ABSTRACT

ANALYSIS OF AN EARLY NINETEENTH-CENTURY AMERICAN PERIODICAL, THE SPIRIT OF THE PILGRIMS, WITH EMPHASIS ON RELIGIOUS CONTROVERSY, REVIVALISM, AND SOCIAL REFORM

by Nancy J. Sonneveldt

This study surveys the contents of an early American periodical, the Spirit of the Pilgrims. Published in Boston from 1828 to 1833 by a group of conservative Calvinists, the periodical is generally theological, but also contains articles on such topics as higher education, ministerial training and demeanor, minor religious sects, popular amusements, and court cases involving churches or their members. This thesis focuses on the periodical's three major concerns: the current doctrinal controversy between the Calvinists and Unitarians, a similar controversy within orthodox Calvinism, and the related areas of revivalism and social reform.

Chapter one begins with a brief summary of the industrial, literary, political, and religious conditions of the 1820's and '30's. Reflecting the contentious character of religious discussion during this period was the proliferation of religious periodicals, one of them the Spirit of the Pilgrims whose founders hoped, through the Spirit, to combat Unitarianism and to promulgate the conservative religious principles of John Calvin and Jonathan Edwards. The Spirit's chief opponent was the Christian Examiner, liberal voice of New England Unitarianism. While known facts concerning the Spirit's publication

are few, I have included in this chapter whatever information was available regarding its editors, founders, conductors, contributors, goals, circulation, and impact on the contemporary religious scene.

Chapter two deals more specifically with the Unitarian-Calvinist doctrinal controversy of the 1820's. Leading the Spirit's orthodox opposition to liberalism were Lyman Beecher, Moses Stuart, Ebenezer Porter, Bennet Tyler, and Leonard Woods--all of them prominent pastors or professors in the Boston vicinity--while William Ellery Channing and Bernard Whitman generally spoke out for the Unitarians. Most frequently discussed in this debate were the traditional doctrines of scriptural inspiration, the Trinity, the nature and work of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, depravity or original sin, and--of particular interest to the early nineteenth century--the question of infant damnation. I have placed each of these topics in its historical context and attempted to delineate the respective positions of the Spirit's contributors and their opponents on these matters.

While the earlier volumes of the Spirit are concerned with the Unitarian opposition, volumes five and six deal largely with a growing controversy within orthodox Calvinism between the "Consistent Calvinists" who sought to preserve the doctrines of the reformers and a group of Yale scholars who were convinced that only new interpretations of old doctrines would enable Calvinism to survive. While a majority of the Spirit's conductors aligned themselves with the Consistent Calvinists, Lyman Beecher sided with Nathaniel Taylor and the more liberal Yale group.

The most significant of the Spirit's articles on this

controversy were two series which ran simultaneously in the later volumes. The first, between Beecher and Woods, was essentially an attempt to allay excitement among the controversialists and dissuade others from heated argument. Involved in the second series were Taylor and Tyler, both of them prejudiced individuals, who dwelt largely on minor doctrinal differences regarding innate and total depravity, the divine permission of sin, and man's role in regeneration.

In chapter four I have discussed the Spirit's articles on the early nineteenth-century revivals, hoping thereby to characterize the New England Awakening of 1830-33 as well as to determine the attitude of the conservative New England evangelists toward the various reform movements of the day. While they devoted many pages to previous revivals, particularly the Great Awakening, the Spirit's conductors also provide us with an unusually comprehensive view of nineteenth-century revivalism. They repeatedly emphasized the value of revivals to the church, but concomitantly deplored extremist methods, the presence of excessive emotion, failure to rely on the Holy Spirit, and inadequate instruction following a revival--all of which distinguish this period of revivals from earlier ones. Since the Unitarians, in general, opposed the various reform movements of the period, the Spirit was especially eager to justify and defend them. Thus, scattered through its six volumes are articles dealing with the anti-slavery movement, Sabbath reform, the temperance movement, foreign missions, the peace crusade, and the problem of Indian removal.

In each of the above areas, the Spirit of the Pilgrims exerted

a powerful, practical influence on the religious life of New England. It drove Unitarianism from concealment and forced its leaders to define and defend their liberal doctrines. It was one of the few publications in which people were able to read a relatively sane and well-balanced account of both sides of the intra-orthodox debate. Equally significant was its vigorous campaign for true revivals of religion. The Spirit had, without a doubt, attained its original objectives: "to investigate, . . . to state our own views, . . . to meet the Unitarians, . . . to provide . . . instruction . . . confirmation . . . and encouragement to the body of orthodox Christians."

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CHAPTER I

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

The American Nation (1820-1850): Independence and Controversy in Politics, Economics, Literature, and Religion

The United States, during the three decades following the Monroe Doctrine, lived very much to itself. Released from dependence on Great Britain, strengthened by an expanding population, blessed with tremendous resources, and secure in her youthful achievements, her people developed strong isolationist tendencies and a desire to create ideas and experiences indigenous to America. This newly acquired and somewhat brash self-trust expressed itself politically as nationalism, aesthetically as freedom to experiment with native American art forms, and spiritually as a release from the restricting Puritan theology and ethic.

This pervasive self-trust or independence was announced by Americans in a variety of terms. On the frontier, Davy Crockett shouted, "I kin lick my weight in wildcats!" In the White House our presidents announced the nation's coming of age in a rapid succession of state papers.[1] In New England, men of ability speculated on the

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[1] Robert E. Spiller et al., (eds.), Literary History of the United States (New York, 1963), pp. 219-228.

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individual's capacity for self-fulfillment, self-improvement, and

self-reliance. Though the eventual results of this confidence were prestige and power for the United States as a nation among nations, its more immediate results were agitation and controversy as people asserted their right to be heard, questioned the status quo, and proposed changes in every area of American life.

The election of 1824, during which the old dynasty in the House of Representatives formed a coalition to defeat Jackson who had received a larger popular and electoral college vote, served as an impetus for the lower classes to promote their own interests. Realizing that sectionalism only weakened their political strength, the West and South formed their own coalition, elected Jackson in 1828, and established a new political era in the United States. Adams' view of the presidency as a noble obligation to maintain the aristocracy of wealth and property was thus overthrown by a farmer and Indian fighter who had nebulous views on the tariff and internal affairs but who was irresistably available and saw the presidency as an office of obligation to all the people. He gave his support to such equalitarian practices as the increase of electoral offices, more frequent elections, rotation in office, and reward for party service--thereby endearing himself to the masses but creating consternation among the clergy, bankers, manufacturers, and southern planters who almost overnight found themselves shunted into the background. From this time on "popular sovereignty" took precedence over privilege, and the mechanics, settlers, farmers, and laborers of the West and South found themselves in the position of being able to defeat the money and minds of New England.

Although the nation throughout this period was still

predominantly rural, American industry was experiencing rapid growth and with it problems of labor and management. Opposition to industry also developed among agrarian and humanitarian groups who denounced it as dangerous to farm interests, generally undemocratic, and lacking in opportunities for personal growth. Even the southern planters damned it as a peculiar form of slavery--as bad as that for which they were being denounced. The people who worked in the factories were, for the most part, reasonably content. This was particularly true if they had previously been accustomed to long hours of farm labor and were now situated in a model factory town such as Lowell or Waltham, Massachusetts, where workers were carefully supervised and provided with stimulating intellectual and recreational activities. But already in the late eighteenth century there were attempts to organize factory laborers for their own benefit. These early attempts at unionization failed but were remembered by workers of the 1820's who were flexing their muscles and demanding the right to unionize. By the mid-twenties they were gaining influence within the economic structure and by 1835 their strikes for higher wages and fewer working hours resulted in the establishment of a ten-hour day in New York and Philadelphia. Demands for such "fringe benefits" as free public schools and abolition of imprisonment for debt were also heard and heeded, though tangible results were sometimes slow in appearing. Some of the most persistent agitation during these years was found in Boston where a strong ruling minority and inflexible tradition successfully resisted the demands of labor until well into the 1850's.[2]

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[2]Nelson Manfred Blake, A Short History of American Life (New York, 1952), p. 181.

By 1820 the era for the making of a new national literature had also arrived. Evidence of the renaissance of American letters would not appear until the late forties or early fifties with the publication of the Scarlet Letter, Leaves of Grass, Moby Dick, Walden, and Emerson's Essays. But the groundwork for this artistic maturity was being laid in the twenties; "No one knew the rules or had the blueprints, yet the air was alive with energy and excitement."[3] The

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[3]Spiller, p. 228.

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spirit of self-trust leading to this atmosphere of experimentation produced a concomitant zeal all over America for writers and literary forms which would enable the new nation to affirm its rightful heritage in the broad expanse of the cultural world and compel English critics to admit the excellence of American literature.

Having accepted the mandate of cultured Americans to produce a national literature of a non-polemical nature, responsible writers in both North and South began to rely less on the support of the church, politics, or law, and more on their own journalistic abilities. The spread of literacy, improvements in communication, the growing sophistication of society, and technical advances in printing and book production made such literary self-sufficiency less of a risk than in the past. Such older literary forms as the essay, the sermon, and imitative classical poetry were soon superseded in both number and popularity by novels, sketches, short stories, and a variety of verse forms.

Yet, underneath this obvious ferment of literary activity lay much confusion and uncertainty. Washington Irving, though he responded

early to the demand for an American literature with his Knickerbocker History of New York, in 1826 attempted to escape from an increasingly complex and chaotic American way of life by fleeing to Europe where he wandered for years, nurturing his love for tradition and the romantic past. James Fenimore Cooper, with his classic tales of Revolutionary and frontier life, was the first to turn to the actual American scene for materials. Yet, he too found it necessary to spend some time in Europe, gaining perspective on American values and institutions. In both his pre and post-European novels, he attempts to reconcile the old, aristocratic America in which he had lived as a boy with the newer, exuberant--but leveling--democracy in which he now found himself. Though always a staunch defender of America's principles, he was also one of her most caustic critics, unwilling to let the past slip entirely from his grip as he observed the errors of the present.

We could go on from Emerson to Hawthorne, to Longfellow, Poe, Whittier, and Bryant, and in the works of each find a certain self-confidence characterized by a desire to create new, indigenous, artistic themes and forms and by an enthusiasm for recently acquired freedoms. But in the works of each can also be found a lingering nostalgia for the uncluttered, peaceful past and an attempt to escape from or adjust to the chaos of the present. Bryant and Whittier survived by throwing themselves into reform movements, Thoreau by refusing to live in anything but the immediate present, Hawthorne by examining the relationship of the past to the present, and Longfellow only by remaining aloof from the grosser perplexities of his environment. Artistic maturity would come, but the process would be painfully slow.

In religion the chief results of the great nineteenth-century Faith in self-trust were secularization, sectarianism, and schism. The authoritarian voices of the religious hierarchy were often lost amid the clamor of individuals demanding the right to be heard. Men no longer looked with awe upon the metaphysical religious systems of the past or with terror upon an omnipotent God who ruled this world without regard for the happiness of man. Instead they openly criticized older doctrines and began to devise religious systems to meet their own needs. Within this atmosphere of religious freedom and dissent, the Shakers, Millerites, spiritualists, Mormons, Christ-ians, and scores of insignificant sects developed their own conceptions of religion and were allowed to proselytize with a degree of liberty unheard of twenty-five years earlier. Other leaders, content to remain within the folds of a more or less orthodox Christianity but eager to appeal to the needs of a growing and changing population, moved in the West toward the emotion of Methodist revivalism and in the East toward the rational humanitarianism of the Unitarians. Each group felt it was best serving the needs of the American public and each demanded complete tolerance for its peculiar point of view--without granting similar tolerance to others. By 1830 the situation was so serious that the Reverend Timothy Flint, writing in the Western Review, could charge, "Nine pulpits in ten in our country are occupied chiefly in the denunciation of other sects."[4]

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[4] III (May, 1830), 579.

Schism and sectarianism did not appear in force until the later thirties. However, men of foresight predicted their development in the

twenties as they viewed with alarm the increasingly liberal tendencies of the American church. Congregational, Lutheran, Reformed, Baptist, Episcopalian, and Presbyterian churches all had liberal elements against which the conservatives reacted in an attempt to preserve what they considered to be the purity of the church of God. By 1840 most had experienced widespread division, with the result that the conservatives were even more conservative and the liberals even more liberal than prior to their intra-church controversies--and even less inclined to tolerate each other.

The Rapid Growth of Periodicals (1820-1850)

With the claims of aristocracy, democracy, nationalism, individualism, sectionalism, industrialism, humanitarianism, revivalism, liberalism, nationalism, progress, and the status quo whirling about in the minds of men, it is no wonder that periodicals became so prominent almost overnight. Belief in a particular cause or theory was inevitably followed by a desire to make that cause known. And in an era which still lacked the telegraph, telephone, and radio, no better means of communicating one's opinion existed than the periodical. It was said of periodicals during this period that they "bloomed like roses in summer, dying with the same regularity."[5] The less than 100 which were

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[5]Charles A. Beard and Mary Beard, The Rise of American Civilization (New York, 1933), p. 498.

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being published in 1825 had expanded by 1850 into more than 600. It is impossible to determine just how many periodicals came into existence during this period of transition and controversy. However, Mott

suggests that with an average life span of two years, approximately 4,000 to 5,000 were born between 1825 and 1850.[6]

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[6]Unless otherwise indicated, the following survey of periodicals is from Frank Luther Mott, A History of American Magazines, 1741-1905 (New York, 1957), I, 135-738 passim.

These periodicals were of all types and encompassed every area of American thought, no matter how insignificant. Especially popular were such general ones as Graham's Magazine, headed for two years by Edgar Allan Poe; the New England Magazine, particularly well known for its inclusion of Hawthorne's short stories; and the Knickerbocker Magazine, for fifty years in the forefront of American magazines with its publication of works by Irving, Bryant, Cooper, Hawthorne, Whittier, Holmes, and other American men of letters. Also popular were the women's magazines, which were scoffed at by the literate and the anti-feminists, but which survived ridicule and led their competitors a merry chase--even forcing their masculine counterparts to print fashion plates and household hints! The best known of this group was Godey's Lady's Book, like its competitors a sober, moral, and mildly entertaining monthly publication.

Such well known literary weeklies, monthlies, and quarterlies as the Saturday Evening Post and the North American Review first appeared during this period, as well as periodicals devoted to morals, etiquette, science, the arts, medicine, law, education, agriculture, theatre, colleges--even the comics. In an attempt to appeal to a larger group of readers than was generally possible, some periodicals were purely eclectic, the title of one being: A Monthly Museum of Knowledge

and Rational Entertainment Containing Poetry, Musick, Biography, History, Physics, Geography, Morality, Criticism, Philosophy, Mathematics, Agriculture, Chemistry, Novels, Tales, Romances, Translations, News, Marriages, Deaths, Meteorological Observations, etc., etc.

Reflecting the contentious character of theological discussion during this period was the proliferation of religious periodicals. These magazines, more than any others, were born to controversy and the pages of a particular issue were frequently filled with little but divisive argument. Yet they were able to achieve some diversity in content and style, and attempted to devote space to literature, science, politics, and social problems. Although no accurate estimate of their numbers is available, Dr. Leonard Bacon, a prominent theologian and literary critic of the time, said that, "of all the issue of the press, three-fourths is theological, ethical, and devotional."[7] Among the

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[7] Biblical Repository, III (January, 1840), 22.

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heaviest of these journals was the Biblical Repertory, later known as the Princeton Review. Begun in 1825, it was the fortress of orthodox Presbyterianism. Best known of its illustrious contributors and editors was Dr. Charles Hodge, who for forty-three years carried the intellectual burden of this great review--writing during that time some 142 articles for its pages. Like its contemporaries, the Repertory devoted much space to the doctrine of original sin. But unlike the others it held tenaciously, even after the Civil War, that slavery was not, scripturally, a sin--a position for which it was widely and severely censured.

Representing the orthodox Congregationalists was Andover

Theological Seminary's Bibliotheca Sacra which bore a long reputation for deadly scholarship. Mark Twain once referred to it as "that literary museum," while kinder critics called it "the most elaborate, erudite, and authoritative organ of the Puritan or Calvinistic denomination, . . . though it wants . . . lively and interesting character."[8]

[8] Brownson's Quarterly Review, II (October, 1845), 442.

Much less forbidding than either the Bibliotheca Sacra or the Biblical Repertory was the Literary and Theological Review, begun and edited by Leonard Woods, Jr. It was able to survive for only six years, from 1834 to 1839, but during that period achieved a reputation for its seemingly perverse opposition to certain popular reforms and movements, among them temperance societies, abolition, and revivals, and for its unrelenting attack upon "the licentious infidel philosophy of the New Haven School."

At the opposite end of the scale was the Christian Parlor Magazine, part of a movement by which the religious press attempted to compete with the ladies' magazines and popular family magazines of the times. Contributing to it were the indefatigable Mrs. Lydia Sigourney, leading American practitioner of the poetry of sensibility, and the eminent theologians Lyman Beecher and Noah Porter. Though popular, its tendency was almost wholly didactic; Mott says of it that, "It was a rather good magazine--too terribly 'good,' in fact." Similar in content was the Christian Herald, which aimed at providing religious reading for infidel sailors.

The most widely read liberal periodical of the period was the

Christian Examiner (1813-1869), for the first eleven years of its existence entitled the Christian Disciple. It was begun by a group of early Unitarians, among them William Ellery Channing, Charles Lowell, and Francis Parkman, in order to support the Reverend Noah Worcester, a Unitarian who had recently lost his pulpit due to his advocacy of the Unitarian cause in a predominantly orthodox community. Its scope, however, did not long remain so narrow, and within a few years it was equally important for its literary criticism, its comments on social and educational reform, and its philosophical treatises. Throughout the years of its publication it maintained a reputation as a serious, scholarly periodical, though its excesses of Unitarian fervor and distortions of Calvinistic doctrines made it anathema in many an orthodox household.

Immediate Predecessors of the Spirit of the Pilgrims

Although the previously mentioned Calvinistic periodicals from Princeton and Andover were the most influential orthodox publications of the nineteenth century, two others, the Panoplist and the Christian Spectator, are more pertinent to this study. Both of them, like their successor, the Spirit of the Pilgrims, were dedicated to the dissemination of orthodox doctrines, represented similar branches of theology within the orthodox tradition, and included among their founders and contributors many of the same men.

The Panoplist, which ran from 1805 to 1820, was begun by an association of Christian gentlemen (including Abiel Holmes, father of a more famous if less orthodox son) and headed by the Reverend Jedediah Morse. Its chief purpose was to spread orthodox beliefs in opposition

to Unitarianism, which had, for the first time in 1805, made noticeable headway in New England. The members of the association were particularly incensed by the popularity of Unitarianism at Harvard, the only established school for ministerial training in New England. They, consequently, were instrumental in the establishment of Andover Theological Seminary in 1808. Interspersed among its lengthy doctrinal dissertations were sermons, essays, exempla for edification, religious poetry, and, especially in its later years, much information on missionary activity in the West (meaning New York and Ohio). Within its limited field the Panoplist seems to have been successful, maintaining six to seven thousand subscribers per year until it merged with the Missionary Monthly in 1820 and undertook the support of missionary endeavors around the world, a task quite different from that of its early years.

Because of the Panoplist's gradual shift from controversy to missionary intelligence, orthodox leaders in Connecticut and Massachusetts grew concerned that the Unitarians, through their periodical the Christian Disciple, were gaining too much momentum in New England. To offset this liberal threat to theological conservatism, a few orthodox ministers, led by the Reverend Lyman Beecher of Litchfield, Connecticut, began preparations for another orthodox periodical. Beecher, late in 1817, wrote to the Reverend Gardiner Spring:

> I believe fully that we are no longer to trust Providence, and expect that God will vindicate this cause while we neglect the use of appropriate means. . . . I believe the establishment of a magazine to be one important, indispensable part of the system of self-defense and counteracting influence; and, so far as I know myself, my inclination, taste, and talents would be gratified and exerted in conducting such a publication, with . . . as much usefulness to my generation as in any station of employment which I may be . . . qualified to fill.[9]

[9]Lyman Beecher, The Autobiography of Lyman Beecher, ed. Barbara M. Cross (Cambridge, 1961), I, 249.

In 1818, his services having been accepted by the other concerned parties, Beecher became the newly organized Christian Spectator's major contributor and promoter. He set aside four days per week to write for it, but due to the gravity and limited appeal of its articles, the Spectator's circulation was low and its funds sometimes non-existent. Beecher also frequently expressed a fear that the generally non-controversial nature of the periodical was "allowing the Unitarian heresy too much popular headway."[10] Even in 1827, at the peak of

[10]Ibid., p. 326.

Unitarian influence in New England, the greater proportion of its articles dealt with such arcane matters as: "Discourses on Chinese Literature," "Eulogies on Adams and Jefferson," "Remarks on Musical Taste," and "The Influence of Nervous Disorders on Religious Experience."

Lyman Beecher and the Need for a New Periodical

Finally, convinced that the Spectator would never take the Unitarian controversy by the horns, Beecher proposed that another periodical be established. Having recently moved from Connecticut to Boston where he was to serve for several years as pastor of the Hanover Street Church, Beecher, on December 18, 1827, wrote to the editor of the Christian Spectator:

> You are aware that this thing has been agitated before, and since my coming I have probably had some influence to keep it back. But we have advanced now to a point in which I am well

> convinced that we must have the aid of a local magazine. The mass of mind which is now awake to investigate and feel, and to receive impressions such as those will make who most frequently approach it, renders the pulpit unequal, and a new means of enlightening and forming public sentiment indispensable . . . we can not, with only past means, maintain our own ground.
>
> These considerations produced a meeting for consultation last evening of ministers and laymen, to whom seem in providence to be committed the responsibility of deliberation and efficient action in the emergency here, in which the opinion was unanimous that the existing and prospective state of things demand a periodical magazine sui generis in the city; and a vote was passed that the thing be done as soon as may be, and the whole subject committed to a committee of nine to take all the requisite measures.
>
> It is in behalf of this committee that I write to give you and the associated minds of the Christian Spectator this information, and the assurance of our cordial estimation of that work, and of our purpose still, as far as it can be done, to secure the continuance of its subscribers. You will be assured that no alienation of feeling and no sinister motive operate with us in this thing, and that whatever can be done will be to give free course with us to your work.[11]

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[11] Ibid., II, 91.

There is no evidence that the founders of this new periodical, the Spirit of the Pilgrims, intended to compete with the Christian Spectator, nor that disagreements of any sort prompted the new venture. Rather, it seems that their only impetus lay in their desire to be more controversial and more localized than the Spectator was able or willing to be.

During the ensuing weeks, Beecher threw all of his organizational and leadership ability into the preparation of the first issue of the Spirit of the Pilgrims. Largely due to his efforts, that first issue appeared early in January of 1828. No person familiar with Beecher's previous encounters with infidelity would be surprised by the determination and energy with which he began this new publication--nor by the evidence that much groundwork and careful preparation had preceded

the first meeting and proposal of December 17. However, his Boston colleagues, unaccustomed to such stamina and organizational skill, were astonished by his efforts, the success of which can be largely attributed to his personal magnetism, his genius for aphoristic quotation, his commitment to "deliberate calculation," and his utter lack of personal ambition. Regarding the first, Dr. Leonard Bacon, a close personal friend of Beecher, says, "If I were to sum up his [Beecher's] character . . . in one word, that word would be electricity. . . . in a congregation, or in a free consultation among ministers and friends on great interests of religion . . . he was like a powerful magnetic battery."[12]

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[12] Ibid., p. 433.

Because of his wisdom, wit, and ability to condense thoughts into the fewest but best possible words, Beecher became popular and oft-quoted wherever he went. It was this ability that kept his thoughts on contemporary issues circulating and that enabled him to become a leader of the common folk who were able to enjoy his witticisms and yet understand the wisdom of his sayings. Furthermore, his refusal to move without what he termed "deliberate calculation" insured him of at least a reasonable amount of success in his undertakings. Whether considering the initiation of a revival, the organization of a reformation society, the establishment of a church, the beginning of a periodical, or the selection of a wife, he moved cautiously, considered all the alternatives, sought the opinions of others, enlisted their support, and only then made his move. With such a degree of organization,

it is no wonder that his efforts were so tremendously successful.

Finally his naivete and total lack of personal ambition left his colleagues with few opportunities for jealousy or personal invective. Quite the opposite, his self-forgetfulness and humility "invited the sympathy and sustaining efforts of his friends." Who could long harbor ill-feeling against one who

> left to his brethren, unchallenged, all the influence they could gain by person, dress, and address, social assiduities, minute learning, and niceties of style; . . . all ecclesiastical offices and preaching prominence . . . so much that he hardly seemed to be in the way of any, while all felt his deference to their persons. . . . If good was done, he cared little by whom, or who had the credit for it. He made all around him feel that they were necessary to him. . . . If he had a grand thought or splendid scheme, he shared it with them . . .[13]

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[13] Ibid., pp. 398-399.

The sum total of these various attributes was a personality admittedly eccentric, but precisely suited to winning followers and leading movements in the early nineteenth century.

Background and Growth of the Unitarian Opposition

Having fought liberalism in Connecticut for several years by means of the Christian Spectator and a series of pamphlets, Beecher went to Boston in 1826 expecting to carry on the battle in this fortress of liberalism. But even he was not prepared for the degree of strength which Unitarianism there displayed. The undermining of Puritanism in America had begun almost with the landing of the Pilgrims, but it had only become a real danger to orthodoxy since 1800. Though Unitarianism is generally considered to be an offshoot of English Protestantism,

its roots reach back to eastern Europe, where, in 1568, the name "Unitarian" first appeared. At first it was simply used to designate those Protestants who, in order to achieve common goals, had formed a union. However, the name soon came to signify that segment of the group who, with Socinius, said that the Father alone was eternal, while the believers in a threefold God took the name Trinitarian. By the early seventeenth century Unitarian beliefs had spread to England where the ruling Puritan party under Archbishop Laud forced their adherents into concealment. Persecution and prejudice continued until 1844 when, with the passage of the Dissenters' Chapel Act, English Unitarians were for the first time given full civil rights.[14]

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[14]Joseph H. Allen and Richard Eddy, American Church History Series, Vol. X: A History of the Unitarians and the Universalists in the United States (New York, 1894), pp. 57-159 passim.

Considering the close contact maintained during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries between England and America, it is no wonder that liberalizing tendencies appeared here almost as soon as they did in England. Shortly after the establishment of our first colonies, problems arose as a result of the congregational form of church government which the founding fathers had adopted. Under this system the tribunal of last appeal was never the church authorities but rather the direct guidance of the Holy Spirit in the mind of the individual. Such a degree of freedom in doctrinal matters was quite naturally an invitation to free thought and doctrinal change.

Other difficulties arose in the mid-seventeenth century as the original settlers died and their less pious sons and daughters, being

unable to give the required account of a spiritual experience, were not permitted to join the church. Disturbed by this decrease in church membership, the New England ministers met in synod in 1662 and adopted a measure popularly known as the "half-way covenant." Under this measure it was made the duty of those who had been baptized in infancy, when grown to years of discretion, to "own the covenant" earlier made on their behalf by their parents. The performance of this act, unaccompanied by real spiritual conviction, entitled people to a type of church membership which did not permit them to partake of the Lord's Supper but which did grant them certain church privileges, eased their consciences, and made them subject to the laws and censure of the church.

Church attendance soared where this practice was adopted but the number of church members in full communion continued to decrease, and the Lord's Supper, sign and seal of one's personal communion with Christ, was falling into disuse. In an attempt to revive the sacrament, the Reverend Solomon Stoddard adopted the position that the Lord's Supper was no longer an ordinance for the regenerate but a converting device to be used by the unregenerate.

By degrees these new positions on the covenant and the sacrament spread from the Boston area to every part of New England.[15]

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[15]For further information on these measures see the Spirit of the Pilgrims, II (February, 1829), 65-70. The Spirit of the Pilgrims will hereafter be abbreviated as S of P.

Their acceptance served to increase the number of communicants in the churches but caused a radical drop in the vitality and influence of

the church. Both doctrines had their opponents, but overwhelming public opinion in favor of that brand of religion which was least demanding, would not permit their abandonment. Since this early controversy between the conservatives and the liberals centered largely about the conditions of the moral life and the means of regeneration rather than the doctrine of the Trinity, those who adhered to the newer interpretations were called "Arminians" instead of "Unitarians." But it was out of this so-called Arminian movement that nineteenth-century Unitarianism eventually developed.

Most influential of the eighteenth-century Arminians were Charles Chauncy and Jonathan Mayhew. Contemporaries of Jonathan Edwards in Boston, they directed all of their efforts toward the refutation of orthodox Calvinism as represented by Edwards. They were especially well known for their opposition to the emotionalism of the Great Awakening, but more significant was their opposition to the fundamental doctrines upon which the Awakening was built, namely, the efficacy of means of grace, the ability of man to achieve his own salvation, and the possibility of instantaneous conversion. Chauncy--mild, reserved, and never a great preacher--became Arminianism's representative scholar. He exerted a profound influence on the religious thought of the time through his Seasonable Thoughts, a commentary on the excesses of revivalism, and the Salvation of All Men, a summary of his heterodox attitudes on eschatology, depravity, the Trinity, and other generally accepted doctrines.

If Chauncy was early liberalism's representative scholar, Mayhew was its orator. While a student at Harvard he revolted against

his early predilection for revivalism and chose the cooler way of reason. Temperamentally he was bolder than Chauncy and did not hesitate to say things Chauncy would have put on paper and saved until a more appropriate moment. Early in his career he openly doubted every point of the orthodox creed, scorning predestination, vicarious atonement, imputed guilt, and the efficacy of creeds. To him Christianity was not a scheme of salvation but merely "the act of living virtuously and piously."[16] The combined influence of Chauncy

[16]Allen, p. 179.

goading from within and Mayhew prodding from without did much to promote liberalism in New England. Yet, ironically, these men were not trying to found a new movement and did not realize they were heading toward a major cleavage within Protestantism. Rather, they believed that they alone were defending the truths of the founding fathers, and they insisted, just as strongly as did Edwards and his followers, that their interpretation of Scripture was the correct one.[17]

[17]For further information on Chauncy and Mayhew see the S of P, II (March, 1829), 121-128.

The Revolutionary War also assisted in preparing the way for Unitarianism. During the Revolution and the wars of the preceding quarter century, American officers and enlisted men mingled with French and English soldiers who were familiar with the arguments of deists, latitudinarians, and atheists. They heard their more sophisticated continental fellows deride the Calvinistic God who damned powerless men to hell, and lived in military camps alongside men with vastly different

systems of morality. The French philosophies especially appealed to these "ignorant, unthinking, and vulgar"[18] Americans; Beecher claimed

[18]Timothy Dwight, Travels in New England and New York (New Haven, 1821-22), IV, 374.

that by 1790 every American farm boy had read Tom Paine. Skepticism also prevailed among the upper classes. To Jefferson the doctrines of orthodox Christianity were the "deliria of crazed imaginations," while the aged Franklin refused to puzzle over the divinity of Christ since he expected soon to have an opportunity to know the truth with less trouble.[19]

[19]William Warren Sweet, Religion in Colonial America (New York, 1949), pp. 337-338.

But perhaps the greatest danger to Calvinism came from within. When the arbitrary God of Calvinism seemed antithetical to America's newly acquired freedom, the clergy tried to defend him with trivial but voluminous attempts at logic which few laymen understood. Orthodoxy, as a result, developed into a legalistic system, lacking the fervor necessary to make it a force in everyday life. Those who recognized the danger inherent in this legalistic trend tried to adapt Calvinism to the demands of the new age, with some encouraging immediate rewards, but dangerous implications for the future. For example, the Reverend Timothy Dwight, though he denounced liberalism in 1800, at the same time applauded the "commendable spirit" of American religion toward moderation and humanism--apparently without recognizing that too much moderation would put his party in the liberal camp.[20]

[20]Timothy Dwight, A Discourse on Some Events of the Past Century (New Haven, 1801), p. 13.

While these developments on the American political and religious scenes would seem to have adequately prepared the way for Unitarianism, its admitted advocates were few at the turn of the century. The only place in which Unitarian doctrines were openly proclaimed was King's Chapel in Boston. In 1785 this, the first Episcopal church in New England, became the first Unitarian church in America when its pastor, the Reverend James Freeman, persuaded his people to strike all references to the Trinity out of their order of worship. Elsewhere the clergy, instead of preaching the Unitarian principles which many of them by this time believed, preferred to repeat old doctrines and evade the controversial. Churches retained the name "Calvinist," though often their congregations were utterly indifferent to Calvinistic tenets. Those few who dared question orthodox beliefs were called "liberal," "neutral," "Arminian," even "Arian" or "Socinian," but never "Unitarian."[21]

[21]For additional information on the Unitarian policy of concealment see the S of P, I (October, 1828), 559-560; II (April, 1829), 220-232; III (March, 1830), 113-125.

After 1800, however, several events hastened the spread and open avowal of Unitarianism. First of all, in 1803 the Monthly Anthology began publication to present the Unitarian point of view as a reasonable alternative to orthodoxy. Shortly thereafter, in 1805, the appointment of Henry Ware as Hollis Professor of Divinity at Harvard broke the long

period of neutrality. In 1800, Harvard, though a tolerant spirit of free inquiry prevailed, was not predominantly liberal. The orthodox were unhappy about certain courses, textbooks, and professorial opinions, but did not sense real danger until the deaths, in 1803 and 1804, of the college's professor of divinity and its president. Both were key positions of influence and the party to gain their control would soon control Harvard. After two years of heated discussion as to whether or not Ware met the requirements of Thomas Hollis who, in 1722, had endowed the chair and provided that its holder be "a man of solid learning in Divinity, and of sound or orthodox principles,"[22] the

[22]Conrad Wright, The Beginnings of Unitarianism in America (Boston, 1955), p. 276.

liberals gave the professorship to Ware. Within a year Samuel Webber, also a liberal, became president, and liberals took positions in the chairs of Hebrew, mathematics, and rhetoric--making Harvard the headquarters of intellectual and religious liberalism in America. Two reactionary consequences of this takeover were the establishment of the Panoplist in 1805 and of Andover Seminary in 1808.

Despite the fact that liberals and conservatives were forced to take sides during the Harvard affair, an uneasy truce between the two existed for another ten years, largely due to an unwillingness on the part of the Unitarians to profess their doctrines openly. Such evasion irritated many orthodox who were unable to attack Unitarianism until they had some evidence of its beliefs. That evidence finally appeared when the Rev. Jedediah Morse, editor of the Panoplist and a

particularly zealous opponent of Unitarianism, obtained and published portions of Thomas Belsham's Life of Theophilus Lindsey in 1815. The book had been published in England three years earlier, but only a few carefully concealed copies were exported to America. After months of fruitless searching, Morse obtained a copy of the work, extracted its statement of Unitarianism in America, and published it in pamphlet form.

Belsham's declared aim was a description of the "radical and essential religious changes" which had taken place in the last thirty years in New England. He praised New England liberal ministers as "some of the most valuable characters of the present age; men of enlightened heads, of pious and benevolent hearts," while censuring the orthodox in equally strong terms. He also enumerated certain specific points of the Unitarian creed, such as Christ's subordination to God, the non-existence of the Holy Spirit, and the partial inspiration of the Scriptures. Particularly revealing to the orthodox were letters to Lindsey from American liberals concerning the state of Unitarianism in America and the concealment of its principles which they felt necessary.[23]

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[23]Joseph Haroutunian, Piety versus Moralism (New York, 1932), p. 181.

In a detailed review of the pamphlet Morse hailed its frankness, presented his own conception of "true religion," and approved Belsham's plea for separation of conservatives and liberals. With this review he put the Unitarians on the defensive. They were neither eager to separate, nor to be labeled unorthodox, for they still felt themselves to be in harmony with the essential doctrines of Calvinistic Christianity.

Forced to reply to Morse's censures, they hedged, contradicted themselves, and, in general, did a most unsatisfactory job of defining their beliefs until William Ellery Channing came to the rescue in 1819.

Asked to deliver the ordination sermon of the Reverend Jared Sparks before a largely Unitarian audience, Channing used this opportunity to defend liberal theology and attack the orthodox.[24] His

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[24]Reprinted in Peter G. Mode, Source Book and Bibliographical Guide for American Church History (Menasha, Wisconsin, 1921), pp. 404-407.

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discourse was immediately successful, not as an argument in answer to Calvinistic theologians, but as an "impeachment of orthodoxy at the bar of popular reason and conscience."[25] The Calvinists resented his

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[25]Allen, p. 196.

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accusations as exaggerated and unjust; moreover, his assertions regarding the confusion of thought and lack of reason implicit in such Calvinist doctrines as the Trinity and the Atonement could easily be refuted by Moses Stuart or any fairly capable orthodox theologian. But his positive, aggressive tone gave Unitarianism the impetus it needed to gain esteem in the popular mind. Unitarianism had long since captured the hearts of many ministers, but it was not able to arouse public sentiment in its favor until Channing set it forth as a humanitarian and ethical system rather than as a series of incomprehensible theological arguments.

This sermon, together with the celebrated Dedham Case of the same year (in which the Massachusetts Supreme Court gave over some

eighty historically Calvinistic church societies to Unitarian control) broke Boston wide open.[26] After this, the growth of Unitarianism and

[26]For a summary of the Dedham Case see the S of P. III (October, 1830), 503-511.

the parallel decline of Calvinism accelerated yearly until in 1825, just prior to Beecher's arrival in Boston, the Unitarians gained firm control of more than 125 churches in the vicinity and formed an Association for united effort. The Calvinists, on the other hand, were hard put to find half a dozen churches in the city that still ably expounded orthodox truths. Harriet Beecher Stowe, daughter of Lyman Beecher, wrote of the Boston which her family entered in 1826:

> All the literary men . . . were Unitarian. All the trustees and professors of Harvard College were Unitarian. All the elite of wealth and fashion crowded Unitarian churches. The judges on the bench were Unitarian, giving decisions by which the peculiar features of church organization, so carefully ordained by the Pilgrim fathers, had been nullified. The Church, as consisting, according to their belief, in regenerate people, had been ignored, and all the power had passed into the hand of the congregation. . . . The dominant majority entered at once into possession of churches and church property, leaving the orthodox to go out into school-houses or town halls and build their churches as best they could. Old foundations, established by the Pilgrim fathers, for the perpetuation . . . of their own views in theology, were seized upon and appropriated to the support of opposing views. A fund given for preaching an annual lecture on the Trinity was employed for preaching an annual attack upon it . . .
>
> So bitter and strong had been the reaction of a whole generation against the bands too stringent of their fathers--such the impulse with which they broke from the cords with which their ancestors sought to bind them forever.[27]

[27]Beecher, II, 82-83.

The Spirit of the Pilgrims

Lyman Beecher and Its Origin

Though he was shocked by this widespread Unitarian popularity, Beecher's natural ebullience enabled him to view Boston's situation as a challenge rather than an occasion for despair. He rejoiced that he had been permitted to lift his voice in this, the sacred city of the Pilgrims; and, as if to communicate with their lost spirit, he frequently visited the old burial-ground on Copp's Hill before delivering his sermons. Mrs. Beecher, speaking of their residence in the older section of the city, admitted that she was at first reluctant to settle there but that her husband was immediately enthusiastic about it, for,

> this soil was pressed by the feet of the Pilgrims and watered by their tears, and consecrated by their prayers. Here are their tombs, there are their children who are to be brought back to the fold. . . . Their wanderings and dispersions are lamentable, their captivity long and dark, but God will turn it to hope, and reclaim these churches; this dust and ruin shall live again.[28]

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[28] Ibid., p. 43

The effect of all this was to keep Beecher at a white heat of enthusiasm, and his family was never allowed to forget that the bones of their own church fathers lay before their very door. Beecher's son Charles relates that his father's prayers during their Boston residence often became upheavings of passionate emotion. "'Come, Lord Jesus,' he would say, 'here where the bones of the fathers rest, here where the crown has been torn from thy brow, come and recall thy wandering children.'"[29]

[29]Ibid., p. 83.

Counteracting Beecher's anguish at the dispersion of God's children was the encouragement he felt as he witnessed a reaction against Unitarianism within the city. Beecher had not been in Boston many weeks before his every leisure hour was occupied by people who came from all classes of society, with every imaginable theological question and personal spiritual problem. It was his belief that these people needed nothing more than an opportunity to hear orthodox Christianity, not Calvinism "as caricatured ad terroream" by Unitarian pastors but the "truth divested of obnoxious terms, [preached] mildly and kindly, luminously explained and earnestly applied, calculated to remove misapprehension and prejudice."[30] For this reason he had come

[30]Ibid., I, 400.

to Boston and for this reason he was prepared to fight Unitarianism with every available weapon. He had been given an opportunity to do so briefly only four years earlier, as a revival preacher in the city. And he took pride in the fact that "blow after blow" of his sermons at that time had "hit every nail [of Unitarianism] on the head."[31] But

[31]Ibid., p. 258

the stakes were higher now; he "had studied the prophecies, and knew that the punishment of the anti-Christian powers was just at hand." He had "read also the signs of the times . . . and felt as if the conversion of the world to Christ was near."[32]

[32]Ibid., p. 46

Motivated by this spiritual vision, Beecher led the drive for a local, controversial periodical that could take its place alongside the Christian Spectator as an opponent of liberal thought. The feelings and aspirations with which Beecher co-operated in the establishment of a new magazine, to be called, significantly, the Spirit of the Pilgrims, are vividly expressed in the following lines from a letter to a fellow minister on March 1, 1828:

> The time has come when the Lord Jesus Christ 'expects every man to do his duty,' and when nothing is required to give to error a final discomfiture, and to truth a permanent victory, but a united and simultaneous effort to rescue from perversion the doctrines and institutions of our fathers, the fairest inheritance ever bestowed by Heaven upon men, and holding out to this nation and this world more prospective good than was ever committed to a merely human instrumentality. . . . for a time 'judgment was fallen in the streets, and equity could not enter.' And all the while at the corners of the streets they were sounding the praise of our fathers and their institutions. . . . 'And the Lord saw it, and it displeased him that there was no judgment, and he saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor, therefore, his arm brought salvation; when the enemy came in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord lifted a standard against him.'
>
> Under the influence of truth and the Holy Ghost, a great attention is awakened to the subject of religion. . . . We can now explain and assert our rights before a public that will hear and do us justice . . .
>
> All which is now needed is that the friends of the religion and institutions of our fathers read, and understand, and feel, and act in unison for the defense of those liberties, civil and religious, which had well-nigh been taken away forever. All the great design which God has to answer by planting our fathers here in this nation and world depend, as I believe, on the efforts of this generation to rescue their institutions from perversion, and restore them to their native purity and glory. We have no sectarian views. We love all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and truth.
>
> Consultation has been had as extensively as time and circumstances would allow, and but one sentiment and feeling

> prevails. We all seem to hear the voice from heaven saying, 'Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.' We dare not be disobedient. We only wish our brethren and the churches, and friends of the institutions which are threatened by Unitarians, to respond to the call which we make upon them for their counsels, and prayers, and co-operation. The great point is to obtain readers, and for this we are determined to send out approved agents who can well explain our views and aid our union of efforts.
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> Such a one is the bearer of this letter. We wish to obtain in every town in this commonwealth the reading of the Spirit of the Pilgrims by a considerable number, so that its light may shine and its influence be felt.[33]

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[33] Ibid., II, 96-98.

Projectors

Precisely who the "original projectors" of the Spirit of the Pilgrims were, it is impossible to determine. Nor is there a list of the "Trustees and Conductors" who established and controlled its editorial policies. Beecher was undoubtedly among the foremost until his removal to Cincinnati in 1832, and there seem to have been at least five others--Abiel Holmes, Jeremiah Evarts, Leonard Woods, Moses Stuart, and Ebenezer Porter.[34] Holmes, a minister, scholar, and father of

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[34] The following biographical information on these five men and on the Spirit's editors is taken (unless otherwise noted) from the DAB and from William Sprague, Annals of the American Pulpit (New York, 1857), Vol. II.

Oliver Wendell Holmes, was serving as the pastor of Cambridge's First Church in 1828. In addition to his service to the church as a writer of tracts and sermons, he was known for his American Annals, the first attempt at an orderly, extensive history of America and for his work as a highly productive member and secretary of the Massachusetts Historical

Society.

Evarts, a practicing lawyer in the early 1800's, had been induced to leave law and assume the editorship of the Panoplist in 1810. From that time on he devoted himself entirely to the work of the church, becoming editor of the Panoplist's successor, the Missionary Herald. His articles, on religious, political, civil, and social issues, were distinguished for their power of analysis and critical acumen. He was also nationally known for his investigations of the Cherokee Indian problem and undoubtedly added greatly to the prestige of the Spirit of the Pilgrims as well as to its endeavors. Not so brilliant as Evarts, but of a more conciliatory nature, Leonard Woods was known for his mediatorial work in more than one church controversy and for his active participation in various reformation societies. His contributions to the Spirit of the Pilgrims were consistently thoughtfully prepared and of an instructive nature.

Moses Stuart was generally considered to be the most scholarly and able defender of orthodoxy in the early years of the nineteenth century. As professor of sacred literature at Andover, he wrote the first Hebrew grammar to appear in America and was the first to insist upon the theological importance of the new German scholarship. Altogether he published almost forty books and was the first American theologian to become favorably known abroad. His known contributions to the Spirit are valuable for their systematic and learned demolition of many Unitarian arguments. Ebenezer Porter was president of Andover during the years of the periodical's existence. Theologically he was a very conservative Calvinist, remembered for his defense of the

conservative position against the liberalizing tendencies of Beecher and Taylor in 1831 and 1832. He was also instrumental in founding the American Tract Society and in various education and temperance movements.

A more reliable, but rather ambiguous, contemporary source of information concerning the Spirit's originators, is Beecher's Autobiography which, at two points, cites names in connection with the periodical. In the first, the above letter to the conductors of the Spectator, Beecher mentions that a committee of nine was formed at the meeting of December 17.[35] Though he does not identify the nine members,

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[35]Beecher, II, 96.

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his biographer, immediately after quoting from the letter, lists the names of a group of men whose theological opinions he considers to be of the type expressed in the Spirit of the Pilgrims. Those mentioned are Porter, Woods, and Stuart, plus the Reverends Fitch, Taylor, Tyler, Nettleton, Hewitt, and Harvey. Whether these men or any part of them made up the original committee is not clear. The second listing is found in a letter from Beecher to Taylor on September 23, 1830, as to whether or not the Spirit of the Pilgrims should open its pages to a controversy involving two groups within orthodox Calvinism.[36]

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[36]Ibid., p. 120

Differences of opinion made a conference necessary and Beecher reports to Taylor that, at a meeting in President Porter's study, the matter was discussed by Woods, Pond, Walker, Jackson, Greene, Hitchcock,

Mitchell, Beckwith, Peters, Emerson, Stewart, and Church. As in the previous case, the actual relationship of these men to the periodical is nowhere explicitly stated. But they obviously were connected with its policy and may well have been among its unknown "Trustees and Conductors."

