all looking to him for leadership, guidance, and strength in the struggle to free the slaves.

Chapter 2 : Channing's Church of Reluctant Radicals

William Ellery Channing is, perhaps, the most important figure in the history of the Unitarian Church. His installation sermon (delivered for Jared Sparks' installation at the Unitarian Church in Baltimore), entitled "Unitarian Christianity," finally defined the terms of Unitarian belief -- without any biblical support for the position of Jesus as God or the Holy Spirit, Unitarians, though.

Mendelsohn was renowned and controversial. When Jack Mendelsohn was attending Harvard Divinity School nearly 70 years ago, a magazine editor asked him to describe why he wanted to become a minister. Mendelsohn told the *Globe* in , when he was retiring as senior minister of First Parish in Bedford, Unitarian Universalist. During his tenure, which coincided with the expansion of the Vietnam War, the parish held a draft refusal service, during which a few hundred college students turned in draft cards. Mendelsohn, who also made news while traveling with the Rev. Jesse Jackson to Syria and Cuba, died of prostate cancer Oct. Get Fast Forward in your inbox: A look at the news and events shaping the day ahead, delivered every weekday. Sign Up Thank you for signing up! He meant so much to all of us. He called for increasing the number of women in the ministry when his was a comparatively lonely voice on that issue. Mendelsohn also drew a public rebuke from the Boston Archdiocese via an editorial in its newspaper, *The Pilot*, when in he called for government to modify traditional tax exemptions for some parishes: John Gibbons, who succeeded Rev. Mendelsohn as senior minister at First Parish in Bedford. Schulz, a former president of the Unitarian Universalist Association, called Rev. To no avail, young Jack had asked God to spare her life. He meant so much to me. While serving as a minister in Rockford, Ill. Mendelsohn then moved to Indianapolis, where he was minister of what was then All Souls Unitarian Church. He also took part in civic organizations that advocated for integration, human rights, and civil liberties. He was installed as minister of Arlington Street Church in September and later served as minister of First Unitarian Church of Chicago before taking the post in Bedford. His other marriages, prior to marrying Frediani, ended in divorce. For many years he was friends with Jackson, whom he accompanied to Syria when Jackson negotiated the release in of Lieutenant Robert O. Wherever his feet landed, he was at home. Why I Am a Unitarian Universalist. I loved being loved by him. Paul; and a step-grandson. A memorial service will be held at 1 p. Against all odds and sometimes even against his better judgment, Jack truly believed in the church, believed in our mission, and believed in us. Jack was the real thing.

Chapter 3 : William Ellery Channing: The Reluctant Radical | James Ford

*Channing: The Reluctant Radical [Jack Mendelsohn] on theinnatdunvilla.com *FREE* shipping on qualifying offers. Although he died more than a century ago, William Ellery Channing remains as potent a force for good in American life today as he was in the full tide of his active ministry.*

Channing was born on April 7, in Newport, Rhode Island, of a distinguished family. He entered Harvard College in , graduated in , and was elected a regent of Harvard in . Channing defended the liberal Congregationalist ministers in against an attack in *The Panoplist* by Jedidiah Morse , who accused them of covertly holding the views of the English Unitarian Thomas Belsham, who held that Christ was strictly human in nature, with human imperfections. Thrust into prominence by this defense, Channing was asked to prepare a manifesto for the liberals, which he did in "Unitarian Christianity," his ordination sermon for Jared Sparks in Baltimore. Channing was the outstanding representative of early American Unitarian theology in the period prior to the Transcendentalist controversy. He emphasized the authority of reason and revelation, the unique and infallible authority of Jesus, human educability to a Christlike perfection, and human essential similarity to God. His thought includes a modified Lockean philosophy, an Arian Christology, and an optimistic view of human nature. In his sermon "Unitarian Christianity," he called for a careful use of reason in interpreting scripture. Channing held that reason judges even the claim of a revelation to authority. Reason approves the claim of the Christian scriptures to authority. Rationally interpreted, these scriptures yield the doctrines of the unipersonality and moral perfection of God. Channing modified his Lockean epistemology when he became acquainted with the Scottish common-sense philosophy of Thomas Reid , Adam Ferguson , and Francis Hutcheson. He viewed Christ as morally perfect. Christ exemplified the perfection to which others can attain. Channing advocated prison reform and opposed alcoholism and other social evils, but he was reluctant to speak out openly against slavery. He acknowledged the fairness of rebukes for his silence. In he published *Slavery*, which had a marked effect in arousing public opinion against the slave system; thereafter his outspoken opposition to slavery cost him friends and support. His writings during this period show that his optimism and his rejection of the doctrine of depravity in no way blinded him to the reality of sin. These, along with his sermons, lectures, and *Slavery*, were translated into German, French, Hungarian, and other languages. Channing became ill on a vacation trip and died at Bennington, Vermont, on October 2, . Boston, , and *The Works of William E. Channing: Essays on American Unitarian History* Boston, *The Reluctant Radical* Boston, Godbey Pick a style below, and copy the text for your bibliography.

