

Session Topic: UU History: Rev. William Ellery Channing: 1819 Baltimore Sermon, The Great Aim of Religious Education Quote Unitarian Universalist Principles & Sources

*Planned Sunday on-site Activities: Joys & Sorrows shared, Old fashioned games – rolling a hoop or marbles* <http://www.landofmarbles.com/marbles-play.html>

❖ **Story & Reflection Question: The 1819 Baltimore Sermon:**



On May 5, 1819 Rev. William Ellery Channing preached a sermon in Baltimore titled “Unitarian Christianity” He had come from Boston, MA with several other Unitarian Ministers to ordain a new minister, Mr. Jared Sparks. His sermon was not just spoken that day, it was also printed, and over 10,000 people all over the United States bought a copy and read it. (in the age before the internet)! In the sermon he talked about Unitarian Christians believed in ONE god, not the Trinity (like other Christians who believed in God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost / Spirit). This was a radical notion in 1819 in Christian circles, from which Unitarian congregations sprang from, *and some people began using the word “Unitarian” to be a slur or put down.* Channing claimed it and defended his thoughts. Channing continued to speak out and preach, in what is now the Arlington St. Church off of the Boston common, for his whole career as a minister. He had other ideas like: using music in worship, about having a gentle, loving relationship with God (versus an angry, punishing God). He believed in

human goodness, and that people could use reason to consider their ideas about spirituality and God.

❖ **Do you see his ideas in our UU Principles and Sources?** (look at them – <https://www.uuworld.org/articles/the-uuas-principles-purposes-1985>)

Despite being sickly and physically weak the rest of his life, he was admired as the founder of Unitarianism as we know it today, valuing the inherent worth and dignity of each human being. At the time, Channing and those folks didn't know what would emerge from their beliefs. Our UU Principles and Sources have been agreed to but also changed over time. Channing knew he had to speak out about what he believed.

❖ **What religion or ideas are “put down” now? How might you speak up when misconceptions happen?**

*FAMILY TAKE-IT-HOME Additional Faith Formation for you:*

- Talk about your Religious Education (formal or informal) when you were young. What do you think about Rev. Channing's words below?
- Parent's read more about Rev. William Ellery Channing and the rest of the quote *below* <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/carlgreag/2017/02/great-end-religious-instruction-legacy-william-ellery-channing/>

*“The great end in religious instruction is not to stamp our minds upon the young, but to stir up their own; Not to make them see with our eyes, but to look inquiringly and steadily with their own; Not to give them a definite amount of knowledge, but to inspire a fervent love of truth; Not to form an outward regularity, but to touch inward springs...”*