Though neither certain nor complete, these lists are sufficient to indicate that a group of men, led by Beecher and generally representing orthodox Calvinistic theology, was responsible for the establishment and maintenance of the Spirit of the Pilgrims. Insofar as I have been able to trace the given names, they appear to have been, like the five known contributors characterized above, either pastors of churches in Massachusetts, Connecticut, Vermont, and Maine or professors at Andover or Yale. Most were active in revivalism and involved in a variety of reform movements. Their theological systems, so similar in 1828, were to veer sharply in two opposing directions within three or four years, and cause a shift in the periodical's content and aims.

Editors

The first editor of the Spirit of the Pilgrims was the Reverend Enoch Pond who resigned his pulpit at Auburn, Massachusetts to perform this service. His success as a writer of tracts and religious articles was the cause of his receiving an invitation to edit the new periodical. During his lifetime he was to write forty books and contribute more than 200 articles to the Biblical Repertory, Bibliotheca Sacra, Literary and Theological Review, and a dozen other

religious periodicals. Pond had studied theology under the conservative Reverend Nathaniel Emmons and accepted without qualification Emmons' old-school Edwardean doctrines. He was reluctant to accept the editorship of the Spirit of the Pilgrims, for he recognized that it was a highly responsible position, and he was not eager to expose himself to vigorous assaults from "the able defenders of the then new heresy." However, he finally succumbed to pressure from the periodical's projectors who insisted they would have no one else. Reflecting their conviction that Pond alone was qualified to edit the Spirit is the following letter in which the Reverend Benjamin Wisner, a close personal friend of Beecher, reminds Pond that:

> You have been educated by Providence for the place. Your taste is formed for it. Your loyalty to truth is unquestionable. Your self-control is your strong defence. Your quickness to see points which need attention fit you for the work, and you can, unmistakably, do more good in this station than in the one you now occupy, and probably more than in any to which you will [words indistinguishable] called.[37]

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[37]Enoch Pond, The Autobiography of the Rev. Enoch Pond, D.D. with an Introduction by the Rev. Edwin Pond, D.D. (Boston, 1883), pp. 54-60.

In 1832, after five years of service to the magazine, Pond left to become one of two professors at Bangor Theological Seminary, where he remained for fifty years. The reasons for his resignation are not clear, but it is quite possible that as a non-militant exponent of Emmonism, he disapproved of Beecher and Taylor's shift in 1831 and 1832 to a theological perspective which no follower of Emmons could possibly accept--and that he resigned rather than clash with his friends and colleagues.

The identity of Pond's successor and editor in 1833, the last year of the Spirit's existence, is not certain, though it may well have been George B. Cheever who that year, at the age of twenty-six, was to become the pastor of a Congregational church in Salem.[38] Throughout

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[38]Mott, p. 572.

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his life Cheever remained a vigorous and uncompromising enemy of Unitarianism and a radical reformer who fought violently for the temperance cause, defended capital punishment on biblical grounds, opposed the defamation of the Sabbath, and advocated full citizenship for the Negro. Regarded as a brilliant writer, his literary endeavors deal with such varied subjects as literature, travel, biography, theology, and politics. He was especially interested in the history and theology of the Pilgrim fathers. The breadth of Cheever's writings makes it difficult to identify by topic all the articles he might have contributed to the Spirit of the Pilgrims, but the prominence and length of his tirade against Unitarianism, with which the sixth and final volume of the periodical closes, suggests that he may very possibly have been its second editor.

Authorship of Articles

Even more difficult than establishing the originators and conductors of the Spirit of the Pilgrims is the attempt to determine the authorship of its articles, which are largely anonymous, the only exceptions being a few signed series such as those by Porter on revivals and Beecher on infant damnation. Over half of the articles, generally reviews and essays of a general theological nature, are said to have

come from the pen of Pond himself, but many cannot be specifically so identified.[39] Others can be attributed with a degree of certainty to

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[39]Pond, pp. 57-58. Here the Rev. Edwin Pond states that approximately four-fifths of his father's contributions to the S of P were "reviews of religious publications" or "wholly controversial." However, he specifically lists eighteen articles which he knows were written by his father. They are: "Objections to Revivals Considered," "Christian Education," "Five Letters on the Introduction and Progress of Unitarianism in New England," "Rights of Congregational Churches," "Character and Prospects of the Heathen," "Work of the Holy Spirit," "What Constitutes Infidelity?" "Hope of Future Repentance," "System in Religious Charities," "Unitarianism in New England," "Importance of a Correct Interpretation of Scripture," "Errors in the Apostolic Churches," "Wicked Men Do Not Understand the Motives of Good Men," "Uses and Abuses of the Doctrine of God's Purposes," "Introduction of Sin," "Sin Not a Necessary Means of the Greatest Good," "God's Government of the Moral World," and "Selfishness of Depravity."

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one of the known conductors of the periodical or various sympathizers with its causes. A series, for example, on the Cherokee problem in Georgia is almost surely the work of Jeremiah Evarts, well known for his investigations of the Indian crisis in the south. Beyond such tentative identifications it is impossible to go.

There are no reasons given in the periodical for this cloak of anonymity. We can only speculate that the Spirit's conductors were hopeful that anonymity would present the appearance of a united front to the opposition--implying that the views expressed in any one article were not those merely of its author but of the orthodox Calvinists as a body. Furthermore, knowing the Unitarians' predilection for personal abuse, the conductors may also have been attempting to protect their contributors from attack. Some support for these inferences is given by Leonard Woods, whose articles throughout the volumes are conspicuously signed and who prefaces a new series of "Letters to Young Ministers"

with the comment that he has chosen to write over his own name because,

> on general principles, I am satisfied that no writer ought to shift off a direct responsibility by keeping himself concealed; and because I think it must, in all ordinary cases, be of special use to an author to feel, that he is acting openly, and is personally answerable for what he writes.[40]

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[40] S of P, V (February, 1832), 78.

Reasons for Publication

For that general information so necessary to an understanding of this periodical's contents, nothing is of more value than the first article of volume one. There, in accord with established periodical tradition, the projectors presented their reasons for publication, proposed topics, stated their position on important issues of the day, and defined controversial terms.[41] Though the purpose of the Spirit of

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[41] The quotations on pages 37 through 46 are found in the S of P., I (January, 1828), 1-20.

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the Pilgrims was obviously to provide the orthodox with the means of free and candid discussion, further insight into the aspirations of its projectors as they undertook this new venture is found in these, their reasons for publication:

> First:--There has been for several years past, and especially of late, a great increase of attention to religion, in this city and the vicinity. . . . . A spirit of investigation has gone forth--a spirit of free inquiry--a spirit that determines to examine for itself, to hear for itself, to think for itself, and not implicitly to confide in the representations of partisans; . . . This spirit of investigation is a noble spirit, and it should be cherished, and cultivated, and satisfied.
>
> In this connexion it is proper to say, that the inhabitants of Boston, and of many other parts of Massachusetts, are, to an unusual degree, an intellectual people. They are hereditarily

and constitutionally a thinking race of men. . . . What can be plainer, than that additional means of meeting this disposition to investigate should be furnished?

While Unitarians have generally been very slow and reluctant to tell definitely what they themselves believe, . . . they have been very ready to tell what the orthodox believe; and to tell it in such a manner, that their people should be in no danger of forming predilections for orthodoxy. . . . We wish to state our own views of divine truth, in our own manner, and to defend them by our own arguments.

Secondly:--Unitarians have a magazine published here, upon which they spare no labor, and which is constantly employed in promoting their cause. We must have the means of meeting them on this ground; it being impossible to do as much through the medium of works published at a distance, as can be done on the spot. They have found it necessary to make strenuous efforts to keep up the publication and circulation of their magazine; and surely, with our views of truth and duty, we cannot do less than they.

Thirdly:--There have been great accessions of numbers and strength to the body of orthodox Christians in Boston and the vicinity, within a few years past.

These accessions of numbers and strength require additional means of improvement, of instruction, of confirmation, of encouragement. As readers are multiplied, there is more need of writing; as invitations to labor are strongly presented, they are prompt to seize the proper occasions, and the proper topics, for discussion; and as the cause of truth advances, it is plain that new measures and new efforts will be constantly demanded.

Fourthly:--The Unitarian controversy, as it is now conducted in Great Britain, Germany, and the United States, embraces nearly all the great points of fundamental truth and fundamental error. It is, as we firmly believe, one of the last great controversies, which is to afflict the church; and, although we would by no means advise to have it introduced where it is unknown, still there is little doubt that it must, for a time, attract the attention of many individuals in almost every part of our country. The history of this controversy, so far as it has already proceeded, does not furnish any ground of alarm for the future; but, in order to make a proper use of advantages, as well as to correct misrepresentations, it is necessary that the orthodox should have some regular channel of communicating with the public.

Aware of the magnitude and breadth of their intentions, the projectors attempted to forestall criticism with a recital of the great things accomplished by religious periodicals thus far in the nineteenth century, even asserting that whatever has been accomplished in America

"for the promotion of practical godliness, or of harmony and brotherly cooperation or of Christian enterprise" must be due to "the instrumentality of religious magazines, . . . the most convenient and respectable vehicles of thought and communication." Singled out for special praise was the Panoplist, which,

> besides exerting an important influence in the establishment and patronage of Bible, Missionary, Tract and Education Societies; besides furnishing a channel for the communication of thoughts on the most interesting topics for the attention of the religious public; it rendered incalculable service to the cause of truth, by compelling Unitarians to leave the concealment, by which they had so long been gaining influence.

Furthermore,

> If any good is to be derived from . . . Andover; if true religion is to be promoted by the erection of new churches; . . . if the doctrines of the Reformation, . . . are to be approved; if revivals of religion, . . . are to be desired; if the education of ministers, . . . under the fostering care of charitable institutions, is to bring down countless blessings on our land; if the sending of the gospel to the heathen . . . is a good work . . . then must the Panoplist be allowed to have discharged an important service, as it promoted and defended all the measures, which led to these results . . .

The implication was that if the Panoplist could do it, so could the Spirit of the Pilgrims!

Defense of Its Controversial Nature

Anticipating that the explicitly controversial nature of the Spirit of the Pilgrims might be criticized by persons of a more conciliatory nature, the projectors, in this first article, also presented several reasons for their belief that controversy was lawful, expedient, and their "imperious duty." They state, for example, that:

> 1. Men are exceedingly prone to fall into error on religious subjects. This is evident from Scripture and the whole history of mankind. But such error is highly injurious to the souls of men, and should therefore be exposed, that as many guards as possible

> may be set up against it. These guards, when set up in season, do actually accomplish their end.
>
> 2. The example of prophets, apostles, and the Saviour himself, warrants a resort to controversy, whenever the interests of truth require it; and of this exigency a well instructed disciple is to judge, as well as of any other . . .
>
> 3. The inspired writers directed the church, in all future ages, to contend for the faith, to expose lurking heresies, and to silence gainsayers. When Paul said of "many vain talkers and deceivers," that their "mouths must be stopped," he doubtless intended that their errors should be refuted, in so decisive and unanswerable a manner, that nothing more could be said; and a thousand times, since the days of Paul, the abetters of error have been effectually silenced.
>
> 4. The success of the Reformation is an illustrious attestation to the value of religious controversy. What could Luther have done, if he had been forbidden to say anything about error in doctrine, or in practice? How could he have taught the truth without aiming a deadly blow at error?
>
> 5. Controversy has always been the great instrument of recovering individuals and communities from the dominion of error. Ignorance never enlightens itself. Prejudice never corrects itself. Abuses never reform themselves. Depravity never purifies itself. In all these cases, there must be an extraneous and opposing influence, or there can be no remedy . . .
>
> 6. The descendants of the Puritans should be the last men in the world to doubt respecting the efficacy of religious controversy. There is not a single principle of civil liberty or of religious toleration, there is nothing virtuous or honorable among men, for which, in some form or other, and at some time or other, the Puritans were not obliged to contend against dangerous error, as well as against the arm of power and oppression; and, from the first settlement of this country to the present day, with the exception of a few transient slumbers, the children of the Pilgrims have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God, both in the annunciation of truth, and in the exposure and refutation of error.

They then enumerated the most common contemporary objections to religious controversy: that it sours the temper of both writers and readers, that it does no good, that it causes dissension and destroys the peace of families, and that the use of satire and ridicule in controversy exasperates both sides without advancing the discovery of truth. The projectors admit that in each of these arguments there is some truth, but suggest several cautionary measures that will enable them to avoid such dangers. Because violent controversy often produces evil

rather than good, the writers must at all times display a responsible, intelligent attitude toward their arguments. Controversy, moreover, may divide houses, but is worth it if it induces some to accept the truth and others to feel the weight of disturbed consciences. The projectors admit, finally, that grave subjects should generally be discussed in a grave manner. Yet, they note that several biblical characters provide excellent examples of how keen satire may be employed to achieve success--and they reserve for their contributors the right to use it in a similar manner.

The projectors are especially critical, in this first article, of those who object to controversy, not for any of the above reasons but "because they are themselves the abettors of error, and wish to pursue their secret course undetected and unopposed." Such people talk loudly of the evils of controversy while managing their own side of it with the greatest dexterity. This aspect is also discussed at some length in volume two of the Spirit of the Pilgrims. Prompted by several factors--the Christian Examiner's announcement that after 1828 it would cease publication or undergo a radical transformation of a pacific nature, the Christian Register's promise that it in the future would exclude all controversial subjects from its columns, and other indications of a sudden, general distaste for controversy in Unitarian circles--the conducters of the Spirit express the hope that soon all controversy and the need for it will cease. Fearing, however, that the Unitarians either desire to reduce the intensity of the argument in order to reassemble their own somewhat battered journalistic ranks, or, even worse, that they "no longer think religion worth the falling

out for," the Spirit's conductors suggest two alternatives. Either the Unitarians "lay before the community, fairly and in plain terms, their whole system," and in that way speedily and effectually bring about the desired cessation of the contest with orthodox approval, or the orthodox will continue "to contend earnestly for the faith" until there is no longer cause for battle.[42]

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[42] S of P, II (April, 1829), 198-212.

This determination on the part of the orthodox to drive Unitarianism into the open, had an undeniable effect on all contemporary Unitarian publications, particularly the Christian Examiner. Despite the fact that the Examiner had taken the place of the Christian Disciple because the latter was thought to be too smooth and vague for the ensuing struggle, and too inclined to avoid rather than attack controversial issues (Allen finds only six articles in its ten years of existence that threw light on theological matters), it too, during its first few years, was generally content to leave controversy be.[43]

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[43] Allen, p. 192.

What controversial points it did discuss were handled timidly and couched in conciliatory language, its editors even suggesting that a union with the Calvinists would be far preferable to joining the Universalists who, in reality, were doctrinally not far from the Unitarians.

Now, however, due to the intensely polemical nature of the Spirit of the Pilgrims, the Examiner was forced to be aggressive and

positive in tone. Rancorous argument and quick retort never did become so prominent in its pages as in the Panoplist and the Spirit. But a perusal of these volumes which parallel the Spirit of the Pilgrims from 1828 to 1833 readily indicates that during those years, despite its distaste for controversy, the Examiner opened its pages to every theological dispute that was in the air and became most vigorous and severe in its strictures. In fact, in assessing the value of the Spirit of the Pilgrims, it can be said that it, almost alone, was responsible for forcing Unitarianism to defend itself by stating its specific objections to Calvinism and defining its own beliefs--beliefs which are still identified with Unitarianism today.

Pilgrim Heritage and Support of Orthodox Doctrines

A major difficulty in the Unitarian-Calvinist controversy was the fact that both parties claimed to be the legitimate representatives of their Pilgrim fathers. It was no doubt in part an attempt to appeal to the historic sense of the Bostonians as well as to reinforce their own claim to affinity with the Pilgrims, that the projectors of this new periodical selected the Spirit of the Pilgrims as their title. Though insisting that they alone believed as had the Pilgrims, the conductors admitted that their ancestors sometimes had mistaken conceptions of duty, and were frequently ruled by passion and prejudice. But they insisted that the Puritans were, nevertheless, extraordinary men "whose minds were enlightened by an intelligent and prayerful perusal of God's word; whose hearts were habitually under the influence of divine truth; whose passions were, to a very remarkable extent, chastened and subdued; whose aims were great, noble and comprehensive."

To make clear that theirs was not an indiscriminate reverence for antiquity or a blind partiality, the editors noted with admiration that the Pilgrims had a habitual reverence for the Bible, were men of prayer, cultivated the internal religion of the heart, sought above all the prosperity of the church, and had a true knowledge of human nature and its limitations. Furthermore, because the Pilgrims possessed these qualities, they were able, simultaneously, to establish a strong civil government, provide for universal education, and establish provisions for public worship.[44]

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[44]Robert Baird, in his classic mid-nineteenth century account of American religion, dwells at some length on the characteristics of the Pilgrim fathers and comes up with an almost identical list of their strengths and weaknesses. Though himself orthodox and, therefore, inclined toward beliefs similar to those of the Spirit's conductors, his testimony coincides with that of others and leads us to conclude that the Unitarians, no matter how valid their doctrinal standards or interpretations of Scripture, were on shaky ground when asserting affinity with the Pilgrim fathers. See Baird's Religion in America, or, An Account of the Origin, Progress, Relation to the State, and Present Condition of the Evangelical Churches in the United States with Notices of the Unevangelical Denominations (New York, 1856), pp. 119-121.

The terms "orthodox" and "liberal" were used repeatedly by writers in the Spirit of the Pilgrims to differentiate themselves from their opponents. Knowing that these terms were universally despised by the Unitarians who felt they unfairly accentuated the differences between the two groups, the conductors took pains, in this first article, to defend their application of "orthodox" to themselves alone. Among the "doctrines of the Reformation" to which one must adhere if he wishes to be "orthodox," rather than "liberal" or even "infidel," and upon which their magazine has been founded, they include:

1. The natural depravity of man.
2. The moral accountability of man for his own disobedience.
3. A plan of redemption given by God.
4. A belief in the Trinity as revealed by God.
5. The atonement of Christ.
6. Salvation for all who believe.
7. Man's natural aversion to God.
8. Man's need for the Holy Spirit to assist in regeneration and sanctification.
9. God's perfection as reason enough for our admiration and love.
10. Good works the necessary fruit of true faith.
11. Justification by faith.
12. Preservation of saints.
13. Eternal punishment or reward dependent on one's life here on earth.

The implications of these doctrines will be discussed at greater length in a later chapter. Now it is important only to realize that the specific and inclusive nature of this doctrinal statement made it impossible for the liberals to insist upon the similarity of their beliefs to those of the orthodox. Their early reviews of this, the Spirit of the Pilgrim's first issue, evince a reluctance to discuss the thirteen points in other than general terms. But within a year, after the Spirit had repeatedly demonstrated that the differences between the two parties were essential and vital and did not relate merely to circumstantial points, the Unitarian approach to the conflict began to change. Not only did the Unitarians accept the gap as undeniable, but also, following the example of Channing's 1819 sermon, their appeal became ethically rather than theologically oriented.

Contents and Circulation

Concluding this informative first article is a discussion of the several divisions into which it is hoped the periodical's articles will fall. Expressing the desire that the Spirit of the Pilgrims will be not merely controversial but "subservient to the great cause of

religion and morality, and of civil freedom and expansive benevolence," its conductors propose to meet their goal with articles on the following topics:

> The doctrines of the Bible, in the form which is sometimes called didactic theology . . . for the edification and consolation of the pious, and the benefit of all classes of the community.
>
> Revivals of religion, those glorious manifestations of divine power and love . . . presented in their true character. . . . their nature . . . proofs of their genuineness, the best means of promoting them, and their happy results . . .
>
> Reviews with that variety as to subjects, the length of the articles, and the style of writers, as will be likely to make the work an interesting inmate of well educated Christian families . . .
>
> All great plans of Christian benevolence . . . the exertions of the present day, in favor of the universal dissemination of the Bible, the preaching of the Gospel, throughout the world, and the religious education of all classes of people, in every country . . .
>
> Miscellaneous communications on preaching, and other means of public instruction, on the morality of the Gospel, on the pernicious tendency of fashionable amusements, on the odious character . . . of war . . .
>
> Remarks on public measures, which have a bearing on the interests of religion and morality, and thus on the prosperity of the Redeemer's kingdom . . .

Although controversial matters remained the primary concern of the periodical's contributors, attention was also given throughout to these various social, literary, political, and religious topics.

I have been unable to locate any specific information regarding the Spirit of the Pilgrims' financial condition, its cost, or the number of its subscribers. However, the precarious nature of its existence is revealed at the end of volume two when the conductors state that, though pecuniary profit has never once entered the minds of its founders, it is now up to its patrons to decide "whether it shall go heavily and dubiously on, dragging out a feeble . . . existence; or whether it shall proceed with vigor, and confidence, and strength." Noting that their list of subscribers is "rather select than numerous," the conductors ask

that these subscribers solicit further subscriptions from among their congregations and friends.[45]

[45] S of P, II (December, 1829), 687-688.

Despite its frequent financial embarrassments, however, the periodical was always well printed, with good paper, clear type, and attractive bindings at the end of the year--its conductors being of the opinion that a cheaper publication would not enable them to accomplish their goals. In format its issues vary, without strict sequence, from sixty pages in the first volume to fifty-six in the second and third, when its financial condition seems to have been most precarious, and up to sixty-four in the later volumes. The magazine appeared monthly rather than quarterly or weekly, because it was believed that a publication should appear often enough to keep its issues alive in the public mind, should be small enough to make yearly bound volumes a possibility, and yet large enough to admit extended discussions. The bound volumes contain no individual title pages, tables of contents, or advertisements, though it is impossible to determine whether or not these items were part of the original monthly issues.

Although Moses Stuart felt it too popular a periodical for his dissertations on Hebrew philology,[46] the Spirit was a serious publication

[46] S of P, II (August, 1829), 405.

which made few concessions to the popular taste--unless its readers could be diverted by its pious death-bed biographies. Conspicuously absent from its pages are the insignificant bits of correspondence and

intelligence usually included in such publications. All in all, it was a respected periodical, the equal of the Christian Examiner in most respects. Its articles were consistently well-written, and frequent contributions by Beecher in his illimitable, metaphorical style provide sufficient relief from the formal, sometimes a bit pedantic, nature of the rest.

Changes in the New England Religious Scene and Dissolution of the Spirit of the Pilgrims

By 1833, the last year of the Spirit of the Pilgrims' existence, the religious situation in New England was considerably different from that of 1828. The Calvinists were divided among themselves and even the Spirit's major contributors were waging battle against each other. The Andover group of Porter, Woods, Tyler, Stuart, Nettleton (and very likely Pond), who had only a short time before presented a united front with the Yale men in opposition to Unitarianism, now opposed Beecher and Taylor, whose attempts to make Calvinism more appealing to the public and thereby more of a threat to liberalism only caused them to be suspected of heresy. On the other hand, the Unitarian forces found themselves threatened from within by transcendentalism. Though it had been in the background for several years, the transcendental movement caused little concern until Ralph Waldo Emerson in 1832 made an open break with established Unitarianism by resigning as pastor of Boston's Second Church. Within a short time, Channing, Theodore Parker, and others sided with Emerson and the transcendentalists. The beliefs of this new group, like those of the Unitarians, were difficult to define, but their abandonment of reason, denial of scriptural truths, and

rejection of the organized church, horrified such old line Unitarians as Andrews Norton and Henry Ware. These men were restrained from ejecting the transcendentalists from church fellowship only by an awareness of the propaganda it would create for the Calvinists. The later volumes of the Spirit of the Pilgrims reflected these changes in the religious scene. Though the orthodox-liberal controversy continued to the last article of the final volume, the old arguments lost their potency and decreased in prominence and frequency. Most of the contributors' energies in the last two volumes were expended instead on aspects of the Andover-Yale controversy.

Exactly why the Spirit of the Pilgrims ceased publication after six years is impossible to determine. The periodical itself did not even mention that there would be no seventh volume, though Cheever seemed to sense that the end was in sight when he flung his final denunciations at the Unitarians in December of 1833. Perhaps it was unable to recover from the loss of Beecher, who in 1832 accepted the presidency of Lane Theological Seminary in Cincinnati. Perhaps its financial difficulties finally became insurmountable, or the disagreements among its conductors too vehement, to permit their working together any longer. But just as likely is the possibility that there was no longer a specific need for a periodical to fight Unitarianism. In volume one the conductors had expressed their belief that "a periodical publication may have a certain great work to perform; and when that is accomplished, it may peacefully and honorably repose."[47]

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[47] S of P, I (January, 1828), 4.

Disagreement between the Unitarians and the Calvinists would never cease so long as the two groups existed. Their differences were too great for that. But the primary objectives of the Spirit of the Pilgrims had been to present the truth and to force the Unitarians into the open. These things it had done.

Furthermore, disestablishment came to Massachusetts in 1833 and with it an awareness on the part of all religious groups that, from then on, the more aggressive faiths would have the advantage in theological and evangelical matters. The Unitarians, who dreaded disestablishment more than the Calvinists did, knew that in the future they must minimize theological matters and be content to retain their ascendency in the social and political spheres. The Calvinists, also aware of this, sensed that they no longer had a real opponent in Unitarianism. Thus, the Spirit of the Pilgrims could retire from the field with pride in its accomplishments and the assurance that the cause for which it had fought was capable, by virtue of its evangelical appeal, of maintaining its own position in American society.

CHAPTER II

THE DOCTRINAL BATTLE BETWEEN THE CALVINISTS AND UNITARIANS

Introduction

Basic to an understanding of the specific doctrinal controversies of the 1820's and '30's is an awareness of the trends and party re-alighments undergone by the various religious groups prior to and during this period. As we have already seen, the most prominent of the newer religious powers were the Unitarians. Liberal and unorthodox, they were known primarily for their diminished emphasis on the traditional functions of the Trinity, and for their increased emphasis on a virtuous character as the most important condition for acceptance by God.[1]

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[1]George Leon Walker, Some Aspects of the Religious Life of New England (n.p., n.d.), p. 127.

The orthodox group, that seemed to present a united front in opposition to the Unitarian heresy, was in reality composed of two widely divergent elements, Old Calvinists and New Divinity men. The Old Calvinists, who adhered to the orthodox views of their New England fathers, stressed the importance of such doctrinal matters as the sovereignty of God, the inherited depravity of man, and the irresistible nature of grace. However, they also believed that man must avail himself of the "means of grace"--preaching, prayer, Scripture--in order to put himself in a favorable position to obtain the Divine help necessary for salvation. This group was influential chiefly in the northern and western sections of New England, while

the southern and eastern portions were dominated by New Divinity men (or "Consistent Calvinists" as they preferred to call themselves) who traced their lineage from Jonathan Edwards and found their ablest spokesman in Samuel Hopkins. Though they agreed with the Old Calvinists that man is totally depraved and God all powerful, they were sensitive to the humanitarian and libertarian tendencies of the day and preferred to stress God's benevolence. They also made man personally responsible for his sins and demanded total, instantaneous submission--rather than the Old Calvinists' "means of grace"--as the only way to salvation.

All three groups were composed of devout, sincere men, but in aggressiveness, zeal, and intelligence, the men of the New Divinity were superior. Coming largely from Connecticut and Yale College, they were animated by their ability to solve many of the dilemmas and avoid the inconsistencies of the Old Calvinists. It was they who established the Panoplist, the Christian Spectator, and the Spirit of the Pilgrims. But they too were torn by controversy in the late twenties when the majority of their members, reacting against a small, more liberal element led by Lyman Beecher and Nathaniel Taylor, reverted to the more traditional doctrinal emphases of the Old Calvinists.

The Role of Reason in Theology

Largely responsible for the doctrinal differences between these groups were their sharply different positions on the function of reason in religion. The Unitarians repeatedly asserted that every man--with no distinction between elect and non-elect, regenerate or unregenerate--possessed natural powers which enabled him to distinguish between

right and wrong, and allowed him to establish the basic truths of religion for himself. They did not utterly reject scriptural revelation, but relegated it to an inferior position; it was necessary, they said, only because men too often failed to make full use of their rational powers. By so emphasizing rationality, it was inevitable that they would doubt and eventually discard many fundamental Christian doctrines, hitherto supported mainly by metaphysical arguments. First to go were the doctrines of the divinity of Christ and the depravity of man; others followed in rapid succession during the second and third decades of the nineteenth century. In regard to these evangelical "truths," which the more "reasonable" Unitarians put aside, the Christian Examiner said in 1830:

> They are rejected because . . . they are believed to have no foundation in the gospel. . . . We take our Heaven-inspired reason, the gift and light of the Lord, and holding it up before the record of his word, we behold no such doctrines there. . . . On the contrary, we are brought to the conclusion that they are in appearance and character opposed to the . . . reasonableness of the christian scriptures; that they overlead and disfigure the real christian doctrine; . . . that they maintain their place and connexion through the power of custom, association, ignorance and fear; that they have no intrinsic value, and that their separate influence is rather bad than good. . . . We therefore renounce them as not christian, as not rational . . .[2]

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[2]Christian Examiner and General Review, VII (May, 1830), 136. Prior to 1829 this periodical was known as the Christian Examiner and Theological Review (volumes I through V, 1824-1828). Volumes VI through XXXV (two volumes yearly from 1829 through 1843) were known as the Christian Examiner and General Review. In accord with contemporary practice I will hereafter refer to both series as simply the Christian Examiner.

The "Consistent Calvinists," on the other hand, still influenced by the emotional fervor of the Great Awakening and subsequent

revivals, repeatedly stressed the dominance of faith over reason. Their doctrines might be proved to be both reasonable and systematic, but were equally likely to be based upon metaphysical arguments which required acceptance by faith alone. Only with the ascendancy of the New Haven school of theology in the 1820's and '30's did reason again become "our only guide in religion, and in examining the evidences of a revelation, in ascertaining its import, in believing its doctrines."[3]

[3]Nathaniel Taylor, Lectures on the Moral Government of God (New York, 1859), I, 382.

The Spirit of the Pilgrims, controlled as it was by men from both the New Divinity and the New Haven schools, was understandably divided on the proper function of reason in determining theological matters. Generally, however, because of their violent opposition to Unitarian insistence on the reasonable nature of all religious truths, its conductors demanded the acceptance of orthodox doctrines on the basis of tradition and faith, frequently stating their conviction that it was impossible for man to discern, by his own reason, the validity of truths presented by God.[4]

[4]One example is found in the S of P, II (June, 1829), 300.

The Doctrine of Scriptural Inspiration

These irreconcilable positions regarding the role of reason are nowhere made more evident than in the Unitarian-Calvinist controversy over the inspiration of the Scriptures. Belief in God as the original author of the Bible was sufficient to convince the conductors of the

Spirit of the Pilgrims that its truths, in their entirety, could be relied upon. Their faith did not waver when they were unable to reconcile doctrines revealed in Scripture with other things they knew to be true. They were able to accept scriptural paradoxes and contradictions; whereas the Unitarians, who tested each scriptural teaching by the light of reason and found much with which to disagree, were forced to deny the infallibility and inspired nature of the Bible.

Because every doctrinal issue between the orthodox and the liberals ultimately centered on the authority of the Bible or lack of it, the Spirit's conductors considered inspiration to be the fundamental issue between the two groups. Their belief in the primary importance of this issue led them to give over a disproportionate number of pages to its discussion in the periodical's first three volumes. Testifying to the Unitarian concern over the same matter is the fact that the Unitarian Advocate, in its review of the Spirit's first issue, was particularly incensed to observe that the conductors of this new periodical dared assert that Unitarians "deny the divine authority of the sacred Scriptures."[5] Yet the Unitarians did not

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[5]Quoted in the S of P, I (June, 1828), 328.

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become overly concerned with the problem of inspiration until the orthodox, in January of 1830, devoted an entire article to demonstrating that Unitarians were "infidels" because they "do not receive the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testament as a revelation from God--as of binding authority--as the standard of their faith, and the rule of their conduct, . . . but set aside the Bible in whole or

in part, as not of divine origin . . ."[6]

[6] S of P, III (September, 1830), 447-458.

After this, the number of articles on the inspiration of the Scriptures increased noticeably in Unitarian periodicals, especially in the Christian Examiner. The Unitarians, unwilling to admit that they have strayed so far from orthodox tenets as to deny sacred authority, complain that their critic in the Spirit of the Pilgrims takes "brief sentences and disjointed members of sentences, here and there," from their writings and "altogether suppresses the full declaration" they make "of their belief of a supernatural communication to the inspired teachers of our religion."[7] To defend themselves from such criticism,

[7] Christian Examiner, IX (July, 1830), 382.

and to support their claim that a belief in scriptural inspiration is absolutely necessary if one wishes to claim the name of Christian, the orthodox writers cite creeds and confessions of faith from the early Reformation church. Beginning with the First Helvetic Confession (1532) which states that the Scriptures are "the Word of God . . . delivered by the Holy Spirit" and continuing through the Westminster Confession (1647) which speaks of the Bible as being composed of books "which are given by the inspiration of God to be the rule of faith and life," they amass an array of evidence to demonstrate that they are simply following orthodox tradition when they call the Unitarians infidels for their failure to believe in inspiration.[8]

[8] S of P, III (November, 1830), 652.

In response to the Christian Examiner's insistence that Unitarians are not developing a new theory of scriptural authority, but are simply adhering to the beliefs of their fathers, the Spirit quotes Charles Chauncy, the leading Arminian scholar of the previous century, as saying that "the things contained in Scripture were . . . received from God and committed to writing under his immediate, extraordinary influence and guidance." A contributor to the Examiner, as late as 1824, still asserts that "the Bible is regarded by Christians . . . as the sacred book from which is drawn, the system of their religious faith."[9]

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[9]Quoted in S of P, III (December, 1830), 652.

Just when American Unitarianism actually shifted from an orthodox to a heretical view of inspiration, the Spirit of the Pilgrims is unable to determine, for prominent Unitarians throughout the 1820's (largely in fear of orthodox reaction) made carefully worded, but vague, statements like those above, indicating their belief in it. However, by 1829, due to the Spirit's repeated insistence that the Unitarians had departed from the faith of their fathers, such respectable Unitarians as Andrews Norton and Henry Ware issued more forthright statements on the issue and clarified the division between the two groups.

The specific arguments about which this controversy over inspiration centered can be extracted from two exchanges or articles in the Spirit of the Pilgrims and the Christian Examiner. Both were prompted by and based upon recent orthodox publications, the first

being Leonard Woods's Lectures on the Inspiration of the Scriptures, the second, Moses Stuart's Commentary on the Hebrews.[10] Woods was

[10]Woods's Lectures are abbreviated and presented as a series of eight articles in the S of P: I (August, 1828), 402-406; I (September, 1828), 474-480; I (December, 1828), 624-629; II (January, 1829), 9-15; II (February, 1829), 70-80; II (April, 1829), 185-195; II (May, 1829), 237-242; II (June, 1829), 298-304. Stuart is reviewed at length in S of P, II (1829), 15-47 and 80-105. Unless otherwise indicated, all references in this section to Woods and Stuart are from these two series of articles.

eminently suited to present the orthodox argument to the Unitarians, if for no other reason than that he was highly respected by both groups. His Lectures, published in two large volumes following their somewhat condensed appearance in the Spirit, drew praise from the orthodox as "serious . . . clear almost to transparency . . . characterized by simplicity of argument,"[11] and from the Unitarians as filled

[11]The S of P reviews Woods's Lectures in III (July, 1830), 369-376.

with "fine and cautious discrimination," grappling with "the difficulties that most press upon our own minds."[12] Particularly significant is

[12]Christian Examiner, IX (July, 1830), 381.

Woods's concise statement of the orthodox position on biblical inspiration:

> The sacred writers were so guided by the Divine Spirit, that, in every part of their work, they were rendered infallible, and wrote just what God willed they should write; so that the sacred volume entirely answers to the mind of God, and has nothing, either as to matter or form, which he did not see to be suited to the great object of a divine revelation.
>
> Anticipating the arguments with which the Unitarians will

counter this declaration, Woods begins his Lectures by establishing the premises upon which his position is based. He states first that he will rely for evidence in proof of inspiration only "on the information which the writers [of Scripture] themselves have given," adding that his readers should not suppose that they "can exactly understand the manner in which the mind is affected by inspiration of God." Nor should they assume that "the only influence of inspiration upon the writers of Scripture was that it revealed to them new truths." His statement that the reasoning displayed in his articles is not intended for infidels, but for those who already admit the infallibility of the Bible, is difficult to understand--particularly in view of the fact that his next several lectures explicitly rebut the various Unitarian arguments against inspiration.

The Unitarians' most frequently reiterated objection to the doctrine of inspiration is that, because scriptural truths are communicated to man in human language, the Bible must be viewed, not as "the Word of God" but only as containing, within its substance, a record of the word of God--a testimony (as it were) to God's goodness. This argument against God's chosen mode of communication is based on two points. The Unitarians object, first of all, on the basis that anything recorded in human language, must, by its very nature, be a human act. So strong is the Bible's naturalness, so marked are its peculiarities of individual thought, manner, and style, that they are obliged to give up the idea of immediate inspiration in favor of God's mere "general superintendence" over its contents. The Unitarians' second objection is derived from their belief that "human language is

essentially and unavoidably an imperfect mode of communication." Thus, it is sufficiently correct for most purposes, but can never be said to convey thoughts that are infallible or perfect. They conclude that the unavoidable errors of authors, inaccuracies in copying, and poor translations make the Bible a book no more and no less excellent than any other of its kind and age.[13]

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[13]Christian Examiner, XI (July, 1831), 346-350.

With the Unitarians' premise that the Bible is communicated to man in a purely human manner and in a variety of styles, Woods does not disagree. But he considers this fact to be no argument at all against the inspiration of Scripture, for:

> If God gives instruction to men, he must give it in language which men can understand. Should divine instruction be conveyed in language which is superhuman, it would then become necessary, either that it should be translated into human language, or else that the human mind should be enabled to understand it by some supernatural endowments.

The supposition that a divine revelation must exhibit a style of writing essentially different from what is in common use, he finds inconsistent and unconvincing. Moreover, his general religious orientation, unlike that of the Unitarians, leads him to suggest "that God may exercise a perfect superintendency over inspired writers as to the language they shall use, and yet . . . each one of them shall write in his own style, and in all respects according to his own taste." At the same time, he contends that, despite the essentially fallible nature of human language, it is entirely within God's power to perfect this imperfect mode and to secure his writers against all error.

The next target of Woods's attack is the Unitarians' claim that clear and identifiable discrepancies in factual information demonstrate the fallibility of scriptural accounts. As evidence, the Unitarians cite the fact that no harmony of the gospels has yet been able to reconcile the numerous inconsistencies contained in the four narratives of the life of Christ. Lest such discrepancies as Mark's statement that the blind man was cured as he went out of Jericho and Luke's that the cure was effected as the man came into Jericho, tend to increase one's skepticism, the Unitarians suggest that the Scriptures be treated as any other book, and their writers as other historians. Since men, as a rule, expect to find conflicting information in various accounts of any historical event, the failure of the evangelists absolutely to concur in their narratives can then be ascribed to natural causes no different from those encountered by other writers--untrustworthy eyewitness accounts, poor memory, or inaccurate interpretation of events.[14]

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[14]Christian Examiner, XI (July, 1831), 360-362.

Woods commends the Unitarians for attempting to maintain the credibility of scriptural accounts, but deplores their justification of scriptural discrepancies, for it has caused, he feels, the untenable conclusion that the writers of Scripture "were not exempted from human fallibility" and that the Scriptures must "be considered as actually the productions of those whose names they bear" with no more authenticity to be attributed to them than to any other records of ancient or modern times. In reply to such statements, he reminds his

readers, first, that many contradictions are due, not to the author but to translators and transcribers from whom our accounts have been transmitted and, second, that even these minute discrepancies which admittedly occur in the original texts, are invariably so trivial as to be ridiculous. Nor, he adds, do they in any way affect the credibility of the infallibility of the scriptural record or its central themes. Contradictions resulting from individual interpretation of passages and relating to such doctrinal matters as predestination and justification, he simply dismisses as too relative to one's own religious system to be permissible as evidence.

Related to the charge of scriptural discrepancy is the Unitarians' allegation that the use of allegory, metaphor, and poetry by biblical writers renders certain passages irrelevant to the religious life and unsuited to the nature of God who is said to have inspired them. They criticize particularly the poetic account of Job, the allegory of Jonah, and the epigrammatic style of Solomon's Proverbs. Using the same books as evidence, the Spirit finds them to be firm evidence, not of the absence of God from Holy Scriptures, but of his intervention in their writing. Not only, says Woods, is biblical variety essential "because of the [depraved] constitution which God himself has given to the human mind," but it is also witness to the unerring wisdom of God that he has recognized the necessity of employing "that mode of teaching which shall be best adapted to produce the desired effect," be it history, prophecy, allegory, proverb, maxim, or rational argument. He considers Revelation's graphic account of the final judgment, without which man would be incapable of comprehending God's justice,

to be an excellent example of the superior literary judgment of God. He concludes, therefore, that biblical variety is a significant factor in favor of the orthodox position on scriptural inspiration.

Probably the least credible Unitarian argument, yet one frequently maintained by its ablest scholars, is their avowed inability to believe that God would admit into the text of the Bible such vulgarities and impurities, such "instances of puerility, coarseness, and indelicacy in style" as they find there. They express their surprise that the orthodox are not so repulsed as they by the imperfections of King David, the eroticism of the Song of Solomon, the shockingly unchristian disputes between Paul and Barnabas--and they dare Woods to defend the inclusion of such imprecations in Scripture.[15]

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[15] Christian Examiner, VIII (January, 1830), 366.

This he does in his briefest, yet, I believe, most satisfactory reply of all. I quote it in its entirety:

> No one can be so absurd as to suppose that the speeches of uninspired men, recorded in Scripture as historical facts, were themselves originally dictated by the Holy Spirit. The object of the sacred volume requires, that it should record the speeches of wicked men, as well as of good men; and the speeches of good men who were not inspired, as well as of those who were inspired. For example, the Evangelists have recorded the words which Peter used in denying his Lord. But who ever imagined that he was prompted to utter those rash and sinful words by the influence of the Spirit? When we say, the Scriptures are divinely inspired, our meaning, is that the divine Spirit guided the writers.

The last of the Unitarian arguments against inspiration is based upon the contention that the documents of Christianity, "prepared as they were for temporary use and filled as they are seen to be with

subjects of local interest or popular accommodation. . . . do not constitute our religion; but only instruct us in its principles and assure us of [its] foundations." Surely an omnipotent God, if he were responsible for every word and idea in the Bible, would be able to present his truths with greater clarity and less dependence on temporary concerns.[16] Woods, while admitting the temporal nature of

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[16] Christian Examiner, VIII (January, 1830), 19.

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much that the Bible contains, rejects the Unitarian conclusion that its presence indicates the inferior nature of the Scriptures. Because he believes this to be the Unitarians' most plausible argument and that which most frequently occurs to the average man, Woods presents a lengthy argument against it. "Had it been intended for one particular society of men, or for one period of time," he says, "a great difference would undoubtedly have been made in its structure." But the Bible's very glory and value lie in the fact that God designed it to be studied by all ages and all men. He has, accordingly, so made it that many things which are obscure and unintelligible to men of one age, shall be perfectly clear to men in a succeeding age.

How, Woods asks, can anyone expect subjects as vast and complex as those treated in Scripture, to be perfectly clear to man, who is so limited and imperfect. "It is essential to our highest enjoyment in religion," he states, "that we should diligently exert the powers of our minds in the acquisition of religious knowledge." He concludes his remarks on this point with the observation that it is no fault of the Bible, but one of its real perfections that it forces

men at every stage to surmount difficulties, and so to keep up mental effort and spiritual growth to the very end of their lives.

Having abolished, to the satisfaction of the orthodox if no others, the Unitarian arguments against inspiration, Woods's next and more positive task is to prove the fact of inspiration. Though he has incidentally done so to some extent in his discussion of the preceding issues, it is his intention now to ignore such extrinsic proof and to utilize only "the testimony of sacred writers themselves," a rule with which his reviewers in the Examiner agree. But when he passes from this rule to his arguments for the inspiration, first of the Old, and then of the New Testaments, they confess amazement at his interpretation of passages and the conclusions he draws from them.[17]

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[17]Christian Examiner, IX (July, 1830), 382.

His first argument for the inspiration of the Old Testament, is taken primarily from two New Testament passages--II Peter 1,21: "the prophecy came not in old times by the will of man, but holy men spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," and Timothy 3,16: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." In the words of Peter, Woods finds evidence not only for the general inspiration of the Old Testament but also for the validity of its many prophecies, particularly those referring to the coming Messiah. He especially values Paul's advice to Timothy for its "direct affirmation . . . that all the Old Testament Scriptures are divinely inspired." In both these texts and in frequent New Testament references to the

Old Testament as "the Word of God," Woods finds considerable evidence "that there is an essential difference between the Holy Scriptures and all other writings, as to their origin, or the manner in which they were first produced." He notes, moreover, that "Christ and his apostles treat them as possessing an authority entirely different from that of any other writings"; that is, that disobedience to them is disobedience to God.

In respect to the New Testament, Woods is tempted merely to remark that "as the Gospel dispensation is one of much higher perfection and . . . communicated more miraculous endowments . . . than the former [Old Testament] dispensation; it would be but reasonable to presume that [its] writers . . . would have . . . equal divine assistance." However, he discards this presumptuous evidence and proceeds to examine the New Testament's witness to its own validity. The first thing he notes is that Christ commissioned his apostles to act in his stead and confirmed their authority by the performance of miracles; in doing this, He bestowed upon them the ability to be infallible, perfect teachers in both oral and written communication. Woods observes, second, that Christ expressly promised to give his apostles the Holy Spirit to assist them in all their work; consequently, we must believe that the apostles "were constantly moved by the Holy Spirit in the execution of their work, and . . . the Scriptures of the New Testament . . . were divinely inspired." Third, he finds many passages in the New Testament which show that the "writers considered themselves to be under the infallible guidance of the Spirit, and their instructions to be clothed with divine authority." Such

assertions, he is certain, these humble men would not have dared make unless they fully believed themselves to be under supernatural guidance, and their doctrines wholly derived from the authority of God.

The conductors of the Christian Examiner, in their review of Woods's arguments, accept his premises "that Jesus authorised the apostles to teach his religion, that he promised them special aid, and that they considered themselves as teaching the great truths of his religion under a guidance which . . . was infallible." Consequently, they are surprised that on the basis of the same scriptural passages, they come to a conslusion so different from his. Reminding Woods that he originally determined to bring to his argument only the witness of Scripture itself, they now contend that he has gone too far in stating that since the writers of Scripture nowhere limit their own divine influence, neither can he or anyone else do so.[18]

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[18]Christian Examiner, IX (July, 1830), 384-385.