Chapter 4 : Channing: The Reluctant Radical by Jack Mendelsohn

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William Ellery Channing came from what is known as "the best New England stock. He was born on April 8, 1781, in Newport, R. He graduated from Harvard College in 1800. He spent some time as a tutor, and in 1801 he returned to Harvard to study for the ministry. Because he showed great promise, Harvard appointed him regent, a less lofty post than the title suggested. He acted as a proctor to the students, but the job left him time for books and helped him support himself. The next year he was ordained as minister of the Federal Street Church in Boston, where he remained until his death. He married his cousin Ruth Gibbs in 1806. In a sense, leadership and eminence came to Channing not through aggressively seeking it but because he was born at the right time. Almost from the beginning there were two warring parties in New England. The Calvinists believed in a jealous God, the depravity of mankind, and the absence of free will. The anti-Calvinists believed in a merciful God, the potential redemption of all mankind, and the existence of free will. As the 19th century proceeded, the fight between the parties sharpened. Channing, after much deliberation, sided with the anti-Calvinists. In Baltimore in 1819 Channing preached a sermon entitled "Unitarian Christianity. Other influential sermons followed. He helped found the Unitarian journal, *Christian Register*, and became one of its outstanding contributors. For his increasing audience Channing prepared some essays which discussed the social and cultural questions of the time. He especially campaigned for a genuine American literature. In his essay "The Importance and Means of a National Literature" he called for cultural independence from England and for a new literature which would reflect the hopeful, expansive attitude that he himself took in theology. The tract was read the more respectfully because Channing himself had written on English literature in both English and American magazines and was friendly with some of the best British writers of his period. Channing grew increasingly interested in politics, believing that political reform, like religious reform, had to start from within. He aimed his political efforts at humanitarian causes: In the slavery dispute he appealed to the conscience of Southerners instead of attacking them. Though his own congregation disagreed with his stand against slavery, his last public address, in August 1828, was on behalf of emancipation. He died the following October. Brown, *Always Young for Liberty: A Biography of William Ellery Channing* The Life of William Ellery Channing Harvard University Press, Greenwood Press, 1963, Mendelsohn, Jack, *Channing, the reluctant radical: Encyclopedia of World Biography*. Copyright The Gale Group, Inc.

Chapter 5 : PAL: William Ellery Channing ()

Channing, the reluctant radical; a biography. by Jack Mendelsohn, *William Ellery Channing starting at \$* *Channing, the reluctant radical; a biography.* has 0 available edition to buy at Alibris Alibris for Libraries.

Christian ministers began to diverge over their beliefs in Christ and various other aspects of the Christian faith, such as original sin, reason in religion, and the nature of God. One of these challenges came as early as with the anonymous publication of *Choice Dialogues between a Godly Minister and an Honest Country Man, Concerning Election and Predestination*, which challenged the stricter forms of Calvinism by arguing that Calvinist doctrines reduce free will, and they turn God into the creator of sin. These hostilities would visibly manifest themselves two years later over the election of Henry Ware as Hollis Professor of Divinity at Harvard College. This incident is acknowledged as the beginning of a thirty-year conflict between the liberal and the orthodox Christians of New England, which has been called the Unitarian controversy. This occurred in various ways, but it is easiest to see his influence by condensing and describing his guidance and influence in relation to two occasions, one in and the other in. The first occasion helped to define the Unitarian identity on a local basis within New England and in and around the Boston area more specifically. Jedidiah Morse was an orthodox Calvinist. He also was the publisher of the *Panoplist*, a conservative Christian periodical begun in the same year. Because the liberals believed the unity of the New England Standing Order and the unity of the congregations were more important, they would not accept his challenges. They abhorred conflict and believed in the harmonious coexistence of the liberals and the conservatives. This, however, was intolerable to Morse and other orthodox Calvinists who believed that two contradictory theological beliefs could not be held. For Morse, the Trinity was a biblical teaching, and to disbelieve this doctrine forced one outside of the Christian fold. This set the stage for Morse to publish an issue of the *Panoplist* that would force the liberal Christians to vocalize their beliefs. This issue of the *Panoplist* was reprinted five times in five months. Second, the New England liberal clergymen were refraining from making their true beliefs known, and they were hypocritically maintaining their pastorates through dissembling about what their true faith was. Third, the orthodox Christians must no longer maintain fellowship with the liberals; true Christians should not maintain fellowship with non-Christians or heathens. Channing addressed each of these points in detail and made it clear that Morse was wrong. By Morse accusing them of being Socinians and hypocritically dissembling about their true beliefs, this carried with it potential charges of civil disobedience and blasphemy. The first thing Channing addresses is the potential diminishment of the reputations of the liberal New England clergymen. Channing states that his "self respect too is wounded. Following this, Channing addresses the charges that they are secretive and plotting. Since they do not believe in the Trinity and other conservative doctrines, they do not speak about them; they act as if they do not exist. This is to avoid bringing controversy into the pulpits. They choose to support harmony among Christian believers instead of privileging doctrinal differences. He reverses the charges and accuses Morse of criminal acts of slander and reducing their reputation. This, Channing argues, is the true crime. He argues that such a call is un-Christian. The liberals have been open about discussions about doctrines they believe have perplexed Christians ever since the doctrines came into existence. While the liberals have been willing to discuss their perplexities over the doctrine of the Trinity and other perplexing doctrines, the orthodox have accused them of the crime of heresy and now advocate casting them out of the community. Instead of this narrow-mindedness, Channing advocates that the orthodox Christians should start living a life with an emphasis on Christian deeds and learn to temper their language in a more Christ-like way. He concludes his letter by asserting that the most honorable position to be in is to suffer for the cause of God. If the liberals must suffer because of their sincere beliefs, then they will gladly do so. They will continue to stand by their beliefs. If the orthodox Christians want to separate, then the division and its negative consequences rest on them. While there may be a few clergymen in New England who agree with the Socinian position, the dominant two groups of liberals could be broken down in a more clear and distinct way. The first group believes that Jesus is more than a mere man; this group holds that Jesus existed prior to the creation of the world and his entrance into it. The second group fully denied the three distinctions

attributed to God. In the end, the aspect common to both groups was the outright denial of the three persons of the Godhead. It did not challenge their different Christologies, but emphasized their common beliefs in the unity of God. In fact, Channing made it clear through his letter that the liberal Christians of New England who were Arian in temperament were closer to the New England Calvinists than they were to the Socinians in England. They preferred the terms "liberal Christians," "rational Christians," or "catholic Christians,"²¹ but the "Unitarian" designation was acceptable as long as people understood the position clearly. This letter was not the last one to be written. He argued that the only way to full salvation was through a belief in the Trinity, and he believed the Unitarianism of New England was undermining the Christian faith. Worcester elicited two more letters from Channing. He disclosed the tendency of the liberals toward openness, dialogue, and harmonious Christian fellowship. He disclosed to those still in the closet about their liberal ideas that there was a large group of religious believers in New England who no longer subscribed fully to orthodox Calvinism. Once it was clear that no reconciliation was possible between Worcester and him, Channing published *Systems of Exclusion and Denunciation in Religion Considered* in 1805, which argued that such denunciations stifled free enquiry into the writings of the Bible and undermined the Congregational church polity found in New England. With this split clearly demarcated, the Unitarians now could establish themselves more solidly as a group within New England with no sense of injustice. Channing had never been one who enjoyed controversy, but in May 1805, he would once again help to define what it meant to be a Unitarian. Baltimore, Maryland was beyond the confines of New England, and the liberal Christians there were attempting to battle orthodox Calvinism. There were two services, one at the ordination ceremony that took place on 5 May was not ordinary. It was highly orchestrated. First, this occasion was chosen for its ability to place the cause of Unitarianism before the nation. Furthermore, the liberal clergymen in attendance had agreed to spread his message as far and as clearly as possible. The first section addresses one topic, but the second section covers five issues. In section one, Channing discloses their understanding of the Bible. This means that it must be read and interpreted with careful reasoning as one would interpret the Constitution. Channing asserts the "Bible is a book written for men, in the language of men, and that its meaning is to be sought in the same manner as that of other books. From this rational approach to the Bible, Channing proceeds to lay out what their rational enquiries have uncovered in the biblical texts. First, they encounter a united God, not a God divided into three persons. We understand by it that there is one being, one mind, one person, one intelligent agent, and one only, to whom underived and infinite perfection and dominion belong. While the Unitarians did not believe that these disagreements were enough to separate them from Trinitarian Christians, they did believe that the Orthodox views were unscriptural and irrational. This corruption of Christianity, alike repugnant to common sense and to the general strain of Scripture, is a remarkable proof of the power of a false philosophy in disfiguring the simple truth of Jesus. His third point in the second section is that the orthodox position has negated the perfectible nature of humanity because of its pernicious view of God. Instead of being cruel, God is merciful. It is here that Channing describes the father-like nature of God that would guide the theology of Unitarians for years to come. This negative view of God has a direct effect on how the orthodox Christians view humans. While there is no doubt that humans tend to sin, they are not depraved as Calvinism asserts. Humans come from a loving God who has implanted divinity in us all. Humans are not beyond aid. This naturally leads to the fourth point. Jesus did not come into the world to change the mind of God, but to change the mind of individuals, so they could recollect the divinity within. By recollecting this divinity within, humans would be able to nurture that likeness to God and infinitely move closer to the divine. The final part follows from this almost flawlessly. It is our moral nature, the spring of all our virtuous acts. From this moral foundation, we are able to be responsible to others. By trying to obstruct such enquiries into the nature of religion and the Christian life, Christianity has caused severe harm. A sincere search for the truths found in the Bible can only occur in a rational environment of open dialogue where censure is abnormal and mutual support is encouraged. Underlying this would be a strong awareness that all people are fallible. No human doctrine will be perfect, and they will be open to revision perpetually. In his common way, Channing urges tolerance and compassion in matters of religion. He prays that God will "overturn, and overturn, and overturn" all obstacles standing in the way of living a Godly life. It expanded upon his letter to Thacher by describing in

more detail the theological and hermeneutic ideas valued by Unitarians. Second, it more clearly established a dislike for the pessimistic Calvinist doctrines that Channing had finally relinquished. It brought into the discussion the active role of humans in the religious life. No longer were humans merely the pawns of God. Instead, God had placed within humans a divine spark that provided all people with a high level of spiritual agency. They play an important role in their relationship with God. The orthodox ministers began to attack Channing immediately. The division between the liberal and the orthodox Christians would last for another sixteen years. During this time and in , the Unitarians would establish the American Unitarian Association as an ecclesiastical organization intended to help sustain liberal Christianity in America. They would seek Channing as its president. His writings helped to establish Unitarianism as a search for meaning based on careful analyses of the Bible. Religion should conform to reason. Passions are part of religion, but reason should be the ultimate criterion from which religious inspiration is judged. Through his letter and his sermon, Channing used his respectability to establish the Unitarian tradition in opposition to the Trinitarianism of Calvinism and its pessimistic view of humanity. In this way, Channing was a crucial person for the formation of the Unitarian identity in nineteenth-century America as he clearly elaborated their beliefs and what it meant for them to be a Christian. Bookman Associates, ,

Chapter 6 : January 08, Sermon "The Free Mind And The Reluctant Radical" by Dr Shirley Ranck