The insistence of the liberals that the act of writing the Bible presupposed certain limitations on its divine nature, and the equally firm conviction of the orthodox that the Bible was totally inspired in its every thought and word, were based ultimately on their divergent attitudes toward reason and faith. The Unitarians, by virtue of their belief in the rational abilities of man and their demand that any doctrine must be absolutely reasonable and without contradiction, could not accept inspiration because "we see no warrant for it in reason, none in the Scriptures themselves, and because it encumbers our faith with difficulties from which . . . it ought to be separated and

freed." On the other hand, the Calvinists, though faced with insoluble obscurities and insurmountable inconsistencies, were content to say, with Woods: "God has declared it . . . we do not fully understand it. But others who shall come . . . will have a better means of knowledge and will . . . know what is very imperfectly known to us."

Also important to the controversy over inspiration was an extensive series of reviews of Moses Stuart's Commentary on the Hebrews. Stuart, professor of sacred literature at Andover and the most able theologian of the orthodox community, undertook in this scholarly work to restore Hebrews to the biblical canon, a position from which the Unitarians had dropped it because it bore witness to several traditionally orthodox doctrines, all of which they refused to accept. The Commentary was highly praised by its reviewer in the Spirit of the Pilgrims for its representation of the New Divinity's theological position, its sound critical principles, and its foundation in the most reliable sources of antiquity. The Unitarians were appalled by its shortcomings.

Stuart began by defending Paul as the author of Hebrews, for, he believed, if one accepts the canonicity of Paul's other New Testament epistles, he must accept the premise that Paul was inspired by the Holy Spirit and that everything he wrote--Hebrews included--was equally inspired. On the basis of internal evidence, the testimony of contemporary Christians, and that of primitive church leaders, Stuart found Paul to be the author of this letter as certainly as he was the author of thirteen additional New Testament epistles. Thus, to the satisfaction of the orthodox, he reestablished Hebrews' claim to inspiration

and a position in the canon.

Professor Andrews Norton, reviewing the Commentary for the Christian Examiner, based his case primarily on the writings of three early church scholars who, unlike the majority of their contemporaries, did not believe Paul to be the author of Hebrews. On the testimony of these three men, Norton found "the evidence . . . wanting, which is required to prove, or to render it probable that Paul was the author of the epistle to the Hebrews." He added that "if it be not his composition, none will contend that it was written by an apostle" or "consider it a canonical book." This, to Norton, was a conclusion of the greatest significance, for the author of this book, whoever he was, "attributes an importance to certain modes of conception peculiar to himself . . . and on these modes of conception has been built a system respecting the character and moral government of God, which has for ages degraded a christian world."

So intent was Norton on disproving the authority of Hebrews that, in the course of his argument, he even declared the entire New Testament to be "not a revelation . . . but a few truths, the knowledge of which . . . might have been preserved in books very different from those we now possess." He concluded, therefore, that the New Testament was subject to all the errors of its age, and that religious truths must henceforth be derived, not from Scripture alone, but from a general survey of all "christian" literature.[19]

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[19]Christian Examiner, VI (July, 1829), 343-347.

The Spirit of the Pilgrims understandably believed Norton's

review to be a revealing indication of the degree to which Unitarianism had strayed from orthodoxy. No longer did Unitarians merely question the inspiration of biblical thought and language, but they now dared exclude a book from the holy canon and even went so far as to deny the superiority of the Bible over other books. However, their indictment of the Unitarian heresy did not in this instance produce an array of articles as had the discussion over Woods's Lectures. In fact, by the end of 1831 all arguments concerning the inspiration of the Scriptures seemed to have worn themselves out, at least insofar as the Spirit of the Pilgrims and the Christian Examiner were concerned.

The Unitarians claimed to feel "unspeakable relief" in their supposed demonstration that the Bible could contain religious truths without being either inspired or infallible. The orthodox, on the other hand, rested their case in the brilliant defenses of Woods and Stuart, but felt it necessary to repeat, from time to time, their earlier caution that men (that is, Unitarians) must not persist in interpreting the Bible according to their own systems or desires, but rather must allow the Almighty to speak for himself with a plainness and simplicity that none can fail to comprehend.[20]

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[20] S of P, IV (February, 1831), 67-75.

The Doctrine of the Trinity

Although the doctrine of scriptural inspiration assumed great importance in theological discussion, of more popular interest and concern was the problem of the Trinity with its many ramifications. This had given the Unitarian sect its name in sixteenth-century Hungary

and was still dividing churches in nineteenth-century America. The conductors of the Spirit of the Pilgrims feel that no subject in the whole compass of theological discussion has suffered more than this from "ignorant flippancy and prejudiced investigation"; yet, they are sure that none requires "more hard study or more rigid impartiality."[21]

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[21] S of P, III (May, 1830), 227-228.

To clarify the orthodox position and avoid misrepresentation by the Unitarians, they frequently state their unqualified belief that,

> there is in the universe one and but one Supreme Being, or Divine Nature; that in this Divine Nature there is a three-fold distinction, which is designated by the personal names Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and that these three have equally, and in common with one another, the perfections of Supreme Divinity, and are the one God revealed to us in the Bible.[22]

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[22] S of P, VI (December, 1833), 667-668.

The Unitarians, annoyed by the orthodox emphasis on the Trinity, repeatedly suggest that a belief in it is not essential to salvation and that it does not warrant the attention it has received. But their actual concern for the doctrine is revealed in the many pages devoted to it in the Christian Examiner, as well as in their assertion that "destruction of it will be destruction of the [Calvinistic] system itself."[23] Their primary argument against the Trinity is simply that

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[23] Christian Examiner, XII (March, 1832), 40.

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as a doctrine it is incredible, its paradoxes and contradictions making it unacceptable to the rational mind. The emphasis in this argument is generally on the mathematical impossibility of three equalling one or

one equalling three. We find, for example, in the Christian Examiner:

> To suppose the Word and Spirit to be two divine persons distinct from the Father, and equal to him in all perfections, appears to be a wrong opinion, grounded upon certain figurative texts of scripture, understood in a literal sense. For to affirm that three persons are equal in all respects, and that these three constitute only one God, is in other words, affirming that God is a being compounded, consisting of, and made up of these three persons. And as no part of any thing or being can be equal to the whole, so none of these three, individually considered, can be equal to God. If each of these three persons be infinite in all perfections, then there must be three infinites. And if God, who is only one, be infinite in all perfections, then there must be three infinites equal only to one infinite.[24]

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[24] Christian Examiner, V (September, 1828), 422.

To the orthodox retort that the Trinity is an incomprehensible mystery and, therefore, beyond the investigation of reason, the Unitarians reply that they can accept the premise that there are mysteries in the Bible, but the doctrine of the Trinity they cannot excuse on that ground, for,

> when we perceive in a proposition an evident contradiction between the ideas which compose it, so that I cannot state them without immediately provoking reasonable and unanswerable opposition, then I say rightly, that it is a contradictory proposition and not a mystery.[25]

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[25] Christian Examiner, XII (March, 1832), 43.

Aware that Calvinists would demand arguments of a more specific nature than this, they attempted several, all of which, to one degree or another, were lacking in substance and credibility. One, which might be called the historical approach, centers about their assertion that the Christian church of the first several centuries A.D. did not accept a doctrine of the Trinity. As evidence, they cite the three

early creeds upon which Calvinism is founded and in them find proof of the changes which, they believe, took place from time to time in regard to this doctrine. The Apostle's Creed, these conductors contend, is "strictly and unequivocally unitarian"--this despite the fact that the creed indicates a belief in "God the Father Almighty . . . Jesus Christ . . . our Lord . . . [and] the Holy Ghost." The Nicene Creed, which was in reality formulated to condemn the doctrines of Arius, a believer in Christ's subordination to God, they call a definite confirmation of Arianism. Not until the "fabrication" of the Athanasian Creed in the fifth century do they consider this "mysterious dogma" of the Trinity with "its paradoxical assertions . . . and . . . its unqualified anathemas" to have been accepted by the church. Thus they prove, to their own satisfaction, that a doctrine of the Trinity did not exist prior to the fourth century and was a corruption of the original, acceptable doctrine of the unity of God.[26]

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[26]Christian Examiner, XII (March, 1832), 40-42.

Undoubtedly the Unitarians' least credible attempt to discard the Trinity was their frequent reference to the prayers of the orthodox, which, they observed, generally begin with an exclusive address to God. According to the Unitarians, if the Calvinists believe in a threefold God, their prayers should be addressed to all three. They, therefore, ask the Trinitarians to justify their utter neglect of the other two persons, for,

> if it is ever proper to address the three persons separately and distinctly, as in the common sense of the word, distinct persons, or intelligent agents; it seems to us, till we are better informed, that it must always be improper not to do it, except

in those cases, where the subject of the address is one . . . [27]

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[27] Christian Examiner, III (May, 1826), 244-245. Similar arguments can be found elsewhere in the periodical.

Whatever validity their criticism of orthodox prayers might have had in its own right, would seem to be totally negated by the weak and faulty reasoning implicit in the above conclusion.

Another approach is exemplified in a tract written by the Reverend Samuel Cooper Thatcher and reviewed in the Spirit of the Pilgrims. Though similar in content to the usual Unitarian arguments against the Trinity, the tract is particularly significant for its methodology and presuppositions. Thatcher's presentation can be summarized as follows: there is, "a priori, a strong presumption against any proposition which apparently interferes with the doctrine of the unity of God"; since the doctrine of the Trinity is "apparently inconsistent with the unity of God," there is a very high probability that the doctrine of the Trinity "will not be found" in the Scriptures, and we must "conclude it to be false till it is fully and clearly demonstrated to be true." As an adjunct of this central argument Thatcher assumes that God's unity is so undeniably evident in the order of nature that we cannot possibly declare him to be triune. This argument from nature might have provided Thatcher with some suitable material for an argument. But his stated determination to admit only evidence favoring his position, plus the strong presumption against the Trinity which he insists one must presuppose in any discussion of it, makes his argument basically unacceptable.[28]

[28]S of P, VI (November, 1833), 651-661. Thatcher is quoted frequently in the Spirit's review of his tract. Subsequent information in this section on the Spirit's opinion of the tract is taken from the same article.

The best defense of the Unitarian position is that published by Professor Andrews Norton in 1833, and reviewed in the Spirit of the Pilgrims for that year.[29] In an earlier work Norton had simply stated,

[29]Norton's work, titled A Statement of Reasons for not Believing the Doctrine of Trinitarians respecting the Nature of God and the Person of Christ, is summarized and reviewed in the S of P, VI (December, 1833), 686-702.

with regard to the Trinity, that "three persons . . . are three Gods. A person is a being. . . . The doctrine of the trinity, then affirms that there are three Gods." In 1833, however, aware that a stronger argument was needed, he determined to base his case on Scripture--as his opponents insisted one must do. Basic to Norton's discussion is his belief that because the Scriptures represent Christ as in some sense distinct from and inferior to God, he is therefore neither divine nor part of a trinity. He also asks his readers to determine for themselves whether the history related by the evangelists is not the history of a man, and he interprets his key text (John 1:1--"The Word was with God") to mean that Christ could not be God if he was with God.

Norton admits that some passages of Scripture "will bear a Trinitarian sense" but refuses to accept such a possibility--even when the meaning is quite obvious. After ingeniously explaining away all such passages, Norton declares that the apostles were ignorant,

uninspired writers and refuses to accept their testimony as truth. His attempt to improve the Unitarian argument against the Trinity is commendable. But his belief that "religion must be taken out of the hands of divines, and its exposition and defence must become the study of philosophers," plus his inability to accept the inspiration of Scripture, makes his position as unacceptable to the orthodox as those presented by others.

The conductors of the Spirit of the Pilgrims were apparently unconcerned about the Unitarian argument based on the prayers of the orthodox, for they did little more than take note that such an argument had been raised. Their more thorough retaliation they reserved for the historical approach and for the works of Thatcher and Norton. The conductors state at one point that because they believe scriptural revelation to be sufficient evidence for the Trinity, they do not consider a historical argument in its favor to be essential. However, the Unitarians' frequent citation of history forces them to develop a historical defense of their own.[30] They admit at the outset that any

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[30] S of P, III (June, 1830), 287-293 and (July, 1830), 344-354.

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attempt to find evidence either for or against the Trinity in the writings of the first few centuries after Christ does have its limitations--both because the philosophical and theological speculations of the time were imperfect and because those who wrote during this period were not inspired and so could not be relied upon to speak the unqualified truth.

Despite these difficulties, however, the orthodox unequivocally

reject the Unitarians' creedal "demonstration" that believers in the first several centuries had no conception of a triune God. In support of their conviction, the conductors quote at length from the Apostolic Fathers and from early Christian leaders who succeeded them. Among those cited as authorities on the beliefs of both the Apostolic and Post-Apostolic church are Justin Martyr, Tatian, Athenagoras, Origen, and Irenaeus--all of whom demonstrate to the satisfaction of the orthodox that the early Christian church took for granted God's existence in three persons. The conductors conclude their series of quotations with the prayer of Polycarp who, just previous to his martyrdom in 147 A.D., prayed: "I praise thee, I bless thee, I glorify thee, by the eternal and heavenly High Priest, Jesus Christ, thy beloved Son, with whom, to thee and the Holy Ghost, be glory both now and to all succeeding ages. Amen."

The ambiguity of some of these ancient quotations makes it difficult to determine whether the Spirit's conductors were correctly interpreting all that they read or whether they were prompted, in their desire to refute the Unitarian argument, to claim support not rightfully theirs. However, they cannot be accused, as were the Unitarians, of deliberately distorting and citing in their own favor, evidence which should have been to their detriment.

Angered by Thatcher's belief that one must approach the study of the Trinity with the presumption that all evidence is against its existence, the conductors of the Spirit of the Pilgrims are tempted to dismiss his entire tract on the ground that people who come to Scripture with bias do not warrant an audience and are not to be relied upon in

any argument concerning the Trinity. This feeling that Thatcher has not played fair recurs from time to time throughout the review, but his critics are able to suppress it long enough to make some valid comments on the specifics of his argument.

They assure Thatcher, first, that they and all adherents to the Calvinistic faith do most assuredly believe in the unity of God. But they make it clear that, to them, a belief in God's unity is not inconsistent with a belief in the Trinity. They even state that "the doctrine of the Trinity, instead of being inconsistent, really or apparently, with the Divine Unity, necessarily includes it," adding that, "it is much a part of the doctrine of the Trinity that God is in some sense one, as that he is in some other sense three." Thatcher's assertion that this unity is clearly portrayed in nature, they deny and ask the Unitarians to explain why--if this is the case--most men who have been "left to the mere light of nature, have been the worshippers of many gods," rather than of one God. Recognizing this to be true, the orthodox prefer to ignore reason and nature, relying instead on the surer authority of revelation. The conductors conclude their diatribe against Thatcher with the comment that they have never before been part of an argument in which "prejudice has been inculcated as necessary in the search after truth," and with the repetition of their conviction that men must approach the Bible with unbiased minds and a willingness to accept all evidence, on whatever side it may fall.

The review of Norton's work in the next month's issue of the Spirit of the Pilgrims, is undertaken in a more gracious, less defensive, spirit than the above. But the reviewer's opinion of Norton's argument

is nowhere in question. Though he praises Norton, a highly respected Harvard professor, for his "refined and cultivated mind" and for his frank discussion of the Trinity, the reviewer is unable to accept either Norton's premises or conclusions, both of which "involve great inconsistencies and pernicious errors." He finds it painful that Norton must deny inspiration and pretend to be more wise than the apostles whose supposed errors he is all too eager to expose.

The main thrust of this reviewer's argument is directed at Norton's admission that certain passages can, but definitely do not, bear a Trinitarian sense, and he accuses Norton, on this basis, of being equally as prejudiced and unreliable as other Unitarian writers. However, due to Norton's refusal to accept inspiration, the reviewer thinks "it idle to go into a discussion with him respecting the meaning of particular passages . . . for when the meaning of a passage is ascertained and settled to his satisfaction, still it is of no authority with him."

Although this reviewer's various arguments are important to any study of the Trinitarian controversy, the real strength of his article lies in his recognition and admission that the orthodox, with their reliance on faith and revelation, will never be able to satisfy the Unitarians with a statement of <u>how</u> the Divine Being can be both three and one at the same time. He realizes, moreover, that the Calvinists will never be content with a "reasonable" demonstration of their supposed inconsistencies by the Unitarians. The essence of this position is contained in the following statement:

> [Trinitarians] believe . . . that the Divine Being is in some sense one, and in some <u>other</u> sense three; and in this propo-

> sition there is no contradiction. . . . For the same reason that Trinitarians cannot explain the <u>different senses</u> in which God may be said to be one and three, it is impossible for Anti-trinitarians to <u>prove</u> that he cannot, in <u>different senses</u> be one and three . . . [we] rest satisfied with what God has revealed.

In conclusion, therefore, the reviewer relies neither on scriptural evidence for his position nor on any attempted refutation of the Unitarian position, but rather on an appeal to every man, Calvinist and Unitarian, to search his own heart and see if he does not feel that he needs all three persons of the Trinity, with their various functions, to make his Christian life full and complete.

Several years later, following Taylor and Beecher's break with the New Divinity, Taylor swung to the other extreme and attempted to give the doctrine of the Trinity a more rational foundation. He hoped, by meeting the Unitarians on their own premises in this way, to help the orthodox doctrine regain some of the ground which it was steadily losing to the liberal conception of the unity of God. He argues, for example, that "there is <u>no presumption</u> either from reason or revelation that God is not a being in a more extended sense than the usual meaning of the word." For this reason he insists that,

> there <u>is</u> a presumption for the truth of the doctrine, that <u>God is one being in three persons</u>. The facts from which this presumption is supposed to arise, may be summarily comprised in these:--that God is administering a perfect Moral government over men under an economy of grace, with the design to reform, to pardon and reward sinful beings; that the accomplishment of this design renders necessary the two great provisions of an adequate Atonement for sin and an adequate reclaiming influence from its power; and that the mode of divine subsistence in the Trinity furnishes the most, if not the only satisfactory explanation of the adequacy of these provisions which by the human mind is conceivable. With these things in view, it is now maintained that a presumption arises that the doctrine of the Trinity is true.[31]

[31]Nathaniel Taylor, Essays, Lectures, etc. upon Select Topics in Revealed Theology (New York, 1859), pp. 64 and 61.

From the rational point of view, however, Taylor's presentation was dangerously weak, still based on premises and presuppositions to which no liberal could consent. It satisfied no one but Taylor and his Yale compatriots and, ironically, led to further orthodox concessions on the Trinity instead of to greater Unitarian acceptance of the Calvinistic position. By the mid-thirties the controversy had in no way been solved, nor did the majority of its protagonists seem to realize that so long as they continued to operate from basically irreconcilable premises it would not be solved. Thus, the argument over the Trinity was destined to continue indefinitely. We turn next to a consideration of the three persons of the Trinity and to the controversies over their persons and functions, matters with which the conductors and contributors to the Spirit of the Pilgrims were more specifically concerned.

The Doctrine of God the Father

The Unitarian-Calvinist controversy regarding God dealt not with his rightful position in the Trinity or with his function, as did those concerning the Son and the Holy Spirit, but with his nature as creator of the universe and judge of all men. Subtle changes with respect to God's role and motives had been evolving gradually since the Reformation, so that the God of nineteenth-century New England was no longer identical to the God of Martin Luther, John Calvin, or Jonathan Edwards. Even the orthodox projectors of the Spirit of the Pilgrims

viewed him differently from their predecessors on the Panoplist, while the conductors of the Christian Examiner would have been hard put if asked to side with the Monthly Anthology in any discussion of his nature. These changes in both the Unitarian and Calvinist parties, though quite dissimilar in their motivation, progress, and culmination, can, nevertheless, be attributed to simultaneous developments in both the orthodox and liberal thought of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

The people of colonial America, ancestors of the later Unitarians as well as of the Calvinists, felt themselves to be under the absolute, incomprehensible power of a sovereign God who was to be neither questioned nor understood but simply adored. They believed he was the sum of all perfections--goodness, justice, power, mercy, righteousness, and knowledge--and never wondered how such attributes could stand side by side in one being. They clung with a simple faith to the teachings of the scholastics who determined their doctrines, and they were satisfied with the traditional, yet indefinite, definition of God as "incomprehensible, first, and absolute."

But the clergy who served the less pious descendents of these first settlers were forced to attempt a delineation of God which would make him more predictable, less mysterious, and more acceptable to their increasingly rational parishioners. Their efforts during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, while clarifying the biblical nature of God, served largely to fill in the gaps and chinks of the earlier orthodox doctrine and, consequently, caused few noticeable changes in the conception of the Father as all-glorious and

all-powerful.[32] But with Jonathan Edwards and his development of the

[32]Perry Miller, Errand into the Wilderness (Cambridge, 1956), p. 52.

theory of "moral virtue" began a trend that would not halt until it culminated a hundred years later in the Unitarian-Calvinist controversy so prominent in the Spirit of the Pilgrims.[33]

[33]Unless otherwise specified, the next three paragraphs are from Haroutunian, pp. 73-96.

Edwards, throughout his lifetime a defender of God as the righteous and exalted Judge of mankind, had no intentions of altering the traditional delineation of God. However, his conception of "true virtue," as opposed to one's selfish interests, led him to state that the genuine Christian must have a benevolent regard not for the few selected objects of his affection, but for "being in general"--that is, for all existence. The oft-repeated corollary of this proposition was that a truly virtuous person would still love and glorify God supremely. But it was not long before Edwards' benevolent propensity to "being in general," and the superior disposition to love God became, in effect, the same thing, and resulted in a lessening of God's sovereign majesty.

Attempts by Edwards' successors to interpret the meaning of "true virtue" were not entirely successful, so far as the glory of God was concerned. Holiness was soon taken to be identical with moral virtue, God's righteousness could no longer be distinguished from his benevolence, and love to God became only one of the many affections

which made a virtuous person. Edward Bellamy, spokesman for the Edwardeans in the late eighteenth century, hoped to rectify the situation by reconciling God's glory and his benevolence:

> When God is seen in his infinite dignity, greatness, glory and excellency, as the most high God, supreme Lord, sovereign Governor of the whole world. . . . this enkindles a holy benevolence, the natural language of which is "let God be glorified" . . . it appears infinitely fit and right . . . that . . . the sun, moon, stars, earth, air, sea; birds, beasts, fishes, mountains, and hills and all things should in this way display the divine perfection.[34]

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[34] Works, Vol. I: True Religion Delineated (n.p., n.d.), pp. 20-21.

However, that he regarded the eternal sovereign with the same friendly affection that he would extend to a casual acquaintance seemed damnable to Calvinistic theologians, and statements such as Bellamy's led, almost immediately, to the notion that God as Creator must be secondary to God the Father.

Another factor which contributed to the changing conception of the post-Edwardean God was the emergence of incipient legalism in Calvinistic theology. Calvinism had always stressed obedience to divine law, but its equivalent stress on the heart and soul had thus far saved it from authoritarianism. However, with Samuel Hopkins' development of the "eternal rule [italics mine] of righteousness which is essential to the being and glory of God's moral government . . . declaring the duty [italics mine] of rational creatures as moral agents," the glory of God became more difficult to see. Many Calvinists tried to temper this legalism by asserting that obedience to God was the best means of witnessing to his glory; but they failed, and New England became more than ever blind to God's glory.

The Arminians of the eighteenth century contemplated even more drastic changes in their concept of the nature of God. Each modification of the basic tenets of Christian doctrine brought with it a concomitant lessening of God's power and glory. Thus, when the liberals denied election, they said God could not be so cruel and arbitrary; when they rejected original sin, they argued that he would never damn innocent people; when they asserted man's free moral agency, they said God would not create a being who was in every respect under his control; when they made regeneration a matter of striving and gradual development, they doubted God's ability to bend men to his will.[35] The result was an

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[35]Wright, p. 161.

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emphasis on God as a universal father who would be content if men only followed his rules, and who would, in return for obedience, reward men with happiness. In emphasizing obedience, the liberals were not far from Calvinistic legalism. But with their attempt to define God's end in creation as not his own glory but man's happiness, they went beyond orthodox Christian humanitarianism, eventually resting their case in Channing's glorification of man as an intellectually and morally perfectable being, allied with the angels and only slightly lower than God.

By the late 1820's, when the Spirit of the Pilgrims was violently denouncing the Unitarians' doctrinal beliefs, the nature of God was not so prominent a theological issue as it had been earlier. This was due, in part, to the increasing attention being given to the doctrine of Christ, and also to the fact that orthodox as well as

Unitarian believers now preferred to stress God's benevolence over his righteousness. However, essential differences between the two groups remained to prompt frequent comment, if not argument, in their respective periodicals. Unitarians continued to emphasize the paternal character of God as the infinitely kind parent of all his creatures, a sort of "grandpa in the sky" whose chief object was to bestow gifts and blessings upon his children. For example, a tract published by the American Unitarian Association and reviewed in the Spirit of the Pilgrims said, in reference to God's ultimate goal: "He adapts every circumstance to the exact state of mind of each individual, at all times; and in such a manner as on the whole to be productive of the greatest benefit to each one of his creatures."[36]

[36]Quoted in S of P, I (April, 1828), 181.

Attempts to restore God's majesty and to proclaim as his end in creation his own glorification, the Unitarians rejected as too selfish a motive to be attributed to a God as infinitely loving as theirs. Closely related to this was Bernard Whitman's assertion that God is "perfectly unchangeable in his nature and can never feel anger or wrath in his bosom."[37] The Unitarians also repeatedly accused the

[37]A Discourse on Regeneration (Boston, 1828). The pamphlet is reviewed in the S of P, I (August, 1828), 409-427.

orthodox of robbing God "of his noblest attributes of goodness and compassion" and reinterpreted his Calvinistic righteousness as "injustice . . . capriciousness . . . and cruelty," calculated to awaken fear rather than love in the hearts of men.[38] One Unitarian

[38]Christian Examiner, III (March, 1826), 152.

author, having noticed that, to the orthodox, God's goodness is not incompatible with his righteousness, goes so far as to admit that the "goodness of God [may be] something diverse, in kind as well as degree, from the same quality in man," and may, therefore, enable him to perform "without impeachment of his character . . . what to us seems palpable cruelty and injustice." But this author's determination to rely on the "fixed principles of the intellect" forces him to deny all scriptural revelation concerning God's righteousness, lest it "falsify all the conclusions of reason, our primary guide amid the dark and intricate windings of our earthly course."[39]

[39]Christian Examiner, V (September, 1828), 424.

One article in the Christian Examiner is of particular significance for its effort to discard whatever scriptural evidence characterizes God as sovereign, omnipotent, and, above all, capable of anger and retaliation. Recognizing that this characterization is almost exclusively Old Testament, the author of the article warns his readers against an injudicious equating of the Old Testament with the New. Not daring to reject it altogether, he speaks of the "plaintive music of its hymns" and "the grandeur of its inspirations." However, he reminds his readers that they must not try to find the true nature of God delineated there, for its pages portray "not so much God's mercy as his exalted character." This characterization of God as powerful and majestic, the writer attributes to God's own knowledge of the Hebrew

people who, he says, resembled children in their intellectual simplicity and who had to be "intimidated and overawed" by a "terrible and resistless King," rather than tenderly appealed to by a merciful Father. To counteract this view of God, he asks his Unitarian readers to search the New Testament for examples of God's love and to consider them as more recent evidence of God's way of encouraging men to progress in the religious life by rejecting what had gone before.[40]

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[40] Christian Examiner, IX (September, 1830), 58-70.

Voicing orthodox concern for the preservation of a God who, though admittedly benevolent, must still be viewed with awe and submission, various writers in the Spirit of the Pilgrims express their disapproval of the humanistic God of Unitarianism. After denying the liberal assertion that God's ultimate goal in the creation and government of the world is the happiness of each individual, one writer reasserts the old Calvinistic doctrine that "the grand object of God's government is, as it ought to be, to glorify himself," and quotes several passages of Scripture to support this belief. This, he adds, is not to minimize God's goodness, for in glorifying himself, he will undoubtedly promote the greatest general good. But the greatest "general good" and the working out of God's plan for his creation may not appear to us to be the greatest possible good for each individual:

> He may promote the greatest general good, and glorify himself in the highest degree, while he makes devils and incorrigibly wicked men, the monuments of his eternal displeasure. . . . he may "shew his wrath, and make his power known, in the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction," while he "makes known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy which he has afore prepared unto glory."

The author concludes by warning Unitarians that it is one thing to love and submit to a being whom one fancies is chiefly concerned for him, but quite another thing to love and submit to Jehovah who overrules all things for his own glory and disposes of individuals according to his pleasure.[41]

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[41] S of P, I (April, 1828), 183.

Forced to attempt a reasonable demonstration of God's superior glory and majesty--both attributes which had, in the past, been accepted on faith--the Calvinists generally referred to the infinite perfection of God's works, to the purity and preservation of his Church, and to the perfection of his eternal decrees.[42] Each of these arguments is

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[42] S of P, IV (October, 1831), 517-528.

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set forth in the Spirit of the Pilgrims for October, 1831. The anonymous author of this article believes that the display of order and coherence in creation, though substantial evidence for God's omnipotence, is too familiar to need explication. As for the purity and preservation of the Church, he merely reminds his readers that no one but "a God glorious in holiness . . . and full of might" could develop an institution which has existed for centuries in the midst of troubles within and without, all the while remaining pure and strong. The best demonstration of the glory of God, this writer suggests, is contained in the revealed plan of divine purposes, "a plan [for God's creation] needing no alteration or amendment, the accomplishment of which has been carried forward this far with an unfaltering hand, and can never fail." In the

knowledge of such a doctrine, he is unable to understand how any intelligent creature can fail to see that "God is never defeated or disappointed, surprised or grieved--that he is bringing light out of darkness and good out of evil, and sees all things infallibly taking place, according to the counsels of his eternal will."

This Calvinistic appeal to the perfection of God's works and decrees was adequate so long as its proponents limited themselves to such things as the beauty of external nature, and to God's ultimate intention of achieving the greatest general good for his universe. But as an argument to convince the Unitarians of God's glory it was dangerously weak, for they, in turn, needed only to point to the imperfections of men, of nature, and of the church--to the rottenness which so obviously permeated everything--and ask the Calvinists how it was that an all-powerful God did not or could not prevent such things. Though the Spirit of the Pilgrims does not record it, Channing, Ware, and other Unitarian spokesmen were to do exactly that throughout the thirties.

A most appropriate summary of the Calvinistic doctrine of God and of the general orthodox attitude toward it can be found in a sermon by the Reverend Edward Payson, titled "Recollections of God Painful to the Wicked" and reviewed in the Spirit of the Pilgrims. Implicit in this sermon and pertinent to our entire discussion of the conservative-liberal controversy, is an awareness of what the Calvinists considered to be a fundamental difference between themselves and the Unitarians--the fact that the Unitarians preferred doctrines that soothed and encouraged, to the harsher ones presented in Scripture. It is

painful, says Payson, for us to think of God's holiness, for if he is holy, he must hate our sins and be angry with us; it is painful to think of his justice, for this makes it necessary that he should punish us for our misdeeds; it is painful to think of his power, for this enables him to restrain or destroy as he pleases; it is painful to think of his sovereignty, for sinners hate to see themselves in the hands of an angry God. But, he concludes, no matter how painful, it is necessary to think of God in all these ways, for he has so represented himself in Scripture that man cannot ignore his righteousness any more than he can his benevolence and mercy.[43]

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[43] S of P, I (October, 1828), 545-551.

From such comments as these in the Spirit of the Pilgrims and the Christian Examiner, it is obvious that, though the Calvinists and the Unitarians seemed to travel the same road toward benevolence, they arrived at quite different destinations. Calvinists of the twenties and thirties were content to add to their well-established conception of God's righteousness a new theory of benevolence that enabled them to love God as well as fear him, and that gave them a stronger hope for happiness here and in eternity. The Unitarians, on the other hand, concerned as they were with social virtues and human happiness, did not stop until they had utterly suppressed both God's glory and righteousness, and raised man to a new position of power and dignity never before attained in the Christian world.

The Doctrine of Christ the Son

His Nature

According to a writer in the Spirit of the Pilgrims, the whole doctrine of the Trinity is nothing more than the complete unfolding of the doctrine of Christ, which, in turn, is the foundation of the whole Christian system.[44] It is undoubtedly for this reason

[44] S of P, III (May, 1830), 230.

that a far greater number of its pages are devoted to the current twofold controversy over the person and work of Christ rather than to those concerning the Father and the Holy Spirit. This controversy was the result of two attractive but unorthodox attitudes toward the nature of Christ which came from Europe in the seventeenth century and gained increasing force in eighteenth-century New England.

The most common of the two was Arianism, a term loosely applied to the doctrine that Christ is inferior to God, yet superior to man, having been created before the beginning of the world and destined for a special work on earth. Because he is less than God, supreme honor is not to be paid him, and whatever honor man may incidentally give him must be understood as referring ultimately to the glory of God. The other, which claimed somewhat fewer adherents, was Socinianism, a highly heretical doctrine whose supporters generally believed Christ to be a mere man, though one created wholly perfect by God and endowed with a superior revelation of his will.[45] A more

[45] Wright, pp. 201-202.

extreme or "lower" form of the same doctrine, said Dr. Joseph Priestley, was a belief in Christ as "the son of Joseph and Mary, and naturally as fallible and peccable as Moses, or any other prophet."[46] Though

[46] S of P, II (December, 1829), 643.

Socinianism took root more slowly than Arianism and remained less widespread, it appealed greatly to the rationalists of the late eighteenth century because it could be stated clearly and unequivocally and avoided the unstable Arian compromise of Christ as neither God nor man.

The Arminians, who as precursors of the nineteenth-century Unitarians evoke our particular interest, were attracted almost without exception to Arianism. However, despite a statement by the Reverend A. Croswell to the effect that "the divinity of Christ is now [1767] an antiquated doctrine, very unfashionable and unmodish,[47] Arianism

[47] S of P, I (December, 1828), 631.

actually took hold slowly, first on the ministers of Boston, then on its laity, and finally on the people of the surrounding area. In fact, a writer for the Spirit of the Pilgrims, after amassing quotations from late eighteenth-century clerics, concludes that Chauncy and Mayhew, the two most liberal ministers of Boston, were the only ones during this period who dared even suggest that Christ might not be divine. Chauncy's preferred method was to refer to Christ as "the Son of God," thereby emphasizing his subordination to the Father. He frequently protested the use of "God the Son" as inaccurate and unscriptural, and believed that Christ, after restoring all the souls in hell to God's

favor, would give up his kingdom to the Father who would reign alone forever. Technically Chauncy could be called a high Arian--one who believed in Christ as an object of worship, the condition of salvation, and the means of man's acceptance by God, but not as God himself. Both Chauncy and Mayhew, when cornered by those suspecting them of heresy, retreated to biblical language and refused to be more explicit.[48]

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[48]Williston Walker, Ten New England Leaders (New York, 1901), p. 308.

However, as the orthodox, reacting against the attraction of Unitarians to these more liberal doctrines, began to place greater stress on their own conception of Christ's nature, the liberals were forced to speak out. They felt constrained to do everything within their power to demonstrate that they were still Christians; that is, that they still believed in Christ as revealed in Scripture. As noted in chapter one, American liberals, both Arminian and Unitarian, had always reacted strongly to even the faintest suggestion that they were no longer "within the fold"; and this feeling, ironically, grew in intensity as the magnitude of their heresy increased. Recognizing, therefore, that a correct interpretation of the nature of Christ was central to any Christian system of theology, they took great pains to demonstrate that their position was both reasonable and revealed, even though it might differ from that of the orthodox. Their explanation, and the orthodox reaction to it, reached a climax in the pages of the Christian Examiner and the Spirit of the Pilgrims during the late 1820's, largely due to an almost fanatical determination on the part

of the orthodox to bring the Unitarian "heresy" on this point into the open that it might better be refuted.

The openness with which the Unitarians had come to speak of Christ's nature by the time of the Spirit of the Pilgrims is nowhere better revealed than by a Unitarian reviewer of Lyman Beecher's sermons who asserted that,

> Trinitarians and Calvinists [can never] pretend to pay even a decent respect to the plain and obvious meaning of the sacred writings, while they continue to make so much use of the hypothesis of two natures in Christ; an hypothesis wholly and entirely conjectural, not having a syllable of direct support from scripture . . . without which the doctrine of the Trinity could not stand for an instant.[49]

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[49] Christian Examiner, I (January, 1824), 57.

Almost without exception these Unitarians followed the example of their Arminian predecessors of the late eighteenth century in adhering to the Arian doctrine of the nature of Christ. They recognized the danger of speculating too freely on Christ's character, for some men (with the era of deism just over and that of transcendentalism about to begin) had recently taken to the notion that the presumed life of Christ was an elaborate forgery, the imaginative product of a small group of illiterate individuals. Yet, many were still convinced that a satisfactory sketch of the character of Christ with "its air of something more than human" and its "many traits of surpassing excellence" had yet to be filled in by the application of man's understanding and intellect to the contents of Scripture.[50] It was on this basis that they

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[50] Christian Examiner, III (March, 1826), 154-155.

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justified their many detailed inquiries into the prevailing doctrine of his nature.

However, despite the zeal and real sincerity with which most Unitarians approached the problem of Christ's person, most of their arguments lacked substance and had little, if any, impact on those outside Unitarian ranks. The scanty evidence with which they had to work is illustrated by their attempt to find, in the writings of primitive Christian leaders, either denial of Christ's divinity or lack of evidence in support of it. Unable to find conclusive evidence of either, they excused their failure with a vague reference to certain inconsistencies and uncertainties in the works of the church fathers, concluding with the meaningless assertion that, "we are far from believing . . . these men can always be reconciled with the scriptures, or with each other or even with themselves. But we do maintain . . . the primitive church was clearly and decidedly anti-calvinistic."[51]

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[51] Christian Examiner, I (January, 1824), 61.

Only slightly more credible is a philological argument by the Reverend Noah Worcester which is built entirely about the pronoun "I" as he observes it being defined and used in the 1820's. Worcester contends that because "a personal pronoun is a substitute for the name or title of a person," it includes the whole person in whatever context it is used. From this he deduces that the pronoun "I," as used by Christ and as recorded in Scripture, embraces every aspect of Christ's being. This argument assumes tremendous importance for Worcester, because it enables him to use those biblical passages in which Christ

declares his own inferiority and to deny the orthodox belief that in them Christ has reference to his human nature only. On this basis Worcester considers himself to have demonstrated with remarkable clarity that Christ does not have "two distinct minds in one body," but is by his own admission simply a man, inferior to and dependent on God in every respect.

Worcester's reviewer in the Spirit of the Pilgrims notes that "this argument would be conclusive against us, if the major proposition were the truth." But, he adds, it is not, for persons often use the pronoun "I" to refer to a particular aspect of their constitution "as the nature of the subject requires" and "need no qualification in order to be perfectly understood." Thus, even if Christ's dependence on God is real--which, the orthodox agree, it is, both because of his humanity and because of the mutual dependence of the members of the Trinity on one another--Worcester's argument is still founded on a false principle. The reviewer concludes with the observation that Worcester's "doctrine of the pronouns," as he prefers to call it, has proved nothing, unless it be the weakness of the cause it was intended to support.[52]

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[52] S of P, I (June, 1828), 305-309.

Worcester's argument is a pathetic and somewhat farcical, though honest, attempt to dismiss the most stubborn evidence of Christ's divinity with which the Unitarians had to contend: that of the New Testament. They could not simply discard the Gospels, as they had the Old Testament with regard to the doctrine of God's benevolence, for the New

Testament also testified to their prevailing doctrine of the love of Christ. Yet, neither could they allow it to stand as it was. One attempt to meet this difficulty resulted in the publication of J. P. Dabney's Annotations on the New Testament. Its innocuous sounding title was intended to give it a rather neutral character, but with the Christian Examiner's comment that "no work of the kind now extant comes so near as this will, . . . to exhibiting the sense of Scripture held by the majority of Unitarians," its party alignment became clear.[53]

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[53]Christian Examiner, V (July, 1828), 345.

The Spirit of the Pilgrims, in a review of this work, criticizes several leading Unitarian journals for praising it without qualification, and states as its primary objection to Dabney's select list of annotations the fact that an effort is made to alter "all those passages which speak of the pre-existence of Christ, and of his possessing a nature superior to the human."[54]

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[54]S of P, II (December, 1829), 658-669.

Further attempts to explain away passages referring to Christ's divinity abound throughout the Christian Examiner and of necessity become a part of almost every argument on the subject. Few chose to side with the Reverend Charles Lowell, a Unitarian "black sheep" who devoted an entire discourse to the demonstration that the Bible reveals nothing about Christ.[55] Most preferred to take what information

[55] S of P, I (October, 1828), 540-544.

Scripture gave concerning Christ and to claim it, after alteration and free interpretation, for the Unitarian cause. Thus all passages which refer to Christ as having been sent by God are interpreted, not as proof of his equality with God, but as evidence of his "inferiority and dependence." In similar fashion, the text, "I and my Father are one," frequently quoted by the orthodox in support of the Trinity and Christ's divinity, the Unitarians declare to illustrate only the "unity of purpose and cooperation" which exist between the Father and the Son.[56]

[56] Christian Examiner, I (January, 1824), 58-59.

Though such interpretations were utterly unacceptable to the orthodox, who took every opportunity to refute them in the Spirit of the Pilgrims, they became critically important in the controversy simply because they were often interpretations of extremely difficult passages--and as such no less arbitrary than those set forth by the orthodox. It all centered, as usual, about the premises and presuppositions with which one approached the interpretation of Scripture.

The most reputable Unitarian in this, as in many other areas of the Unitarian-Calvinist controversy, was Professor Andrews Norton of Harvard. Norton based his case for Christ's humanity on the assertion that because Christ is presented as separate from God, he is inferior to God. He also emphasized his belief that the phrase "Son of God" was given to Christ, not because he was actually allied with God by nature,

but because he possessed an amount of power, grace, truth, and authority superior to that of any other created being. In an attempt to establish a principle upon which to dismiss the pre-existence of Christ, Norton declared that the apostles were ignorant, unskilled writers who "conformed the language to their own modes of expression"; therefore, "what they meant to represent God as having foreordained, they described as actually existing." He concluded from this that the apostles' claim of Christ's pre-existence was untrustworthy--that he had no existence, except in the purpose of God, previous to his appearance on earth.

With this, and Norton's other conclusions, his reviewer in the Spirit of the Pilgrims disagrees, rejoicing that Norton has been unable to disprove the divinity of Christ without rejecting scriptural infallibility. That this has happened to the Unitarians' most auspicious defender, the reviewer remarks, is particularly significant, for Norton, unlike lesser controversialists, has carried the war "into the heart of the Book of God," and still has not been able to find what he wanted--conclusive evidence against the divinity of Christ. This, to the reviewer, exposes the weaknesses of the Unitarian cause, for it leaves them with nothing on which to base their demonstration of Christ's total humanity but "the concurring judgment of men." And that, as any good Calvinist knew, was little better than nothing at all.[57]

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[57] S of P, VI (December, 1833), 686-702.

From the information presented thus far, it is obvious that those who contributed to the Spirit of the Pilgrims thought little of Unitarian attempts to explain away the divinity of Christ and considered

them to be even less rational than their arguments on other subjects. As the orthodox spokesman, Lyman Beecher, with more accuracy than tact, once said of the Unitarians: "Dr. Ware, Dr. Channing, and others of their school who are sound reasoners on other subjects, can not construct a logical argument on Christ's divinity."[58] Such statements as Beecher's

[58]Beecher, II, 430.

angered the Unitarians, who were quite certain that the Calvinists, with their supposed aversion to rational argument, could not do as well. They therefore demanded that the orthodox state fully their own position. This the orthodox did, with increasing intensity, throughout the six volumes of the Spirit of the Pilgrims, not so much in response to the challenge, but with the realization that if they did not present their own case, the Unitarians would grossly misrepresent them.[59]

[59]S of P, II (January, 1829), 3.

Although the arguments presented in the Spirit of the Pilgrims, are, on the whole, more substantial than those in the Christian Examiner, the Calvinists were not without their own far-fetched attempts--and failures. Only slightly more credible than the Unitarian "doctrine of the pronouns" is an anonymous exposition of I Peter 3:18-20 which reads in part:

> For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened in the Spirit by which also he went and preached with the spirits in prison, which sometimes were disobedient when once the long suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing . . .

Bringing to this ambiguous passage his own presuppositions about the Christian religion, and interpreting it with the assistance of several passages totally unrelated to the one in question, the author decides that it was Christ's own "Spirit" which "preached to sinners before the flood by means of Noah." He concludes from this that Christ had to exist before Noah, that he created the world, and that he was, therefore, "from the beginning a sovereign in the kingdom of grace" and co-equal with God.[60]

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[60] S of P, I (August, 1828), 405-409.

Much more credible is an attempt in a later volume to prove from Christ's witness to himself that he was divine as well as human. Those verses in which Jesus calls himself the "Son of God" and claims peculiar honors and capabilities, the author considers to be Christ's own testimony to the fact that he partakes of the attributes of God his Father. This same evidence, the reader will recall, was used by the Unitarians to prove that Christ was inferior to God! The author also agrees that Christ's personal claim, in the book of Revelation, to such divine characteristics as "absolute eternity, creative power, and supreme dominion," would never appear in the pages of inspired Scripture unless Christ himself knew them to be rightfully his.

In the same vein, the author presents a series of statements from the Apostolic Fathers who "were the immediate successors of the Apostles and had enjoyed their personal instructions." Admitting that a high degree of interpolation and corruption in the writings of these men makes it almost impossible to cite them authoritatively on matters of

doctrine, the author nevertheless interprets the consistency with which they refer to Christ as God as strong evidence in favor of the orthodox view. In support, he quotes such statements as this by Clemens Romanus who speaks of Christ as

> the high priest of all our offerings and the defender and helper of our weakness, [by whom] the eyes of our hearts are opened, [our] foolish, darkened understandings are enlightened [and] we look up to the highest heavens . . . to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.[61]

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[61] S of P, III (May, 1830), 224-236 and (June, 1830), 287-293.

The orthodox frequently state that the most conclusive single scriptural witness to the nature of Christ can be found in the writings of the Apostle John. Thus, it is not surprising to find in the first volume of the Spirit of the Pilgrims an exposition by the Reverend J. P. Smith of John 1:1-5. His arguments for Christ's divinity are too detailed to allow full consideration, but his objective discussion of several points makes his work one of the most satisfactory on the subject and necessitates a summary here. Smith states first that the "Logos" or "Word" to which John refers is not an abstract term but must refer to a being of intelligence and power, reminding his Unitarian readers that their Thomas Belsham (whose book had so much to do with the growth of Unitarianism in America) believed this, even though he would have preferred not to. This "Word," Smith quickly demonstrates, is synonymous with Christ. Because the Word, according to John, existed "in the beginning" or when creation took place, Smith contends that Christ "must have been from eternity" and is not a created being whose only existence prior to his birth in Bethlehem was in the mind and

purpose of God.