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Gatherings where Unitarian Universalist ministers present and discuss scholarly papers about their theologies. It is always very stimulating and exciting intellectually but frustrating and challenging to try to translate the scholarly ideas into everyday living. Most of us human beings however have a strong tendency to say one thing and do another. But there are some few courageous persons who with great effort and determination struggle all their lives to bring these compartments together, to make their theologies or values evident in their lives. William Ellery Channing was such a person. He was a small, frail man who never wanted to be a radical. But he felt called to articulate a new theology and to live accordingly. He was born in Newport, Rhode Island in and raised in a family of culture and education. He was educated at Harvard and after great inner torment decided to enter the ministry. He was called to the Federal Street Church in Boston in and remained with that congregation throughout his career. Those same convictions, however, forced him repeatedly to speak with passion and eloquence on the social issues of his day. Calvinism was the dominant theology in New England Congregationalism when Channing was growing up. God was seen as all-powerful, and human beings as inherently sinful. Channing, however, believed in a God of love and benevolence and a Jesus who was fully human. What these beliefs meant to him was, first, that human beings are born with the potential for becoming good and loving persons, and second that if only that potential for good could be encouraged in individuals, society would be transformed. Channing considered his life work as a minister to be the development of goodness and tolerance in the people he was called to serve. This same commitment to a path of acceptance and tolerance of differing views made it difficult for Channing to contribute to dissension by answering the theological attacks of Orthodox Calvinists. And in later years he was cautious at first in speaking against slavery because he disliked the abrasive activities of the abolitionists. Reluctant or not, in Channing accepted the challenge of answering the theological attacks of the orthodox. Until that time he and other liberal ministers had avoided controversial issues in their preaching, ignoring the angry words of the orthodox who demanded that the liberals admit their heresies. Channing finally spoke in Baltimore at the ordination of Jared Sparks and set forth the theological position of the Unitarian Christians of that time. The sermon was published and has been called the most widely read sermon in America. Channing proclaimed a theology which freed human beings from the tyrant god of Calvinism, the guilt of original sin, and the neglect of reason in reading the scriptures. With a loving deity and a human example of perfection in the life of Jesus the responsibility for good and evil was placed upon the individual. Each person was called to develop a just and loving character. Channing was greatly admired and his optimistic theology was seen as a basis for the wave of social reforms which characterized much of the nineteenth century. As a young man he spent two years in Virginia as a tutor and was nauseated by the slavery he saw for the first time. This alone would prevent me from ever settling in Virginia. Language cannot express my detestation of it. In when Missouri asked to be admitted to the Union as a slave state Channing said nothing publicly. He considered slavery to be morally wrong. But how could a nation so entangled in a vast entrenched system of evil find the moral strength to extricate itself? A Baltimore abolitionist, Benjamin Lundy, visited Channing to enlist his help in organizing abolitionist societies but Channing was wary. His benevolent and comprehensive perspective is evident in the letter he wrote to Senator Daniel Webster in Washington. Lundy of Baltimore, the editor of a paper called *The Genius of Universal Emancipation* visited to stir us up to the work of abolishing slavery at the South, and the intention is to organize societies for this purpose. I know few objects into which I should enter with more zeal, but I am aware how cautiously exertions are to be made for it in this part of the country. I know that our Southern brethren interpret every word from this region on the subject of slavery as an expression of hostility. I would ask if they cannot be brought to understand us better, and if we can do any good till we remove their misapprehensions. What his perspective lacked was empathy with the feelings of slaves. But in the Channings spent six months in St. Croix and there he took upon himself a series of face to

face discussions with slaves. According to his biographer Channing once passed a slave woman who was singing. He asked her why she found her work so pleasant. She answered decisively that she did not. We forced to do it. He began to outline a major essay on slavery. Still he hesitated and the essay was not completed and published until five years later. On his return to Boston he did preach an anti-slavery sermon. But when asked to join the anti-slavery society he refused. He could not perceive Southern slaveholders and moneyed Northerners as a mass of immoral or evil people when to him they were individuals with varying moral capacities. Abolitionist Lydia Child had many conversations with Channing. It is not our fault that those might have pleaded for the enslaved so much more eloquently, both with the pen and with the living voice than we can, have been silent. We are not to blame, Sir, that you who more perhaps than any other man might have so raised the voice of remonstrance that it should have been heard throughout the length and breadth of the land,--we are not to blame, Sir, that you have not so spoken. And now, because inferior men have begun to speak and act against what you yourself acknowledge to be an awful injustice, it is not becoming in you to complain of us, because we do it in an inferior style. Why, Sir, have you not moved, why have you not spoken before? Old line members of Federal Street Church stopped calling at the Channing home, some even refused to speak when passing him on the sidewalk. As Mendelsohn writes, he who had been an object of almost mystical adulation was suddenly a pariah. Thereafter he spoke out repeatedly on behalf of the rights of abolitionists and against the annexation of Texas as a slave state. Channing memorialized his friend from the pulpit anyway. Then he addressed a letter to the committee relinquishing his salary and asking that his public functions as pastor should cease. Shortly before his death Channing was vacationing in the Berkshires. In his final public utterance he said: We were told that the slaves if set free, would break out in universal massacre; but since that event not a report has reached us of murder perpetrated by a colored man on the white population. The master abhorred it, repelled it as long as possible, submitted to it only from force, and consequently did little to mitigate its evils, or to conciliate the freed bondman. In those island the slaves were eight or ten times more numerous than the whites. Yet perfect order has followed emancipation Emancipation conferred deliberately and conscientiously is safe. Channing lived out his theology as best he could, having the courage to do so even when his personal comfort and popularity had to be sacrificed. What is even more remarkable is that however passionate he was in his own convictions, he was able also to affirm the freedom of others to articulate their own views. The free mind was of ultimate concern to Channing. He even dared to suggest that children should be nurtured in that freedom. Again his theology forced him to a radical position; it is still a radical position in religious education today. I would like to close with his well-known words on the subject: In a word, the great end is to awaken the soul, to excite and cherish spiritual life.

Chapter 7 : PAL: William Henry Channing ()

I indeed was a reluctant minister as I would later be a reluctant radical. A highly self-conscious Boston, 25, strong in , was ready to make its moves in a nation that had just embraced the Louisiana Purchase and acquired a vast new frontier.

John Gaffney has invited me to speak to you today, even though I had to come back from the grave at the age of Too often our wonderful Unitarian Universalist history is either unknown or forgotten and the powerful lessons of those who have gone before are lost, and thus we are unknowingly impoverished. Today I would like to redress this weakness. I will tell you of my life and how our glorious movement began. I was born in Newport, Rhode Island on April 7, , only four years after the signing of the Declaration of Independence. My birthplace was, perhaps, a harbinger of things to come. Newport was haven to both Captain Kidd, pirate, and Anne Hutchinson, heretic. Rhode Islanders declared their independence from Great Britain a month before any other colony but were the last of the original thirteen to ratify the Constitution of the United States. We were a fiercely independent and diverse lot. The ravages of the American Revolution had reduced the population of Newport from twenty two thousand to less than four thousand. British troops, with a fanatical concern for firewood, had defoliated the landscape and chopped up the furnishings of most public buildings, including the pews of our family church. It was a grim and desolate town when I was born. I was the third of ten children. My father, William, was self educated, well read in the law with a large library of well selected books. He abounded in respectability and public involvement. The most noted thinkers and political figures of day were frequent guests at our dinner table. He saw little problem in slavery. He was very popular in the State, was attorney-general and district attorney at the same time and held both offices at the time of his death. He died suddenly and with no money in the bank. My mother, Lucy Ellery, was the daughter of one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence. She was keen, candid, assertive, spirited and with a simplicity of mind and firmness to see the truth. I was small, slight, muscular and agile and quite popular. One of my earliest religious memories was attending the revival meeting of an itinerant preacher with my father. The preacher spoke in very graphic detail of the lost condition of the human race rushing into hell. It filled my imagination with horror. On the way home my father remarked: Leaves no rag of self-righteousness to wrap the sinner in! My father began to whistle on the ride home and at home he smoked his pipe and read the newspaper. From my grandfather, William Ellery, an amateur religious scholar, I found much to mull over in the realms of piety. I learned that a clear conviction of truth was essential to religion. The want of reverence for truth manifest in the rash teaching of our times shocked me greatly. I was building a liberal faith on the actions of which human nature is capable. I was dispatched to New London, Connecticut. Ah, the wonderful insight of human competence! Overnight my advantaged, independent family found itself in chilling financial straits. Fortunately my Channing household was extremely well connected. Through these connections, though lacking in funds, I was able to attend Harvard. I was 14 years old. Harvard in was vastly different from the large prestigious University of today. There were two dormitories, and two other buildings, one a chapel. A president, three professors, and several young tutors constituted the faculty. Total enrollment was I was attracted to English and Scottish rationalists, some of them followers of Socinius, a contemporary of Calvin, who argued for the simple humanity of Jesus. I delved into the writings of Joseph Priestly, the scientist and English Unitarian. Enough of Calvinism with its predestination and human depravity. Now I could appreciate the dignity of human nature. The Shakespeare revisal that burst on Harvard at that time awakened a dramatic inner tension that would affect my future preaching. I was elected president of the Speaking Club and was in great demand. Especially I was entranced by the life of reason. At the same time I longed to know God beyond reason. I would use the rest of my years to embrace the inherent ambiguity of these themes. I had a lifelong bias against wrangling. At age 18 I finished my undergraduate degree. I returned to my family in Newport but deep down there was turbulence. I wanted to enter the ministry but the lack of money seemed to make this impossible. Restless and unsettled, as in earlier years, I wandered along the beach seeking solace. My emotions were erratic and I felt determined to control them. I wrote to my classmate William Shaw: By a