In conjunction with John's statement that "the Word was with God and the Word was God" Smith mentions the interpretations proposed by two Unitarians who, feeling the "intolerable pressure" of this verse against their argument, went so far as to suggest, without justification, that it must be read either as "the Word belonged to God" or, by inverting the Greek and English word orders, as "God was the Word"--both of which are more amenable to the Unitarian position than the literal meaning. Smith, however, after studying the etymology and the contemporary usage of several words in the passage, declares it to be irrefutable evidence that Christ was both co-eternal and co-equal with the Father.

In regard to the section "All things were made by him and without him was not anything made that hath been made," Smith again takes note of several Unitarian interpretations. Though most earlier, eminent Unitarian expositors readily admitted that the term "all things" must refer to "the making of the world . . . All things that have been created," modern Unitarians have preferred to adopt the sense that these words "refer to the moral creation, the instruction and reformation of mankind." Such an interpretation would, of course, coincide neatly with their desired image of Christ as teacher and reformer of man. Smith's recourse in this case, as earlier, is to the literal sense of the words and, therefore, to the interpretation that Jesus Christ was responsible with the Father for the creation of all things and the establishment of all divine decrees for the operation of the world. He closes by asking any Unitarians, who after reading his exposition might

possibly feel that they are "rowing against the stream . . . putting language to the torture . . . affixing significations to words and phrases which . . . could never have been in the contemplation of the original writer," to review the whole subject in the New Testament to see if the information they glean for themselves is not different from what their leaders have told them.[62]

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[62] S of P, I (December, 1828), 656-664.

While the preceding argument is, from the orthodox point of view, a learned and nearly irrefutable demonstration of the divine nature of Christ, it does not adequately indicate the breadth and depth of the Calvinists' rebuttal of what was to them the greatest of all Unitarian heresies. I shall, therefore, conclude this discussion of Christ's divinity with some comments from the lead article of the Spirit of the Pilgrims' final number--a last chance, as it were, to lay everything on the table.

Although the anonymous author of this article is concerned with the defense of the Trinity as a body, his specific proof for the orthodox doctrine of Christ, based as it is "solely on divine revelation," but broad enough to incorporate every major scriptural witness to Christ's divinity, makes it the best constructed, most complete argument on the subject. Resting his case on the Bible alone, the author relates, first, the marks or characteristics that, by the consent of both orthodox and liberal, belong to God; he shows, second, that these marks are common to Christ as well as to the Father; and concludes, third, that Christ must then be the God of the Bible.

His excellent working out of this syllogism cannot be our concern, but the contents of its second step and, hence, the author's proof of Christ's divinity can be summarized as follows: First, Christ is expressly called God in the New Testament (this argument we have already encountered in Smith's exposition of John 1, but the examples given here are far more inclusive than Smith's were able to be). Second, the Old Testament descriptions of God are applied to Christ both in the New Testament and in the prophecies of the Old. Chief among them is "Adonai" (translated "Lord") which is the name given to the covenant God of Israel and used in reference to him over 6,000 times in the Old Testament. "Kurios," its Greek equivalent and also translated "Lord," is consistently applied to Christ in the New Testament. Though some critics contend that the apostles' use of "Lord" merely meant "Sir" or "Master," the author finds several verses to support the orthodox belief that "Lord" as used in reference to Christ does mean deity and is intended to equate him with God the Father.

Third, Christ possesses the attributes of God; among them are a life-giving power, self-existence, truth, holiness, omniscience, omnipresence, omnipotence, and, above all, eternity--of which Christ himself says, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end." Fourth, the works of God alone are ascribed to Christ. He was involved, for example, in the creation of the world; he at one time was given power to raise the dead; he now upholds God's decrees; and he will in the last days, serve as judge of all men. Fifth and finally, Christ receives honor and worship due only to God. The sources of evidence to which the author refers us on this point are Christ himself, the apostles, their

contemporaries in the New Testament church, the dying martyr Stephen, and finally, the saints and angels who, says the book of Revelation, "surround the throne in heaven," singing "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain."[63]

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[63] S of P, VI (December, 1833), 667-681.

On this presentation the conductors of the Spirit of the Pilgrims finally rested their case for Christ's divinity. The thoroughness with which they had constructed their arguments and the solid foundations of Scripture upon which they stood, convinced most of them that they had satisfactorily proved their claim that Christ could be both God and man. However, their "clear and indubitable proof" for Christ's divinity was based, even more than their other arguments with the Unitarians, upon Scripture and the presupposition that it is the "infalliable standard of truth." Consequently, it had little effect on the Unitarians who, being equally convinced that Scripture was fallible and should be subjected to human scrutiny and correction, continued to assert the superiority of their rational argument over the incredible paradox of a man who could also be God. The controversy, by 1833, had done nothing except perhaps to confirm the orthodox conviction that their opponents were dangerous infidels.

His Work

The doctrines of the divinity of Christ and of the atonement, as components of a highly developed theological system, are mutually dependent on each other. There is no reason, for example, to insist

on Christ's dual nature if we do not also believe that the combination of his humanity and divinity will enable him to perform works that one who is merely man or merely God cannot perform. Likewise it is impossible to believe that Christ's sacrifice has any divine efficacy without a prior belief in his peculiar nature as God-man. Thus it was that the Calvinists of the 1820's so diligently strove to preserve their doctrine of the divinity of Christ, for without it all their claims to salvation through the atoning blood of Christ, the very essence of Christianity, were empty.

To better understand the battle over the atonement as it was waged during the time of the Spirit of the Pilgrims, it is necessary first to consider two theories of the atonement, both of which were attempts by Christian theologians to give accurate and consistent explanations of the redeeming work of Christ. The first, called the Anselmic theory, is based on the Cur Deus Homo of Anselm, a monk of the eleventh century, and is even today the most important single work on the atonement, having been adopted first by the early Catholic Church and then passed on to the Lutheran and Calvinistic churches of the Reformation.

Anselm, convinced that there must be some reason, some absolute necessity, for the Incarnation and death of Christ, was unable to accept the prevailing belief of his time that the nature of the atonement was not to be questioned but rather simply accepted as God's will, his chosen plan for salvation. Moreover, as a firm believer in the glory of God and the necessity of man's absolute obedience to him, Anselm saw sin as robbing God of his due honor and, therefore, as

intolerable to Him. God's sense of justice and his determination to maintain his own honor then demand that he require satisfaction for sin. Because fallen man, a weak and finite creature, cannot save himself or satisfy God's justice, God allowed Christ his son, as sinless man, to die of his own free will as man's substitute. According to Anselm, it is absolutely essential that Christ, in this role as ransom and Saviour, be both God and man--God because the death of a mere man could never outweigh the accumulated guilt of mankind and vindicate God's honor, man because only one with a human nature could offer to the Father a satisfaction for humanity. The ultimate result of this selfless act of Christ is the imputation of his supreme righteousness to man whom God, in his goodness and mercy, is pleased to save now that his honor has been kept intact. The fact that Anselm saw man as owing obedience to God makes the relationship between God and man, under his system, one of creditor and debtor. When the debt is paid, the credit is restored and man reassumes his original stature in the eyes of God.

In the year 1617 Hugo Grotius, a learned Dutch jurist and theologian, published A Defence of the Satisfaction of Christ in which he presented a new theory of the atonement which has since been titled the "governmental theory" because it explains the atonement as a governmental necessity and sees the relationship between God and man as one of ruler and subject. According to Grotius, God originally chose to inflict punishment on man only because he believed it necessary to maintain order and prevent crime, not because he was concerned with upholding his own honor and glory. However, Grotius continues, God, like any other ruler, has the authority and power to alter his

decrees as he sees fit, and if he believes his purpose can be achieved in any other way (in this case with less suffering to man) he need only remit his earlier penalty. God, therefore, chose to send his son to earth to die in man's stead and serve as an example to sinners, warning them of the horrible nature and consequences of sin and urging them to keep God's law. Thus, Christ's sacrifice upholds the dignity and authority of God's moral government without necessitating the punishment of every individual transgressor or a general satisfaction for all humanity.[64]

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[64]Frank Hugh Foster, A Genetic History of the New England Theology (New York, 1963), 113-114; Wright, pp. 218-219.

Though the religious leaders of New England traditionally accepted the Anselmic theory, Grotius' work was known there as early as 1653 and was found in the libraries of Yale and Harvard by the mid-eighteenth century. It is difficult to determine just when the clergy began to swing toward this newer theory, but, by the time of Jonathan Edwards, advocates of both were being heard. Within the orthodox party Edwards himself chose to reassert Anselm's position, stressing both the necessary punishment of sin by God and the blood sacrifice of Christ as payment of man's "unpaid debt,"[65] while

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[65]Haroutunian, p. 158

Bellamy and Jonathan Edwards, Jr. preferred the Grotian system. Bellamy, who some consider to be New England's first major exponent of Grotius' theory, believed that "the whole mediatorial scheme is

designed, and in its own nature adapted to do honor to the divine law," and was particularly attracted by Grotius' emphasis on God's benevolence as opposed to his righteousness.[66]

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[66] Works, II, 315, quoted in Ibid., p. 161.

In this same vein, the younger Edwards, who early rejected his father's emphasis on Christ's payment of the sinner's debt, decided that the real accomplishment of Christ was to make it appear that "sin shall not go without proper tokens of divine displeasure and abhorrence."[67] Thus the atonement became for Bellamy, the

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[67] Works, II, 26, quoted in Ibid., p. 170.

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younger Edwards, and all who accepted the New England theology, a public example to warn men against sin and establish God's moral law. Only when the Reverend Stephen West, who was appalled by the extremes to which his supposedly orthodox predecessors had gone, deliberately set about to re-establish the biblical conception of the efficacy of Christ's sacrifice, did the Calvinists of New England return to Anselm's theory of the atonement as held by their fathers. Due to this reversal, nineteenth-century orthodox clergy, particularly that group involved in the publication of the Spirit of the Pilgrims, were committed, in their controversy with the Unitarians, to the theory that it was the blood of Christ--not his example--that was able to save the world.

The Arminians of the eighteenth century, like the orthodox, were attracted to the Grotian theory because it enabled them to stress

God's benevolence and love for man over his righteousness and sense of justice. Charles Chauncy, in almost every theological discussion an exponent of the newer, more liberal thought, chose on this particular issue to remain rather neutral, saying that "our blessed Saviour Jesus Christ . . . suffered everything that was necessary in order to a worthiness, a righteousness on account of which God might . . . manifest his mercy toward sinners . . . saving them from wrath."[68]

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[68]Quoted without reference in S of P, III (December, 1830), 653.

However, Jonathan Mayhew, his bolder contemporary and an admitted Grotian, frequently asserted in public that Christ's sacrifice tends only to give us a just sense of God's authority and the dignity of his law. Mayhew's interpretation of the atonement was accepted by both the later Arminians and the first American Unitarians, who bit by bit abandoned all references to Christ in his threefold office of prophet, priest, and king. Unlike the orthodox, they did not react against the Grotian theory as it became increasingly critical of Christ's divinely appointed function. Instead they went so far beyond its original form that by 1820 Christ, for them, was nothing more than a super-human source of divine revelation who inspired men by his example of obedience, and whose sacrifice had lost all special significance.[69]

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[69]Wright, p. 219.

According to the Christian Examiner, which was during the

twenties and thirties quite explicit on the subject of the atonement, foreign theologians, "have ceased to regard any particular explication of this doctrine as essential to Christianity."[70] However,

[70] Christian Examiner, IX (November, 1830), 191.

American Unitarians, due to the Spirit's unrelenting criticism of their doctrine, were forced to speak out in defense of their liberalized Grotian theory and in opposition to the Anselmic viewpoint of the orthodox. This they were more than willing to do, particularly because they had observed that several aspects of the Anselmic position were directly antithetical to their conception of religion in general. In the first place, they no longer saw God's nature as one which demanded an atonement but preferred rather to think of him as a forgiving father who is willing to pardon without any necessity of satisfaction.

Secondly, not only did the orthodox theory assume that "the most holy God has no mercy," but it also exposed man "to pernicious moral consequences" because it placed the responsibility for his future happiness in the blood of Christ rather than on his own obedience. Why then, the Unitarians asked, should the sinner who "has no feeling of insecurity to alarm him, no apprehension of future ill to make his hand hesitate," feel any concern for his own moral behavior if that behavior is of no consequence to his present or future situation.[71] This argument was based upon a false premise, for the

[71] Christian Examiner, III (September, 1826), 380-383.

Calvinists never did relieve men of responsibility in salvation. But the notion that they did was common and remained a part of the Unitarian argument. A third and final reason for the Unitarians' consistent criticism of the Calvinistic theory was the simple fact that their own liberal belief in Christ as just another man, superior though he may be, would not permit them to accept a doctrine which asserted his ability, as a member of the Trinity, to save men from punishment.

Though contributors to the Christian Examiner consistently criticize those aspects of the Calvinistic theory of the atonement which are so contrary to their conception of the nature of religion, they are more concerned with stating their own belief, not so much, it seems, because they fear that the orthodox are unfamiliar with their position on the atonement, but because they consider it to be more conservative than that of many Unitarians and wish the distinction to be clearly understood. This position, says one of their contributors, is nowhere more accurately or openly presented than in a recent work by the Reverend Noah Worcester entitled The Atoning Sacrifice, a Display of Love, not of Wrath. Worcester, as the reader may recall, was the creator of the "doctrine of the pronouns" with which he attempted to demonstrate the total humanity of Christ. The reviewer agrees with Worcester that "if there are any Christians who believe the only purpose of Christ's death was to exhibit a perfect example under sufferings, we are not of that number." Yet he admits that "liberal Christians," as a whole, have stressed too much the superficial example of Christ's obedience: "We have heard more of

tears, than of thoughts 'too deep for tears.' We have heard more of how the bosom has been softened and melted, than of how it has been armed by the contemplation of the most exalted of sufferers."

This emphasis, he believes, is almost as misleading and incorrect as that of "the disciples of the popular system of substitution" who are so absorbed by the "grand mystical notion" that Christ suffered in our stead, that they are "too apt to regard with a sentiment approaching to contempt the position that he suffered, not in our stead, but for our sakes." In place of these two extremes, the reviewer suggests that his readers consider the theory which he and Worcester have adopted, a theory stressing not just Christ's example of obedience on the cross, but,

> the constancy which [his death] has taught to virtuous purpose . . . the invincibleness which it has imparted to high resolutions . . . the noble disregard to the world and its pleasures with which it has animated millions . . . [and] the courage and fortitude which it has breathed into the Christian body.

This system, he is convinced, recognizes in the clearest and strongest manner, "the mental and moral efficacy" which the death of Christ has always had in the formation of the true Christian character. Therefore, he urges his readers to study Christ's character and develop, as Christ did, a preference for "the invisible and eternal things" which are not of this world but essential to one's true happiness.

The reviewer is especially concerned that his readers (undoubtedly the orthodox) take note of his assertion that the death of Christ is man's salvation. In stating this, he seems to feel that he has satisfactorily countered the Spirit of the Pilgrims' complaint

that the Unitarians, rejecting as they do the saving power of Christ, do not fully comprehend his function or the importance of his death.[72]

[72] Christian Examiner, XII (January, 1832), 312-320.

However, the reviewer's explanation that this "redemption by the cross of Christ" is simply a more moral and selfless life, the result of man's "arming himself with the mind of his suffering and dying Master" and thus showing himself to be "free from the dominion of flesh and sense," does not go far to vindicate the Unitarian theory in the minds of the Calvinists. They, in fact, were unimpressed with his entire argument and recognized it as nothing more than the usual Unitarian theory disguised by a smattering of orthodox terminology.

Far more distressing to the conductors of the Spirit of the Pilgrims than such arguments was the increased cynicism of certain Unitarian leaders, who not only rejected but caricatured the Calvinistic theory of the atonement. Channing, who represented this group, observed in a sermon before a Unitarian congregation:

> Suppose that a teacher should come among you, and should tell you, that the Creator, in order to pardon his own children, had erected a gallows in the centre of the universe, and had publicly executed upon it, in room of the offenders, an Infinite being, the partaker of his own Supreme Divinity; suppose him to declare, that this execution was appointed, as a most conspicuous and terrible manifestation of God's justice, and of the infinite we denounced by his law; and suppose him to add, that all beings in heaven and earth are required to fix their eyes on this fearful sight, as the most powerful enforcement of obedience and virtue. Would you not tell him, that he calumniated his Maker; would you not say to him, that this central gallows threw gloom over the universe; that the spirit of a government, whose very acts of pardon were written in such blood, was terror, not paternal love, and that the obedience,

> which needed to be upheld by this horrid spectacle was nothing worthy

Another statement, also quoted by a writer in the Spirit of the Pilgrims, provided an even more distorted example of Unitarian disparagement of the orthodox theory:

> The spectacle of a sinless being stretched on the cross, to expiate the crimes of the wicked, or prepare the way for their forgiveness, far from inspiring a reverence for God's moral attributes, is fitted effectually to weaken or destroy it. It would furnish as strong an argument of his injustice, and cruelty, as could possibly be offered to our minds. . . . You talk to me of a substitute, etc. But, meanwhile, what a conception of my reverence and trust! Surely you do not ask me to repose confidence in such a being. I can view him only with shuddering and horror. The belief that he formed and governed the universe would . . . be an abhorred persuasion, from which I would willingly take refuge in the LESS CHILLING CREED OF THE ATHEIST.[73]

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[73] S of P, III (December, 1830), 663-664.

The Calvinists were also greatly disturbed by the attempts of certain Unitarian writers to put such men as the Reverend James Murdock, with his obviously Grotian concern for order in the universe and his conception of the atonement as a mere symbol, in the Calvinistic camp. Just why Unitarians would want to classify as orthodox someone whose belief was almost as liberal as their own is not clear, but it apparently had something to do with their desire to demonstrate the inconsistency and, therefore, the incredibility of the various orthodox theologians on the atonement.[74]

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[74] Christian Examiner, I (September, 1824), 367-376.

Despite their dismay at such gross misrepresentations of

their position, the conductors of the Spirit of the Pilgrims do not devote any one entire article to an explication of the Anselm theory. They prefer instead to make frequent brief comments regarding their position, lest it be forgotten, and to devote a far greater number of pages to refuting specific Unitarian arguments against them. Thus, when the Reverend Bernard Whitman, with his usual genius for inaccuracy, states that the doctrine of the atonement is not a theory of the Reformation but "really and literally" a doctrine of the Catholic church, his reviewer in the Spirit of the Pilgrims is ready for him. He asks Whitman, addressed satirically as "our learned author," if he does not know better, and clarifies for him the difference between the Catholic and Calvinistic theories of the atonement: "We [the orthodox] believe that 'Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many'; the Catholic believes that he is offered as a propitiatory sacrifice, in every mass performed in the Church." This plus the fact that the Calvinists regard the atonement as "man's sole and sufficient foundation of hope," as opposed to the merits, penances, and "supererogatory performances" of the Catholic church, is, to the author, adequate evidence of the tremendous gulf between the two positions which Whitman has attempted to equate.[75]

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[75] S of P, IV (March, 1831), 133.

One of the most vociferous orthodox spokesman was Lyman Beecher who struck out many times, for the Spirit of the Pilgrims and other periodicals, in defense of the Calvinistic theory. Typical is his comment in volume one of the Spirit that, "a renunciation of

the atonement . . . is a renunciation of Christianity . . . and inevitable destruction." He tells the Unitarians that they have a perfect right to call themselves Christians and to be called Christians by all whom they can persuade to believe them. But he insists that he and his party shall never share the name with any group which believes that "to build the hope of pardon on . . . Christ is unscriptural." Well aware that the Unitarians base their theory of the atonement on the earlier governmental theory of Grotius, he points out that their hope for "certainty of pardon . . . upon the simple condition of repentance" is "an utter prostration of government by law." He also criticizes what he believes to be a basic fallacy of the Grotian theory--the equating of God's perfect government with the imperfect rule of men. These statements drew heavy criticism from the Unitarians, who were quick to set Worcester's "plain declarations of Scripture," against Beecher's "low trap-like cunning in argument."

Beecher, however, reserves his most vehement criticism for the gross distortions of God with which the Christian Examiner's articles on the atonement are filled. In reply to Channing's caricature of God as the hangman of the universe and a certain reviewer's comment that "God DID DE FACTO, inflict the highest torments on an innocent, pure, spotless, creature, even his own Son," he presents a brief but complete resume of the orthodox conception of God's role in the atonement.

Beecher first points out that since Christ's sacrifice was given of his own free will, it cannot be directly attributed to God's

absolute sense of justice or desire to punish someone, even his own son, for man's disobedience. He adds, moreover, that Christ as benefactor of the world had a right to lay down his life, and that God,

> was competent to decide whether the substitution of his obedience and death would answer the purpose of maintaining law while pardon should be offered and conferred upon all of the human race who should repent and believe . . . and seeing mercy and truth, public justice and forgiveness could be secured by the atonement, he had a right to accept the expiation which Jesus Christ had a right to make, and did accept it. [Italics mine.]

Thus Beecher finds God's acceptance of Christ's offer to be more indicative of God's overwhelming love for man than of his desire to gain revenge, for as a member of the Trinity, it was he, as much as Christ, who took upon himself man's burden and suffering, in order that man would not have to bear them alone.[76]

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[76]This summary of Beecher's position on the atonement is taken from the following three sources: Christian Examiner, XII (January, 1832), 312-315; S of P, I (October, 1828), 521; S of P, III (April, 1830), 184-185.

Preferring to criticize the position of the Unitarians on the atonement rather than state its own, the Spirit of the Pilgrims' most complete article on the subject examines and discards the "three principal schemes which have been devised [by the Unitarians] for explaining away the language of Christ and his Apostles on the subject of sacrifice and remission of sins."[77] Faced as usual with

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[77] S of P, II (October, 1829), 525-532.

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contrary scriptural evidence, the Unitarians were forced to develop

ingenious arguments for rejecting such a strong witness against them. Least successful was their contention that "the doctrine of atonement is a mere accommodation to Jewish prejudices," a necessary expedient for reconciling the Jews to the loss of their religious rites and helping them to fall in more easily with the "pure spiritual and rational religion" of Christ. The critic in the Spirit of the Pilgrims finds this to be a serious charge against Christ and the apostles who, he says, never pretended to ingratiate themselves with the Jews but, quite the contrary, expressed their distaste for the Jewish religion by calling its adherents "whited sepulchers," "serpents," and "a generation of vipers." He also reminds the Unitarians that even if the apostles had desired to make their religion more appealing to the Jews, they could not have done so without alienating the Gentiles to whom they were also preaching; such a risk, he is certain, they would never have taken.

The next Unitarian "scheme," with an argument similar to the above, states that "the apostles, being Jews and strongly tinctured with the notion of sacrifices, atonements, and purifications could not explain and defend the pure doctrines of Jesus without giving them a Jewish complexion." This, says the Spirit's reviewer, casts dishonor upon Christ in the choice of his apostles, for anyone who believes Christ to have been the divinely sent revealer of truth, cannot suspect him of ignorance or poor judgment in the all important task of selecting those who were to preach his truth after him. Moreover, the fact that the apostles demonstrated such willingness to give up all things for Christ, makes it highly unlikely that they would not strive to

"undergo such a change in sentiment and habit of thought, as would fit them to publish the pure doctrines of Jesus."

The Unitarians' third and most successful scheme for explaining away scriptural witness to the atonement, one we have already encountered, is based upon their assertion that:

> those strong expressions which represent the death of Christ as our ransom for sins, our redemption, our peace with God, the propiation for our sins, . . . are figurative illustrations, meaning only that "Christ fell a sacrifice in the cause of human welfare and happiness," and that his tragical death, and exalted virtue, present such a powerful motive to repentance and reformation, as will lead to true piety, and procure the remission of sins.

In partial agreement with the Unitarians, our author admits that Christ's death is an excellent example of supreme obedience to the will of the Father and he concedes that there is, therefore, a connection between the death of Christ and man's reformation. However, he reminds his readers, the orthodox see as a second reason for Christ's sacrifice his desire to "give his life a ransom for many" and to provide for "the remission of sins." This sacrifice of the blood of Christ and the subsequent imputation of his righteousness to us, far supersede any "motive for repentance" which his mere example on the cross might provide.

Having examined these three "schemes" in considerable detail and having answered them with a fairly convincing display of orthodox thought, the writer concludes with a reaffirmation of faith in the infallible witness of Scripture to this, as to all other doctrinal controversies, and with the assertion that the Unitarian attempt to do away with all scriptural authority on the atonement is but the "baseless

fabric of a vision."

The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit

A belief in the Holy Spirit as third person of the Trinity and the only efficient agent in redemption had been a part of Christian thought since the time of Christ, and was particularly vital to nineteenth-century Calvinism with its emphasis on repentance and regeneration. However, the Unitarians, who no longer saw any need for personal confession or redemption, rejected both the Holy Spirit's separate personality and his special function. This rejection was due primarily to their belief that the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, presupposing as it did the doctrine of the Trinity, was utterly contradictory and could never be made to conform with reason. But they also found it impossible, as rationalists and budding empiricists, to believe in the existence of any being so elusive, formless, and intangible. Because they neither needed nor wanted the doctrine of the Holy Spirit to be a part of their system, they went to great lengths, during the 1820's and '30's, to invalidate scriptural evidence of his existence and equality with the Father and the Son.

The Reverend Bernard Whitman, who seems to have discussed every aspect of the Unitarian-Calvinist controversy at one time or another, begins his Discourse on Regeneration by attempting to give his readers "a definite idea of the phrase 'Holy Ghost, or Spirit.'" Before examining Scripture, he denies the separate personality of the Spirit, warning his readers that biblical personification of the word "spirit" is not sufficient evidence on which to base a belief in him as a person.

Subsequent examination of scriptural passages which refer to the presence of a "spirit" or "Spirit" leads him to conclude that this "Spirit of God is simply God Himself"--not in the Trinitarian sense as the third person of the Trinity, but in the Unitarian sense as an aspect of the one God who is forever united, indivisible, and unequalled.[78]

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[78]Whitman's Discourse is reviewed in the S of P, I (August, 1828), 409-427. Subsequent criticism of his work is also taken from this review.

Another Unitarian writer uses Christ's conversation with Nicodemus as the foundation of his argument for rejecting the person of the Holy Spirit. He is particularly interested in Christ's declaration that "except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." Though this statement suggests immediately "to the common reader, the idea that the Spirit of God is . . . the third person in the Trinity," the author believes this interpretation to be erroneous and is certain that the strict literal translation of the original should have been "born of water and spirit." Having made this correction, he is able to discard the passage's witness to the person of the Holy Spirit and to suggest instead that "to be 'born of Spirit' is simply, to be born in a spiritual sense," that is, to undergo moral reformation and spiritual renewal.

Unlike their denial of the Holy Spirit's person, to which they devoted an assortment of arguments like the above, the Unitarians did not seem to think a similar denial of his special function to be worth such serious efforts. Instead, they were content to explain away

Luke's accounts of the conversions at Pentecost and thereafter as miracles which could be performed so long as the apostles were present and exerted that mysterious influence by which they were also "enabled to speak with tongues and cast out devils." However, the Unitarians insist, such miracles "are no example of what is to be expected now," with the apostles no longer on earth, and they rank belief in the Spirit's special operations with such popular but fanciful superstitions as fortune-telling, palm-reading, astrology, witches, ghosts, and apparitions. In place of the Holy Spirit's work in regeneration, which to the orthodox was of ultimate importance, they stress the ability of each individual to lead a "sober, righteous, . . . godly life" and thus bring himself to the point of salvation.[79]

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[79] S of P, II (May, 1829), 288.

The Spirit of the Pilgrims, in presenting the orthodox doctrine of the Holy Spirit, has little to say regarding his person. In fact, its only complete presentation of the orthodox position on this issue is found in the last number of the final volume. The author of this article, identifying himself only as "Clericus," undertakes a defense of all the members of the Trinity, and in the course of his discussion devotes several pages to its third person. He asks first what is meant by the term "Holy Spirit": "Does it mean simply God himself, an attribute of God, a divine influence, mode of operation, extraordinary gifts, miraculous powers? or does it mean a real agent distinct from God the Father and possessed of attributes of true Divinity?"

In answer to his own question he notes that the term appears to

have various meanings in Scripture. Sometimes it is synonymous with God; in other instances it seems to mean only divine influence or a proper disposition of the heart. To these two interpretations of the term the Unitarians would also consent. However, adds Clericus, it is equally evident that "Holy Spirit" frequently means "a person or agent distinct from the Father and the Son." To support his position he cites several New Testament passages, all of which distinguish the Spirit from the gifts which he imparts and from the other two members of the Trinity.

The author then turns to those passages in which the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are named together as objects of worship--intending thereby to show that the Spirit is to be honored and obeyed. Typical of his examples is Christ's final command to the apostles: "Go, teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." He also considers various prayers and invocations addressed by the apostles to the three persons of the Trinity and asks why--unless the three are "equally and in common the object of religious worship"--Christ's followers would connect them in this solemn and devotional manner.

The real strength of this author's argument lies not so much in the specific scriptural passages that he quotes, but in the fact that he presents nothing but scriptural proof for the existence, divinity, and work of the Holy Spirit. By so limiting himself, and making no claims that cannot be substantiated by Scripture, he not only follows the accepted orthodox procedure of proof by revelation but makes himself less vulnerable to Unitarian retaliation, than if he had attempted a

rational demonstration of such a highly irrational issue.[80]

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[80] S of P, VI (December, 1833), 672-675.

The Spirit of the Pilgrims' several discussions of the Holy Spirit's function are, in my opinion, far less satisfactory than its single treatment of his person or its similar defense of the work of Christ. Despite their inadequacies, however, a few articles do make some significant observations on the orthodox attitude toward the work of the Spirit and the liberal opposition to it. The periodical's reviewer of Whitman's Discourse on Regeneration suggests that the reason most Unitarian clergymen deny the special agency of the Holy Spirit is that they "rarely, if ever, witness facts like these under their own ministrations." This he attributes to their "cold and heartless" preaching, which is so far from true Christianity that the Divine Spirit will not own and honor it or use it as "an instrument for bringing sinners to repentance." Critical of the Unitarians' insistence that they must see or feel evidence of the Spirit's operation before they will consider the possibility of his existence, the reviewer reminds his readers that the Spirit's work need not be seen or heard in order to be real. For those who still demand evidence, he can only offer Christ's weary comment on this subject: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, we speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen, and yet ye receive not our witness."

In reply to Whitman's contention that a belief in the "miraculous powers of the Holy Spirit is to be ranked with witchcraft and astrology, the reviewer emphatically states that Calvinists "do not regard

conversions in the light of miracles" but rather "suppose they are effected by a special operation of the Holy Spirit." This "special operation" must be accompanied at all times by the use of wisely adapted "means" (among them preaching, prayer, and the reading of the Word), through which "truth must be exhibited . . . motives must be presented . . . and the understanding must be enlightened." The reviewer feels that this use of human agency in the process of conversion protects the orthodox from charges such as Whitman's, for then the Spirit's work is simply to take and "render effectual" these obvious and available aids which "of themselves are not sufficient to melt and break the hard hearts of men."

This emphasis on man's role in conversion is typical of the New Divinity and, even more, of the New Haven school of theology which would soon assert itself. However, the reviewer's concomitant de-emphasis of the Spirit's authority in regeneration, plus his inability to define adequately the "special" agency on which he bases his argument, weakens his case, and creates opposition to his opinion among the orthodox as well as among the liberals. Apparently aware of the dangerous direction in which his attack on Unitarianism has led him, the author repeatedly stresses the role of the Spirit by referring to several scriptural passages in which the change wrought in regeneration "is expressly ascribed to the Holy Spirit." For those in whose estimation "a plain declaration of Scripture is of small account," he relates a series of incidents in which the means were utilized, often for years, but in which regeneration did not take place until the Holy Spirit imparted his peculiar energy to them. With this final stroke our

unknown reviewer partially redeems his argument. However, the damage was already done and his unorthodox defense of orthodoxy would not go unnoticed by Calvinist or Unitarian theologians.

A later discussion of the Spirit's function, though it too contains some grave errors, improves on this article in its attempt to delineate the specific role of the Spirit in the regenerative process. The author, undoubtedly Enoch Pond,[81] begins by reaffirming the orthodox

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[81] S of P, II (November, 1829), 595-604. Authorship of this article is not certain, but the fact that it is signed "P." and was written "by request" shortly after Pond resigned as the Spirit's editor, suggests that he was very likely the author.

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belief that the "essential part of the work in man's redemption is in Scripture ascribed to the Holy Spirit," following it with an equally orthodox explanation of the Spirit's threefold office to enlighten, sanctify, and comfort mankind. In his role as enlightener of all men, it is the Spirit's duty to "awaken the thoughtless, alarm the secure, impress a sense of the importance of religion, promote serious reflection, remove prejudices and unfounded hopes, and convince the sinner of his guilt and of the justice of God in his condemnation."

Though the Unitarians denied each of these functions, the last two, emphasizing the sinner's sinful nature and God's righteousness, are particularly contrary to their belief in man's innate goodness and God's prevailing benevelence. For this reason Pond stresses the Spirit's ability to lead man into a knowledge of his own and God's true natures. As sanctifier, the Holy Spirit guides man to a gradual renunciation of the kingdom of this world for the kingdom of heaven. He is taught first to love God and to submit to the divine will. This is

followed by sincere repentance and profession of belief in Jesus Christ, which, in turn, leads to "a holy complacence in all the duties and services of religion." The emphasis here is on the orthodox belief that all these things are accomplished, not through man's natural ability as the Unitarians would have it, but through the superior and holy influence of the Spirit alone. Finally, the Spirit, as comforter, concerns himself with man's happiness. He imparts to man a peace over which the world has no direct power, the "peace of God which passeth all understanding." In support of this Pond accepts literally those passages from John 14 and 15 in which Jesus promises to send a Comforter "which is the Holy Ghost" who will abide with man forever and guide him into all truth.

An earlier writer for the Christian Examiner, who examined the same group of verses, had rejected their witness to the existence and special agency of the Holy Spirit on the ground that such passages needed to be purged of their inaccuracies before they could be correctly interpreted. After several rather ingenious attempts to undermine the Calvinists' literal acceptance of these passages, this writer concluded that "the Comforter Jesus promised and God sent down is TRUTH" or, more specifically, the instruction provided in Scripture[82] for man's benefit.

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[82] Christian Examiner, III (March, 1826), 107.

With such interpretations emanating from the Unitarian side, it is no wonder that Pond believed it necessary to emphasize the specific role of the Spirit as Comforter and to cite, as his primary evidence, the testimony of John.

Completely in accord with orthodox doctrine thus far, Pond's difficulties begin when, in the following paragraphs, it becomes evident that he is not content to accept the inexplicable, supernatural agency of the Holy Spirit or to rest his case for the Spirit's operation on the authority of Scripture alone. We note first his comment that the work of the Holy Spirit is not really contrary to fact but is only "in a sense supernatural." Sensitive to widespread ridicule of the Calvinistic doctrine of the Holy Spirit, Pond is determined to appeal to the Unitarians on their own ground and demonstrate how reasonable the orthodox position really is. He bases part of his demonstration on his own previous discussion of the Spirit's three offices, stating that "those who are the subjects of his operations can [also] be expected to give a reasonable account of the views and exercises of their minds" during conversion. On this basis alone he ventures to suggest that the Holy Spirit always operates in a rational manner and that "the religious experience, of which no rational account can be given, ought to be suspected." But, for those who may not be so easily convinced, he also attempts to prove that the Holy Spirit performs his three functions, "through the medium of our mental faculties and in accordance with the established laws of the mind," none of which is the least bit mysterious or supernatural. The Spirit enlightens, for example, through understanding and the conscience; he sanctifies through the will; and he comforts through "some faculty of feeling . . . whatever that may be." Of particular importance to Pond, and to us, is his belief that the Spirit can only sanctify through the will of man--that is, with man's full knowledge, understanding, and consent.

Pond's desire to provide an acceptable defense of the Spirit's "special agency" is commendable, but his assumption that these offices can be imparted only through the medium of man's mental faculties is completely erroneous so far as Calvinism is concerned. He has ignored, deliberately it seems, the fundamental Calvinistic tenet that the ways of God are unknowable, that his will may be both contrary to and outside of man's mental faculties. Any member of the Trinity may, therefore, at any time perform acts and create situations which are not only beyond the comprehension of man but also expressly the opposite of what man may prefer. Thus, according to traditional orthodox doctrine, the operation of the Holy Spirit in sanctification may well be inexplicable, unsolicited, undesirable, and totally irrational. Pond's attempt to prove it otherwise is not surprising, nor is his assertion that God always acts within the realm of man's will and understanding atypical of the anthropocentric age in which he lived. However, as an answer to Unitarian criticism, it is basically fallacious, not only weak but also dangerous to Calvinistic doctrine which would in time lose its peculiar identify as a result of such attempts to make it more amenable to its critics. Pond would have done better service to his own argument and to the orthodox cause had he concerned himself less with the construction of an argument that could "bear the investigation of the philosopher" and more with the witness of Scripture to the person and work of the Holy Spirit.

The Doctrine of Depravity and Original Sin

Williston Walker, in his history of Congregationalism, says that "the loudest strife" in the Unitarian-Calvinist debate was over the

doctrine of the Trinity, but that "its most vital point was after all the practical question of the nature of man."[83] Whether or not we

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[83] Williston Walker, A History of the Congregational Church in the United States (New York, 1894), p. 345.

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agree with Walker's evaluation, it is impossible to deny that the problem of man's innate depravity or goodness was central to the religious controversy of the 1820's and is, of all the issues debated in the Spirit of the Pilgrims, most difficult to characterize. This is due to the fact that the orthodox conductors of the periodical veered sharply from the Old Calvinist conception of the nature of man and even differed among themselves on various details of the doctrine.

Early New England theologians taught the "covenant" or "federal" doctrine of original sin and human depravity. Fundamental to it was the belief that though God is absolutely sovereign, his concern for his creatures prompted him to offer to Adam and Eve the benefit of his covenant of works, whereby man was to receive life upon the condition of perfect obedience. Because Adam and Eve violated their obligation, they and all their posterity, to whom the covenant also was given, fell from righteousness and became dead in sin. Man, therefore, no longer has original righteousness but original sin--in addition to all the actual transgressions which proceed from it.

Prior to the religious upheavals of the mid-eighteenth century, few people questioned this position. But with the growth of Arminianism came the assertion that guilt was a personal matter, that no one could be blamed for the guilt of another or for circumstances over which he had no control. These early Arminians admitted that there was a

connection between the sin of Adam and man's moral situation, but said it involved only such physical properties as pain, sickness, sorrow, labor, and death. Among the better known of these earlier liberals were Charles Chauncy who, though he accepted the doctrine that man's nature was less perfect after the fall, refused to identify this imperfection; and Jonathan Mayhew, who had no sympathy for any doctrine which underestimated man's natural ability to discern truth through reason. Such heterodox opinions placed these men in direct opposition to Jonathan Edwards who, after a long inner struggle, decided to abide by the Old Calvinist belief that all men are by nature sinners due to the sin of Adam, our "federal head" or representative.[84]

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[84]H. Shelton Smith, Changing Conceptions of Original Sin: A Study in American Theology since 1750 (New York, 1955), pp. 2, 3, 54, 22.

The majority of the eighteenth-century clergymen favored Edwards' position, particularly the evangelists of the Great Awakening and subsequent revival movements. They realized that to preach the necessity of change through regeneration and the ability of Christ to redeem, they must first convince men of their innate sinfulness. However, attempts by several reputable orthodox theologians to re-state and defend Edwards' theory of depravity for theological purposes led to conclusions which Edwards himself would never have accepted and to which some revivalists stood in direct opposition.

Hopkins, for example, when he set out to show numerous eighteenth-century skeptics that sin "through divine interposition [is] an advantage to the universe," was forced to conclude somewhat lamely that such must be the case or else "God's will to permit sin and misery

is not wise and good, and . . . cannot be submitted to."[85] Similar

[85] Works, II, 494, quoted in Hareutunian, p. 39.

attempts by Bellamy, Smalley, and others of the Hopkinsian school drew a large segment of the orthodox community from a belief in the Old Calvinist conception of depravity and sin, leading them to accept one which absolved God of blame for man's sinful condition and made each person, as a moral agent, responsible for his own depraved state.

Though many modifications and re-interpretations of the doctrine of innate depravity were advanced during the post-Revolutionary years, it did not become a major issue in the liberal-orthodox controversy until Channing preached his famous discourse on "Unitarian Christianity" at Baltimore in 1819. In Channing's opinion the Calvinistic conception of depravity was the most objectionable doctrine in a system whose every doctrine repulsed him. His caustic critique on this is worth quoting at length:

> According to its old and genuine form it [Calvinism] teaches, that God brings us into life wholly depraved, so that under the innocent features of our childhood is hidden a nature averse to all good and propense to all evil, a nature which exposes us to God's displeasure and wrath, even before we have acquired power to understand our duties, or to reflect upon our actions. According to a more modern exposition, it teaches, that we came from the hands of our Maker with such a constitution, and are placed under such influences and circumstances as to render certain and infallible the total depravity of every human being, from the first moment of his moral agency; . . . Now, according to the plainest principles of morality, we maintain, that a natural constitution of the mind, unfailingly disposing it to evil and to evil alone, would absolve it from guilt; that to give existence under this condition would argue unspeakable cruelty; and that to punish the sin of an unhappily constituted child with endless ruin, would be a wrong unparalleled by the most merciless despotism.

H. Shelton Smith notes that Channing obviously intended to be all inclusive in his indictment of the orthodox doctrine, for by the phrase "old and genuine form" he meant the federal doctrine as set forth by the early New England church, and by the words "a more modern expositon" he was referring to the New Divinity version. Both, so far as he was concerned, were equally repugnant.[86]

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[86]Smith, pp. 72-73.

The leaders of the Calvinistic church responded almost immediately to this shocking appraisal of their doctrine. Consequently, the Unitarians, who had previously been content merely to state their position, were forced to devise a series of arguments with which to defend it. One of the most popular was based upon their observation that every man possesses certain natural affections (among them honesty, charity, obedience, mercy, love, and patriotism) by means of which he is able to demonstrate his concern for the world about him. Because civilized man more often exercises these noble attributes than the baser, primitive instincts which he also possesses, the Unitarians were convinced that humanity is not originally sinful, as the Calvinists insisted, but actually innately and fundamentally good. Harvard's controversial Dr. Henry Ware exemplified one aspect of the Unitarian approach to this issue when, in an unidentified sermon, he spoke of familial affection:

> How early does the infant discover affection, attachment, gratitude, to those from whom it received kindness! How universally is it an object of interest to those about it?--Instead of this must it not (on the supposition of the truth of the Orthodox doctrine of depravity.) naturally be the object of aversion and disgust, and especially so to pious and virtuous persons?

In reply to such statements a writer for the Spirit of the Pilgrims declares that the mere exercise of noble attributes, though we can be grateful for them, does not in itself imply any measure of holiness in the individual. Nor, he adds, is their existence in human nature a "just objection to the doctrine, that men are by nature sinful." He concludes with the observation that "we might as well hope to be admitted to the joys of the upper world on the ground of a vigorous intellect and a refined taste, as on the ground of our amiableness and integrity, our humane feelings, and patriotic sentiments."[87]

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[87]S of P, III (April, 1830), 171-181.

In summary then, most Unitarians of the late 1820's and early 1830's believed in the "depravableness" of human nature rather than in total depravity, contending that while man may seem to have a greater propensity to do evil rather than good, this is due, not to any physical or moral deficiency but simply to environmental factors which men should strive to improve or overcome. Channing, however, whose conception of human nature had progressed considerably in the ten years since his Baltimore sermon, went so far as to assert in 1828 that man actually participates in the divine nature, that he has "a like nature to God":

> God does not sustain a figurative resemblance to man. It is the resemblance of a parent to a child, the likeness of a kindred nature. . . . What is it to be a Father? It is to communicate one's own nature, to give life to kindred beings. . . . This name belongs to God, because he frames spirits like himself and delights to give them what is most glorious and blessed in his own nature. . . . I do and I must reverence human nature.

> Neither the sneers of a worldly skepticism, nor the groans of a gloomy theology, disturb my faith in its godlike powers and tendencies.

Channing's reviewer in the Spirit of the Pilgrims notes that, if by such expressions Channing intended only to say that men have noble faculties and immortal souls, the Calvinists "could cheerfully have accorded to the sentiment." But, convinced that Channing actually believes "we inherit, by nature, the moral as well as the natural image of God," the reviewer and his fellow Calvinists can express nothing but shock at Unitarianism's latest heresy and hope to counteract it by stating their own position.[88] Although the Spirit of the Pilgrims

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[88] S of P, I (December, 1828), 667.

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contains many articles on the nature of man, two in particular are valuable, not only for their refutation of Unitarianism but also for their explication of the New Divinity position as opposed to that of the Old Calvinists.

In the first article, Enoch Pond attempts to refute the Unitarian belief in man's essential goodness with a logical and precise demonstration of man's universal selfishness and, hence, his total depravity. This argument is typical of the New Divinity scholars, who followed closely Hopkins' example; however, to my knowledge, it had not yet been used in any significant manner during the Unitarian-Calvinist controversy of the late 1820's. Pond proposes first to describe selfishness, which to him is not just that "instinctive desire of happiness and aversion to misery" which men possess in common, but a "disproportionate and supreme love of self." It is:

> a reigning desire of personal emolument and gratification. . . . a setting of self above every thing, and a pursuing of one's private, separate interest as the chief good. With the selfish man, the great question in regard to measures is, How will they affect me? How will they bear upon my reputation, my interest, my family, my prospects and happiness? With such an one, self is the central point, and objects are chosen, or refused, loved or hated, just according as they bear upon this.

He contrasts such persons with the "disinterested" who are few in number but far happier than other men because they "fix their attention supremely upon God [who] alone is supremely and infinitely worthy."

Having defined selfishness, Pond proposes, as the second stage of his argument, that men, in a state of nature, are universally selfish. To gain support for this assertion, he appeals, not only to the Bible as he might have done with considerable success, but also to observation and facts, knowing that the Unitarians could less easily refute such evidence. He suggests first that his readers examine their own hearts to see whether they do not discover that as far back as they can recollect, they have been anxious primarily for themselves and are, hence, quite selfish. Moving from introspection to factual observation, he also finds manifestations of selfishness in the undisguised feelings of little children, in the suspicion with which men regard each other, in the overwhelming ambition of men to increase their wealth and power, in the prevalence of wars among nations, and, above all, in the "readiness with which [men] impute selfish motives, one to another, in actions which are seemingly and professedly benevolent." On the basis of such observations, Pond concludes that "self is the ruling motive with all," thus placing himself in direct opposition to the Unitarians who continued to praise man's essential goodness.