stroke of luck my life took a felicitous turn. David Meade Randolph, Esq. He needed a tutor for his children and asked if I would accept the position. Spending those years in Virginia rather than in New England probably prevented me from becoming just another Proper Bostonian. I compared the selfish prudence of a Yankee with the generous confidence of a Virginian. Their sensuality both surprised and intrigued. I envied it but the Brahmin in me resisted it. For the first time in Virginia I saw slavery in all of its terrible aspects. Because of my cautious, studious nature, which wanted to study every facet of a subject, I wrestled for a lifetime with the morality of slavery and could only reach a position of staunch opposition, in the final years of my life. The Virginia experience, however, made that personal imprint that would play such a major role in my final decision against slavery. Religiously Deism flourished in Virginia and emptied the churches there. This system believed that God, after creating the world and the laws governing it, refrained from interfering with the operation of these laws. All supernatural intervention was rejected. This appealed to my rationalism which so much believed in the goodness and creativity of mankind. In Richmond I was a schoolmaster, charged with taming the energies of twelve students who lacerated my conscience. I recoiled from being too hard on them and when I was too easy, they took advantage of me. I was a failure as a pedagogue. During those youthful, idealistic days I exaggerated my poverty by refusing to buy new clothes or to spend any money on myself. Sensuality is something I could not deal with. The anxiety, stress and exhaustion that I tried to wrestle with alone, without help or guidance, took a terrible toll. My lifelong physical wretchedness was pervasive and the cause can be traced to those early days. O would that I was not such a proper, puritanical Bostonian! When I returned to Newport some 21 months later, my family was stunned by this pallid shadow of the compact sturdy young person they had sent off to Richmond. Happily I assumed the role of head of household in Newport but I envied my classmates who were pursuing graduate studies at Harvard. I avoided all social life but that of the family circle. I was determined not to risk again the fleshly tingles aroused by the parties on the Randolph veranda. My habits of solitariness, seclusion, introspection, and self-searching were jelling to an alarming degree. Once again I turned daily to my beloved shoreline for a renewed sense of freedom and strength. I began to realize that I was more of a pagan than I thought President Willard of Harvard noticed my isolation and gave me a plum of a job as regent or dorm master for undergraduate students. My scholarship and preaching skill became well known. On June 1, at the age of 23 I was ordained and installed in the only pulpit I was ever to call my own, the Federal St. The first thing I did was panic. What was I but a midget with a trembling voice. I was still too wrapped up in my own problems to turn my attention to the world around me. The thought of being sociable repelled me. I wanted to get back to my brooding, my compulsive brooding. I indeed was a reluctant minister as I would later be a reluctant radical. A highly self-conscious Boston, 25, strong in ,was ready to make its moves in a nation that had just embraced the Louisiana Purchase and acquired a vast new frontier. Boston resembled an insulated English market town. Boston was both stuffy and stirring, proper and yet curious. They searched for prosperity but also had a social conscience.

Chapter 8 : Being a Reluctant Radical – Sermon by Rev. David Pyle | Celestial Lands

THE RELUCTANT RADICAL is a documentary following activist Ken Ward as he put himself in the direct path of the fossil fuel industry. THE RELUCTANT RADICAL is a.

What to one person is eminently reasonable and obvious, to another person is often looked upon as dangerous and radical. This morning I want to tell you a little bit about a man who in his day was considered by some the most reasonable and eloquent voice of modern religion since the Reformation; a man whom others rushed to condemn as an inflammatory radical, a heretic who, had he lived in another place and time, would have burned at the stake for his bold questioning of traditional views of God and Christ and the proper reading of Scriptures. Like Luther, his personal intellect and his personal religious vision galvanized a religious movement that was waiting to happen. Like Luther, he had the courage to take on the religious establishment of his day to preach the principles he believed in. But unlike Martin Luther, William Ellery Channing did not possess a classic revolutionary personality. His was not a fiery, earthy temperament. He was, by all accounts, a painfully shy and reticent man, always uncomfortable with confrontation, an introvert who spent a lifetime, it seems, trying to avoid the natural positions of leadership that his powerful intellect and gifted preaching ability continually thrust upon him. And yet, during a professional ministry that spanned forty years at the Federal Street Church in Boston, there is virtually no single great social issue of his time that he did not powerfully influence. William Ellery Channing was born in Newport, Rhode Island in 1781, the youngest son of a large family. His prosperous father died when Channing was only 13, and the family was left dependent on the support of his merchant uncles. He was a brilliant student, mastering Latin, Greek, and French before he was a teenager, and through the sponsorship of an uncle, he was sent off at age 16 to Harvard College to prepare for a career in law. Channing had been raised as a proper New England Congregational Calvinist as befitted his station in his community, but during his college years as he read deeply into philosophy and theology, he was confronted with a faith crisis. His own image of a loving God could not in good conscience accept the Calvinist notion of Pre-Destination, with its images of eternal damnation and hellfire for the unsaved. The more he studied Scriptures – he added Hebrew and German to his curriculum to do so – the deeper his doubts grew. It was only the beginning of a lifetime of physical ailments for Channing. He was a physical ruin for most of his 62 years. But in fact, the man was barely five feet tall; he weighed only about a hundred pounds at his healthiest. He suffered from deafness and gout and dyspepsia. He knew other pains as well. He lost his father at age 13, two of his own children died at an early age, and his beloved wife was taken with a crippling arthritis. Yet, despite all this, he is remembered as a happy man, a genteel and generous soul, a loving pastor who although not gregarious and never really comfortable in the personal encounters required in ministry, nevertheless always made time for his people when they needed him. His sermons, in accordance with the custom of his day, averaged some two hours in length, and in an age of great oratory, Channing was an acknowledged master, as lively and dramatic in the pulpit as he was shy and introverted outside of it. It was said Channing would cross a street to avoid having to chat with parishioners coming the other way, then get up in front of hundreds on Sunday and hold them spellbound. His preaching was said to be mesmerizing. Channing, quite to the contrary, held people with his themes of love and peace and justice. Always and again he returned to his great central focus: But in religion as in all other human endeavors, perspective makes all the difference. What to one person is eminently reasonable and obvious, to another person is often seen as dangerous and radical. By 1820, the Congregationalist churches of New England were divided in all but name between the conservative majority of Calvinists of the Old Order, whose traditional clergy clung to the gloomy tenets of Calvinist fire and brimstone, and an increasing number of churches whose clergy leaned toward the more liberal intellectual and philosophical influences of the Enlightenment. Boston printing presses were cranking out theological treatises, local clergy debates, heated letters to the editor, and anonymous pamphlets by the thousands in 1820, something hard for us to imagine today, and it was clear that Congregationalism, then the largest Protestant denomination in America, was about ready to split at the seams. It was a carefully chosen occasion, an ordination ceremony attended by several hundred clergy who traveled