Pond proceeds, thirdly, to inquire into the bearing of this truth upon the natural character of mankind, for if selfishness is right, "then this is a very holy world--as holy as heaven." But if it is wrong, "then this is a very sinful world," and the conclusion must follow that man is not just depravable but completely and innately depraved. After selecting, supposedly at random, the second of these two alternatives as the more likely, he presents a variety of personal observations, quite cleverly utilizing the Unitarians' own arguments, in an attempt to convince them that "selfishness, in its very nature--in all its forms and degrees--is sinful." He asserts, for example, that selfishness is unreasonable, for it involves "loving a very little object more than one of infinite magnitude," and tends to spread disorder, confusion, and misery through the universe. Even more important are Pond's observations that Scripture condemns selfishness, and that it is directly opposed to the example of Christ whose entire life was "a continued reproof and condemnation . . . of selfishness."

With evidence such as this, Pond finds it impossible to resist the conclusion that selfishness is sin and man, therefore, an utterly depraved creature. He realizes that the Unitarians will dispute this conclusion even though they must accept the validity of his logic, for it presents a "humbling and melancholy view" of human nature which they oppose. But, he adds, it is no more melancholy than true. Pond closes by reiterating the orthodox belief that this doctrine is supremely important, not for its own sake, but because without it man feels no need for the saving power of Christ, nor for the continued

operation of the Holy Spirit: "He begins with doubting his own depravity, and ends in becoming a thorough going liberalist and skeptic."[89]

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[89]S of P, VI (November, 1833), 623-632.

Dr. Leonard Woods was one of the first to criticise Channing's earlier comments on the nature of man and was also, in the early twenties, involved in a similar controversy with Dr. Henry Ware who had undertaken a defense of Channing. Though both of Woods's early efforts were rather clumsy and failed to impress either Unitarians or Calvinists, his third attempt, in the Spirit of the Pilgrims, was considerably more successful. There, in a series of letters ostensibly addressed to recent Andover graduates but actually aimed at those not entirely in accord with the New Divinity doctrine of depravity--be they Unitarians or Old Calvinists--he undertook a discussion of "moral and natural inability." Woods does not doubt the Calvinistic belief that sinners are, of themselves, unable to obey God or come to a saving knowledge of Christ. But his attempt to determine the "true meaning of . . . various texts . . . which affirm in different ways, that sinners cannot comply with the divine requisitions," is unquestionably derived from Hopkins' theological system.

After examining such texts as John 5:40: "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life," Woods proposes that man's inability to love God or, conversely, his proneness to love himself and do evil, is not a physical inability but simply "an unwillingness or disinclination

to do what is right." Man's entire moral corruption is still so pervasive that without renewal by the Spirit, "it is impossible for him to cease from sin or do that which is spiritually good." But Woods, by emphasizing "disinclination" rather than any "deficiency of constitution," deviates significantly from the strict Calvinistic doctrine of depravity, for he places the ultimate blame for man's sin, not on Adam as representative man or on a broken covenant but on the individual himself who possesses whatever attributes needed to make him a just subject of God's moral government.

Woods is certain that the apostles and Christ himself would have agreed with him that man's inability does not arise from any "disorder in the faculties of the mind," and he quotes several scriptural passages in which Christ's statements on inability can be so interpreted. He is forced, however, to admit that many sacred writers use the word "cannot" when referring to inability and appear to believe that man has a hereditary constitutional deficiency which prevents him from doing good. To explain away such passages, Woods states that, because the writers of Scripture had such strong emotions on this subject and because they felt so profoundly the "urgency of the situation," their language became figurative and "the words originally denoting want of power in the literal sense, are indeed used somewhat metaphorically." In justifying this controversial position, Woods quotes Dr. Smalley, one of the first proponents of the newer Calvinistic theology, who on the same topic had earlier said:

> There is a real necessity for using such words as <u>capable</u>, <u>incapable</u>, <u>cannot</u>, etc. in that diversity of signification in which we see they are used in common speech, as well as in the

> Scriptures. For whenever any thing, whether in ourselves or without us, is absolutely inconsistent with our doing a thing, we have no way fully and strongly enough to express that inconsistency, but by saying, we are unable, we cannot, it is impossible. . . . And if, when we would express this sort of necessity, we should not use the same phrases as are made use of in cases of natural necessity, but, for fear of a misunderstanding, should carefully avoid saying a man cannot, whenever we mean only that he has not such a heart as is necessary, and only say that he will not;--our language would often sound odd, being out of common custom, which governs the propriety of words; and not only so, but it would not be sufficiently expressive.

According to Smalley, when Christ said, "a good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit," he actually meant that the sinner "will not" do so because of his utter disinclination to participate in good rather than evil.[90]

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[90] S of P, V (June, 1832), 305-315.

The Unitarians, so consistently berated by the Calvinists--even by Woods--for interpreting Scripture according to their own religious and moral presuppositions, must have been elated to discover that Woods himself, when his position necessitated it, refused to accept a literal interpretation of Scripture and demanded instead the right to approach it with the presuppositions of his party. The Calvinists, as a group, seldom resorted to such means, and their more conservative members would not have condoned Woods's doing so at this point. But Woods, convinced that the New Divinity's doctrine of depravity was superior to those of both the Old Calvinists and the Unitarians, was willing to risk censure by deviating in this way from acceptable procedure. Such deviations in content and method would become increasingly more common during the thirties and forties and would result in a type of Calvinism

scarcely recognizable as that Jonathan Edwards had taught.

The Damnation of Infants

Of greater concern to the conductors of the *Spirit of the Pilgrims* than the doctrine of innate and total depravity was the closely related question of infant damnation, the sorest spot of old Calvinism. Resurrected by the Unitarians of the 1820's, it became the most emotionally charged and violently controversial topic of the decade. The debate over this relatively minor doctrinal issue began in 1757 with an anonymous pamphlet entitled *A Winter Evening's Conversation upon the Doctrine of Original Sin* but actually more concerned with the fate of damned infants than with its stated topic. The author, in his indictment of what he believes to be the orthodox doctrine of infant damnation, addresses first the Calvinists:

> How can you reconcile it to the goodness, holiness or justice of God to make infants heirs of hell and send them into the world only to breathe and die and then take them away, or even send them to hell from their mother's womb before they have seen the light of life? What! make them first to open their eyes in torments; and all this for a sin which certainly they had no hand in . . .

and then God himself:

> O good father of heaven and earth, what doleful apprehensions must they have of thine excellency and glory, who can suppose that thou shoulds't pronounce a sentence by which myriads of infants as blameless as helpless, were consigned to the blackness of darkness to be tormented with fire and brimstone forever . . . taking up the innocent helpless millions and shaking them awhile over that habitation of devils just ready to cast them into it, while they know not their right hand from their left.

The Rev. Peter Clark, a prominent orthodox minister, immediately defended the Calvinists with his *A Summer Morning's Conversation on the*

Doctrine of Original Sin, stating that "few or none maintain that infants must suffer the torments of hell-fire." But his admission that the Christian doctrine of original sin is "most disagreeable to the proud heart of man," and his obvious timidity in hoping that God has found some humane way of dealing with damned infants,[91] were

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[91]Herbert W. Schneider, The Puritan Mind (New York, 1930), pp. 224-226.

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quickly noted by the liberals. They insisted that the whole notion of infant damnation was inconsistent with divine goodness; Charles Chauncy was particularly fond of quoting from Michael Wigglesworth's The Day of Doom, a vivid poetic account of the last judgment presumably based upon the Calvinistic doctrines of predestination and election. The poem, first published in 1662, was republished several times during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, not by Calvinists but by liberals who gloated over its detailed description of the future state of non-elect infants. Wigglesworth's infants, after passing immediately "from the womb to the tomb" and finding themselves amid the torments of hell, plead before God the Father:

> O great Creator, why was our nature
> depraved and forlorn?
> Why so defil'd and made so vile
> while we were yet unborn?

They protest that "not we but he [Adam] ate of the tree"; however, a terrible and righteous God replies:

> What you call old Adam's fall,
> and only his trespass.
> You call amiss to call it his;
> both his and your's it was.

You sinners are and such a share
as sinners may expect.
Such you shall have, for, I do save
none but mine own elect.[92]

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[92]Smith, p. 49. In objecting to a contemporary publication of the poem, the Spirit's reviewer in December of 1828 (p. 670) writes: "We are utterly unable to assign a motive for the republication of these old scraps of 'ryme and meeter' at the present time. Their author was a pious and useful minister of a former age, who, no doubt from the best of motives, filled up the intervals of a protracted confinement in writing what then passed here for poetry. But why drag out his performance from under the ashes of more than a century, and offer it for present circulation? Is it to go with the Token, the Souvenir, etc., as a Christmas present? Or is it to burlesque Evangelical religion, and bring a most serious and awful subject into profane ridicule and contempt? This latter is the impression which first forced itself upon us; but considering the character and standing of the publisher, we would not indulge it, and we do not. But whatever motive may have led to the publication of this book, we have no doubt as to the use that will be made of it. It will be referred to as demonstration strong that the Orthodox of New England do now hold to certain modifications of doctrine here set forth, particularly the damnation of infants, their own most solemn convictions and repeated asserverations to the contrary, notwithstanding. We should not be surprised if the Christian Examiner should find matter here for a whole chapter, and should even insist upon our being responsible for that in poetry, which we deny in prose.

Thus the liberals of the mid-eighteenth century, with the unwitting assistance of such radical Calvinists as Wigglesworth, put the Calvinistic doctrine of infant damnation in a most obnoxious light. Even the orthodox, overly sensitive as they were to the highly emotional nature of the liberal attack and unsure of what Calvinism actually taught on the subject, found it a monstrous doctrine and preferred to minimize their opponents' accusations rather than attempt to defend themselves. Consequently, the subject of infant damnation, though it had briefly been the hottest issue in the Calvinist-Arminian controversy, was virtually ignored during the last years of the eighteenth century.

Not until the unprecedented success of the orthodox revival movement at the beginning of the nineteenth century, did the Unitarians again find it necessary to check the progress of evangelical Christianity by resurrecting several distorted aspects of older Calvinistic doctrine. Among their misrepresentations (which even if true to the letter were certainly false to the spirit of the Calvinistic system), none was more potentially inflammatory than their charge that Calvinists believed in the damnation of innocent infants.[93]

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[93]Beecher, II, 102.

The simplest and most correct orthodox answer to such accusations would have been to show that all mankind, even infants, have sinful natures and, therefore, as subjects of God's moral government, deserve damnation. Whether or not God actually inflicts such deserved punishment, the Calvinists should then have declared to be a matter unrevealed to man and, hence, not an appropriate topic for speculation. Influenced, however, by an increasingly rationalistic age and angered by the Unitarians' gross exaggeration of the Calvinistic position, the orthodox chose instead to deny unequivocally the Unitarian accusations, and to develop a consistent defense of what they believed to be the true Calvinistic doctrine of infant damnation.

At the center of this controversy stood Lyman Beecher, whose one man campaign on infant damnation began when he delivered a sermon entitled "The Government of God Desirable" in 1808, and ended when he published a series of articles on the subject in the third volume of the Spirit of the Pilgrims. The sermon itself was more important for

its complete presentation of Beecher's theological system than for its comments on the future state of infants, and did not create much of a stir for several years. But by 1819 Beecher was even more certain than he had been earlier that "people . . . under Unitarian influence . . . were being led to believe that the orthodox did hold to the doctrine that infants are lost, as a part of their system." In view of these circumstances, he determined to republish his earlier sermon and halt, once and for all, this alarming development. Fearing, however, that the sermon alone would not make his position entirely clear, he added to it a brief note on the damnation of infants. In doing so, he touched off a violent controversy entirely out of proportion to the relative insignificance of the subject. The note read as follows:

> I am aware that Calvinists are represented as believing and teaching the monstrous doctrine that infants are damned, and that hell is doubtless paved with their bones. But, having passed the age of fifty, and been conversant for thirty years with the most approved Calvinistic writers, and personally acquainted with many of the most distinguished Calvinistic divines in New England, and in the middle and southern and western states, I must say that I have never seen or heard of any book which contained such a sentiment, nor a man, minister, or layman, who believed or taught it. And I feel authorised to say, that Calvinists, as a body, are as far from teaching the doctrine of infant damnation, as any of those who falsely accuse them. And I would earnestly and affectionately recommend to all persons who have been accustomed to propagate this slander, that they commit to memory, without delay, the ninth commandment, which is, "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor."[94]

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[94]Reprinted in S of P, I (January, 1828), 44.

The conductors of the Christian Examiner, who, incidentally, were aroused to an unusual degree of polemical ardor by this controversy, commented upon the publication of Beecher's note almost immediately, but

first criticised it at length in an 1827 article. This article, though ostensibly a review of the earlier sermon, actually discusses nothing but Beecher's assertions on the future state of infants. Its anonymous author begins by quoting the note in full and then states that he will, in the course of his discussion,

> adduce authorities for asserting, that, notwithstanding this formal, and . . . solemn disavowal and denial, the doctrine of infant damnation has been expressly maintained by leading Calvinists, and is connected with essential, vital principles of the Calvinistic system.

He considers first the leading Calvinist of them all, John Calvin, and stresses particularly a statement from the Institutes which he has translated in the following manner:

> The scripture proclaims that all human beings were in the person of one man given over to eternal death.--How has it happened that the fall of Adam has involved so many nations with their infant children in eternal death, but because it so seemed good in the sight of God? It is a dreadful decree, I confess.

Primarily on the basis of this one statement, the reviewer concludes that Calvin believed in the damnation of infants. Though admitting that Calvin at first view, does seem to exempt from "unutterable torments" the children of the elect, he is certain that the reformer actually meant to place the children of believers "on no higher ground" than those of unbelievers. In order to support this highly heretical and inaccurate interpretation of Calvin's thought, the reviewer quotes several ambiguous passages from the works of Calvin, none of which have any direct bearing on the subject.

He turns next to the works of Augustine and Turretin who, though separated by more than 1,000 years, were both, according to the reviewer, firmly convinced that "infants . . . as rational creatures are the just

subjects of God's law and are not to be exempted from punishment." The only near-contemporary to whom the reviewer refers is Edward Bellamy who, he suggests, was not only Connecticut orthodoxy's most distinguished divine after Edwards, but also its most vigorous proponent of infant damnation. In this instance, the reviewer again cites an impressive array of quotations; yet, even he is forced to confess that many of them do not state but only "strongly imply" a belief in the disputed doctrine. In view of this admission, it is difficult to understand just how the reviewer can believe he has succeeded in his original intention. But he remains undaunted and still concludes (with a certain arrogance characteristic of both combatants in this controversy) that he has presented enough evidence to satisfy both the public and Dr. Beecher that infant damnation has been and is still a doctrine of the Calvinistic churches.[95]

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[95] Christian Examiner, IV (September, 1827), 431-448.

Beecher lost no time replying to this review. Using the newly established Spirit of the Pilgrims, he attempted, in a series of letters to the editor of the Christian Examiner, to defend both the Calvinistic position and his own reputation. He mentions his earlier note and says he had hoped it would be sufficient to clarify the situation and end all controversy on the subject of infant damnation. But the very fact that a "preminent" Unitarian writer in the "accredited Unitarian organ" has recently dared charge the orthodox with belief in such a doctrine convinces him that further explication is necessary.

Commenting first upon his reviewer's inference that his note was

intended to vindicate "all the most approved Calvinistic writers," Beecher points out that the whole stress of his disclaimer in the note "respects not the dead but the living," and was intended to vindicate only them from the "unjust aspersions" of the Unitarians. Beecher is disturbed, above all, by his reviewer's vague assertion that "the damnation of infants is connected with the essential vital principles of the Calvinistic system." Failing to find in the review any specific statement of these "vital principles," Beecher suggests that the reviewer could only have been referring to the doctrines of original sin and predestination. But he is unable to comprehend how either of these doctrines could be used to prove that Calvinists believe in infant damnation, for neither, if interpreted correctly, has any clear relation to the subject.

For example, the doctrine of original sin, with reference to infants, teaches only, "that infants by the imputation of Adam's sin, are depraved and guilty, and on this account . . . exposed to future punishment." It nowhere even implies that this deserved punishment is actually inflicted. Moreover, the reviewer's quotations from Calvin, Turretin, and Bellamy--all of which supposedly "imply" a Calvinistic belief in infant damnation--actually prove nothing but that each of these men accepted the doctrine of imputation. Beecher wonders whether his reviewer really thinks that "to teach the <u>desert</u> of punishment" is the same as to teach "expressly its actual infliction." After reducing his reviewer's argument to syllogistic form and demonstrating how illogical such a conclusion actually is, Beecher concludes that,

> should the infatuation which has produced such obliquity of reasoning still harden him [the reviewer] to defend his premises, that

> to teach desert of punishment is to teach "expressly the actual infliction of the punishment deserved," we shall be somewhat comforted by perceiving into what honorable company we have fallen and with what a cloud of witnesses we are surrounded.

In a later portion of his defense Beecher finds the doctrine of predestination to be no more related than that of original sin to the condemnation of infants, for "it teaches only that God, in his infinite mercy, has determined to reclaim, and forgive, and save a portion of the human race." How many and whom it does not say; nor does it expressly exclude infants from the elect. Because God has preferred not to reveal how far he will extend his mercy to those who die in infancy, man must refrain from drawing conclusions. He must be content to leave such matters to God "whose tender mercies are over all his works." While admitting that so limited an amount of information may not be fully satisfactory, Beecher maintains that there is, nevertheless, a great difference "between not teaching positively, that infants are saved, and teaching positively that they are damned." In view of this distinction, he requests that the Unitarians, henceforth, select more carefully the quotations on which they base their statements.

Concluding this first letter, Beecher again denies "that the Calvinistic system teaches or implies the doctrine that infants are damned," and he challenges his unknown adversary "to name a single doctrine of the system which implies that infants are damned, and to point out, coolly and clearly, the connection between his premises and his conclusions."[96]

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[96] S of P, I (January, 1828), 42-52.

Beecher intends, in the second of the three letters, to show that in every age the most authentic and representative documents of Calvinism "stamp falsehood upon the charge . . . that Calvinists believe and teach the damnation of infants." He first considers the major creeds and confessions of Protestantism--from those of the Reformation to the Andover Confession of the early nineteenth century--and finds in each the belief that man is both depraved and predestined, but nothing concerning the future state of infants. He then turns to his reviewer's translation of the afore-mentioned passage from Calvin's Institutes and shows that this passage, if translated correctly, contains nothing to justify its being used as conclusive evidence of Calvin's belief in infant damnation. Beecher's demonstration of his reviewer's inaccuracy centers about the reviewer's deliberate omission of the phrase "without remedy," which, if included in the quotation, drastically alters its meaning, suggesting not that all mankind are actually damned but only that they are justly condemned and "exposed to punishment."

Upset (and puzzled) by his opponent's assertion that Calvin damned the children of believing parents as well as those of non-believers, Beecher also quotes a letter from Calvin to John Knox in which Calvin states that God's promise to save the children of believers "comprehends not only the offspring of the faithful in the first degree, but is extended to a thousand generations." Therefore, concludes Beecher, Calvin came nearer to teaching the actual salvation of all infants than the damnation of any, for if we "sweep a compass round all infants who die within a thousand generations of a pious

ancestor, . . . how many will fall without the blessed circumference of mercy?"[97]

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[97] S of P, I (February, 1828), 78-95. Beecher's criticism, in this article, of his reviewer's translation of Calvin is sound and worthy of fuller consideration than I have given it. For his complete argument on this issue see pp. 83-86.

In his third and final letter to the Christian Examiner, Beecher questions his reviewer's right to "prove" the sentiments of a denomination by referring to specific authors. Although he is certain his previous demonstration will satisfy everyone that the Calvinists, as a party, do not hold to a belief in infant damnation, he sees no reason why Calvinists "should not be indulged, if they please, in a happy inconsistency, as well as their neighbors, who sometimes find it convenient to contradict themselves."

He is also quite sure that no Unitarian would allow what another Unitarian has said to be quoted as evidence of what all Unitarians believe. Yet, he observes that his reviewer has proceeded, "in flippant style, with quotation upon quotation from musty folios of Calvinistic writers of other ages" to convict living Calvinistic ministers of believing in infant damnation. To demonstrate the error inherent in such a procedure, Beecher proposes to turn the tables and "edify" his reviewer with a few scattered specimen of Unitarian thought which, he satirically suggests, all Unitarians must certainly accept.

Knowing, for example, that most Unitarian ministers still preferred the Arian position on the person of Christ to that of the Socinians, he finds several passages in the works of extreme Unitarians

such as Priestley and Belsham which state that Jesus Christ was a mere man--and then dares his reviewer to deny that all Unitarians are Socinians. In another instance, well aware of the antagonism between the Unitarians and the Universalists, he demonstrates that the doctrine of universal salvation was indeed held by some Unitarian ministers, and on this basis proposes that "all consistent Unitarian ministers to a man, are Universalists." Convinced, after several such presentations, that he has made his point, Beecher asks his reviewer on what basis he is able to justify his use of selected early Calvinistic writers as representative of what all Calvinists now believe, if the Calvinists cannot use a similar procedure with respect to Unitarianism.

Beecher concludes his series of messages to the Christian Examiner with an explanation of his earlier declaration that:

> the mode of stating the doctrine of original sin . . . from which the reviewer derives all his evidence . . . have been exchanged in New England for many years, for views and language which utterly preclude even the appearance which the reviewer thinks he finds of ground for such an inference.

His discussion at this point is important not only for its relevance to the remarks made by his reviewer in the Christian Examiner, but also for its excellent presentation of the New Divinity position on original sin and depravity. He notes first that the opinion of the Reformers on original sin "seems to have been that the very substance or essence of the soul was depraved . . . insomuch that sin became a property of every man's nature, and was propagated as really as flesh and blood." However, he continues, this doctrine was discarded some fifty years ago by a group of New England divines who preferred the somewhat less controversial belief that "men are not guilty of Adam's

sin, and that depravity is not of the substance of the soul, nor an inherent or physical quality, but is wholly voluntary, and consists in the transgression of law, in such circumstances as constitute accountability and desert of punishment." Though this change was resisted for years by the Old Calvinists and was accomplished only after much discussion within the orthodox party, Beecher is willing to guess that the newer doctrine is now accepted by "two thirds, if not by three quarters, of the evangelical divines in the United States."

In view of this significant doctrinal change, Beecher is unable to understand how his reviewer can attempt to prove his case against the nineteenth-century Calvinists by quoting authors from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Beecher maintains, moreover, that before he or any Calvinist will permit such antiquated and misleading quotations to be used as evidence against them, his reviewer must first demonstrate that "no change has taken place among the Calvinists of New England in stating the doctrine of original sin" for the past 200 years.[98]

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[98] S of P, I (March, 1828), 149-164.

Within a few months the same unidentified reviewer published a lengthy reply to Beecher's letters.[99] He begins with the observation

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[99] Christian Examiner, V (May, 1828), 229-261.

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that he would prefer not to prolong the controversy, but he believes that Beecher's "attempts to evade the issue by a frequent . . .

shifting of positions" and "his lofty pretensions to extensive reading in theology" are sufficiently disturbing to necessitate a reply. Refusing to accept Beecher's contention that his translation of Calvin is incorrect, and in defense of his own omission, he discusses in tedious detail several other translations of the same passage, all of which are the work of Unitarians and, in one way or another, manage to ignore the disputed phrase.[100] The only other aspects of the

[100]The significance of this one issue to the Unitarian position is seen in the fact that the author devotes twenty of his article's forty pages to "proving" that he, not Beecher, has translated the disputed passage correctly.

orthodox argument to which the reviewer devotes more than cursory attention is Beecher's rejection of the Reformation doctrine of original sin, declaring that Beecher has no right to call himself and his party Calvinists if they are so willing "to modify the Calvinistic system, as to make what was once true of it, now to be false."

There is no reference in this review to Beecher's demand that his reviewer state both the specific Calvinistic doctrines upon which the concept of infant damnation is founded and the names of any contemporary Calvinistic writers who explicitly believe in it. It may be that the reviewer intended to do so later, for, at the end of his review, he does say hastily that he must defer further remarks to a future opportunity. That article, however, did not appear, and Beecher, after waiting for over a year and admitting that he had exhausted his patience, addressed another series of letters to the editor of what was then called the Christian Examiner and Theological Review.[101] Insofar

[101] S of P, III (January, 1830), 17-24; (February, 1830), 72-86; (April, 1830), 181-195.

as his argument is concerned, Beecher says little that is new. He summarizes the history of the controversy thus far, states again that it was his deliberate intention "to charge living men with slandering living men," repeats his belief that the Calvinists "of Boston, of New England, and of the United States" do not hold to the doctrine that infants are damned, and says he has successfully proved his earlier charge that the Unitarians are guilty of bearing witness against their neighbors.

After exulting for several paragraphs in what he believes to be the overwhelming success of his own arguments, Beecher turns to his reviewer's frequent complaint that "he [Beecher] has made pretensions to an acquaintance with authors which he does not possess." With considerable objectivity, Beecher admits that his original note may have given the impression that he wanted to vindicate all Calvinists of all time from the charge of believing in infant damnation--though he insists such was never his intention. He acknowledges also that he has deserved, in a few instances, "the buffeting" which he has received at the hands of his reviewer for asserting more than he can substantiate, and he offers to make an honorable retraction if any of these accusations can actually be proved. However, he is certain that he has little to fear, for he knew

> that the Calvinistic system did not contain the doctrine of infant damnation . . . that living Calvinists, as a body, did not believe or teach it . . . that no American theological

> writer of any eminence taught it . . . and that no ancient respectable Calvinistic writers taught it.

Upon his conviction that this knowledge was unimpeachable, he originally wrote his note, defended it at length, and now believes he has achieved his stated goal of vindicating the Calvinistic church of his day from Unitarian charges that it holds to the doctrine of infant damnation.

Contemporary evaluations of this controversy vary considerably, depending largely upon the commentator's own religious convictions. Ellis, in his Half Century of Unitarian Controversy, claims that Beecher was utterly and most ingloriously vanquished and that his opponent gained an unquestionable victory.[102] On the other hand,

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[102] _____Ellis, A Half Century of Unitarian Controversy (n.p., n.d.), pp. 83-84.

Beecher's son Charles, in a surprisingly objective appraisal of the entire affair, submits that "the utmost the reviewer could claim to have proved was that Dr. Beecher had rashly asserted more in respect to early Calvinistic writers than he could maintain."[103] Despite such

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[103] Beecher, II, 103.

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differences of opinion, however, both the Calvinists and the Unitarians were later to admit that this discussion, minor as it was in comparison with other aspects of their religious controversy, marked a significant era in theological advancement. Never before had the doctrine of infant damnation been so openly and earnestly denied; never before had the salvation of infants by implication been so distinctly

maintained as the faith of the Christian church. Henceforth, the doctrine of infant damnation would cease to be an issue in the Unitarian-Calvinist controversy and within twenty years would be all but forgotten.

Conclusion

With the publication of an article by the Reverend George Cheever in the Spirit of the Pilgrims for December, 1833, the controversy between the Unitarians and Calvinists virtually ceased. The results of this controversy, if results are to be determined by the number of converts added to one's cause, or by the number of differences settled, were minimal for both sides. Neither had been able to convince members of the opposing party that there was a religious system more satisfying or more credible than that in which they already believed. In fact quite the opposite seemed to have happened, for as people from both groups zealously defended their faith against what they considered to be unjust accusations, they also grew more familiar with its tenets and more convinced than before of its superiority over all other religious systems. Nor had any doctrinal matters been resolved, for as long as the orthodox relied ultimately upon the infallible authority of Scripture and the liberals on their own "Heaven-inspired reason," no common premises could be established and all arguments would be inconclusive.

But the conductors of the Spirit of the Pilgrims were satisfied, for they had achieved their primary objective which, as stated in the first article of volume one, was to drive Unitarianism from

concealment and force its leaders to define and defend their doctrines. They were also encouraged by the Unitarians' recently evinced indifference to controversy, an attitude which the orthodox correctly believed to be indicative of a broader spiritual apathy among the liberals. Convinced, therefore, that they had successfully silenced their opponents, or that they, at least, need no longer fear Unitarian competition in spiritual matters, the Calvinists felt free to turn to the problem of division within their own party.

CHAPTER III

THE INTRA-ORTHODOX DOCTRINAL CONTROVERSY

Introduction and Background

The doctrinal controversy between the Calvinists and the Unitarians was undoubtedly the most publicized and significant American religious debate of the nineteenth century. However, it was less relevant to the development of the evangelical church than a series of battles waged within Calvinist orthodoxy itself between those who sought to preserve the doctrines of the reformers and those who were convinced that only new interpretations of old doctrines would enable Calvinism to survive. One such controversy involved the Consistent Calvinists[1] of Massachusetts and a group of ministers and professors in Connecticut. The latter, who espoused a brand of Calvinism far more liberal than that of their opponents, eventually came to be known as the Yale or New Haven theologians. Their theology, which Sidney Mead calls "an offspring of the forced marriage of New

[1]The term "Consistent Calvinist" is synonymous with "New Divinity" as used in the preceding chapters. It refers to those Calvinists who, in the early 1800's, abandoned several of the more paradoxical, inexplicable aspects of Calvinism but, nevertheless, still adhered closely to the Calvinistic system as interpreted by Jonathan Edwards. Included in this group were the founders of the Christian Spectator and the Spirit of the Pilgrims. These men frequently referred to themselves as "Consistent Calvinists"--particularly when contrasting their beliefs with those of the "Old Calvinists" (who continued to resist doctrinal change) or the New Haven scholars (a more liberal group whose theology is discussed in this chapter.) In accord with contemporary usage, the terms "conservative" and "liberal" will also be used from time to time throughout this chapter to designate the Consistent Calvinists and the New Haven theologians respectively. These terms are in no way related to the conservatives and liberals of the Calvinist-Unitarian controversy as discussed in the preceding chapters.

England Calvinism and revivalism," was born during the revivals of 1800 under Timothy Dwight and grew to maturity during the Unitarian controversy of the 1820's. Thus, the most unified period in the history of American Calvinism was, ironically, also the period which nurtured its most divisive controversy.

The issues about which the New Haven theologians built their system emerged not out of an abstract chaos but were forced upon them by continuous changes in the social, political, and intellectual life of nineteenth-century America. These men, moreover, unlike the isolated rural preachers of the colonies who "whimsically spun webs of theological fancy to be suspended from nothing more tangible than the rafters of heaven," were active ministers who involved themselves in all aspects of contemporary life and attempted to relate their theological treatises to the desires and needs of the people they served.[2]

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[2]Mead, p. vii.

Both the Consistent Calvinists and these New Haven scholars had inherited from their New England forbears several troublesome doctrines. Although the Consistent Calvinists took pride in the "consistency" of their theological system and believed they had satisfactorily countered their ancestors' absurdities, many of their explanations only heightened the central paradoxes of the Christian religion. The New Haven theologians, therefore, determined to use common sense and depend on the reasonableness of their position to convince their hearers that theirs was the more practical, if not the superior, system of theology.

The leading expositors of New Haven theology during the 1820's and '30's were Lyman Beecher and Nathaniel Taylor, both of whom figure prominently in the Spirit of the Pilgrims' controversy between their party and its more conservative contemporaries. The two met by chance in Dr. Dwight's office when Beecher was still a relatively unknown Connecticut preacher and Taylor Dwight's personal secretary. As a result of this meeting, at which Taylor mistook the unkempt, ruddy-complexioned Beecher for a neighboring farmer and treated him accordingly, the two became inseparable, lifelong friends.[3] Considering their differences of background and interest, their close friendship is particularly surprising.

[3]Beecher, when reminded late in life of their first meeting, said, "Ah, yes, we took hold of hands in Dr. Dwight's study and we never let go!" (_____ Hatch, Personal Reminiscences [n.p., n.d.], p. 32, quoted in ibid., p. 34.)

Beecher, a rough, homespun individual who grew up in the villages of rural New England, was known throughout his life for his careless appearance and his refusal to respect the social amenities of the day. Uninhibited and gregarious, he was more concerned with saving souls than with speculating on theological subtleties, more at home in a rural church than a prestigious city parish. Taylor, on the other hand, was born to an influential, upper-class New England family. Handsome, reserved to the point of haughtiness, and conservative in both dress and principles, he received a call at the age of twenty-six to the First Church of New Haven which served the most prominent families of the state and the college. He later served for many years as a distinguished professor of theology at Yale, but, unlike Beecher,

he always preferred theological speculation over his work as pastor and professor.

These profound differences, however, were minimized by their mutual disagreement with Jonathan Edwards and his descendants, the Consistent Calvinists, on several doctrinal matters. In this connection, Beecher, near the beginning of their acquaintance, wrote to Taylor, concurring with his opinion, that,

> something should and may be done toward settling points which Edwards did not aim to settle, and which will, to some extent, change the current of theological speculation . . . [and show the world] that good sound Calvinism or . . . Beecherism and Taylorism, is but another name for the truth and reality of things as they exist in the nature of God and man.

Some of Edwards' defects which they determined to correct were his definition of moral agency and free will, his implication that the will is restricted by a higher cause, and his conception of innate depravity.[4]

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[4]Beecher, I, 284-287.

Though the Consistent Calvinists disliked the New-Havenites' deliberate deviation from Edwardean theology, they muted their criticism for several years. This was due primarily to their belief that the orthodox, whatever their differences, must maintain a united front if they were to be successful in their battle with the Unitarians. In 1825, however, after some twenty years of restrained but bitter discussion on both sides, the sparks of controversy, which had previously only flickered and faded, suddenly ignited and the intra-orthodox controversy blazed throughout New England. Beecher was appalled, not only because the participants on both sides were his friends, but also because he realized that, "we are watched by enemies within and without

and our condition is critical. Sectarians within and heretics without would gladly see us fall out by the way, and avail themselves of our confusion to put down our Theological Seminary, our College, and our churches."[5] Though Beecher often spoke of "hewing down" his opponents,

[5]Ibid., II, 13.

"wringing their necks off," and "hanging them on their own gallows," he actually dreaded argument and, therefore, did all he could to mediate between the protagonists within each party. But his efforts were unsuccessful. Taylor and several of his Yale colleagues were convinced that people must hear the truth, and they, consequently, refused to minimize their differences any longer.[6] The Consistent Calvinists,

[6]Not even the label "Pelagian" could intimidate Taylor's colleague, Dr. Fitch, who, in asserting his freedom to depart from theological tradition, stated: "If Augustine held that there is a sin in any one before sin begins to be, or that there is sin in any without beginning; or if he affirmed that sin begins in something totally different in kind from all choice or preference of mind; verily, on this specific point, I must look somewhere else for truth and correctness, even if I wander, in search of it, to the door of Pelagius." (Smith, p. 104.)

likewise, were certain that the preservation of truth, as they saw it, was more important than unity within the Calvinistic church or even victory in their battle with Unitarianism.[7]

[7]Most contemporary and modern scholars concede that a variety of factors, converging en masse upon the orthodox during the mid-twenties, were together responsible for the rather sudden refusal of both groups to remain silent. First, the conservatives were growing increasingly intolerant of every minor divergence from what they believed to be orthodox Calvinism. Thus many insignificant differences which would ordinarily have been excused as normal--even healthy--deviations among so large a body as the Calvinists of New England, created bitter animosity and broke up lifelong friendships. Second, several individuals,

most notably the Reverend Thomas Hewitt, objected to Taylor for strictly personal reasons and turned the uninformed public against him and all who professed a preference for the New Haven views. Third, there was much opposition among the conservatives to Beecher who, they believed, was condoning the sensational revival tactics of Charles G. Finney in New York state. Fourth, it was not until the twenties that the conservatives recognized the "dangerous" emphasis placed by the liberals on reason. Though they took pride in their systematic theology and logical explanations of doctrinal matters, these conservatives continually minimized the role of reason in the evolution of theological opinion. Only after their heated controversy with the Unitarians over the role of reason in scriptural interpretation did they fully realize the danger inherent in Taylor's assertion that "the Book shall be tried at the bar of human reason." Finally, the Unitarians created suspicion among the orthodox community by capitalizing on certain minor differences within Protestantism, thus drawing attention away from their own controversy with the Calvinists.

Of these two groups, the more belligerent and aggressive were the Consistent Calvinists, who drew courage both from the size of their constituency and from the fact that they had tradition behind them. Subsequent to the eruption of controversy in the mid-twenties, the conservatives bided their time, waiting for the right opportunity to open fire on the heretical New Haven doctrines. That opportunity came in 1828 when Taylor published his Concio ad Clerum, a sermon in which he stated more clearly than ever before his peculiar theological position. Immediately after its publication the full fury of the opposition burst upon him. Even Bennet Tyler, Asahel Nettleton, and Leonard Woods, Taylor's former friends and colleagues, suddenly expressed great concern at his divergence from vital Calvinistic truths.[8]

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[8]These men had, some years earlier, joined with Beecher and Taylor in a fight against disestablishment in Connecticut and had, as late as 1824, been pleased to discover that they (with Taylor and Beecher) were not the "Old Calvinists" that the Unitarians thought they were. Nettleton, for example, on April 2, 1824, wrote to Beecher: "I believe it to be a matter of fact that you and I are really a different kind of Calvinist from what Unitarians have imagined. . . . We do preach moral

obligation and dependence different from many of our old divines . . . in some things the Calvinism of Connecticut or New England has undergone an important change. . . . We feel no concern for old Calvinism." (Beecher, I, 549-552.)

Beecher, aware that only trouble would result from so bitter and prejudiced a controversy, fought to keep it out of the Spirit of the Pilgrims. Representative of his efforts is a letter to Taylor, dated September 23, 1830. After a conference during which Beecher and a group of New England ministers (who apparently comprised the periodical's board of conductors) discussed the possibility of opening its pages to the New Haven argument and unanimously voted against it, Beecher gave Taylor the following reasons for their decision--and his concurrence with it:

1. It is perfectly manifest to my mind that the public sentiment does not demand the controversy, but is opposed to having it . . .
2. I think there is on both sides, among those of us most deeply interested, a state of feeling which is too strong to be managed safely in a controversy. . . . if we do push the controversy now, as we shall if we let all loose, it will work up into a practical schism . . . and pull down on our heads the ruins of a glorious edifice now going up. I think also that our heat, and sense of injury, and of the importance of the point in dispute, will so far surpass that of the mass of the community that they will not sympathize with us, and that on both sides we shall, in their eyes, walk naked and expose our shame.
3. Nearly all the public sentiment . . . will be apt . . . to vent itself upon New Haven theology as being at least the needless occasion of existing troubles.
4. There is also so much ignorance, and alarm, and fever up now, and so much temptation to keep it up, that I do not think we should stand a fair chance; i.e., points would be started and resisted which in a calm state of things would pass unquestioned . . .
5. I am seriously apprehensive that we should, if we have not, push them back into errors which it may take fifty years to eradicate . . .
6. Another reason which weighs greatly with me is, that we can not prevent it from becoming a war of theological seminaries,

> and, if virulence arises, can not prevent it from affecting Yale.[9]

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[9] Ibid., pp. 174-175.

However, shortly after making this detailed statement, Beecher changed his mind and began to advocate the exposition of differences.

The occasion of his reversal was a letter sent to him by President Porter of Andover who was both a conductor of the Spirit of the Pilgrims and a close personal friend of Beecher. Porter, along with his faculty and students, was apparently disturbed by the fact that Taylor's increasing popularity was drawing students to Yale who would ordinarily have attended Andover. He therefore wrote Beecher, criticizing the New Haven views and expressing his alarm at what he believed to be Beecher's recent inclination toward Taylor's doctrinal system. He is particularly disturbed, he writes, by the "generally indefinite and obscure character" of Taylor's sermons, a method which he fears Beecher too will adopt if he continues to depart from the truth. But he also questions specific doctrinal matters that he believes can as accurately be ascribed to Beecher as to Taylor. He believes, for example, that

> these views are not built on the BIBLE, but on philosophical theories as to man's mind and powers of agency, that your preaching does not draw its proof from the Scriptures, and therefore does not lead men to "search the Scriptures," as much as the plain, serious preaching common in New England pulpits, that you exalt one part of Calvinism,.viz., human agency, so as virtually to lose sight of its correlate, human dependence, and thus make regeneration a result of means and instrumentality, so that the sinner is born rather "of blood, or of the will of man, than of God;"

Admitting that such innovations are not, in themselves, heretical, he

is convinced that those who preach in this manner will tend to modify Calvinism even further in order to appease the opposition and appeal to the public. He also warns Beecher that if he persists in his present manner of preaching, he must no longer "use the plural pronoun" as if he were a spokesman for all Calvinists, but must speak for himself only.[10]

[10] Ibid., II, 117-125.

Beecher, in a lengthy reply to Porter's admonitions, states that "never before, as in reading your letter, have the emotions of surprise . . . and grief held such strange conflict in my mind." He objects to Porter's contention that he has built his views "not on the Bible, but on philosophical views" and insists that the doctrine of Calvinism cannot be preached without explanation and interpretation. He also denies that he has distorted the specific doctrines of inspiration, dependence, regeneration, and depravity, stating conversely that he has kept the "essential doctrines" or "vital interest" of Calvinism in all areas. While admitting that his preaching has, of late, been adapted to the exigencies of revivalism, he is certain that his results have justified his means. He closes by promising Porter that he will try to present his doctrinal positions with greater clarity in the future, but he despairs "of ever reducing . . . hyperboles and metaphors to logical precision" and will, therefore, "probably go on sinning" as before.[11]

[11] Ibid., 125-141.

Porter professed himself satisfied with this reply. However, the fact that he, a close friend, had questioned Beecher's theological position, made Beecher realize that the time had come to undertake a serious exposition and clarification of the New Haven views. Whether he liked it or not, he and his periodical could no longer remain aloof from the controversy. Thus, within a few months the Spirit of the Pilgrims was admitting controversial articles to its pages. Unlike the Christian Spectator which had been purchased by a group of Yale sympathizers to defend their own doctrinal position and consequently aired only one side of the issue, the Spirit attempted to give equal space to participants within each group. This was undoubtedly due to the fact that its conductors and contributors were themselves divided on the problem, with Woods, Tyler, Stuart, and Porter siding with the conservatives, Beecher and Taylor representing the liberals, and Pond, as editor, agreeing with the Andover group but attempting to reconcile the protagonists on both sides.[12] Although the Spirit's involvement

[12]Frank Hugh Foster and others state that Pond, a pupil of Nathaniel Emmons, was entirely Edwardean. He did not follow Taylor in his endeavors to improve theodicy, maintaining instead that God could prevent all sin without impairing free will. He regarded as a strong argument for this position his personal knowledge that God can convert sinners. He also believed that the Holy Spirit is the only efficient cause of all holy affections and that the Bible is man's only source of Christian doctrine (Foster, pp. 436-438). With such views as these it was impossible for him to follow Taylor and Beecher in their theological speculations.

in the Andover-New Haven debate was extensive, we need only consider two series of articles in order to become familiar with the issues which created the controversy and the emotions which prevented its conclusion.

Participating in these series, which ran simultaneously in volumes five and six of the periodical, were the leading exponents of both schools: Tyler, Woods, Beecher, and Taylor.

The Beecher-Woods Correspondence

The less significant, but no less absorbing, of the two series was that between Woods and Beecher. Their six letters in the Spirit of the Pilgrims were preceded and accompanied by an active exchange of letters in private, the object of the series being to allay excitement among all controversialists and to dissuade others from heated controversy.[13] The letters are particularly interesting for their revelation

[13]Beecher, II, 194.

of the characters of the two participants. Woods, like Beecher, was known for his kindly, conciliatory nature and for his belief that solid agreement between the two Calvinistic groups was necessary if they were to combat their common Unitarian enemy. Though he had strong convictions on the fundamentals of the faith, he was cautious in expressing his opinions and moderate in his judgments of men and theories. Early in the century he had been instrumental in resolving the Harvard-Andover controversy, and he was now hopeful that he might again play the role of mediator and restrain, if not avert altogether, this undesirable argument within Calvinism.[14]

[14]Williston Walker, Ten Leaders, pp. 375-376.

In embarking upon a discussion with Beecher, Woods was going

against the advice of his conservative friends, many of whom were at this point so prejudiced that they trusted the integrity and honesty of no one on the opposing side--not even their old friend Lyman Beecher. However, Woods, in his first letter, expresses confidence that he knows Beecher better than his advisors do, and he is certain that Beecher will speak honestly and unreservedly what he believes:

> Firm as a rock I feel this heart of mine to be, being fully persuaded that we are doing what God approves. I have counted the cost. I suppose you have. I want to be perfectly honest and fair; I know you do. I suspect myself more than I do you. But you will have some severe trials with your particular friends. . . . My dear brother, I have made up my mind to act for Christ and for the judgment day.[15]

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[15]Beecher, II, 194-195. Letter dated June 6, 1832.

In almost immediate reply, Beecher echoes Woods's sentiments regarding the conditions under which their discussion will be conducted and states that he too has a "uniform aversion to controversy between brethren." He adds that he is especially bothered by this controversy because its participants agree on the fundamental doctrines of the Gospel and their differences "are more imaginary than real." In support of his latter assertion, with which he knows many conservatives will disagree, he presents several factors which he considers to be more responsible for the "present state of feeling" than "any peculiar obliquity of heart." He observes first that the recent Unitarian defection from evangelical doctrine has created widespread fear that such an apostacy might again creep in unawares. Second, he notes that improvements in transportation and communication enable minor controversial issues to spread over large areas, so that what "once might

have agitated the waters of a pond may now roll up mountain waves." He believes, third, that Jonathan Edwards, in the previous century, gave a new impulse to intellectual action and that in his train are still arising ministers "of powerful and discriminating minds" who demand the right to think and to speak for themselves.

Fourth, he finds a similar increase in intelligent laymen who, due to such recent developments as the Sunday School movement, are qualified to explicate biblical passages. Such examination and interpretation may create dissension within the church but are essential, for they will "detect any alloy, and burn up any wood and hay and stubble, which we, in our unskillfulness may have mingled with the true materials." He asserts, finally, that recent revisions in seminary instruction, whereby students study Scripture "without reference to any philosophy or theory, but that of the Bible" have created "a great solicitude" among the clergy who are now, more than ever before, alive to what is being taught in the seminaries and suspicious of every divergence from traditional thought.