down to Baltimore from New England to attend. Within a month after the Baltimore Sermon, as it came to be called, some 25, pamphlets of its text were sold in Boston alone. Within five years, more than parishes officially left the Congregationalist fold and established a new liberal denomination, the American Unitarian Association of Churches. For in religion as in all other human endeavors, perspective makes all the difference. Channing spoke out on the issue that he had resisted addressing as long as he could. That issue was slavery, and Channing had resisted speaking out on the topic, not because he had any doubts about the moral imperatives of the issue, but because he knew full well the institutional effect his public stance would have. For many of the most prominent families of the church, indeed of Boston high society, were merchant shippers who directly and indirectly profited from the Southern slave system. As he knew it would, his treatise on slavery in cracked open his congregation. For such a strong believer in church institutionalism as Channing, this was a truly devastating event. Although deeply hurt over this unchristian and insensitive action of his church, Channing did not resign his pulpit as his friend Ralph Waldo Emerson advised him to do. Before his death, William Ellery Channing would go on to lend his leadership and his energies to virtually every major reform movement of his day: Not radicalism when it is chic or safe. But radicalism that is an informed deep loyalty to principle. Because the wise man or woman knows that such radicalism, such informed dramatic loyalty to principle, always exacts a price. The world cannot tolerate radical truth because radical truth or principle always puts the world to shame. Anthony once said that when one woman speaks the truth, there is a revolution. Radical truth always puts the world to shame. Why was Moses reluctant when Yahweh called him to lead the Chosen People? Because Moses knew what the price would be. I believe that his great central theme – the dignity of human nature and the greatness of the human soul – is still the core of the Unitarian heart, still the message that distinguishes this church from the modern-day religious purveyors of gloom and doom theology. I like to think that his kind of radical love and radical peace and radical justice in all their simplicity and in all their insistence still undergird the church that Channing founded. And there are some religious movements – like those Roman Catholic Liberation communities in Latin America, for example – that are more radical than ours in their general politics. But by and large, I think the overall record of Unitarianism speaks well for itself over the years since Channing took on the establishment in Boston. Perspective is everything, I guess.

Chapter 9 : Channing, the reluctant radical; a biography by Jack Mendelsohn | LibraryThing

Last preached on March 13th, Reading Excerpt from "Unitarian Christianity" by Rev. William Ellery Channing. Also known as the Baltimore Sermon, this excerpt is from the ordination sermon of Rev. Jared Sparks in , and is considered by many the official birth of American Unitarianism.

His published sermons, lighting a path between orthodoxy and infidelity, were widely influential abroad as well as throughout the United States. His Christian humanism inspired both religious and literary features of the Transcendentalist movement. An exemplar of Christian piety and a champion of human rights and dignity, he effectively fostered social reform in areas of free speech, education, peace, relief for the poor, and anti-slavery. His pulpit orations made him, according to Emerson , "a kind of public Conscience. When William was growing up, Newport, founded by Baptists on the principle of religious freedom, had Baptist, Congregationalist, Quaker, Independent and Jewish houses of worship. Slaves of Channing family households were leaders in the African community. As many Congregationalist ministers did during the revolutionary period, Stiles advocated republican values without fully considering their consistency with orthodoxy. Channing once said he owed to Ezra Stiles the indignation he felt "at every invasion of human rights. Overwhelmed by the fiery sermon, William felt "a curse seemed to rest on the earth and darkness and horror to veil the face of nature. Instead, the family ate their usual meal, and then his father sat by the fire, puffed his pipe and read the newspaper. The boy concluded he should not take so seriously what people said, but study their behavior to know what they meant. But it would take him many years to be rid of his "early gloom" regarding religion. At age 15 he entered Harvard College. His college reading of Francis Hutcheson, a Scottish common sense philosopher, was transforming. Hutcheson asserted a universal human capacity for unselfish benevolence. Reading Hutcheson, Channing apprehended, with the force of an epiphany, the dignity of human nature, the vital principle of human rights. Channing graduated from Harvard at the head of the class of 1795. Needing an income to continue his studies, he served as tutor for the children of David Meade Randolph of Richmond, Virginia. In Richmond the young man was appalled by much of what he learned of Southern slavery and society, and he permanently weakened his health with ascetic practices. At some point in Richmond, he also experienced a "change of heart" and wrote to his uncle, "I have now solemnly given myself up to God. He later recalled, "I had studied with great delight during my college life the philosophy of Hutcheson, and the Stoic morality, and these had prepared me for the noble, self-sacrificing doctrines of Dr. In he told the Newport Unitarian congregation, "No spot on earth has helped to form me so much as that beach. There I lifted up my voice in praise amidst the tempest. There, in reverential sympathy with the mighty power around me, I became conscious of power within. During this period Channing wrote down some thoughts which guided him in his studies throughout his life, defining his liberal bent: The quantity of knowledge thus gained may be less, but the quality will be superior. Truth received on authority, or acquired without labor, makes but a feeble impression. Tappan preached the ordination sermon, his uncle Henry Channing gave the charge, and his Harvard classmate and friend Joseph Tuckerman extended the right hand of fellowship. Channing served on the board of the Harvard Corporation, , and worked toward the establishment of the Harvard Divinity School. In Channing married a first cousin, Ruth Gibbs, one of the wealthiest women in the country. They had four children. For some time dissension had been brewing among New England Congregationalists. Always reluctant to be divisive, Channing did not speak publicly about the controversy until Channing wrote a reply, addressed to a liberal colleague and titled, A Letter to the Rev. Tens of thousands of copies were sold. In Unitarian Christianity Channing described the Bible as "a book written for men, in the language of men" whose "meaning is to be sought in the same manner as that of other books. It teaches, that the highest purpose of his mission was to reconcile God to man, not man to God. He confidently preached the possibility of unending moral and spiritual progress for all who would shape their lives in accordance with its demands. He said in his Election Day sermon, "Spiritual Freedom," "I call that mind free which masters the senses, which protects itself against animal appetites, which contemns pleasure and pain in comparison with its own energy, which penetrates beneath the body and recognizes its own reality and