Beecher is convinced that no general rules can be prescribed to reconcile the many differences of opinion which arise from free inquiry. But he is also certain that whenever controversy appears imminent, an informal private conference between the participants will demonstrate that their differences are not of sufficient magnitude to justify a public discussion. He suggests, in conclusion, that any discussion between himself and Woods be conducted as a "calm comparison" rather than as "a polemic discussion" with its temptations to invective and abuse.[16]

[16] *S of P*, V (July, 1832), 392-402.

Woods's first letter in the *Spirit of the Pilgrims* is similar to his earlier, unpublished communication with which the Beecher-Woods exchange began. He agrees with Beecher that the church should encourage free inquiry but wonders what can be done to "prevent that coldness, alienation, and strife, which minor differences . . . are apt to produce among Christian ministers." In answering his own question, he provides several interesting insights into the religious practices of his day. He suggests, for example, that good ministers have frequently contributed to unnecessary controversy "by thrusting little differences into frequent notice, and giving them a prominence which does not properly belong to them." This happens not only in their preaching but also in their more private intercourse, for whenever certain pastors meet, they immediately bring up disputed matters and "dwell upon them . . . till they lose all candor and patience towards those who dissent from them." Woods also believes that many ministers, during the examination of candidates for the ministry, give undue prominence to a "number of little points" instead of concentrating on the fundamental doctrines of Christianity. In the ensuing debate, during which the examining ministers take sides and strive to show their size as disputants, the candidate's essential orthodoxy is all but forgotten. He, as a result, frequently fails his examination--not for any lack of "intellectual furniture" but because his peculiar phraseology and minor philosophical differences have created an unjustifiable amount of antagonism toward him.

Woods is also concerned lest the orthodox religious periodicals which "are professedly intended for the eludication and defense of the fundamental doctrines . . . of revealed religion" give themselves over to "doubtful, or unimportant, or singular speculations." Should such a thing happen, he fears that a magazine and pamphlet war will follow, during which the controversy will be carried into the "bosom of society . . . and interpose a wall of separation" between the participants. In order that the press does not become an instrument of error and discord, Woods pleads with all orthodox periodicals, including the Spirit of the Pilgrims, "to exhibit only the grand principles of Christianity" in their columns.

After emphasizing his fervent desire to exercise a Christian magnanimity in rising above little provocations, Woods admits that he, "very frankly . . . [is] far from considering all differences among the professed orthodox to be of this character." This statement opens the way for "a free, animated, and useful discussion" between himself and Beecher on several pre-arranged topics, all of which must involve only basic Christian doctrines. He concludes, however, that Beecher need not fear lest their discussion become uncharitable and contentious, for he intends to abide by the rules thus far laid out and to defend his position with scriptural proof alone.[17]

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[17] S of P, V (August, 1832), 455-472.

Recognizing that any discussion into which he and Woods enter will henceforth be determined by their agreement on the fundamental doctrines of Christianity, Beecher submits an outline of those that he

believes will be accepted by "a very large proportion of the ministry of the two denominations, if not by nearly every man." Among his twelve doctrines are original sin, innate depravity, free will, regeneration, election, and justification by faith. Although he manages to include in his outline every topic upon which the Consistent Calvinists and the New Haven theologians disagree, he limits himself to a brief statement of each doctrine and, in so doing, demonstrates that both groups are in essential agreement.[18] Further explanation would

[18] S of P, V (September, 1832), 493-503.

inevitably have revealed differences, but Beecher wished to avoid, not begin, a battle and therefore took no chances.

Woods, having been allowed to peruse Beecher's letter in manuscript, replied only four days later. He states immediately that "a fondness for novel terms and phrases in theology has often been the occasion of fruitless debate," and then discusses the importance of using common phraseology and precise definitions in all theological discourse. In this philological discussion he does not directly implicate Beecher. However, his frequent reference to such words as depravity, regeneration, and ability can only be interpreted as a suggestion that Beecher, in the future, use these terms in "the common sense" lest he "appear to differ from others, when there is really no difference." He then examines Beecher's statement of fundamental doctrines and finds them to be "lucid and comprehensive" but skeletal and therefore of little value to their ensuing discussion. His letter closes with an announcement to the readers of the Spirit of the Pilgrims

that he and Beecher soon plan to discuss the differences between their respective systems of theology, "withholding nothing which we deem important, and insisting upon nothing which is trifling."[19]

[19] S of P, V (September, 1832), 503-508.

At this time, however, their correspondence was temporarily suspended while Beecher moved to Cincinnati, to assume the presidency of the newly organized Lane Theological Seminary. To keep their discussion before the public during the interval, he sent to Woods the proofs of his sermon on Dependence and Free-agency, soon to be published. Since its topic lay within the range of their proposed discussions, he suggested that Woods might like to comment upon it.[20]

[20] Beecher's note to Woods reads, in part, as follows: "The cares incident to a removal must suspend my part of our correspondence, till my establishment in Cincinnati. It is my purpose then to resume it. . . . I shall have pleasure in the recollection, that supposed differences, which might have arrayed our influence in opposition to each other, have, by timely explanation, so far disappeared, as to present no obstacle to our mutual confidence and affectionate co-operation. Shades of difference, as we proceed in our discussions, we shall probably discover; but none, I trust, of such vital consequence as to occasion solicitude to ourselves or others. That the subject of our correspondence may not wholly disappear from the public view during this interval, I beg your acceptance of my sermon . . . on 'Dependence and Free-agency'; . . . And now, my brother, in taking leave of you and beloved New England, it affords me great pleasure to reflect upon the candor and courtesy and kindness and Christian affection which have marked your every movement towards me . . . " (S of P, V [November, 1832], 618-619.) This issue of the Spirit also includes an article by Woods (pp. 605-618) on "Rules for the Right Conduct of Polemic Theology."

Though the Spirit of the Pilgrims does not mention it, this simple act precipitated a totally unexpected amount of tension and ill-feeling between the two men.

It seems that the sermon's proofs were returned to Beecher by way of a Dr. Wisner, who took it upon himself to revise Woods's revisions and add some of his own. Beecher, in looking over the returned proof sheets, grew increasingly angry, for he believed that Woods had either altered or deleted his every reference to moral agency, depravity, and voluntary sinfulness--the very topics on which they were to commence discussion:

> I cannot consent to be silent or equivocal on those points. I might as well not write as not to speak out. I must add that while I confide in the general friendship and candor of my good brother, I am fully persuaded that he, and Porter, and Stewart [sic] had rather pay for the whole expense of setting the type than to have it printed just now.

This disturbed Woods, who replied that he had not intentionally concealed Beecher's theological views, but rather that his "whole labor" had been "to make . . . Dr. Beecher, appear as well as possible in his own dress." He adds, moreover, that it cost him a great deal of trouble "to find and verify the quotations to which he [Beecher] had left no manner of clew." Had he endured from anyone less than his "dearly beloved brother, Dr. Beecher," he declares that his patience would have been exhausted. It is not clear to this day whether Woods or Wisner actually made the debated revisions. But no matter who was responsible, this minor incident almost destroyed the atmosphere of mutual trust and cooperation which Woods and Beecher had endeavored so sincerely to establish. It was due only to their magnanimity that apologies could be duly offered and accepted, and their discussion continued.[21]

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[21] Beecher, II, pp. 100-103.

Within a month the Spirit of the Pilgrims printed Woods's formal reply to Beecher's sermon, without commenting on the furor behind the scenes. In this letter Woods asserts without qualification that between his views and Beecher's "on the subject of man's ability and inability, there is not, so far as I can judge, any real disagreement." After studying the sermon in considerable detail, he adds that orthodox ministers of all shades will most certainly accept Beecher's belief that man "has those intellectual and moral faculties which constitute him justly accountable for his actions," but that man has, nevertheless, "an inflexible bias of will to evil." Woods does wish, however, that Beecher, in his sermons, would refer more to inability than to ability, if for no other reason than to satisfy those who would put an unfair construction on his statements.

Having said this, he decides that the only possible difference between Beecher and himself is verbal, and he determines to direct the remainder of his remarks to "modes of expression" rather than to philosophical discussions. He is especially concerned about Beecher's use of the term "natural," when referring to ability, for to him it denotes a physical quality, though to Beecher it means no such thing. He also points out several passages in which Beecher has not guarded against ambiguity as well as he generally does, and cautions Beecher against speaking of "ability" "so as to set aside, or be understood to set aside, the necessity of divine influence." In this regard he is pleased to note Beecher's statement that,

> if there is a doctrine of the Bible which is unquestionable and fundamental, it is that of fallen man's dependence for actual holiness on the special influence of the Spirit; and if there

> is a fact which every man who is saved learns experimentally, it is the certainty of his perdition, if Christ by his Spirit, does not subdue his will, and reconcile him to God.

and he urges him to repeat such statements in the future.[22]

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[22] S of P, VI (January, 1833), 19-40. For a more complete statement of Woods's position on "ability" see supra, chap. ii, pp. 141-143.

With this letter the Spirit of the Pilgrims' discussion between Woods and Beecher came to an abrupt conclusion, suggesting that their exchange may have continued in private. As a controversy it was significant, not for its explication of the differences within Calvinism, but for its implication of topics that would in other instances be the cause of major arguments, and for its demonstration of the caution and reluctance with which some participants embarked on this divisive course.

The Taylor-Tyler Debate: Background and Introduction

Unfortunately the same could not be said of the Spirit of the Pilgrims' other intra-orthodox controversy. Its participants, Nathaniel Taylor and Bennet Tyler, were impulsive, prejudiced men who allowed their personalities to dominate their writings. Displaying little concern for the stability and unity of the Calvinistic church, they devoted the greater portion of their articles to demonstrating the utterly heretical nature of the other's views and defending their own positions.

Their controversy actually began not in the Spirit of the Pilgrims, but in the Christian Spectator with a review by Taylor of the Reverend Gardner Spring's Dissertation on the Means of Regeneration. In this

sermon Spring, one of conservatism's most capable defenders, deprecated the use of "means" in regeneration and insisted that the only true way to salvation lay in confession and immediate repentance. Taylor, in reviewing the sermon, emphasized the work of the Holy Spirit in salvation, but asserted that "means," as an instrument of the Spirit, are also to be utilized by the sinner. This reply precipitated a pamphlet war which had already passed its earlier stages when Bennet Tyler, a one-time classmate of Taylor's at Yale, entered the contest with his Strictures on the Views of Nathaniel Taylor. The essence of Tyler's criticism was that Taylor "has adopted principles . . . which will lead by inevitable consequence, to the denial of important doctrines; and that his speculations will pave the way for the gradual influx of error upon the American churches."

Well aware of Beecher's attitude toward controversy within the church and evidently fearful of his reaction to such statements, Tyler wrote him also, expressing a hope that his remarks about Taylor would not lose him Beecher's fellowship. Beecher replied that Tyler was only exercising his right of free inquiry; however, he did feel that Tyler misunderstood Taylor, who might have deserved censure as a philologist but not as a theologian. Though he refused to assume responsibility for all of Taylor's opinions, he hastened to remind Tyler that neither did he feel that Taylor's work "gives currency to dangerous error."[23]

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[23]Beecher, II, 149.

Taylor and Tyler carried on their correspondence in the Christian Spectator until 1832 when, with some reluctance, the conductors of

the Spirit of the Pilgrims agreed to open their periodical to certain aspects of the controversy.[24] As presented in the Spirit, the debate

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[24]Regarding this the Spirit's editor says: "Hitherto our pages have been chiefly occupied in the discussion of subjects in regard to which Orthodox Christians are generally agreed; and there has been less of debate by our contributors, than has been common in similar periodical works. We trust it may be so in future. Still, as there are differences of opinion among our brethren, which are known deeply to interest some of the first minds in the community, and as a good understanding may perhaps be better promoted by an interchange of views on disputed points, than by endeavoring to prevent discussion; we have thought that we ought not longer to exclude articles relating to these subjects, if prepared with ability and candor. We hope the discussion, so far as we are concerned in it, may be carried on by men of experience and wisdom, and under their own proper names;--that . . . it may be, and may appear to be, an honest inquiry after truth, and not a mere struggle for victory. Communications should be of a moderate length. An article of twenty or thirty pages had better be published in a pamphlet, than crowded into a monthly magazine. We must be understood, also to be our own judges in regard to particular articles, whether to exclude or insert; and as we have opened our pages to discussions of this nature, in hope that the public good may thereby be promoted, whenever it shall seem to us that this end is not likely to be attained, we shall feel not only at liberty, but under obligations, at once to close them." (V [June, 1832], 325.)

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was not primarily theological, in the sense that it led to changes in religious thought. It was, rather, political--that is, a debate over whether New Haven Calvinism was to be permitted to continue in the Congregational churches of Connecticut and Massachusetts. Tyler held, for example, that Taylor and the Yale group had departed from orthodox Calvinism to such a degree that they ought to leave the church. Taylor, on the other hand, argued that he had not abandoned any of Calvinism's essential doctrines but had merely offered more convincing explanations of them. Mead, in summarizing the impact and effectiveness of their debate, states that,

> the ensuing controversy ran off into finer and finer distinctions, and more and more elaborate definitions and involved arguments,

> until for following generations it has become a kind of symbol for all that is incomprehensible and unimportant in theological discussion.

The reason for this becomes obvious when we realize that the parties were arguing over the results that each assumed would follow the others' doctrinal interpretations and not over anything that had actually occurred.[25] Due to the tedious complexity of both Taylor's and

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[25]Mead, pp. 222-223.

Tyler's arguments, the following discussion will be limited to the three areas of theology with which they were chiefly concerned: depravity, the divine permission of sin, and regeneration.

Taylor and Tyler on Depravity

Taylor's interest in the doctrine of depravity began shortly before the peak of the Unitarian controversy when Professor Andrews Norton, arch-opponent of Calvinism, stated that all Calvinists believed, "God creates man with a sinful nature."[26] Taylor, in order to defend

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[26]Ibid., p. 187.

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the Consistent Calvinists from this contention, formulated a theory on depravity that was entirely his own. He bluntly accuses Norton of presenting "a distorted caricature" which will not be substantiated by fair quotations from Calvinistic authors.[27] He also explains to Norton

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[27]Christian Spectator, IV (June, 1822), 301-303, quoted in Smith, p. 89.

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that when Calvinists speak of man as "depraved by nature," they mean

not that man is born with an innate physical property which is the cause of his sin, but that every man's nature is such that he will certainly sin. Such a view, he hastens to add, in no way impinges on man's "power to the contrary," that is, his ability to do good as well as evil. This conception of "certainty with power to the contrary" was soon to become the motto of the New Haven theologians, for it enabled them, as no other theory had, to hold in balance two doctrines which they believed to be equally sure: man's freedom to act as he chooses and his predestined propensity to sin. Aware that the Calvinists of his day are not at all united in their views on the doctrine of depravity, Taylor proposes a version of the doctrine to which he hopes Calvinists, as a class, will agree, stating that, "mankind come into the world in such a state, that without the interposition of divine grace, all as soon as they become moral agents, sin in every accountable act."[28]

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[28]Mead, p. 188.

Many Calvinists, however, noted Taylor's evasion of imputation and, instead of uniting behind him in opposition to the Unitarian heresy, dissented publicly with his interpretation. Even Beecher was disturbed, not because he disagreed with Taylor, but because he realized that many people would interpret Taylor's position as a departure from Calvinism. He, therefore, wrote to the Christian Spectator, warning its editors that on this issue, "Taylor must be guarded," and reminding them that "this proclaiming their hasty opinions upon the housetops

will do infinite mischief."[29] Hearing that Taylor and his colleague,

[29]Beecher, I, 350-351.

Chauncy Goodrich, were even lecturing on depravity in this manner at Yale, Beecher wrote them, stating that he "never felt so bad" as when he heard what they were so boldly teaching their students, and telling them that "they must take [it] back, or they would have the old fight over under new names."[30]

[30]Smith, p. 97.

But the New Haven men refused to be silenced. They were not eager to create trouble within the church. But they were determined to clarify their doctrinal position--which they believed both the Unitarians and the Andover group had consistently misinterpreted.

The culmination of their early attempts was Taylor's Concio ad Clerum. Delivered to the Connecticut clergy in Yale Chapel on September 10, 1828, it was a superb example of Taylor's aggressive strategy. He first eliminates all the commonly held Calvinistic theories on depravity, particularly that which presupposes an innate sinful nature, affirming instead that moral depravity "is man's own act, consisting in a free choice of some object rather than God, as his chief good;--or a free preference of the world and of worldly good, to the will and glory of God." Though he dares not deny that there was some relationship between Adam's first sin and that of his posterity, he does not try to explain precisely how that original sin could have been the occasion of universal sinfulness. In his opinion,

the reason why man sins is secondary to the certainty of the fact of sin.

Recognizing that conservative Calvinistic opposition to his views will be great, Taylor also attempts to show that the New Haven doctrine of depravity does not represent an attempt to set up any anti-orthodox peculiarity. But he was largely unsuccessful, for his latest treatment of depravity was "too explicit to be misunderstood and too bold to be ignored," and created a storm of controversy in theological circles.[31]

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[31] Ibid., pp. 104-109.

One of the few to remain convinced of Taylor's orthodoxy was his reviewer in the Spirit of the Pilgrims, who states at the beginning of his review, "We have here an able and satisfactory discussion of the natural and entire depravity of man." During the course of his remarks, the reviewer agrees with Taylor's unique definition of "nature" and his declaration that men sin voluntarily and "thus render themselves depraved." He also observes that he can see "no reason at all for such a charge" that the theological professors at New Haven have replaced orthodox principles with principles of their own, and concludes that "if indeed, there is any perceptible difference, we are satisfied it is chiefly verbal."[32] Representative of the new or

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[32] S of P. I (December, 1828), 664-666.

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reinvigorated opposition was the Reverend Joseph Harvey, who argued that the only way to account for the certainty of sin is to presuppose

a sinful nature as its efficient cause, and who was certain that Taylor's theory involved only "probability" of sin rather than "certainty" of its occurrence.[33]

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[33]Smith, pp. 110-111.

From this time on, the Connecticut and Massachusetts clergy were sharply divided into two groups, each insisting on its own fidelity to Edwardean theology. Appalled by this divisive course, several of Taylor's more conservative friends tried to rectify matters, especially the Reverend Joel Hawes of Hartford, who wrote to Taylor, commending him for the clarity and orthodoxy of his Concio ad Clerum, but advising him to give a full and frank statement of his position for those who were not yet fully satisfied.[34]

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[34]Letter from Hawes of January 23, 1832, quoted in ibid., p. 118.

Taylor, less than a week later, submitted to Hawes a fairly concise statement of his personal religious views in eleven areas, which the Spirit of the Pilgrims published in March of 1832 with the comment that its readers, "whether they accord with the writer, in all his explanations or not . . . will endeavor to judge of it with fairness and candor." Although Taylor's "creed" includes statements on doctrines ranging all the way from the Trinity to perseverance of the saints, he devotes most of his attention to those of depravity, moral agency, and regeneration. On depravity he states in article three:

> All mankind, in consequence of the fall of Adam, are born destitute of holiness, and are by nature totally depraved; in other

> words . . . all men, from the commencement of their moral agency, do without the interposition of divine grace, sin, and only sin, in all their moral conduct.

Though he professes that "with respect to . . . the great FACTS of Christianity . . . there is between the Orthodox ministry and myself an entire agreement," he admits that he may differ from some "in respect to comparatively minor points, and philosophical theories." Having made this statement, he feels free to expound further his conception of depravity.

He denies first that Adam's posterity "are in the proper sense of the language, guilty of his sin," suggesting instead that "all mankind, in consequence of Adam's sin, become sinners by their own act." He also reaffirms his conviction that, "such is the nature of the human mind, that it becomes the occasion of universal sin in men in all the appropriate circumstances of their existence; and that therefore they are truly and properly said to be sinners by nature."[35]

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[35] S of P, V (March, 1832), 173-179.

Had Taylor been content to define his position on "leading Calvinistic doctrines" rather than to insist upon explicating "minor points," he would have been safe from conservative attack, for his simple statement in article three was general enough to admit of acceptance by most orthodox clergy. As it was, however, his philosophising only added new coals to the fire of controversy.

Among the most vocal and prejudiced of Tayler's critics was Bennet Tyler, who even before the Hawes-Taylor correspondence had accused Taylor of holding unsound theological views. Firmly convinced

that Taylor had, in effect, denied total depravity, Tyler sent to the Spirit of the Pilgrims an "Examination of Dr. Taylor's Theological Views" with the expectation that it would be published anonymously, as was the periodical's practice. However, the Spirit's conductors, hoping to encourage Christian charity and courtesy in a controversy which they preferred to ignore, insisted that all communications on the subject appear under the "writer's own proper names." Thus it was that all correspondence between Woods and Beecher, as well as that between Taylor and Tyler, was signed.

Tyler begins by stating that he has no objections to Taylor's eleven articles as such, but adds that when Taylor "proceeds to . . . materially modify his statements . . . there is still cause for solicitude." Observing that the "great errors which have infested the Christian church have usually crept in unawares," he finds little consolation in his observation that Taylor apparently does not intend to deny Calvinism, for, even if

> Dr. Taylor himself should by a happy inconsistency, retain his Orthodoxy; yet if his theories are adopted by his pupils, there is reason to believe that many of them will follow them into their legitimate consequences, and thus be led to renounce some of the fundamental doctrines of the Gospel.

He, therefore, plans to show that Taylor's theories, whether Taylor admits it or not, do involve principles "subversive of some of the most prominent and important articles of his creed."

Tyler objects, first of all, to Taylor's peculiar definition of "nature," stating that "when it is said, all are by nature sinners, the meaning is, that there is something in our nature which is truly the . . . reason why all men become sinners." He also criticises

Taylor's rejection of imputation and insists that anyone who believes "that in consequence of the fall of Adam all have become sinners" must also accept the fact that "there is a real connexion between the sin of Adam and that of his posterity." However, Taylor maintains that the universal sinfulness of mankind is not to be attributed to any "constitutional propensities" different from those which Adam possessed, "but to the circumstances of temptation in which they . . . commence their moral existence." Stating his own position in opposition to this seemingly illogical conclusion, Tyler declares that the fall did bring upon man a morally contaminated nature which, like an hereditary trait, is transmitted from parent to child.[36]

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[36] S of P, V (June, 1832), 329-331.

Tyler's indictment elicited from Taylor an extremely caustic reply. He states first that the theories to which Tyler has objected are neither novel nor anti-orthodox but nearly identical to what has been taught for the past hundred years. He insists Tyler has misinterpreted his statement that "mankind come into the world with the same nature as Adam" and explains, for Tyler's benefit, that man's nature is the same in kind as Adam's but different in degree. Man, therefore, since the fall, has not been able to resist sinful action to the degree that Adam could, but he is still identical to Adam in being "as truly a human being as Adam was."

Taylor also declares that his own theory of depravity predicates a "real connexion" between Adam's fall and the sin of his posterity. However, he is, as usual, unable to specify the exact nature of that

connection. Well aware of Tyler's admiration for Jonathan Edwards, he concludes with the provocative remark that Edwards too believed in circumstantial rather than hereditary depravity. He then asks Tyler whether he can deny that President Edwards was orthodox. Nothing could have been more insulting to Tyler who believed that he, not Taylor, stood on the side of history, tradition, and President Edwards.[37]

[37] S of P, V (August, 1832), 428-429, 438-439.

Not content merely to clarify and defend his own views, Taylor promptly followed up this article with another in which he determined to show the evil consequences which logically derived from Tyler's notion of original sin. The gist of this offensive thrust is that Tyler's theory makes God the responsible author of sin, accounts for all sin by asserting a previous sin as its cause, is inconsistent with the doctrine of ability or moral agency, and subverts the doctrine of moral inability. With this Taylor believes he has successfully countered Tyler on all fronts.[38]

[38] Quoted and discussed in Smith, p. 121. No additional bibliographical information given.

Tyler, however, remained undaunted by Taylor's accusations and took his adversary sharply to task in a lengthy article. Lamenting that he has been charged "with having advanced opinions which not only lead to the worst of heresies, but which involve the most horrid blasphemy," he insists that his views have been entirely misrepresented. He does, indeed, believe that the fall fundamentally changed human

nature, and that all men are naturally inclined to evil. But he has never attempted to define the nature of that change, nor has he said that "it involves the physical structure of the mind." Taylor, moreover, has ignored his statement that all men, though they are by nature inclined to evil, are also free and voluntarily commit every act of sin.

Particularly disturbing to Tyler is Taylor's profound misinterpretation of traditional Calvinism which has caused him to place all Consistent Calvinists outside Edwards' camp and to assert that the New Haven scholars alone are Edwards' true heirs. In retaliation for this humiliating pronouncement, Tyler contends that Taylor is no more orthodox or deserving of tolerance than the Unitarians who say "man is by nature innocent and pure . . . no more inclined to vice than to virtue." With this hasty and inaccurate generalization, Tyler proves himself to be equally as unperceptive, intolerant, and unfair as he has accused Taylor of being. But such was the nature of these protagonists that neither was ever able to see the error of his own position. Tyler concludes this article by expressing his regret "that Dr. Taylor should have allowed himself to indulge in such complaints of personal injury . . . misquotation, misrepresentation, etc.," reminding him that "when a man writes for the public and calls in question prevalent opinions," he ought to expect that his views will be carefully examined.[39]

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[39] S of P, V (October, 1832), 545-551, 562-563.

Taylor, replying after a brief interval, does not appear to have read Tyler's closing paragraph, for he immediately accuses Tyler

of misquoting and misinterpreting him on the relationship between Adam's nature and that of man. "I did admit," he says, "that mankind come into the world with the same nature in kind, as . . . Adam. But I also said . . . [their natures] differ in degree." Aware, however, that his statements are purely speculative, Taylor attempts to forestall hostile criticism on this issue by reverting to the method of the Concio ad Clerum and declaring:

> I do not affirm that difference in the degree of propensity to natural good is, but simply that it may be, the reason, why Adam did not sin, and why his posterity do sin. All that I feel authorized to affirm is that such is the nature of mankind, that in all the appropriate circumstances of their existence, they will uniformly sin.

Yet, he ironically has enough confidence in his theory to utilize it as the basis of a long argument which concludes that Tyler has not proved that Adam and his posterity--if both were created equally innocent--would have an equal resistance to sin and could not, therefore, differ only in degree. Because Tyler has by implication developed his entire argument about this unwarranted belief, Taylor contends that his reasoning is generally faulty and his conclusions, without exception, invalid.

Even more disturbing to Taylor than his adversary's unwarranted assumptions is Tyler's insistence that the New Haven views on human nature are similar to those of the Unitarians and, therefore, heretical. In this connection, he states that Tyler, though he "knew it all before," will be gratified to hear him repeat,

> that while I reject his [Tyler's] doctrine of a constitutional propagated propensity to sin; I fully believe that from man's propensities to natural good in the permanent circumstances in which he is placed, results a very strong tendency or proneness

> to sin; and that in this import of the language, man is much more inclined, or disposed to sin than to holiness— . . .

He believes, moreover, that man's natural affections are evil rather than good, as opposed to the Unitarians who repeatedly stress the innate moral goodness of the natural affections.

Taylor concludes by attempting to demonstrate his firm belief that Edwards, rather than supporting the conservative position of Tyler and the Consistent Calvinists, actually contradicts their every tenet. As proof of this assertion, he quotes several passages in which Edwards does say that Calvinism "neither implies nor infers" any such thing as an innate taint which causes sin. However, in selecting these quotations and commenting on them, Taylor is less than fair to both Edwards and Tyler, for he conspicuously ignores Edwards' belief that there is a definite identity between Adam and his posterity and, hence, a real connection between Adam's sin and theirs. Taylor reveals his awareness of this when he suggests, after several pages of quotations, that even if Edwards "did in words maintain that man is born with a corrupt nature or a propensity . . . to sin," the real question is not what did President Edwards say, "but what did President Edwards mean?"[40]

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[40] S of P, VI (January, 1833), 4-18.

Before printing Tyler's reply to this detailed critique of his views, the editor of the Spirit of the Pilgrims states that its conductors had intended to publish nothing more on this controversy, but "inasmuch as Dr. Tyler complains of misrepresentations which he wishes

to correct . . . we have concluded, on the whole, to insert his Letter . . . in the miscellaneous department of the present number." Since their readers have tired of the controversy, any participants who wish to carry it further "must seek some other vehicle of communication" than the pages of the Spirit of the Pilgrims.[41]

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[41] S of P, VI (May, 1833), 284.

Tyler, whose feelings were obviously hurt by the editor's note, begins by defending his right to more of the periodical's space. He contends, first, that Taylor has been given "twice the number of pages" and asks, "on what principle is he [Taylor] entitled to this double privilege?" Furthermore, since the editor of the Christian Spectator has refused to print his reply, there is no periodical other than the Spirit to which he can turn. Finally, he asserts that since his views have been grossly misrepresented, he needs an opportunity to correct them for the benefit of the public--if not for Taylor's enlightenment.

Continuing his discussion, Tyler states that he has never been more thoroughly misrepresented than by Taylor in his preceding discourse on original sin and depravity:

> Both Dr. Taylor and the reviewer [in the Christian Spectator] represent me as maintaining that depravity is a physical attribute, . . . that depravity is "an inherent property of man's very nature, which amounts to an utter disqualification--an absolute natural inability for right moral action"--and that man "is led to disobey rather than obey God, by the same cause or the operation of the same physical law of his being, as that by which the lion is led to feed on flesh and not on grass."

He admits he has maintained that man's moral nature, since the fall, is different from what it was before, but insists he has never claimed

that sinners are utterly unable to do good. He also maintains that men possess a native, hereditary propensity to evil, but protests that he has never even pretended to be able to state in what this propensity consists: "Adam was naturally inclined to obey God. His posterity without exception, are naturally inclined to disobey him." This, according to Tyler, is plain common sense, needing no further explication or defense.

Tyler also criticizes Taylor for deliberately presenting only a partial survey of Edwards' position on depravity, maintaining that if he and Edwards are correctly interpreted, their views are complementary rather than contradictory. He concludes by stating that though he prefers peace to strife, peace can never be purchased at the expense of truth. In keeping with his declaration, he declares that he alone has been right and that his opponent has consistently subverted the Calvinistic doctrine of depravity. Thus he brings this aspect of the Taylor-Tyler controversy to a bitter and inconclusive end.[42]

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[42] S of P, VI (May, 1833), 284-285, 296-306.

Taylor and Tyler on the Divine Permission of Sin

So far as the New Haven men were concerned, the central issue in their argument with the Andover group was that which concerned the origin and permission of sin. Jonathan Edwards himself prepared the way for this intra-orthodox controversy when he refused to accept the scheme of the Westminster Confession by which the fall of Adam was referred to his own free will rather than to the will of God.

According to Edwards, the fall proceeded from the will but was caused by motives which were ultimately presented by God. He did not actually teach that "God willed the fall" and is the author of sin, as his Arminian opponents frequently stated, but rather that God ordered the system in which sin would infallibly come to pass. Thus Edwards made man the author of sin, while allowing God to remain the author of the system.[43] Hopkins, in trying to clarify Edwards' doctrine on sin

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[43]Foster, pp. 78,79.

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for the laity, had no intentions of altering it. But his emphasis was unmistakably different:

> That God did will the existence of moral evil, in determining, at least, to permit it, when he could have prevented it . . . must be granted by all who would avoid ascribing to Him that imperfection, impotence . . . be it what it may, which introduced sin, contrary to his will; which is indeed shockingly impious, and real blasphemy, to every considerate and rationally pious mind. We may infer from this, with the greatest certainty that it is, all things considered, or in the view of the omniscient God <u>wisest</u> and <u>best</u> that moral evil should exist.

So determined was Hopkins to preserve God's sovereignty and omnipotence, that he overemphasized God's permission of sin until he made God explicitly responsible for the appearance of sin on earth. From this, as his critics were quick to demonstrate, it was only a step to the belief that God, not man, is the author of sin. That step was soon taken by Nathaniel Emmons, a student of Hopkins, and was subsequently adopted by many New England ministers and laymen.[44]

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[44]Hopkins, <u>Works</u> (n.p., n.d.), I, 108, quoted in <u>ibid</u>., p. 173.

The Consistent Calvinists of the nineteenth century were inclined to accept the Edwardean position, though they disagreed among themselves regarding the amount and type of responsibility that should be assigned to God. Beecher and Taylor, however, had difficulty accepting any doctrine which seemed to limit man's freedom or his moral agency. Thus it was inevitable that they should, early in their careers, express disapproval of both the Edwardean and Hopkinsian systems. Their divergence from Edwards' theology on this issue is particularly remarkable when we recall that one of their chief concerns, in the argument over depravity, was to demonstrate that they, in all instances, were the true heirs of Edwards. Beecher disagreed primarily with the eighteenth century's undue emphasis on God's sovereignty which, he believed, could not help but make God ultimately responsible for sin and leave man without blame. Reminiscing later in life about his gradual rejection of this Edwardean emphasis, he said:

> I remember when Emmons came out high, dry, and stiff that God was the author of sin. Dr. Dwight had prepared several strong sermons against that. Taylor and I used to talk about Emmons and wonder how he could possibly have room in his system for accountability. To me it seemed an utter impossibility.[45]

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[45]Beecher, I, 375. Beecher also abhorred the books in which Edwards, Hopkins, Emmons, and other arch-conservatives poured out their spiritual anguish and professed their inability to find comfort or security in the Christian life. Of these writings (on which he was raised) Beecher once said, "They left me in a state of permanent hypochondria--the horrors of a mind without guidance, motive, or ability to do anything. They are a bad generation of books, on the whole. . . . I was converted in spite of such books. . . . I have used my evangelical philosophy all my lifetime and retrieved people without number out of the sloughs of high Calvinism." (Beecher, I, 30.)

Taylor, on the other hand, was more concerned with Edwards'

failure to be explicit on certain details and with his apparent lack of interest in God's fundamental goodness. However, Taylor's preoccupation with the problem of depravity kept him from commenting publicly on the permission of sin until he delivered his Concio ad Clerum. In this sermon Taylor emphatically maintains that God is essentially good and cannot therefore be held responsible for the existence of sin. To take the place of this abominable doctrine (which he is certain all conservatives accept) he formulates the theory that God prefers holiness but permits sin because He can do nothing else. Central to this theory is Taylor's conception of the moral government of God which he elsewhere defines as:

> THE INFLUENCE OF THE AUTHORITY OR OF THE RIGHTFUL AUTHORITY OF A MORAL GOVERNOR OR MORAL BEINGS, DESIGNED SO TO CONTROL THEIR ACTIONS AS TO SECURE THE GREAT END OF ACTION ON THEIR PART THROUGH THE MEDIUM OF LAW. . . . Its law is the promulgated will of the moral governor, as a decisive rule of action to his subjects, requiring benevolence on their part as the best kind of action and the sum of disobedience, expressing his preference of the action required to its opposite all things considered, his satisfaction with obedience and with nothing but obedience on the part of subjects . . . and including the appropriate sanctions of the moral governor's authority.[46]

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[46] Taylor, Lectures, I, 7 and 16-17.

Stated more succinctly, moral government is nothing more than God's chosen system for maintaining order on earth, under which every man is directly responsible for his own actions and within which God, as moral governor, influences the thoughts and actions of his subjects without hindering their freedom. It is not difficult to see how, with such a doctrine, Taylor could preserve God's goodness and at the same time stress man's moral agency and personal responsibility for his sinful condition.

One of the first to attack Taylor was Leonard Woods, who said that Taylor was proposing "a doctrine of human power . . . at the expense of the doctrine of divine power" and at variance with the Scriptures. So far as Woods is concerned, God permits sin only because his wisdom demands it, not because his power is circumscribed by that of the human will. He also reaffirms the traditional Calvinistic belief that if sin is to be found in the world, it must serve the eternal good purposes of God.[47]

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[47]Woods, Works (n.p., n.d.), IV, 443, quoted in Haroutunian, p. 272.

The editors of the Christian Spectator, hoping to avert controversy on this issue, stated that Taylor was not proposing a new theory but merely questioning the orthodox theory as to why God permitted sin to enter the world.[48] However, these efforts were ineffectual, and by

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[48]Haroutunian, p. 273.

1832 intra-orthodox discussion on the permission of sin had become so prevalent that Taylor included a statement on it in his letter to Hawes: "I believe . . . that the eternal purposes of God extend to all actual events, sin not excepted or, that God foreordains whatsoever comes to pass, and so executes these purposes as to leave the free moral agency of man unimpaired." Of the eleven statements set forth by Taylor in this letter, this is undoubtedly the most general and, therefore, the least open to criticism. But in his subsequent discussion of the philosophical differences between himself and his opponents, Taylor

immediately gets into trouble. He states first that he does not believe "sin can be proved to be the necessary means of the greatest good" or that as such "God prefers it on the whole to holiness in its stead." But, he continues:

> I do believe, that holiness as the means of good, may be better than sin; that it may be true, that God all things considered prefers holiness to sin in all instances in which the latter takes place . . . though for wise and good reasons he permits, or does not prevent, the existence of evil. I do not believe that it can be proved that an omnipotent God would be unable to secure more good by means of the perfect and universal obedience of his creatures if they would render it, than by means of their sin. But I do believe that it may involve a dishonorable limitation of his power to suppose that he could not do it.[49]

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[49] S of P, V (March, 1832), 173-179.

Not yet sufficiently sure of his position to assert it without qualification, Taylor, nevertheless, manages to make clear his conception of moral government and his belief that God decided to permit man to sin rather than subject him to absolute but blind obedience.

However, Tyler, unmoved by Taylor's exhibition of prudence, attacked him immediately, pointing out that Taylor's presumably insignificant "philosophical opinion" on the origin of sin was in reality a vital divergence from orthodox theology. He discusses first Taylor's statement of doctrinal fact and then his philosophical explanation of that fact, noting that if God "prefers holiness to sin" in all instances in which the latter takes place, it cannot be true that God has foreordained "whatsoever comes to pass," for the two comprise "a palpable contradiction. It is the same as to say that God chooses and does not choose the same thing at the same time."

In order to explain his earlier assertion that "sin is the necessary means of the greatest good," Tyler restates the Consistent Calvinist belief that God is "infinitely wise and infinitely good." From this it follows that God has not foreordained the existence of anything which will not ultimately reflect his goodness. To suppose, then, that God decreed sin should exist when he foresaw that it would be, on the whole, a detriment to his system," is to suppose that God acted without wisdom or goodness. Thus, concludes Tyler, men must either accept on faith the conclusion that sin is God's way of producing the greatest good or reject the Calvinistic doctrine of foreordination.[50] Tyler's conception of sin as the necessary means of the

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[50] S of P, V (June, 1832), 326-329.

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greatest good was not entirely orthodox, for it stressed God's goodness at the expense of his righteousness and omnipotence. However, it proved to be a fairly effective weapon against Taylorism and was, therefore, the chief means by which Tyler continued to defend his position.

Tyler's offensive thrust was impressive; he and his conservative colleagues thought they had done with the liberals' argument on this issue. But such was not the case, for Taylor quickly came to the rescue of his own philosophy. In this first major defense of "Taylorism," he admits that Tyler's theory of "sin as a necessary means of good" is tenable, and that as long as no other satisfactory theory is advanced, people will accept it as the true reason for the existence of sin. However, because he has long been convinced that this orthodox view violates biblical teaching, Taylor feels it his duty to

submit another plan in its place. Even if his suggestion that God may have preferred the existence of sin to true holiness is only "barely possible," it at least saves men "from feeling shut up . . . with a conclusion, which involves so much difficulty and contradiction." In this connection, Taylor repeatedly states that he has not proposed a theory on the permission of sin as the "actual reason" why sin exists, but only as "one of several possible" theories. Capitalizing on his own professed uncertainty and failing to recognize Tyler's humble admission that other theories may be equally as tenable as his own, Taylor accuses his opponent of ignoring the only acceptable orthodox position--which is "simply to say we know not the reason of the divine permission of sin."

However, later in the same article Taylor confidently promotes his own theory and just as confidently disparages Tyler's, thus undermining the speculative foundation on which he has so deliberately constructed his entire argument. Disapproving of Tyler's belief that God had to foreordain sin either "for a good or a bad end," he states that God foreordained it "directly not at all, and not for any reason dependent necessarily on the good effects of sin; but simply and solely for this reason, that the adoption of the moral system best on other accounts involved its certain existence." God may well prefer obedience to disobedience, holiness to sin. But because he is certain that freedom and moral agency are, in the end, best, he has chosen to allow man's disobedience and to leave him to do "the best things he can" within his limitations. Taylor concludes this article by reminding Tyler that he has never actually said, "God could not prevent sin,"

only that God was unable to do so "in a moral system." Had God, he says, chosen not to adopt a moral system, he "could have prevented all sin; and . . . he could have prevented any particular sin individually and abstractedly considered, and even all sin in this world up to the present time; and even to the end of it."[51]

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[51] S of P, V (August, 1832), 425-428, 433-438.

It is then Tyler's turn to clarify his position. He immediately grasps Taylor's fundamental error, noting that though Taylor insists he has proposed his theory on the permission of sin "only as a supposition," he has still made it "the basis of his reasoning, and in every argument, and in every illustration . . . assumed it as true." He has, moreover, attempted to establish its truth "both by direct argument and by attempting to overthrow the opposite theory." Fully aware that on this issue he alone can claim the support of Edwards and his contemporaries, Tyler quotes several passages from orthodox sermons of the previous century to affirm his conviction "that God so over rules sin that he will bring to pass, eventually, a greater amount of good than would otherwise have been the case." But he adds that neither he nor his predecessors have ever in any other sense maintained that sin is the means of the greatest good or that it is in itself a good thing. Quite the contrary, he has consistently maintained that "sin is evil, infinitely evil--that it tends to evil, and evil only."

In the section which follows, Tyler conspicuously ignores Taylor's assertion that God could have prevented sin if he had wanted to, and repeats his former criticism that "Dr. Taylor teaches . . .

God cannot secure the conduct he prefers." In opposition to this suggested theory, Tyler declares that "God can control at pleasure the moral actions of his creatures"--then presents a series of arguments in support of his belief. Some of the more significant arguments center about his previously expressed beliefs that:

1. God is almighty [and]. . . almighty power is power to which no limits can be attached.
2. The Scriptures explicitly teach that God can and does control . . . the moral actions of his creatures . . .
3. If God cannot "secure the conduct he prefers" . . . there is no encouragement to the duty of prayer . . .
4. If God cannot control . . . moral actions . . . he cannot fulfil his predictions and promises; for the fulfilment of these depends on innumerable voluntary actions of men. [Moreover] if there are creatures whose actions Omnipotence cannot control, there are creatures whose actions Omnipotence cannot foresee.
5. If God cannot "secure the conduct he prefers," he cannot be perfectly happy.
6. If God cannot "secure the conduct he prefers," there can be no certainty that any of the subjects of his moral government will be preserved from utter and final apostacy.

On the basis of these observations he rejects Taylor's theory that "God cannot . . . prevent all sin" as "a groundless assumption" which ought never to be made the basis of an objection or of an argument.[52]

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[52] S of P, V (September, 1832), 509-523.

Taylor, who, insofar as this controversy is concerned, regards absolute confidence in one's own theory to be "the mark of a rash and presumptuous mind," is unable to understand how Tyler can be so certain of his own "philosophical judgement," especially when that judgment is encumbered with "difficulties, absurdities, and contradictions!" He quite predictably objects to Tyler's lengthy demonstration that God can secure the conduct he prefers, for "that God can do this, I

too fully believe." He adds, however, that even if it were essential to their discussion that Tyler prove God's ability to obtain universal holiness, "he has not proved it." In support of this bold assertion, Taylor analyzes each of Tyler's proofs, hoping thereby to convict his opponent of fallacious reasoning. But he achieves little success. Not only are his complex arguments virtually incomprehensible to the common reader, but they are also founded upon Taylor's own premises and presuppositions, thus making it impossible for him to evaluate his opponent with tolerance and understanding or to arrive at conclusions similar to those of his adversary.

He is particularly disturbed by Tyler's contention that God cannot be perfectly happy unless he secures the conduct he prefers. Replying to Tyler's argument on this point, he maintains that God will be happy if, as moral governor of the universe, he recognizes that his moral government is the best possible system and its results the best possible results. While summarizing his remarks, Taylor inadvertently invites criticism by interpreting Tyler's position on the permission of sin to be that:

> God could not be satisfied with the perfect holiness and consequent perfect happiness of his moral creation, but purposed, and by providential arrangements secured, the existence of sin, and plunged creatures into ruin that he might have the happiness and the glory of bringing to a part only a great deliverance.[53]

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[53] S of P, V (December, 1832), 669-694.

Tyler, in the Spirit of the Pilgrims' last instalment in this controversy, is justifiably disturbed by Tayler's concluding summary of his conservative position, and, therefore, asks his readers to

remember that he has always "maintained directly the contrary--that sin is an evil, infinitely hateful." He dislikes having to repeat himself and finds it difficult to believe that Taylor can so consistently have misinterpreted his explicit statement of doctrine. But since misunderstandings, whether intentional or accidental, still prevail in Tayler's latest article, Tyler pauses to correct each inaccurate assumption, utilizing arguments already familiar and, consequently, of little interest to us. He refuses to accept Taylor's contention that he has contradicted himself at various points in his previous articles and suggests that Taylor himself has created these apparent contradictions by boldly and freely interpreting matters too deep for his comprehension. Had Taylor accepted at face value his original assertion that sin "as the necessary means of the greatest good" means, "not that it is the means of as great good as holiness would be in its stead, but simply that God . . . counteracts its evil tendencies . . . [and] causes so much good to follow it, that in this way he glorifies himself," he would never have encountered any contradictions or, for that matter, seen any cause for controversy.

Tyler continues by commenting at some length upon Taylor's assertion that he (Tyler) has exceeded the limits of good sense "in trying to explore the counsels of God" and solve "the mysteries which relate to the divine permission of sin." He reminds Taylor that he has never undertaken to show, "what are the particular reasons why sin is permitted" or "in what ways God will overrule it for good." Quite the contrary, he has only stated that sin exists, that God is benevolent, and that God will somehow bring good out of evil. "Thus far," he

concludes, "the subject, to my mind, is plain. Farther than this I do not go . . . and here I leave it."[54]

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[54] S of P, VI (May, 1833), 285-296.

With this evasive remark the controversy between Taylor and Tyler over the divine permission of sin came to an end. It had resolved none of the differences over which the debate had originated; nor had it reconciled its participants to mutual co-existence. In fact, the publicity which this controversy received and the resultant prominence which it attained, made it virtually impossible for any Calvinist--whether from Andover or Yale--to maintain an attitude of indifference or even of tolerance on the issue. Men were instead forced to choose between two extremes, that of being old-fashioned determinists who gave God absolute control over man's destiny or modern free-willists who exalted man's ability for self-determination and virtually abandoned God's sovereignty. Since neither position was representative of true orthodoxy, the Calvinistic church herself was the greatest loser in this battle to rid her of heresy.