greatness. I call that mind free which escapes the bondage of matter, which, instead of stopping at the material universe and making it a prison wall, passes beyond it to its Author. He wrote in "Likeness to God," "Our own moral nature" leads us to comprehend God through its "approving and condemning voice. The soul, by its sense of right, or its perception of moral distinctions, is clothed with sovereignty over itself, and through this alone, it understands and recognizes the Sovereign of the Universe. The warp and woof of this fabric are not without tension. For Channing, the tensions were existential. It was as though people could feel directly his benign sincerity. Frederic Henry Hedge said Channing could "send his word into the soul with more searching force than all the orators of his time. One of the earliest innovations of his ministry was to invite the children about him after worship. This was one of a number of examples of his creating small discussion groups for church members which emerged as part of the Sunday School movement. In he worked with Samuel Cooper Thacher of the New South Church to produce a catechism for the use of the children in the two churches. His first published sermon was "The Duties of Children," He wrote in his "Remarks on Education," "There is no office higher than that of a teacher of youth, for there is nothing on earth so precious as the mind, soul, character of the child. In he took a young associate, Ezra Stiles Gannett. From the first Channing extended trust and pulpit freedom to his associate. In Channing had traveled to England and continental Europe for the sake of his frail health. The trip did little by way of improving his health, but it stimulated his literary interests. Returned from Europe, he penned several essays, all highly acclaimed, on Milton, ; Fenelon, ; and Napoleon Bonaparte, Channing was ambivalent about money. In he wrote to Lucy Aiken of the house he was building next to the Gibbs mansion. He said he spent nothing on amusements and little on clothing, but that he must have a good house, "open to the sun and air, with apartments large enough for breathing freely. Although his family exploited the free labor market, Channing was deeply concerned about the destiny of displaced and low wage workers. Joseph Tuckerman took up the call. Channing conceived spiritual awakening to be required for economic development in the circumstances of a free labor market. His lecture, Self-Culture, , was addressed to working artisans. He tried to inspire them with his vision of their potential. He told them politics, education, art and literature could all be means of their development and prosperity. Self-culture is the practice of likeness to God. Any notion that the majority of human beings, all with a moral nature, were created only to "minister to the luxury and elevation of the few," violates the universality of human rights. He wrote in The Laboring Classes, , "Self-culture is a good thing, but it cannot abolish inequality, nor restore men to their rights. As a means it is well, as an end it is nothing. He feared large organizations and was unwilling in to take any part in forming of the American Unitarian Association, a missionary organization which would seek support from the liberal churches. He said there is "no moral worth in being swept away by a crowd, even towards the best objects. In his "Remarks on Associations," , Channing described the church, the family and the state as natural institutions; others worked unneeded mischief. He formulated the Iron Law of Oligarchy: But Channing attended few meetings because he felt those in attendance might defer to him rather than speak their own minds. He did nevertheless participate in another discussion group which included Alcott, Hedge, and Ripley. In its place they embraced an "absolute" religion whose moral demands they intuitively perceived to "transcend" all history. These younger ministers and other "Transcendentalists" called for the radical restructuring of society, and also publicly subjected Unitarians any less passionately committed to social reform than themselves to withering criticism. Ever one to avoid conflict if possible, Channing did not publicly criticize the Transcendentalists. Channing, and say he is getting old; but as soon as he is ill we remember he is our Bishop and we have not done with him yet. An trip to the West Indies, in search of health, again provided him with a vivid view of the injustice and cruelty of slavery. He never sought to undervalue the importance of Antislavery, but he said many things to prevent my looking upon it as the only question interesting to humanity. In this he claimed, as he had many times, that human rights derive from our moral nature, created by God, not society. Slavery, he thought, calls for an examination of "the foundation, nature, and extent of human rights. He said the sin of slavery thwarts the spiritual progress of slaves and slave owners, but he condemned the sin, not sinners. Garrison was disappointed by such moderate anti-slavery. Austin, and the Boston industrialists who sat in pews of the Federal Street Church, disapproved his book on opposite grounds. Austin said Channing was encouraging slave insurrection. Channing preached one of his finest

sermons on his death. The Standing Committee said no, it could not be. Thereupon Channing wrote to the Standing Committee, "If it should be thought best that there should be a formal dissolution of the relation, I desire that this may immediately take place. Channing had more than twenty years earlier closed Unitarian Christianity with a petition envisioning Christ as a messianic Son of Liberty, "that He will overturn, and overturn, and overturn the strongholds of spiritual usurpation, until He shall come whose right it is to rule the minds of men. His moderate and considered support gave anti-slavery a respectability it had not previously possessed. When Channing died in many paid tribute to his ministry. May said Channing sacrificed his serenity and reputation "by espousing the cause of the oppressed. Among Unitarians Channing was claimed by Transcendentalist radicals as well as by their critics, who often styled themselves "Channing" Unitarians. Keen interest in Channing continued throughout the 19th century. He was neglected during the tumultuous first half of 20th century. Students of American religion have since shown a renewed appreciation of him. Pioneering a middle way between spirituality and secularity, Channing was a subtle and key figure in American religious and literary history.