Taylor and Tyler on Regeneration

The doctrine of regeneration, which had been central to the religious controversies of both the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, was still being dissected and scrutinized by the rational theologians of Andover and Yale during the 1830's. Prior to the revival movement of the 1730's the basic Calvinistic position was that before salvation man could do nothing to make himself deserving of God's mercy. All was left to God, who, if he desired, would foreordain men to salvation; and to the Holy Spirit, whose guidance would then enable

the sinner to undergo the mysterious process of regeneration. This doctrine obviously complemented the essential Calvinistic belief that all wisdom, goodness, and power, must be attributed to God rather than to man. These early Calvinists did not ignore the use of such aids as Scripture, preaching, and prayer, but they at all times subordinated these "means of grace" to the work of the Father himself.

This was especially true during the Great Awakening, when overly zealous pastors substituted sudden religious experiences for the more methodical conversion process of their forefathers. The Arminians, reacting against such undignified and emotional spectacles, began to stress the importance of prolonged and methodical self-improvement before one could truly be said to have achieved salvation. Though these early liberals repeatedly affirmed their belief in justification by faith, not works, their concomitant belief that man must "strive to enter in at the strait gate" could not fail to equalize faith and works in the process of salvation.

Counterbalancing this revolutionary point of view, which appealed to many Calvinists as well as to the Arminians, were the men of the New Divinity. Their leaders, particularly Samuel Hopkins, recognized the danger inherent in any doctrine of regeneration which stressed man's role at the expense of God's. They therefore deprecated the use of means and developed a high or supralapsarian type of Calvinism which not only placed all responsibility and glory for regeneration on God alone but also made every action of the unregenerate man displeasing to God. No matter how respectable or repentant a man was, he could do nothing to help himself. Closely related to this doctrine of

inability was their belief in instantaneous conversion which was to be wrought by the Holy Spirit, "not gradually but at once":

> The man is either under the dominion of sin, as obstinate and vile as ever, dead in trespasses and sins; or his heart is humble and penitent, he is a new creature and spiritually alive. There can be no instant of time, in which the heart is neither a hard heart nor a new heart, and the man is neither dead in trespasses and sins, nor spiritually alive.[55]

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[55]Quoted in Foster, pp. 183-184.

According to the more extreme proponents of this doctrine, men were no longer to read the Scriptures or pray, or even desire to choose God as their chief end, but simply to hear the preaching of the Word and await the Spirit's influence.

This opinion predominated during the early years of the nineteenth century, but the Reverend Timothy Dwight, in many respects more of an Old Calvinist than a Consistent Calvinist, argued that, since

> it is the soul, which is . . . taught, alarmed, and allured . . . [and] upon which descends the efficacious grace of the Holy Spirit . . . the Means of Grace ought to be used by sinners; and by Christians, for the purpose of promoting the salvation of sinners. We ought therefore to advise, and exhort, sinners to use the means of Grace.

However, he still insisted, like his colleagues among the New Divinity, that the ultimate act of regeneration must be attributed to God rather than to man.[56]

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[56]Timothy Dwight, Theology Explained and Defended (n.p., n.d.), IV, 58 and 60, quoted in Mead, p. 119.

Taylor and Beecher, both of whom were close personal friends of Dwight as well as enthusiastic supporters of his theological system,

grew somewhat impatient with his hesitancy to go all the way and assert the primary importance of man's role in the conversion process. In an attempt, therefore, to demonstrate the ability of man to effect his own salvation, they developed similar, but not identical, theories of their own. The essence of Tayler's doctrine was that man, being a moral agent, has "power to perform every duty which God requires and is, therefore, fully authorized to regard . . . compliance with the terms of salvation as a duty which can be done." Tayler thus left God some measure of sovereignty by admitting that sinners cannot compel God to save them, or be absolutely certain that he will save them. But he insisted that the Scriptures amply assure man that if he complies with the terms of salvation, he will be saved.[57] Beecher was

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[57]Mead, p. 120.

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reluctant to go so far as Taylor in asserting man's role in salvation, but he also differed significantly from the Consistent Calvinists. His firm belief that God and man must work together is nowhere more evident than in a letter to his daughter Catherine regarding her personal spiritual struggles. In answer to her complaint that she feels physically and mentally unable to contribute to her own salvation, he states:

> You have not two great labors to accomplish--you have but one. God has, by his providence and Spirit, arrested your attention, and convinced you that you are an unholy, selfish, proud, worldly, poor, disconsolate, and wretched being. He now offers to receive you, through Jesus the Mediator, into his family, and, weary and heavy laden, you have only to come to Christ, to love the Savior, and rely on him for pardon, strength, guidance, and comfort. Do it, I beseech you my child, without delay. All things are ready. Your mind is prepared. The Spirit is striving. Christ is waiting; and why should it be a long time before you exchange darkness for light?

In pointing out to Catherine that "it is . . . your duty to do that which you cry to God to help you do," Beecher was concurring with Taylor's doctrine of ability, but in insisting on God's "offer" of salvation, he was clearly demonstrating his still essential orthodoxy.[58]

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[58]Beecher, I, 366-367.

The controversy between Taylor and Tyler over this doctrine of regeneration actually began, not with their articles in the Spirit of the Pilgrims, but with Taylor's review, in the Christian Spectator, of an article by the Reverend Gardner Spring. In this review Taylor disagrees with Spring's attempt to stress the role of the Holy Spirit in regeneration by minimizing the means of grace. In opposition to Spring's conservative position, Taylor emphasizes man's role in regeneration. He is careful, however, to define regeneration as a complex psychological process involving the Holy Spirit as well as man. Fearing that his review may still be construed as a blatant denial of divine intervention in regeneration, he attempts to present his peculiar position in great detail, stating at one point that,

> when we say . . . the soul in regeneration chooses God for its portion, "under the impulse of its inherent desire for happiness" we are not excluding the influence of the Divine Spirit. We are simply stating the great principle of Edwards that "the will is as the greatest apparent good."

Bennet Tyler was quick to sense that Taylor's sporadic emphasis on the Holy Spirit was merely an attempt to pacify his many critics. In his Strictures on the Review of Dr. Spring's Dissertation, which immediately preceded the Spirit's debate, he admits that Taylor, "does indeed maintain that regeneration is produced by the power of God, or

by the agency of the Holy Spirit." Yet, "he makes no distinction between the act of God who is the author of this change and the act of the sinner who is the subject of it. . . . But who could feel authorized to say that the sinner regenerates himself?" So far as Tyler is concerned, regeneration must be viewed either as an act of God or an act of man. His own religious orientation makes it impossible that he should accept anything but the former alternative, although he remains convinced that regeneration also "includes the perception of the intellect."[59] His hesitancy to delegate all power

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[59]Haroutunian, pp. 258-262. I have not been able to verify Taylor's authorship of the Spectator's review of Spring, but Haroutunian and others assume that Taylor was the anonymous reviewer.

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to God, despite his insistence that God alone must be wholly responsible for the act of conversion, made his argument weak and ineffective. But the questions raised in his Strictures did force Taylor to clarify his own rather vague beliefs concerning the process of regeneration.

In his letter to Hawes, devoted chiefly to this problem, Taylor states, as a fact of the Christian faith, that "the change in Regeneration is a moral change," but that it "is never produced in the human heart by moral suasion, i.e., by the mere influence of truth and motives . . . but by the . . . Holy Spirit." He also incorporates into this creed his belief that, "the renewing grace of God is special . . . and does infallibly secure the conversion of the sinner."

Taylor's doctrinal omissions and peculiarities are more noticeable here than they were in his factual statements regarding depravity and the permission of sin, but they become even clearer in his

subsequent philosophical explanation of the same doctrine. In order to emphasize the absolute moral agency of man, he finds it necessary to reject irresistible grace, one of the five points of Calvinism. He even goes so far as to state that "were no . . . grace afforded," man, by utilizing such aids as Scripture, preaching, and prayer, could serve as the agent of his own salvation. The greater portion of this letter he reserves for a discussion of the relative prominence to be given, in preaching, to ability and inability. Although he admits that he would personally prefer to stress moral agency over dependence, he believes it necessary for the pastor "to divide the word of truth" between ability and inability, for,

> when both doctrines are wisely and truly presented, the sinner has no resting place. He cannot well avoid a sense of guilt . . . for he sees that he is a free moral agent, under the responsibility . . . to immediate duty. He cannot well presume on his resolution of future repentance, for he sees that sovereign, injured grace may at once abandon him to hopeless sin.[60]

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[60] S of P, V (March, 1832), 173-179.

Tyler, in commenting upon these views, acknowledges the orthodoxy of Taylor's creed and accepts his statement on the necessity of the Spirit's divine influence in regeneration. But he wishes that his opponent had not felt compelled to philosophize further, for he believes that Taylor, in his discussion of regeneration, subverts the most important articles of his creed and "saps the foundation of this fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith." He objects primarily to Taylor's declaration that "irresistible" or "efficacious" grace is neither an important aspect of the conversion experience nor irresistable, but rather able to be resisted by the sinner who may cling

indefinitely to "the idols of his heart." So far as Tyler is concerned, the "almighty energy of the Holy Ghost" is absolutely essential because sinners, if allowed to do as they please, would forever resist his influence. God must, therefore, overcome or subdue them through the power of his divine Spirit, which is the only power greater than their own.

Tyler's second objection is to Taylor's implication that the sinner needs nothing but "light to . . . effect his conversion." If this were true, Tyler points out, we would only have to show the sinner "that more happiness is to be derived from God than the world" and he would leap to the truth, changing, of his own free will, the object of his affection. But such, he observes, is not the case, for sinners do know where happiness is to be found. Yet they persist in their self-indulgent ways and demonstrate, without question, that they prefer the elusive happiness of the world to the eternal joy of being with God. He adds that Taylor's belief, as well as being visibly inaccurate, is also doctrinally erroneous, for the sinner who initiates his own conversion has "no necessity of the Holy Spirit." Tyler therefore is convinced that Taylor has once again effected a drastic limitation of God's omnipotence and a serious distortion of the Calvinistic faith.[61]

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[61] S of P, V (June, 1832), 331-334.

Taylor builds the greater portion of his reply upon a series of quotations from the works of Timothy Dwight, all of which support his belief that divine grace is not "irresistible" but "may be resisted by

man as a free moral agent." He is especially eager to have his readers note Dwight's assertion that God will not "exert a regenerating agency on the human mind, which man has not a natural power to resist," for this statement not only confirms the New Haven theory of regeneration but also clarifies the essential relationship between the doctrines of moral freedom and regeneration.

Taylor is more disturbed, however, by Tyler's contention that, according to the New Haven theologians, "the sinner ceases to resist before the grace of God converts him." In answer to this erroneous interpretation of his views, Taylor reminds Tyler that "ceasing to resist is not of course holy love, and that therefore grace might still be necessary to secure this affection." The complexity and subtle distinctions upon which both participants were forced to build their cases becomes evident when Taylor insists he did not say that man ceases to resist or that man can even change himself prior to the operation of the Holy Spirit; quite the contrary, he recalls several instances on which he has stated,

> that whatever may be the specific states, or acts of the sinner's mind, prompted by selfishness, in any forms of thought, of anxiety, of desire, or conviction, prior to this complex act [of regeneration], he is still committing sin; and that in that instant when this complex act takes place, the moral change (which consists in this act) takes place; and that it never does take place except through the gracious influence of the Holy Spirit.

Thus the Taylor-Tyler debate shifted from a serious discussion of the agents and means of regeneration to an irrelevant, petty argument over the exact instant when man ceases to work for his own salvation and the Holy Spirit takes over. "How will Dr. Tyler show," asks Taylor, "that

cotemporaneousness [sic] is the same thing as priority?"[62]

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[62]S of P, V (August, 1832), 425-448 passim.

Tyler, as might be expected, accuses Taylor of misrepresenting him. He admits that like Taylor and Dr. Dwight, he does not like the term "irresistible grace," for it seems to imply that the sinner plays no role at all in his own regeneration. Nevertheless, he does believe that grace is "irresistible" inasmuch as it is able to overcome whatever obstinacy the sinner displays. In this connection, he states that "the resistance of the sinner is never so great, as to render it impossible for God to bring him . . . voluntarily to submit." Since he still interprets Taylor as believing that grace "may be so resisted as to render it impossible for God, by any influence . . . to bring him to repentance," he is unable to accept Taylor's concluding remark that their positions are, after all, too similar to be debated.

Subsequent to his defense of irresistible grace, Tyler evaluates his opponent's attempt to explain the operations of God and man in regeneration as simultaneous rather than successive. Though he believes Taylor's presentation to be weak, he notes particularly that Taylor's remarks are also inconsistent with his earlier assertions that the "means of grace" are an essential aspect of the conversion process:

> He [Taylor] has written a long treatise to prove, that sinners do use the means of regeneration, and that they must use them, or they never can be regenerated. He has also maintained that they never do use these means, till the selfish principle is suspended. If then, there is no time between the suspension of the selfish principle, and a change of heart, there is no time in which sinners use the means of regeneration.

He concludes that if there is then "no time" during which sinners may

use the means of grace," it is certain that they never use them." In view of this contradiction, Tyler discards Taylor's "elaborate treatise" on this subject as "an utter failure," not worthy of further consideration.[63]

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[63] S of P, V (October, 1832), 551-556.

Taylor's reply in February of 1833 was annoyingly defensive in tone and so similar in content to his earlier articles that it does not demand a detailed analysis. He does, however, make some pertinent comments on the means of regeneration. He is disturbed and puzzled by Tyler's assertion that his statement regarding the simultaneous operation of God and man precludes the use of means, for he realizes that the proper utilization of designated means is fundamental to New Haven theology. He had replied earlier, in answer to the question "where do we [the Yale theologians] place the using of the means of regeneration," as explicitly as possible:

> under regeneration itself . . . in those acts of contemplating divine truth which we have spoken of as necessarily co-existing with the act of choice or love, denominated regeneration in the restricted theological meaning of the word . . . at that moment, God and divine things stand before the soul, no longer pre-occupied by supreme selfishness. . . . At that moment the view of God and divine things becomes the means of regeneration.

According to this earlier presentation of New Haven theology, the work of the Holy Spirit, rather than complementing man's own efforts, actually becomes the means of regeneration at that "indivisible moment" when the mind abandons the world for God. As an explanation it was weak and raised many questions, but it was Taylor's only hope for

reconciling God, man, and means within the liberal doctrine of regeneration. For that reason he can do little more, when Tyler confronts him with a similar question, than to restate his original position, conclude that "if the word regeneration be used to denote the complex act, there are no acts which can properly be called using the means of regeneration," and finally ask his opponent, "If these acts and the act of love take place in an indivisible moment of time, as I have said, how is it [that you have said] that there is no time in which they take place?"[64] This, Taylor's last attempt to extricate himself

[64] S of P, VI (February, 1833), 65-84. Earlier statement by Taylor is from the Christian Spectator for 1829, p. 694, and is quoted in Foster, pp. 388-389.

from the predicament in which his speculations placed him, was no more successful than the first. Tyler, in fact, was so unimpressed that he virtually ignored the whole subject in his final comprehensive commentary on Taylor's theological system, observing only that Taylor has exceeded the limits of good sense in his argument on the means of regeneration.[65]

[65] S of P, VI (May, 1833), 285-306. Beecher who was known for his common sense and the clarity of his expressed opinions had no such difficulty with the time sequence of regeneration and was able to do a much better job than Taylor of reconciling the means of grace with God's role in the process of salvation. In a letter to his daughter Catherine (Beecher, I, 363-364), who was struggling with her soul and insisting that she could not help herself, he said: "As to using the means of grace, what are the means of grace but the requirements of God, with the motives by which they are enforced? Releasing sinners from a sense of obligation to pray immediately and always, with affectionate reliance on Christ and penitence for sin, surely does not tend to make them pray in this manner of themselves, and surely it does not increase the probability that God will make them obedient. God's way to produce obedience in sinners is to require it, and make them feel their mouth is stopped and then, when obligation presses hard . . .

when the sinner can not obey, and can not live disobedient under such a pressure of obligation and motive, then, when the means press with all their power on the conscience and heart, God makes them effectual. . . . the diligent use of means, from a sense of duty with a deep interest in the subject, conscious of our constant deficiency and constant obligation to do better, with daily attempts to give the heart to God and to come to Christ, with many tears and supplications for aid, is as near the truth, in feeling and practice, as the sinner ever gets, till God in mercy bids him live." [Italics mine.]

Conclusion

Thus ended the Spirit of the Pilgrims' controversy between the Andover conservatives and the New Haven liberals--in louder recriminations and deeper obscurity than it had begun. Taylor continued to hold that God demands a rational faith of rational beings, and adjusted his beliefs accordingly. Tyler, on the other hand, was convinced that Taylor had forsaken revealed religion and must be ousted from the orthodox Congregational church. Both were bitterly resentful of the fact that the other had argued from tendency--that is, from the results they supposed would follow the other's doctrinal statements--rather than from actual fact. Such, however, was to be expected, for so long as there was no real meeting of minds, and so long as the differences between them were neither logical nor well-defined, their arguments could never be decisive, and their most frequent complaint would be that each had misunderstood and misrepresented the other. With Taylor it became almost a mania; he used to tell his students that no one would understand him until he published his book and it would be so large that no one would read it![66]

[66] George N. Boardman, A History of New England Theology (New York, 1899), p. 253.

Although most public discussions on this issue ceased with the Spirit of the Pilgrims' decision to refrain from promoting it further, the momentum of the controversy itself continued to increase within the seminaries and colleges of the Congregational church. In 1834, Professor Chauncey Goodrich, who only a few years earlier had been the Yale theology's most outspoken advocate, recognized the inconsequential but nevertheless divisive nature of the argument and asked Beecher to serve once again as mediator between the two groups. Beecher tried, but by 1835 the situation was such that even he, the one least anxious to create dissension within Calvinism, was tried for heresy by the established church. He himself admitted that at the outset of his trial, "it looked squally," but his accusers so overstated the conservative position that they divided their own party. Beecher, who quickly took advantage of their confusion to demonstrate the insignificance of their accusations against him, was acquitted.

Following Beecher's acquittal and the failure of ecclesiastical government to crush the New Haven system, Beecher's opponents redoubled their efforts to force him to denounce Taylor, or at least be considered a heretic with him. For a time Beecher steadfastly refused to take sides, still hoping that concerted efforts on both sides might avert actual division:

> If her [the Church's] ministers and members can check their jealousies and drop their bickerings, and bury their animosities, and all cultivate the meekness and gentleness of Christ, a glorious destiny is before her. But let dissension prevail . . . and it will be a wreck over which angels might weep. Every valuable interest throughout the world, . . . and perhaps for generations to come, must sympathize with the sad catastrophe.

However, as his old friends--most notably Woods and

Tyler--repeatedly urged him to come over to their side, he began to balk, realizing that he could never sacrifice Taylor and "the truth" even for so desirable a cause as church unity. Finally, when Woods approached him and, as an authorized representative of the New Divinity, asked whether he could not make certain concessions regarding Taylor's views on depravity and moral government, Beecher replied:

> Dr. Woods, I know what these gentlemen and you want. They want me to say what will . . . implicate Taylor as heretical, and I never will do it. . . . I'll never denounce Taylor. To reach Taylor they must pass over my dead body. My bones shall whiten on the battlefield beside Taylor's.

The consequences of this statement were immediate. The Congregational church could no longer avoid division, and attempts were made on all sides to brand Beecher a heretic and throw him, along with Taylor, out of the church.[67]

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[67]Beecher, II, 255-300 passim.

But even the establishment's most determined efforts could not halt the New Haven theological system. The Christian Spectator, which had for a time been relatively silent, once again took up its cause. Ministers who had long been dissatisfied with traditional beliefs, now dared expound the New Haven doctrines from pulpits throughout New England. Thus it was that, within a few years, the Calvinism of most denominations lost its Reformation bearings. Humanitarianism and optimism replaced piety and humility. Humanistic religious orientation was substituted for theocentricity. Man's need rather than God's Word became the guide to doctrinal formulation, and the central Christian paradoxes became stark, logical contradictions, needing to be either

disguised or explained away.[68] Such a rational, anthropocentric

[68]Sidney Ahlstrom, "The Scottish Philosophers and American Theology," Church History, XXIV (1955), 268-269.

theology naturally appealed to the enlightened Americans of the 1840's and '50's, and Calvinism, as taught by the Reformers--even as interpreted by Edwards, Hopkins, Woods, and Tyler--fell into disuse throughout most of the land.

CHAPTER IV

REVIVALISM AND REFORM

Introduction

In 1798 a solemn group of New England ministers met to consider a dreadful fact. Their fellow citizens, the chosen people of the new world, were falling away from orthodoxy and from God. In order to make America aware of this prevailing ungodliness, these clergymen issued a pastoral letter which read in part:

> We perceive, with pain and fearful apprehension, a general dereliction of religious principle and practice. ... . a visible and prevailing impiety and contempt for the laws and institutions of religion, and an abounding infidelity which in many instances tends to Atheism itself. . . . The profligacy and corruption of the public morals have advanced with progress proportioned to our declension in religion.[1]

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[1] Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, 1789-1820 (Philadelphia, 1847), pp. 152-153, quoted in Charles R. Keller, The Second Great Awakening in Connecticut (New Haven, 1942), p. 3.

The future looked dark to these men worn old with years of religious strife and apathy. But to their more youthful colleagues, many of them recent seminary graduates, the situation was a challenge. Eager to restore their nation to the favor of God, they attacked infidelity and corruption with a zeal unparalleled in the history of America. The results of their efforts were so astounding that by 1840 they could conclude that the rising tide of worldliness was stemmed. Few

public policies were launched without an appeal for God's approval; politicians were seldom willing to risk the united condemnation of the orthodox clergy; religious newspapers and periodicals were widely read; most colleges were controlled by denominational boards and maintained by devout ministers and laymen; national societies were formed to distribute Bibles, print tracts, christianize the heathen, reform morals, and promote benevolence.

This religious revitalization of American society, was primarily the result of a continuing series of revivals, during which the clergy entreated the American people to return to the principles and practices of their Puritan forefathers. Spurring them on, as the century progressed, was a belief that the millennium was approaching, that, "as the eastern continent was honoured with the birth of a Saviour . . . so this land may be favored with the dawn of the millennial sun, which may return to the east, shining with growing brightness unto the perfect day,"[2] and that the united efforts of the "chosen

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[2]Stephen Chapin, The Duty of Striving for the Good of Posterity (Portland, Maine, 1821), p. 40, quoted in John R. Bodo, The Protestant Clergy and Public Issues, 1812-1848 (Princeton, 1954), p. 5.

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people" would hasten the arrival of this day.

Historical Background

The Spirit of the Pilgrims, whose editors and conductors participated vigorously in almost every evangelistic effort of the decade, played a significant role in this era of revivalism and reform. Like its predecessor, the Connecticut Evangelical Magazine, it printed

reports of various revival movements, publicized the efforts of their leaders, and helped create, within the New England church, a climate conducive to the support of such endeavors. However, more important was the determination of its conductors to promote those policies which were scriptural and would contribute best to the improvement of church and nation. Believing that the revivals of their day were the natural outgrowth of earlier evangelistic campaigns, the Spirit's conductors devoted a considerable amount of space to the history of revivalism. One contributor suggests that the "recent revivals of religion" were the descendants of several "special and powerful" effusions of God's Spirit which began in the primitive Ante-Nicene church, continued during the time of the German Reformation, and shortly thereafter traversed the North Sea, resulting in "extraordinary outpourings" throughout the British Isles. He is certain, however, that the United States has been distinguished above every other nation "by the frequency and power of her revivals of religion."[3]

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[3] S of P, IV (August, 1831), 405-407.

The first of these "special operations of the Spirit" occurred in Boston during the year 1633 when, according to Governor Winthrop, "divers profane and notoriously evil persons came and confessed their sins, and were comfortably received into the bosom of the church." Within a few months this revival spread to the other settlements, but its results were short-lived and the religious life of the colonies went into a rapid decline. Ministers in their traditional jeremiads lamented the ever increasing prevalence of wigs, lewdness

at husking time, Christmas revels, boisterous weddings, and women's jewelry.[4] Of even greater concern toward the end of the century were

[4]Perry Miller, The New England Mind, from Colony to Province (Cambridge, 1953), pp. 305-306. A "jeremiad" was a sermon lamenting the prevailing ungodliness of the "chosen people" on the American continent. It was especially widespread in the New England colonies during the seventeenth century.

such liberal church practices as the half-way covenant and Stoddard's innovations on the Lord's Supper.

The beginnings of a general reaction against these dangerous developments appeared in the early 1720's when the Reverends Theodore Freylinghuysen and Gilbert Tennent, both of New Brunswick, New Jersey, replaced the traditional legalistic Calvinism with a pietistic emphasis on experimental, personal religion. Local revivals similar to theirs soon spread throughout New England and the Middle Colonies. But it was not until 1734 when Jonathan Edwards, an unknown young minister from Northampton, began to re-emphasize the old Calvinistic doctrine of God's absolute sovereignty that the tremendous wave of religious influence later known as the Great Awakening swept over the colonies. The gospel preached in this revival, says Enoch Pond--the author of this historical series--was effective, not because it was new, but because it was presented, "in a new and glowing aspect. . . . not as mere form, but as feeling and substance--not as matter of cold speculation, affecting the head only, but as reaching, stirring, warming, renewing all the affections of the soul." By 1735 it was said that due to such preaching "scarcely a person . . . either young or old . . . [was] left unconcerned about the things of the eternal world."

Many, however, who regarded revivals with suspicion, objected both to their doctrines and methods. The most vociferous of these early critics was the Reverend Charles Chauncy, whose Seasonable Thoughts on the State of Religion in New England condemned not only the confusion and emotionalism of revivals but also the use of lay speakers, the emphasis on depravity, and the uninvited invasion of parishes by unordained preachers. Though Pond condemns such opposition as "unreasonable . . . virulent . . . unrelenting . . . and unworthy," he admits that there were excesses, particularly in 1741 and 1742 when the Reverend James Davenport deluded many with his "confidence, censures, and . . . new and imposing measures." Despite such errors, Pond continues, the Great Awakening imparted to the religious life of New England a degree of vitality which it has never entirely lost. Church membership more than doubled, preaching assumed new power, pastors became more vigilant, worship services multiplied, and men once again accepted certain dogmatic views of religious truth. However, the combination of "unreasonable opposition by unholy men" and error on the part of the revivalists themselves, did bring about an abrupt end to the Great Awakening in the mid 1740's. Revivals virtually ceased, revivalists settled down in regular pastorates, and people returned to the steady rhythm of a normal church life.[5]

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[5] S of P, II (March, 1829), 121-128.

According to many scholars, both contemporary and modern, there were no religious awakenings for the next fifty years. But Dr. Ebenezer Porter, after studying primary sources of the period finds

"distinct mention of considerable revivals between 1765 and 1795." He admits, however, that even these revivals were "comparatively infrequent" and that religious life during the period was generally torpid. He attributes this declension in religiosity to the "political asperities between the Colonies and the Mother Country, which kept all the bad passions in feverish agitation till they exploded in the revolution."[6] Later critics, while agreeing with Porter's brief

[6] S of P, V (May, 1832), 259-260.

analysis, suggest that there were other causes as well. French infidelity and British deism became popular among college students and intellectuals who publicly assailed the divinity of Christ, the sovereignty of God, and the miracle of the Virgin birth. Moreover, the rising movement for disestablishment weakened ministerial supremacy and influence. Finally, the westward movement made it virtually impossible for the church to maintain contact with all Americans and thereby to exert a civilizing and Christianizing influence upon them.[7]

[7] Keller, pp. 14-16; G. L. Walker, pp. 24-25; Frank J. Beardsley, History of American Revivals (New York, 1904), pp. 71-83; Bernard Weisberger, They Gathered at the River, the Story of the Great Revivalists and Their Impact upon Religion in America (Boston, 1958), pp. 3-10.

With so many factors simultaneously affecting the church's traditional hold on the nation, it is little wonder that the Presbyterian Assembly of 1798 was forced to the ominous conclusion "that the eternal God has a controversy with this nation."[8]

[8] Keller, p. 3.

However, by 1800 all of New England was aware that a vigorous and widespread revival movement was again pervading the church. Porter reports that no part of the country "shared so largely in these times of refreshing . . . as Connecticut." But people in Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey, Ohio, Kentucky, the Carolinas, and Georgia were also deeply affected. A significant feature of these revivals was their marked contrast to those of the Great Awakening. Rather than permit traveling evangelists to disturb their congregations with exorbitant claims, parish ministers kept the revivals in their own hands. Furthermore, in order to avoid such criticism as Davenport's "new measures" had prompted, they used only the "ordinary means of grace," including prayer meetings, home visitation, and the stated services of the church. There was also a concerted effort to preserve doctrinal purity, with ministers stressing the sufficiency of the Atonement, the immutability of the moral law, the inability of sinners, and the uncertainty of conversion. Reflecting their Hopkinsian heritage, both pastors and congregations experienced an overwhelming sense of sin and readily accepted the belief that all of man's actions were "an abomination unto the Lord." Most surprising of all was the entire absence of emotional trauma and physical manifestations.

Due to their solemnity and emphasis on doctrine, rather than emotion, these early nineteenth-century revivals exerted a more profound influence on the people of New England than had the Great Awakening. The threat of infidelity lessened; churches once again filled to capacity with spiritually minded people. Moreover, the degree of piety aroused by these early successes was sufficient to generate another

flood of revivals which so engulfed the nation that until the mid 1830's "there was not a month in which we could not point to some village, some city, some seminary . . . and say 'Behold, what hath God wrought!'"[9] But for our purposes, these revivals of 1800-1810 were

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[9]Gardiner Spring, Memoirs (n.p., n.d.), I, 160, quoted in Beardsley, p. 104.

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particularly significant for the young ministers they motivated and trained to carry on subsequent revival campaigns.

The most notable of these young men were Lyman Beecher, Nathaniel Taylor, and Asahel Nettleton, all of whom achieved prominence in the revivals of the twenties and thirties. Beecher, whose primary aim in life was the promotion of revivals, first gained experience in the tiny town of Litchfield, Connecticut, where by deliberate design, he brought about a successful revival in the state. In 1826, he moved to Boston where, as one aspect of his service to the Hanover Street Church, he carried on a highly organized revivalistic campaign against the Unitarians. While there he refined his methods and became one of the greatest, if not the greatest, revival strategists of the era. Commenting on his remarkable successes, Beecher once said that the secret lay in treating each inquirer differently. To those who readily believed the Bible and his sermons on it, he gave "only plain instruction." Others, who "could not see, realize, feel anything . . . [and] did not know where to begin" he guided step by step. With those who pleaded inability, he "became a philosopher and rose into the field of metaphysics" for "purposes of discrimination." When he met skeptics

or infidels, he put himself "on the highest key . . . and made them feel somebody knew something besides themselves . . . [until] they came meek as lambs." He admitted also to having encountered some "pretty hard cases" that he "never made out anything with."[10] But his

[10]Beecher, II, 53-54.

revivals in Boston and those of his contemporaries in other parts of New England met with amazing success and continued intermittently for the next several years, including the six years during which the Spirit of the Pilgrims was published.

In commenting on this particular period of revivals, a writer in the periodical relates that 1829 was a year of "uncommon spiritual desertion" when the number of revivals was comparatively few and Christians once more began to ask, "Wherefore is the Lord contending with us?" He adds that it was not until the autumn of 1830 that "drops of mercy were scattered here and there . . . began to thicken, and to show indications of a general shower."[11] By 1831, it was evident that

[11]S of P, IV (August, 1831), 408-410.

the United States was in the midst of the greatest revival since the time of Jonathan Edwards a century earlier.[12] This revival, which

[12]Of this revival which was just then occurring, one of the Spirit's contributors says: "From the first of January, a series of revivals have burst out and are moving on, so extensive, numerous, and rapid, as to surpass enumeration and outrun calculation. The scenes of wonder and joy which are opening upon us in these times of refreshing it is impossible to describe. Those who witness them, and those who feel their transforming power, and those angelic messengers who bear to heaven the tidings of souls renewed and sins forgiven,

can alone appreciate the glories of this rising day. We can only say 'The night is far spent, and the day is at hand,' 'Lo, this is our God, we have waited for him.' 'Joy to the world, the Lord is come!'" (IV [September, 1831], 479.)

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commenced in western New York, spread rapidly to New York City and from there to Connecticut and the Boston area. It also moved south to such diverse localities as Charleston, the District of Columbia, Cincinnati, and the southwestern states. Of particular significance to this author is the fact that cities and colleges "have been the scene of deepest revival interest as if the divine Spirit would correct the streams of moral influence by purifying the fountains." Though he believes it impossible to estimate with accuracy the number of converts thus far, he quotes the Secretary of the American Education Society as stating that "a thousand congregations . . . have been visited within six months" and "the whole number of conversions is probably not less than fifty thousand."[13]

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[13]The source from which this author obtained his information on revivals was the American Baptist Magazine, XI, 276-281. However, he himself nowhere identifies it as such.

Another unidentified writer characterises these revivals of 1830-31 as "seasons of silent attention and . . . clear intellectual, argumentative, doctrinal preaching, with pungent applications to the conscience, attended with deep convictions of sin."[14] They were,

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[14]S of P, IV (September, 1831), 477.

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however, much less Hopkinsian in their doctrinal emphases than the revivals of 1800. Ministers, concerned primarily with winning converts,

found it unpopular to stress Hopkins' peculiar form of self-renunciation which had popularly--but inexactly--been termed "a willingness to be damned." They also found it convenient to insist less on man's innate inability to save himself, more on his ability to contribute to his own repentance and conversion. In short, expediency overruled orthodoxy.[15] Along with this change in doctrine went a concomitant change

[15]G. L. Walker, p. 149.

of purpose. Revivals were no longer considered to be crucial to the future of the church alone but to the future of the entire American nation. Even the millennium took on new dimensions. Men who earlier had envisioned a day when God's people would be gathered effortlessly unto him now believed that it was up to the revival movement to improve society and eventually to save the entire nation.[16]

[16]Beecher exemplified this optimistic millennialism when he said: "The time has come when the experiment is to be made whether the world is to be emancipated and rendered happy, or whether the whole creation shall groan and travail together in pain. . . . If it had been the design of Heaven to establish a powerful nation in the full enjoyment of civil and religious liberty, where all the energies of man might find full scope and excitement, on purpose to show the world by one great successful experiment of what man is capable . . . where should such an experiment have been made but in this country! . . . The light of such a hemisphere shall go up to Heaven . . . it will . . . produce revolutions and overturnings until the world is free. . . . Floods have been poured upon the rising flame, but they can no more extinguish it than they can extinguish the flames of Aetna. Still it burns, and still the mountain murmurs; and soon it will explode with voices and thunderings, and great earthquakes. . . . Then will the trumpet of jubilee sound, and earth's debased millions will leap from the dust, and shake off their chains, and cry, 'Hosanna to the Son of David!'" (Quoted in Alice Felt Tyler, Freedom's Ferment: Phases of American Social History to 1860 [Minneapolis, 1944], p. 1.)

This belief in revivalism as an adjunct to other ends as well

as an end in itself is well expressed by an anonymous author in the Spirit of the Pilgrims. His article, entitled "The Necessity of Revivals of Religion to the Perpetuity of our Civil and Religious Institutions," is typical of those published in the magazines of the day. The author begins by discussing the "numerous and appalling" dangers which threaten the United States and which, he believes, have never been "in more powerful or terrific action." Leading politicians have capitulated to "the thirst of power and dominion" and "subserve only their own political ends." National prosperity has led to extravagance, rash speculation, poverty, and misery. Universal suffrage has added to the electorate "an ocean of unstable mind." Infidelity and atheism, though less a threat than before the recent revivals, would still "suspend moral attraction, dissolve society, and turn out the whole family of human animals into one common field of unbridled appetite and lust." Even "the intrigues of Catholic Europe," through the medium of the American Catholic population, seek to divide the nation and destroy its institutions.

With dangers of such amplitude and imminence threatening the land, he is certain her destruction will be sure, unless men turn to their "only remaining source of hope": "GOD--and the interposition of his Holy Spirit in great and general Revivals of Religion, to reform the hearts of this people, and make the nation good and happy." He does not doubt that God has power sufficient to change human character. Nor does he question God's desire to do so, for "his benevolence and mercy . . . lead us to anticipate a . . . moral and religious amelioration." He believes, moreover, that God must help man or permit

his destruction, for man has proved to be incapable of helping himself. He has tried force, which intimidates but cannot compel "the graces of the Christian character." The cultivation of intellect has led to voluptuousness and moral dissolution. Creeds, though "venerable, useful, scriptural," do not produce holiness of themselves nor do they ensure it. Even religious institutions have proved to be inadequate: the power of evangelical churches extends through only one generation, faithful ministers are unequal to the effort needed "to bring a . . . contentious and proud people into a willing subjection to the laws of Christ," and the many benevolent societies so recently organized, are nothing more than "the power of the cobweb to hold the whirlwind or chain down the ocean."

Since traditional religious endeavors are no longer sufficient, something drastic must be attempted--and only "speedy, extensive, and powerful revivals of religion" possess the rapidity and force necessary to overwhelm the people of the American nation. Aware that many prefer "a gradual dispensation of the Spirit" to "these sudden outpourings," the author admits that the intense interest which accompanies revivals is often temporary. But he is certain that "single drops falling in slow and deliberate succession as . . . should satisfy the prudence of some . . . men" will never save "800,000,000 of souls, or any considerable part of this number . . . within the most distant time to which the millenium can be deferred according to prediction." He looks, therefore, to revivals alone, "to put out the fires of ambition, and permit our troubled sea . . . to rest."[17]

[17] S of P, IV (September, 1831), 465-478. For further information on the threat of infidelity see S of P, VI (April, 1833), 204-215.

Dissension among the Revivalists: 1826 to 1833

Despite their successes, the revivals of the late twenties and early thirties were not without dissension and controversy. Unitarian opposition was to be expected. Beecher encountered it in Boston as early as 1826 and it increased in intensity as revivals became more powerful and their converts more numerous. Of greater concern to the orthodox than the Unitarians' grossly distorted accusations was the inner tension that developed in the mid-twenties between the conservative men of the New Divinity and a more liberal group which identified with the doctrines of Beecher and Taylor. Representing these two factions were Asahel Nettleton and Charles G. Finney, who, with the exception of Beecher, were the best known revivalists of the day.

Nettleton, having lived as a youth in an area still recovering from Davenport's eighteenth-century excesses, developed an almost fanatical abhorrence of emotion and disorder. He was so determined to have stillness and solemnity in his revival services that he often spent "the best part of an hour" seating his congregation, then requesting them not to rise for prayers lest they disturb the order he had achieved. His preaching was characterized by an absolute dependence on the Holy Spirit and he frequently urged participating ministers not to "get up a revival" but to wait until God indicated that the time was ripe. He used no means other than those already

existing in the churches he visited, and discouraged the multiplication of meetings, speaking by outsiders, and early admission of converts to the church. Though neither eloquent nor personally popular, he achieved such success with his sober pronouncements of truth that there was "often very great difficulty in separating and getting them [his congregations] to return home."[18]

[18]R. Smith, Recollections of Nettleton and the Great Revival of 1820 (Albany, 1848), pp. 76-142 passim.

Finney was in every respect Nettleton's opposite. Raised in western New York and converted during an early revival there, he disliked the severity of New England Calvinism and adopted instead the less demanding doctrinal interpretations of the New Haven school. He was particularly disparaging of the Holy Spirit's role in conversion and once stated that regeneration "is not a miracle or dependent on a miracle in any sense. It is purely a philosophical result of the right use of constituted means." In order to assist men in working out their own salvation, Finney stressed their voluntary sinfulness and utilized whatever means were available to effect a change of will. Critics undoubtedly exaggerated the notoriety of his "new measures," but it was common knowledge that he did not hesitate to extend meetings for several days or even weeks, call sinners by name in his sermons, encourage women to pray in public, and demand that those under conviction occupy a seat at the front that they might be more easily cajoled into a decision.[19] These unprededented measures inevitably led to individual

[19]Basil Miller, Charles G. Finney (Minneapolis, 1966), pp. 7-137 passim. Quotation in middle of paragraph is from Gilbert H. Barnes,

The Anti-Slavery Impulse (New York, 1933), p. 8.

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stresses and resulted in disorder such as Nettleton would never have permitted.

The conservatives, eager to prevent controversy that might hinder the success of their revivals, tolerated Finney in silence for several years. But when Nettleton refused to appear on an Albany pulpit with Finney, lest he appear to sanction Finney's methods, open dissension broke out. Hoping to win Beecher over to the side of the conservatives, Nettleton wrote him, urging that he, as the head of the New England revival forces, speak out against Finney's measures. The request troubled Beecher who believed that further controversy would benefit the Unitarian propagandists more than the revivalists. He was also disturbed by the fact that though he preferred Finney's doctrines to those of Nettleton, he could not tolerate Finney's fanaticism, censoriousness, and pride.

After much thought, Beecher adopted his customary compromise position, defending Finney's measures "against the opposition of formalists," but insisting that the New England Calvinists "can not justify his [Finney's] faults for the sake of his excellencies." This action, combined with a special convention at which both Nettleton and Finney were given an opportunity to defend their positions, pacified both sides temporarily. However, Nettleton soon grew dissatisfied. He felt Beecher did not duly appreciate his efforts, he believed that the New Haven men were deliberately currying favor with Finney, and he insisted that the controversy continue. Beecher,

though he repeatedly affirmed his approval of Nettleton's tactics, was unable to convince Nettleton of his support and the controversy dragged on, becoming, in the mid-thirties, a primary factor in the conservatives' attempt to convict Beecher of heresy.[20]

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[20]Beecher, II, 66-80.

The determination of the orthodox party to refrain from open debate over revival procedures so long as they were waging war against the Unitarians is clearly demonstrated in the Spirit of the Pilgrims. Unlike its doctrinal discussions, which present in detail the partisan positions of the Yale and Andover groups, most of the Spirit's forty some articles on revivalism are conspicuously devoid of explicit references to controversial figures and issues. Nevertheless, these same articles, if carefully perused, reveal a tendency on the part of the Spirit's conductors and contributors to side with the Nettletonian party and to deprecate by implication the "new measures" of the Finneyites. Three groups of articles in particular reflect this conservative position.

The first, a series of five relatively brief essays entitled Thoughts on Revivals of Religion, began in January of 1828, following by only a few months the efforts of Beecher and others to relieve tensions within their party. The anonymous author of these articles reveals his attitude, not by denouncing Finney's doctrines, but rather by stressing the continuing process of repentance, conversion, and sanctification--an aspect of revivalism which Finney was apt to ignore in his desire to elicit immediate commitments. The second series,

consisting of seven letters by Dr. Ebenezer Porter, is found in volumes five and six. Though Porter intends to limit his remarks to the revivals of 1800 to 1810, he repeatedly reflects his personal prejudices in references to the revivals of his own day. His letters also reveal the attitudes of the Andover faculty and students who have recently organized a "Revival Association" and have chosen Porter to publish the results of their research on revivals in the Spirit of the Pilgrims.[21] The third series was authorized by the Massachusetts

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[21] S of P, V (May, 1832), 256.

Pastoral Association which, at its annual meeting in May of 1832, passed the following resolution:

> Deeply sensible of the necessity of continued and powerful revivals of religion, to sustain and replenish our churches, bless our country, and save the souls of men; acknowledging our own unspeakable obligations to the Great Head of the Church, for the numerous revivals of the last year; and impressed with the importance, by a free and fraternal interchange of views, of making ourselves acquainted with the most effectual means of promoting revivals, and the best method of conducting them. . . .
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> Therefore, resolved that a committee . . . be appointed to correspond with the ministerial associations in the state . . . obtain an expression of the views of ministers . . . and cause it [their correspondence] to be published . . . in the Spirit of the Pilgrims.

Serving on the committee were Leonard Woods of Andover and Lyman Beecher, who requested from the state's several ministerial associations specific information concerning the revivals of the past two years. The nine replies, published in volume six of the Spirit of the Pilgrims, provide us with an unusually comprehensive view of New England revivalism, its doctrines, and its techniques.[22]

[22]These nine reports are found in the S of P, VI (April, 1833), 185-203; (June, 1833), 307-320; (August, 1833), 439-456.

In order to illustrate with the greatest possible accuracy the Spirit's prevailing attitude toward revivals, I have chosen to group the contents of these three series, as well as numerous other articles in the journal, under several major headings. The reader is asked to remember that this view of revivals belonged not only to the clergy of a single denomination who lived in a tiny corner of the nation and contributed to a relatively minor periodical, but that it is also a generally accurate representation of the Awakening of 1830-33 in the eastern portion of the United States.

The New England Revivals of 1830 to 1833

General Features

A revival, states the moderator of the Suffolk Association in the Spirit's first association report, is not simply "an excitement about things of a religious nature." Nor is it a multiplication of religious meetings, or even "a special zeal about the visible forms and ordinances of religion." Rather, it is "a special visitation of the Holy Spirit, giving efficacy to the word and ordinances of the Gospel, in the edification of saints and in the conversion of sinners so that public morals are reformed,--works of piety and benevolence are promoted,--God is honored,--and souls are stamped with a heavenly zeal." With this emphasis on the role of the Holy Spirit in the revival process, the author reveals his conservatism and establishes

the tone of the reports which follow. He recalls several features which, he believes, are characteristic of most revivals in his area. There is, for example, "a spirit of inquiry" among the people who devote much of their time to contemplating "God and the interest and objects of the invisible world." Habitual prayer is also much in evidence and is viewed not as a burden or a task but as an expression of the love of God in the heart of the individual. Finally, in times of revival "a deep conviction of sin is apparent among the people" who agree that they have offended a holy God whom they were under the highest obligation to honor and serve.

In the presence of such features as these, the author does not doubt that "awakenings" will be both genuine and frequent. He supports this assertion by estimating that the ten churches in his association, all of which have recently been favored with either sporadic or continuous revivals, have gained a total of 1,000 new members during the past five years. One congregation alone has added 200 persons to its rolls--most of them individuals without previous church affiliation. Reports from the other associations indicate that they too received a remarkable number of converts: one reports a gain of 500 to 600 within the last fifteen months, another states that each of the seventeen churches in its area has added between 8 and 120 persons, still another says that during the past six months revivals have occurred in every church of the association. From figures such as these it is clear that the revivals of this period were widespread rather than scattered, and that they consistently affected not merely a few persons in each parish but a large percentage of those in attendance.

By way of contrast with the revivals of 1800-1810, one reporter mentions that a large proportion of the subjects in his area are from "the more active and influential class of the community," and that the progress "from conviction to hope" has been more rapid than in the past. Noting that in most earlier revivals women converts far outnumbered men, another reports that "the number of male, though not yet equal to the number of female subjects bears a greater proportion to it than in former years." In the Franklin Association a number of Arians and Universalists have gone through "an entire revolution in theological positions" and for their conversions the clergy are especially grateful. Finally, several associations note that, in sharp contrast to previous revivals, a large proportion of converts have been under twenty-five years of age--a sign that the influence of recent awakenings "will be extended down to the next generation."

Information concerning the length of revivals in the various districts is scanty. Though in a few "small and compact societies" the work has been limited to a few weeks, the moderator of the Suffolk Association reports that in most instances their revivals have lasted for several months, even one to two years. He adds that these continuous outpourings of the Spirit have exerted a far greater influence on their communities than the sporadic outbursts of earlier revivals. All but one of the remaining reports concur with his comments, the only dissenting opinion coming from the Harmony Association, where revivals have been "of short continuance" due to their intensity and excitement.

"Means"

The means by which revivals were to be conducted were of little concern to the revivalists of 1800 who, with few exceptions, simply used the customary services of the church. But with the emergence of Finney and his "new measures," the proper selection and utilization of the means of revivalistic conversion suddenly assumed new significance. Closely related to the Andover-Yale controversy over the "means of grace," the fundamental question about which the revivalists argued was the same as that to which Taylor and Tyler devoted so much time: Was all power and control over the act of regeneration to be attributed to God alone, or was man himself to initiate the work and assist God through the use of various delegated means? Few men on either side were capable of holding so sane an opinion as the author of the Natural History of Enthusiasm, who finds divine influence consistent with secondary measures:

> If it be true that the agency of the Holy Spirit in renovating the heart is perfectly congruous with the natural movements of the mind, both in its animal and intellectual constitution, it is implied that whatever natural means of suasion, or of rational conviction, are proper to rectify the motives of mankind, will be employed as the concomitant, or second causes of the change.[23]

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[23] S of P, III (June, 1830), 330.

Dr. Porter is suspicious of means in general because he believes regeneration a wholly supernatural work, dependent on God alone who needs no instruments to effect his miracles. He is convinced, moreover, that any system of means which will "supersede or . . . impair the influence of a regular local ministry, must ultimately

be deleterious to the churches." He even declares that extraordinary means should under no circumstances supplant the "ordinary means of grace" but, lest he be misunderstood, admits that certain extraordinary means may be "under the blessing of God, and the guidance of Christian wisdom, eminently proper."

Believing that preaching is an "ordinary means" to which no one can object, yet aware that his contemporaries were abusing it, Porter discusses their errors at some length. Some, he suggests are simply indiscreet. By choosing to arouse the emotions of their congregations, they revolt the sensibilities of intelligent men who think religion should promote "sobriety, decorum, and amiable temper in its subjects." Others are of such "sluggish temperament" that they give their hearers the impression of "languor and inefficiency" and thereby serve as poor examples. A few are so eager to attain a classical style that they sacrifice "pungency and power to rhetorical embellishment," or they may be "moral preachers" who condemn vices but never seek to impress their listeners with the great truths of the Bible.

In view of these many errors to be observed in revivalistic preaching, Porter longs for a return to the sermons of 1800 which were decidedly evangelical, methodical, instructive, and plain--"with little pretension to elegance of diction."[24] A similar concern for evangel-

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[24]This summary of Porter's position on "means" is taken from three of his articles in the S of P: V (June, 1832), 317-319; V (July, 1832), 378-380; VI (July, 1833), 371-375.

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ical and doctrinal preaching is evident in several of the association reports. The moderator of the Suffolk Association, for example,

states that revival sermons in his area are biblical rather than declamatory, "addressed to the understanding and the conscience rather than to the passions." He believes this approach is due to a prevailing belief among the ministers in his area that men are "rational and voluntary beings" who need first to be instructed in duty and truth, and not until then admonished "to cultivate affections."

Of all the Calvinistic doctrines in which these New Englanders believed, those of the Hopkinsian school, without exception, were found to be most conducive to winning converts during a revival campaign; their proponents took pride in the fact that they were preaching, not the doctrines of the New Haven opposition, but those "of the reformation. . . . the same which our Puritan fathers held, as explained and held by Edwards, Bellamy, Dwight, and others." Several associations admit to dwelling more on the doctrine of depravity, "showing the state, character and destiny of sinners in the light of God's law," during times of revival than at other seasons. Fearing that an emphasis of one doctrine over others would lead to a distortion of Calvinism, many revivalists discouraged such practices. But the temptation to stress depravity remained great, for it "shows men that God must have mercy on them, or they will certainly perish" and was, therefore, a strong inducement to repentance and conviction.

Closely related to this emphasis on man's innate and total depravity was a similar emphasis of God's sovereignty, on the "purity, intent, and unbending justice" of his omnipotence. Though minimized by Taylor and the Yale divines, Nettleton developed his entire revivalistic technique about this doctrine, believing that nothing would

bring a person to his knees more quickly than a feeling of apprehension and helplessness in the presence of a righteous, powerful Judge.

Yet, in accord with contemporary practice, the revivalists of the 1830's, treating sinners as free moral agents, "pressed their obligation to an immediate compliance with the terms of salvation." Recognizing that sinners to whom God's sovereignty had become real often professed themselves incapable of action, pastors generally utilized Edwards' distinction between natural and moral inability. They told their congregations,

> that the only reason why they did not choose religion was that they loved darkness rather than light;--that the guilt and the blame of their refusal and of their alienation of heart from God were entirely their own;--that their love of sin, opposing will and wicked heart formed no excuse;--that this was their condemnation . . . that they hated the light.

Dr. Porter notes that one of the greatest difficulties for the revival preacher is maintaining a proper balance between these two seemingly contradictory doctrines. But he insists that it can and must be done, for the man to whom both dependence and ability are a reality, "feels himself to be in solemn circumstances." He is loaded down with "responsibility, guilt, danger,--a triple weight that crushes him and makes him cry out." His conscience shows him that his wickedness is to be charged "not upon Adam, or Satan, or God, but upon his own single self." And the Bible shows him, "a hell flaming beneath his feet." Porter, therefore, urges those who would be successful in revivals to preach both doctrines if they want to "transform careless sinners into anxious, trembling inquirers."[25]

[25] S of P, VI (July, 1833), 370-371.

Porter and the pastoral associations clearly revealed the gulf between themselves and Finney in their disparagement of regeneration by self-love. The concept was Dwight's, but Taylor had adopted it as a part of his doctrinal system, and Finney found it a most convenient revivalistic tool. Porter, in one of his earlier letters on revivals, admits that Taylor's doctrine is hampered by an unfortunate choice of words, for "self-love" is not as selfish a concept as its terminology would indicate. Yet he is correct in assuming that "a desire for personal happiness," or "concern for one's highest good" becomes, within Taylor's system, a legitimate motive for repentance. Moreover, according to this theory, man becomes a regenerate creature by a voluntary act "in which he first prefers God to the world, from regard to his own interest."[26] This concept was obnoxious to Porter and his

[26] S of P, VI (August, 1833), 433-438.

contemporaries, for it gave man power to initiate his own salvation and made God, after one's self, the "secondary object" of man's regard. However, these conservative New Englanders were most disturbed by its tendency to undermine the divine influence so necessary to a successful revival, for a man who "becomes persuaded that God is his friend "can easily mistake his love of happiness" for "a love of holiness" which he actually does not possess. Conversion then becomes a matter of "the sinner's making up his mind to serve God and the doctrines of grace are subverted."

One of the Spirit's anonymous authors, speaking on the revivals of 1830-31, states that "if the preaching in these revivals has been peculiar in any thing, it has been in urging, with unwonted power the obligation and motives to immediate repentance." Preachers exhorted their listeners to "lay down their weapons, and submit;--to do it freely, unconditionally--and IMMEDIATELY."[27] Of the New England

[27]S of P, IV (July, 1831), 411-412.

revivalists, none relied more heavily on this doctrine than Porter, who generally cited it as a concomitant of his belief in conversion by the Holy Spirit rather than through means. His fullest statement of instantaneous conversion occurs in a discussion of mediate and immediate influence, which he believes are the only two ways in which God can possibly operate on the human mind. Porter rejects mediate influence which seeks to regenerate man through gradual "moral suasion," stating that it contradicts scriptural evidence of miraculous conversions, minimizes the doctrine of depravity, and subverts the doctrine of prevenient grace. He prefers to stress instead the Spirit's "immediate operation" which is "direct and without the intervention of second causes." He adds that because Calvinistic ministers believe nothing supersedes God's supernatural agency, they conceive of regeneration as "an instantaneous, not a progressive work," and approach revivals with the conviction that they must convince the "unholy man" to accept God's offer of salvation without a moment's hesitation. Several of the associations concur with Porter's demand for instantaneous regeneration, noting, for example, that their

ministers have repeatedly stressed "the duty of immediate submission to the King of Zion."[28]

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[28] S of P, VI (August, 1833), 428-433.

Though the doctrines of depravity, dependence, ability, and immediate regeneration were most frequently emphasized in the sermons of the early nineteenth-century revivalists, others too received a considerable amount of attention. Quite a few associations comment that their pastors have stressed the scriptural belief, "that sinners deserve endless punishment . . . but those who comply with God's conditions will be rewarded with everlasting blessedness." Others refer to the doctrines of predestination, the divinity and expiatory death of Christ, the necessity of experiential religion, and the eternal decrees of God. Even election, which hung "like a millstone" about the necks of Finney and his disciples, is mentioned and does not seem to have destroyed men's hopes or convinced them that they were unable to help themselves.[29]

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[29] Weisberger, p. 40.

While the New England revivalists agreed that preaching should be central to every revival and that certain doctrines are conducive to conversion, they did not concur in their attitudes toward other means by which revivals could be conducted. Some, like Porter, had little desire to go beyond the stated weekly services of the church. They heard stories of Finney's long addresses, his female prayer leaders, and his "holy band" of recruiters. They were told how

he once agreed with another minister, "I hope we look to God, but we must have means."[30] And they over-reacted by denouncing all extra-

[30]Whitney R. Cross, The Burned-over District, The Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion in Western New York, 1800-1830 (Ithaca, 1950), p. 183.

ordinary means and every device by which their fellow revivalists seemed to supersede the ultimate instrumentality of the Father. Others, though they believed in the sufficiency of the Spirit, were eager to innovate and experiment. They recognized that every revival was different and believed that expediency sometimes demanded the use of an unusual technique. But they proceeded cautiously, lest their innovations get out of hand and their critics accuse them of adopting Finney's measures.

Of these means the most controversial, and the only one on which the pastoral committee sought specific information, was the "protracted meeting."[31] First utilized by Finney in western New York,

[31]The question asked of the various associations was, "What estimate have you been led to form of the utility of Protracted Meetings? And in your opinion how should they be conducted, and what cautions respecting them should be observed in order to secure them against abuse, and render them most conducive to the interests of the church?" (VI [April, 1833], 185.)

protracted meetings generally lasted for three to four days, though one gathering is known to have continued for thirty-three days. New England pastors, Nettleton in particular, opposed them for many years because they over-emphasized the importance of the visiting preacher to the disadvantage of the resident minister (who had no time for

extended meetings), helping to create the notion that special effects under a person of particular talent could create more spirituality than the ordinary course of worship.

However, despite their skepticism, eight of the nine Massachusetts pastoral associations report the extensive use of protracted meetings in their churches. One reporter claims that every church in his area held one or more protracted meeting during 1831. But he is quick to add that in almost every instance there was some indication of a revival "previous to the holding of the meeting," thereby silencing those who criticized such meetings as conceived by man rather than inspired by God. Most of these meetings, reports another, continue for three to five days, with two services being held during the daylight hours and one longer one scheduled for each evening. He adds that those in attendance generally spend the intervals in prayer and that inquirers are invited to stay at the close of every meeting for further instruction.

The reports reveal that although protracted meetings were highly concentrated and their audiences quite intense, their promoters were careful to exempt themselves from "doubtful measures" by insisting on "the strictest order and decorum, like a religious meeting on the Sabbath." As an added precaution they made certain that all exercises were conducted during "seasonable hours" rather than continuing into the night. In evaluating the success of their protracted meetings, the associations vary considerably. Several, however, are less than elated with their results, one stating that "the results did not equal expectations." Another association reports that since

the "preparation" and the "bustle" of protracted meetings have seemed to "draw off the minds of Christians from . . . reliance on God," the number of converts in their area has been less than expected. The tendency of protracted meetings to make people discontented with their own pastors and with the ordinary means of grace is also mentioned; one reporter even complains that sinners are beginning to get the idea that they "cannot get religion until a protracted meeting comes."

Some associations, on the other hand, speak well of such meetings, but even these caution against "often repeating them in the same place" and wonder whether "more good might have been done in each case, by the same amount of labor in a dozen parishes." In short, the consensus appears to be that protracted meetings may serve a valuable function, but that, like all instruments in human hands, they are "liable to be perverted" and are seldom as successful as their proponents would have men believe. Despite these pleas for caution, protracted meetings grew in popularity during the early thirties, leading one minister to question whether "before the millenium [sic] comes will not Christians hold 365-day-meetings every year?"[32]

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[32]Cross, p. 183.

According to the various association reports, the protracted meeting was not the only "extraordinary" type of meeting made use of by the conservative New Englanders. Aware that some would criticize their innovations, the members of the Suffolk Association attempted to justify their added services by stating that meetings of any type

were "well suited to our social nature" and "when accompanied with humble and importunate prayer . . . may become eminently useful." Others made similar statements--and then apparently felt free to schedule as many meetings as their week would hold. The Hampden Association, for example, reports that though its members continue to regard the three or four services of the Sabbath with "peculiar interest," they have also held several weekday lectures, public prayer meetings, neighborhood prayer circles, religious conferences, inquiry meetings, female meetings, house-to-house visitation, Sunday School classes, Bible classes, and fasts.

While the functions of these meetings frequently did overlap, each was designed to serve a specific purpose. Protracted meetings were reserved for the public presentation of the Word. Prayer meetings, "the soul and substance of all means," were intended to humble Christians and lead them "to look away from every other reliance to God alone." Special prayer meetings derived their efficacy from such unusual circumstances as funerals, "acts of Providence," and "conspicuous conversions," and were found to be effective in arousing the hearts of hardened individuals. Though public prayers by women were discouraged (due to the frequently emotional nature of their outpourings), "female prayer meetings" were common throughout New England. The associations, when mentioning female participation in revivals, are quick to indicate that the women "do not transcend their spriptural sphere" or occasion "gross irregularities." When a church mourned the absence of divine influence, fasting served to "bow them down before God" and intensify their prayers for deliverance.

Neighborhood and family "concerts of prayer" united friends and relatives in "concerted supplication" for the success of their local revival. Highly popular were religious conferences which provided the laity with an opportunity to participate in singing, exhortation, reading, and "free conversation on religious subjects."

Inquiry meetings, generally held at the conclusion of public evening services, supposedly enabled individuals to resolve religious doubts by personal conversation with the pastor or his appointed representatives. When wisely handled, these meetings were eminently successful, but indiscreet pastors frequently marred their effectiveness by pressing for quick decisions or by simply quieting the inquirers without first "probing their wicked hearts deep." One association objects to inquiry meetings on the basis that they become occasions of "general address" rather than opportunities for those under "pungent conviction for sin" to converse in privacy with their pastor. Related to the inquiry meeting was the "anxious seat," a bench or area at the front of the church to which a person could move if, during a meeting, he became seriously concerned about the state of his soul. Once he was there, the congregation would pray for him and the preacher would direct a series of remarks to him in an effort to move him from the anxious seat to the inquiry room.[33] The pastoral

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[33] S of P, V (July, 1832), 390-391 provides some information on the various types of meetings and their purposes.

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associations are unanimous in their condemnation of the anxious seat, which had come to be identified with Finney's "new measures."

However, many New England revivalists occasionally used it; even Nettleton found it useful for a time--until he visited England and learned that it had originated with the Methodists!

Although most of the Spirit's contributors supported such "multiplicity of public religious meetings," they realized that the practice could lead to undesirable results. The Hampden Association reports that, in its area, "secret prayer, the Bible, and self-examination" are in danger of being neglected. Moreover, some individuals, unable to bear the strain of attendance at so many meetings, have become "unstable and restless, or greatly excited," and tend to make public spectacles of themselves. Another association has found that too frequent meetings exhaust the strength of ministers, develop an undue confidence in means, and promote a kind of "religious gossiping--dissipated thought, periodical fervor, fastidious taste." But since these meetings have proved to be of value in winning converts, the associations see no reason to discontinue their practice.

More disturbing to the Spirit's contributors, were the itinerant preachers who traveled from parish to parish, practicing their own specialized revival techniques and undermining the work of the regular pastor. Though both Nettleton and Finney conducted revivals in various locations, neither was an itinerant in the common, derogatory sense of the term, for both were eager to cooperate with the regular pastors and to serve as their assistants rather than rivals. Both, moreover, were educated men and good preachers with no desire to sow dissension in the congregations they visited. But the lesser

men who followed them, notes Porter, have done more harm than good. When invited to assist a regular pastor or when they thrust themselves forward without invitation, they behave in "heady, sanguine, censorious" fashion and attempt to subvert the pastor's influence by arousing "those restless spirits" found in every congregation. He adds that the prestige which accompanies itinerants as they travel from place to place makes them overconfident and self-righteous, a poor example for their listeners and a detriment to the spiritual life of the churches to which they have come.

In urging his readers to forego the assistance of such itinerant evangelists in future revivals, Porter states that the first responsibility of every church is to its own pastor who, if his members support him, can accomplish far more than a visitor--and maintain the church's stability as well. He believes that only a personal pastor can adequately deal with an anxious sinner, and looks with horror to the "day of calamity" when churches "shall be willing to exchange a stated pastorship for itinerant and occasional ministers." This, Porter is certain, would destroy all sense of ministerial responsibility and weaken the organization of the church which can be maintained only by "constant pastoral supervision." It would also transform the whole character of public preaching, for hearers would become fond of novelty and preachers would become "diversive and declamatory . . . and indefinite" in their preaching rather than instructive and appropriate. He is even skeptical of using itinerants as assistants during extremely long or intense revivals, concluding that "as a suggestion especially applicable to some parts of our

country," ministers should beware of all itinerant revival preachers, for such strangers are not always "angels unawares."[34]

[34] S of P, VI (July, 1833), 371-375.

The Role of Emotion

Emotional outbursts, hysteria, and physical phenomena were an inevitable and frequently undesirable by-product of most eighteenth and nineteenth-century revivals. The excesses of Whitefield and Davenport prompted a considerable amount of criticism during the Great Awakening and forced Edwards into the difficult position of having to defend these men against their Arminian critics and at the same time censor them for failing to repress undesirable practices. Thus, in his elaborate Treatise on the Religious Affections (1746), he maintained that religion is more a matter of the affections than of the intellect. But in opposition to extreme enthusiasts, he emphasized his conviction that the great majority of disturbances were not a sign of the grace of God.[35] Fearful of criticism and eager to abide by the

[35] Quoted and discussed in S of P, V (July, 1832), 390-391.

tenets of Edwards, the New England revivalists of 1800 were successful in discouraging all types of emotion. Assemblies, says Porter, were "solemn as eternitie," and people listened with "a deep, fixed, silent attention." However, simultaneous revivals in the west were notorious for their disorder. Because they were dealing with a low class, migrating population, preachers had to appeal to the emotions and

press for quick decisions. Camp meetings, during which preachers from several denominations exhorted simultaneously and people drifted from one area to another also contributed to emotionalism. During these meetings it was not unusual to see people weeping, shouting, laughing uncontrollably, swooning, and twitching spasmodically--and attributing it all to the work of the Holy Spirit. Disturbances were also characteristic of Finney's revivals. The New England Calvinists, though they censured Finney for encouraging emotionalism, could not in sincerity condemn all evidences of enthusiasm, for they recognized that--when held to a moderate level--it could contribute to the conversion experience. However, because of their extreme sensitivity to Unitarian criticism, they hesitated publicly to approve of any degree of emotional manifestation.

In the first article of his series, the unknown author of Thoughts on Revivals of Religion clearly reflects this reluctance to condone emotion. Having recently had an opportunity to participate in a series of revivals, he has observed a number of doctrinal and procedural errors. But no error, he is certain, is a greater hindrance to revivalistic success than that their subjects have come to expect "a degree and distinctness of feeling altogether above what will ordinarily be produced." He adds that in some areas conversions unaccompanied by emotional frenzy are so contrary to what the subjects anticipated that they become frightened and think their conversions cannot be real. Because they are not trembling and weeping, they resist their feelings of tranquillity and "go in quest of new alarms, as the means of a conversion whose characteristics shall correspond

with their unfounded expectations." To avoid such disturbing errors in future revivals, the author asks his readers to remember that emotional displays have no scriptural basis, whereas the "reality and greatness" of a true religious change will be evinced by "silent tranquillity, humble love . . . cheerful resignation, and implicit reliance on the Saviour."[36]

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[36] S of P, I (January, 1828), 37-39.

Another anonymous author recognizes the value of emotion but fears that the critics of revivals may eventually force the orthodox to reject emotionalism altogether. Having observed that the most common objection to emotional revivals is "that such seasons are not clearly distinguishable from cases of strong and prevalent excitement in regard to other things," he resolves to show:

> by a recurrence to facts connected with revivals of religion, that this objection to them is unfounded, that they are widely and gloriously distinguished from all other cases of strong excitement; and that there is no way of accounting for them . . . but by supposing the special interposition and agency of God.

The author observes first that revivals are different from all other cases of prevalent excitement "in respect to their origin." While admitting that some excitement can be attributed to external events and even to the "circumstance itself," he contends, nevertheless, that in most instances "no sufficient natural cause . . . can be assigned." Without the use of any extraordinary means, sinners begin to feel solemn, anxious, and to manifest "an unusual concern for their souls." It is inevitable that they should then "from the

fulness of their laboring hearts" and the "interposition . . . of the Almighty Spirit" begin to pray and speak and outwardly manifest their concern. He believes, secondly, that the "nature and depth of those feelings, which are brought into exercise" distinguishes them from other cases of general excitement. Unlike the "superficial . . . flighty . . . boisterous" feelings which result from external causes, religious feelings are always "of a deep and solemn kind, such as nothing merely external could produce." They affect the most hidden parts of the soul, weigh upon the sinner's conscience, and follow him wherever he goes. Springing as they do from the inner man, over which the external world has little control, these intense emotions can be touched and relieved "only by the finger of God."

The fact that the excitement of revivals leads to "a rational course of conversation and pursuit" is further evidence to the author that such emotion cannot be equated with other seasons of great excitement which frequently "fall little short of . . . insanity" and lead persons to say and do things of which they are later ashamed. Conversely, those under conviction immediately initiate a reasonable course of events: they "view religion to be all important. . . . regard themselves as great sinners . . . are distressed on account of their sins . . . [and] are seen acquiescing sweetly in the will of God." They never, in later life, look back with regret to the feelings which were theirs during a revival, but rather consider the loss of such feelings to be a heavy one and pray that they may be revived again.

The author states, finally, that revivals are distinguished

from all other cases of emotion "by the permanency of those impressions which they leave on the mind, and the unalterable change which they produce in the character." Ordinary cases of excitement may call forth a general burst of indignation or an overwhelming feeling of joy. But persons do not remain indignant or joyful forever, and the character of those affected by these effervescent emotions remains essentially unaltered. Such however, is not the case in genuine revivals of religion, for:

> persons receive impressions which they never lose. A change is produced in their characters which is radical and permanent . . . their thoughts are turned almost wholly to new subjects; their feelings receive a new direction; a new aspect is given to their whole characters.

This feeling, moreover, is not temporary but perpetual, and makes the person involved "a new creature." Since differences between religious enthusiasm and natural excitement are so clear, the author is unable to understand how the Unitarians can justify their criticism of revivals, or how his fellow orthodox can be so reluctant to admit the value of emotional excitement.[37]

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[37] S of P, I (August, 1828), 397-402. A similar approach is taken by the author of an article found in S of P, III (May, 1830), 256-279.

When discussing the role of emotion in revivals, the various pastoral associations reveal their conservative Nettletonian perspective more conspicuously than ever before, in sharp contrast to the above plea for a balanced attitude toward enthusiasm. With but one exception, the correspondents smugly report that their areas have been relatively free from excitement, the implication being that their

revivals are therefore above reproach. For example, all revivals in the churches of the Suffolk Association are reported as "rational, that is, in accordance with the principles of our nature and the dictates of common sense." There has been "no overwhelming excitement, no loud weeping, no exclamation, no fainting, or other physical derangement." Meetings are never protracted to a late hour, nor have women expressed a wish to exhort or pray in public meetings. Others state that their revivals "have been attended with few if any irregularities," that they "are accompanied with a general and deep solemnity," that "the character of the work has been still, solemn, and gradual," or that there has been "an unusual degree of exemption from animal excitement."

The only association to report otherwise is Hampden, whose correspondent frequently contradicts the experiences of the other groups. Though the Hampden reporter has rarely observed any "bodily agitations, any out-cries, any resort to self-righteous, fanatical doings," he admits that some of the revivals among his people have been attended with "considerable animal excitement." He has found too that in many instances individuals have been deprived of strength and "manifested much agony of feeling." He dislikes such displays of emotion and states that the churches have endeavored to turn them to good account with "consistent, calm, and plain exhibitions of truth." He is aware, furthermore, that the subjects of such revivals may mistake their excitements for submission to Christ and, when their anxiety has faded, "return to their former state, like a dog to his vomit." But he does not believe that emotionalism threatens the

success of the Hampden revivals, for these peculiarities have always taken place in conjunction with "the fears awakened by a deep conviction of . . . divine wrath," and they have uniformly appeared among "thoughtless, ignorant, and inattentive" individuals from whom such conduct is to be expected.

The Treatment of Awakened Sinners

The guidance of those who were awakened to the truths of Scripture by revivals, but who were not yet professing Christians, was a matter of prime concern to the New England revivalists of 1830-31. They did not wish to repeat the error of the eighteenth-century clergy who permitted "unconverted men in great numbers" to be admitted to the church in the hope that they would eventually become Christians. Nor did they desire to be identified with Finney, who was frequently accused of failing to follow up his campaigns with sound programs of instruction. In view of the matter's significance, it is not surprising that the Spirit of the Pilgrims has much advice to offer both the individual under revivalistic conviction and the church under whose instruction he sat.

Dr. Porter, in several of his letters on revivals, is particularly concerned with the attitudes and "exercises" of those he terms "hopeful converts." Aware that many such converts are inclined to a "groundless confidence" in their own spiritual condition, he reminds them that the recognition of divine truth which they have experienced is only the beginning of the conversion process. To help them progress at a satisfactory rate, he suggests that they practice the "truly

Christian graces" of benevolence and mercy, whether or not they feel a desire to do so, for growth in the Christian life comes only with action and experience. He urges them, furthermore, to remain constantly aware of their own guilt as sinners and their utter dependence on God for all spiritual benefits. Despite the belief of the New Haven theologians that "every one [may] love himself supremely and . . . regard God . . . only with ultimate reference to his own happiness," Porter insists that the awakened sinner must make God the center of his regard and Christ the sole example of his life. He requests finally that each strive to attain a true humility--to sit at the feet of those who teach, instead of "exhibiting themselves in a public assembly, by telling their experiences."[38]

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[38] S of P, V (October, 1832), 567-576.

The author of another article is concerned about the recent tendency of hopeful converts to refuse the Spirit, for fear that they will become subject to melancholy and deep depression. He is certain that the enemies of revivals are responsible for such rumors and equally certain that whatever stories they circulate are "malignant fictions . . . mere caricatures of the reality." Hoping to allay the fears of his readers and encourage them to submit without alarm to the promptings of the Spirit, he declares that during thirty years of observation he has found conviction of sin to be "a state of mind entirely safe." He cannot deny that a certain amount of solicitude generally "precedes renovation," but believes this solicitude to be so productive of desired results that individuals should encourage rather

than fear its appearance.

He does, however, suggest certain precautions to enable the awakened sinner to maintain a proper state of mind while under conviction. He should, above all, "continue his daily avocation," lest "undiverted intensity of thought . . . produce confusion of mind and exhausted sensibility." An ordinary amount of "nutrition and sleep" are also important and will protect the individual from the "perplexity . . . fear and faintness of heart" which are the result, not of intense spiritual anxiety, but of "exhaustion . . . and the ebbing of nervous energy." By observing these simple precautions, the author concludes that there will be "in every case of religious awakening, next to absolute safety" and freedom from melancholy.[39]

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[39] S of P, I (September, 1828), 480-481.

Having stressed the duties of sinners with respect to their own salvation, Porter remarks that "great wisdom is requisite on the part of ministers and other Christians in the treatment of those who are anxious." He addresses particularly those ministers who wrongly exhort their listeners not only to immediate repentance but "to an immediate decision" as well, thereby encouraging them "to entertain premature hopes" of their own conversion. While admitting that the work of conversion may be done "effectually in a moment," Porter insists that no one but God can have immediate proof of such rapid conversions, and that it is, therefore, not the responsibility of the church to urge sinners to immediate commitment. The most a minister can do at this point, he continues, is to hope with the sinner that

his experience has been real and to help him see the necessity of continued "calm thought, reading, and examination into his own heart."

Porter adds that ministers who continue to press for immediate conversions will be guilty of a twofold error. They will, on the one hand, have undermined the spirituality of the organized church whose members will be inclined to "religious ostentation" in "numbering the people" who have been admitted to the rolls. This, he fears, will be accompanied by a tendency to evaluate a church's strength on the basis of its total membership rather than the quality of its members. Moreover, those "who are hurried into communion . . . without having been instructed" will be ignorant of orthodox doctrines, indifferent to the church's programs, and opposed to its discipline. On the other hand, the minister will have put the eternal interests of the sinner himself "in imminent and needless jeopardy," for he will have given him "a groundless hope of heaven." The sinner, because he is alarmed and distressed, and "feels as he never felt before," will respond with eagerness to the pastor's plea and will, consequently, fail to understand that he must strive diligently before he can be numbered among the elect.

To avoid the continuation of such distressing developments, Porter offers several practical suggestions. He proposes, for example, that ministers refer to their subjects not as "converts" but as "hopeful subjects of grace" who are "hopefully renewed," "apparently reconciled to God," or "apparently become new creatures." He believes also that every church must develop a plan for the "systematic instruction and probation" of hopeful converts, one by which "they might be

kept in a state of trial and of progress, without the liability to be carried backward, . . . by adverse circumstances." Such a plan, he is certain, will necessarily include a "Probationer's Class," the object of which is:

> to give them [the hopefully pious] clear and correct views respecting the nature and evidences of piety, that they may not be deceived respecting their own characters, to watch the progress of their minds and the exercises of their hearts, that a correct judgment may be formed respecting them; and to acquaint them fully with the duties and responsibility connected with a public profession of religion, that they may be able to count the cost and to come forward with right apprehensions to the work of the Lord.

When the probationer has learned to accept not only the doctrines stressed in revivals, but every teaching of the church and of Scripture, he will be ready to make a public profession of faith. To avoid both premature rashness of commitment, and "its opposite danger . . . too much delay," Porter suggests that this interval between repentance and profession be not less than two nor more than four months.[40]

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[40] S of P, V (October, 1832), 573-576; VI (July, 1833), 376-388. Porter also refers his readers back to an anonymous letter on the desirability of Probationers' Classes in IV (December, 1831), 656-658.

The Process of Sanctification

The Unitarians of the early 1830's frequently contended that those who made decisions during revivals were emotionally rather than spiritually aroused and would fall from grace as soon as their initial fervor subsided. In an attempt to forestall such criticism and remove whatever conditions might have prompted it, the conductors of the Spirit of the Pilgrims published several articles dealing with the

process of sanctification--or growth in Christian graces--which followed one's public profession of faith. They realized that only by continually growing in spirituality and virtue could the subjects of revivals convince the world that their conversions, though effected under unusual circumstances, were as lasting as those which occurred in a less spectacular fashion.

Several of the periodical's contributors are concerned about the mental state of the new convert who, though he has made a public profession, may still lack assurance of his salvation. Hoping to provide them with religious confidence, one anonymous author enumerates several changes which, he believes, occur in the individual after his spiritual rebirth. He notes, first of all, that the truly regenerate soul "has a new object of supreme affection." Whereas he formerly considered only his own happiness, he now sees the "loveliness . . . of the Divine character" and gives God "a supreme regard, affection and veneration." The regenerate man, secondly, has "a new rule of duty." He no longer acts according to his own "desires, wishes, and propensities," but according to the will of God. He replaces the maxims of the world with God's moral law, the standard by which "to estimate his character, mould his affections, and regulate his conduct."

The author notes also that the person undergoing sanctification has a "new view of man's native character." Although a "moral . . . but impenitent man" may, by observing certain aspects of life, receive a dark picture of human nature, he will find relief from such thoughts in the contemplation of natural affections and will decide that mankind is not, after all, entirely bad. The regenerate man, on

the other hand, sees that "the most amiable, unrenewed men, in all their moral, accountable exercises, are sinful, only sinful, and sinful without any measure of holiness." Finally, states the author, the "new creature has a new foundation for his hope of acceptance with God." Unconverted individuals "make a great merit" of their sobriety, honesty, and kindness." They "respect the Sabbath, read their Bibles . . . attend meetings . . . and [believe] their hopes be good." The convert, however, knows he can no longer look to his own goodness for hope; he knows "that the sum total of his life stands against him in characters black with sin." He turns, therefore, to the cross of Christ and on that hangs his only hope of forgiveness and heaven. If the recent convert is able to point to such profound changes in his own attitudes, the author sees no reason for him to doubt any longer that he has become "a new creature" and is progressing satisfactorily along the path of sanctification.[41]

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[41] S of P, IV (August, 1831), 415-421.

Of all the Spirit's contributors, the author of the series entitled Thoughts on Revivals of Religion displays the greatest concern for those just beginning the lifelong process of sanctification. He, like the above author, has counselled many discouraged young Christians and recognizes the danger inherent in their attitudes. Lest these persons, fearing their religious experiences have been merely temporary, lose their newly-acquired zeal, the author believes it his duty to show them "what religion does not do . . . on finding a place in the soul." He states, for example, that "religion accom-

plishes no change in respect to natural faculties or personal identity," that the individual, after conversion, has the same "intellect, and conscience, and hopes and fears, with all the unchanged tokens of identity" that he had before. Related to this is the author's belief that religion "does not change the natural temperament." Thus, a person "who was phlegmatic . . . before his conversion," will not grow "quick and ardent afterwards."

Religion, moreover, does not change one's "instincts, passions . . . or appetites"; even fervent watchfulness and self-denial will not successfully suspend "in a moment, the bias of every passion which may have become inordinate by indulgence." The author declares, fourthly, that "the commencement of religion does not extirpate entirely from the soul any one sinful passion." The young Christian, therefore, should not be "needlessly troubled" by any onset of "remaining sin" but should consider the prodound conflicts which now arise in him to be "some of his best evidences" of conversion.

For those who, after conversion, still find themselves unable to discriminate between truth and error, the author states that religion "does not produce intuitive knowledge of what is morally right." He adds that the Christian's only "preservative against error" is biblical study along with "observation, reflection and prayer." As his last and most important point he notes that the individual after conversion "does not <u>appear</u> to himself to be growing better." Though in the sight of God he <u>has</u> become better and will improve even more as he advances in sanctification, "the real effect on himself" is: "deeper views of the deceitfulness and wickedness

of his heart, deeper humiliation before God, stronger desires to be delivered from sin, and a more grateful sense of the goodness of God in sending his Son to make atonement for sin and give his people the victory over it." Continuing these remarks in a later issue, the author adds that the commencement of religion does not imply the existence at once of all the Christian graces, that it does not enable the Christian to call up at will any one affection, and that it is not the occasion of "one unvarying state of enjoyment."[42]

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[42] S of P. I (January, 1828), 37-42; I (February, 1828), 74-77.

To help the recent convert progress satisfactorily in his acquisition of Christian virtues, this same author, at another time, gives him some practical advice regarding amusements. He deplores the attitude of those professing Christians who, while they avoid "definite and prominent immoralities," still think there is a "middle ground" in the area of amusements over which Christianity has no control. While admitting that the Gospel does not give specific injunctions and prohibitions for every possible temptation, the author insists that it and the church do provide "general principles" by which the recent convert can decide "how far he may safely go and where he must stop." He should, in the first place, avoid whatever amusements the most devout Christians of all denominations have regarded as sinful. Other amusements, such as ballroom dancing and gambling, which "damp devotion . . . and alienate the mind from religious associations," are also unsuited to the Christian life.

The Christian, moreover, must regard as sinful those which his

conscience tells him are unlawful and those which the world believes to be inconsistent with Christianity, lest "they [the world] despise us for our flexibility." The author, finally, exhorts young converts either to avoid amusements "which are the chosen and especial recreation of irreligious, vicious, and eminently worldly men," or to "strike from their prayers 'Lead us not into temptation.'" He concludes by warning the many youthful Christians "who mingle with the world under the pretext of doing good," that in all such experiments, "the conversions take place on the wrong side . . . [and] are never reciprocated."[43]

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[43] S of P, I (July, 1828), 353-361.

The reporters for the various associations, while offering little advice to the individual, are greatly concerned with the role of the church and its minister in this crucial process. Most inclusive is the report of the Suffolk Association, whose correspondent devotes several pages to discussing: "THE PRESENT DUTY OF MINISTERS AND CHURCHES IN ORDER TO SECURE THE SPECIAL AND CONTINUED OPERATION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT AND TO RENDER THE INFLUENCE OF THE GOSPEL GENERAL AND PERMANENT." Recognizing the tendency of many ministers and church members to consider themselves responsible for successful revivals, he reminds them that the continued operation of the Holy Spirit is absolutely essential to any church that is concerned with the spiritual growth of its recent converts. Instead of holding themselves responsible for all instruction and admonition, churches must cultivate a greater "filial sense of dependence" on the Spirit and

request his "guidance and blessing" for their feeble and insufficient efforts.

The author, moreover, emphasizes the need for "humble and penitential, frequent and persevering prayers" which are the only condition on which the blessing of sanctification is offered. "Fitful and transient devotion" may introduce a revival, but it is not sufficient to guarantee permanent results. The church must finally "institute a rigid discipline" among all its members, for only if they are "holy and blameless" can they serve as examples for recent converts. By adopting these suggestions, the author concludes, churches can feel reasonably confident that "the lamentable . . . cases of apostacy" which sometimes follow revivals will be few and the process of sanctification will progress satisfactorily.

Objections to Revivalism

Despite intensive attempts by the revivalists to conduct their campaigns in a manner commensurate with scriptural teaching, certain doctrinal and tactical errors were virtually impossible to erase. Itineracy grew increasingly prevalent, competition arose among pastors, denominational strife divided congregations, protracted meetings were both misused and overused, ministers neglected doctrinal matters, and man's ability all too often superseded the power of the Holy Spirit. No group was quicker to take advantage of these errors than the Unitarians, who magnified and distorted them until they were no longer recognizable as the same errors which the orthodox themselves were opposing. Beecher, in describing the vehemence with which the

Unitarians criticized his Boston revivals of 1826-27, says:

> In one day after seventy joined [his church], the press belched and bellowed, and all the mud in the streets was flying at us. The upper class put mouth to ear, and hand to pocket, and said St-boy! There was an intense malignant enragement. . . . Showers of lies were rained about us every day. The Unitarians, with all their principles of toleration, were as really a persecuting power while they had the ascendency as ever existed. Wives and daughters were forbidden to attend our meeting; and the whole weight of political, literary, and social influence was turned against us.[44]

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[44]Beecher, II, 55

Though their criticism was often due more to the basic Unitarian-Calvinistic controversy than to their abhorrence of revivalistic indiscretions, the Unitarians frequently did strike out at specific errors. Consequently, as these errors multiplied during the late twenties due to the infiltration of Finney's revival methods, the Unitarian opposition took on new strength. The conductors of the Spirit of the Pilgrims, were repelled by the possibility of dissension over revivalism within their own ranks, but they had no such scruples with regard to the Unitarians. One reviewer, disturbed by Unitarian criticism of that which they had never experienced, ignores his stated purpose--the evaluation of Unitarian tracts--and devotes his entire article to speculating on the reasons for such vehement criticism of revivals. He is certain that, for one thing, the Unitarians dislike revivals because they are not conducted "in a cool . . . rational . . . spontaneous manner," and even more certain that "they cannot bear to see other denominations so much more engaged and successful than themselves . . . and they give vent to their feelings in objections and complaints." However, he believes that "most distressing

of all" to the liberals is the well-known fact that seasons of refreshing "are continually thinning their ranks, and adding new and striking attestations to the power and excellence of evangelical truth." Large numbers of "their best instructed and most zealous partisans," he explains, have experienced a complete change in religious views and have become harsh critics of heretical beliefs.[45]

[45] S of P, IV (October, 1831), 554-566.

It is difficult to determine whether this critic is correct in his contention that so many prominent Unitarians have defected to orthodoxy. But he is accurately voicing the opinions of the Spirit's conductors who, between 1828 and 1833, grew increasingly convinced that revivals were the weapon by which Unitarianism was soon to be routed.

The best known and most vociferous Unitarian criticism of the period was contained in a work entitled Letters of an English Traveller to His Friend in England on the Revivals of Religion in America. The conductors of the Spirit of the Pilgrims considered this little volume sufficiently important to warrant three detailed reviews.[46]

[46] S of P, I (May, 1828), 248-266; I (June, 1828), 310-319; I (July, 1828), 374-389. Another of the Spirit's contributors refers to it in III (March, 1830), 131. When page references are noted in the following summary, the information has been obtained from the work itself. All other quotations, comments, etc. are from the Spirit's reviews of its contents.

They were as concerned with its "unqualified and abundant . . . approbation" by Unitarian reviewers as they were with its contents,

for they believed such universal acclaim was indicative of their oppositions' unified strength. Henry Ware, for one, praises it as "the best commentary" on revivals ever published. The Unitarian Advocate calls it "a calm, dispassionate, intelligent, and serious judgment . . . without a particle of bitterness." The Christian Examiner gives it "a cordial recommendation" and even goes so far as to compare it with Charles Chauncy's "Things of a Bad and Dangerous Tendency" of the previous century.

Unlike the Unitarian reviewers, the Spirit's anonymous reviewer is predictably caustic in his condemnation of this work, moving from sarcasm, to disgust, to disbelief as he comments upon the traveller's observations. He is particularly disturbed by the traveller's "assumption of infallibility" which leads him to presuppose the unerring accuracy of the Unitarian attitude toward revivals. On the strength of this assumption, the author not only "colors, distorts, and misrepresents" the orthodox position but also exposes the orthodox themselves as "weak, irrational, or superstitious, for acting according to their own sentiments."

Though the traveller professes to be "a candid, liberal, gentlemanly, philosophical, and Christian Englishman," the reviewer refuses to accept his self-characterization, stating that:

> no passing traveller could acquire such a thorough knowledge of the peculiarities of our religious character, and of minute facts, and secret strings of action, as would enable him to represent, or misrepresent them, as the case may be, in the manner of this author . . . nor [would] any considerate foreigner . . . have identified himself so completely with the interests of a party . . . so as to accommodate himself exactly to their wishes, prejudices, and hostilities.

He concludes, therefore, that the author has merely assumed the character of an English traveller and is, in reality, "a leader of the Unitarian party here; nay more, one of our Unitarian clergy."[47]

[47]I have been unable to determine whether the Spirit's reviewer actually knew the identify of this "leader of the Unitarian party" or whether he was simply speculating. While the original publication of the Letters of an English Traveller (Boston, 1828) is anonymous, contemporary critics, both Unitarian and orthodox, almost immediately identified it as the work of the Reverend Orville Dewey, who was indeed a well-known Unitarian clergyman.

Like his Arminian predecessors of the Great Awakening, Dewey objects to the traditional doctrines upon which the orthodox "rest . . . their whole subject of revivals." He characterizes the doctrine of total depravity as the belief that, "all men are naturally and utterly depraved and wicked, and deserving of unspeakable and endless misery, that the character which they bring from their very birth, which they derive from their creation dooms them to eternal and infinite suffering." Since the Calvinist is so certain that God alone can help him, he "conjures up his fearful system of faith" and places so much reliance on revivals of religion.[48] In reply, the Spirit's

[48]Letters of an English Traveller, p. 14.

reviewer concedes that an admission of depravity is fundamental to the orthodox conception of revivals, for "if men are in danger of endless punishment . . . they need . . . a radical change of moral character and pardon" such as revivals provide. But he warns Dewey that his opinions "are not arguments" and until the Unitarians prove by Scripture and an appeal to facts that men are not entirely depraved, the

orthodox will not take them seriously.

In the course of his comments on depravity, Dewey also criticizes the orthodox insistence on immediate repentance, their irrational belief that "men are converted and made Christians in one moment, that grace descends not like the calm and refreshing dew, slowly developing the growth of nature, but like the lightning, sudden, irresistible, blasting every thing natural." Believing with all Unitarians that one must strive with painful slowness if he hopes to eventually emulate the example of Christ, Dewey is unable to understand how men can "talk about getting religion in an hour or a moment."[49] His reviewer, on the other hand, finds it absurd to speak

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[49] Ibid., p. 73.

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of regeneration as a gradual change and declares that "if man is to be . . . changed from entire depravity to any degree of true holiness, the change must be instantaneous," and revivals are necessary. He adds that it is "absurd and unphilosophical, uncandid and unchristian" for a member "of a small denomination of recent origin" to ridicule the great majority of New Englanders "for adhering to the system of their pilgrim fathers, and reducing it to practice."

Another of Dewey's targets is the entire body of orthodox clergymen who, he contends, "periodically feel the urgent necessity of some grand arousing from . . . lethargy" and, consequently "call up" a revival without receiving prior indications that the Spirit is at work.[50] Most persons who attend such revivals do so not from any

[50]Ibid., pp. 4-11.

religious impulse but simply "out of curiosity." Dewey, moreover, condemns the orthodox clergy for using revivals as a means by which to extend their control over "a superstitious people" and for failing to restrict their "clerical influence" to the boundaries of their own parishes.

Continuing his commentary on revivals, Dewey criticizes several of the means that the revivalists were currently utilizing, for better or for worse, throughout New England. He characterizes itinerants as men who take advantage of the "extraordinary events of Providence" to produce excitement and who gain "converts" by implying that their audiences will be "guilty of the most awful obduracy . . . if they should refuse to be aroused." He objects to "domiciliary visitation" as a "horrifying experience" when "two or three men . . . enter a house with an air of preternatural solemnity [and ask] pointed questions put in the most awful manner . . . concerning the most secret, solemn, and delicate feelings."[51] He even contends that the

[51]Ibid., pp. 19 and 56-57.

promoters of revivals plan their campaigns for the winter or for seasons of sickness and drought in order to take advantage of widespread depression, poverty, or sorrow.

Dewey, however, reserves the brunt of his attack for the emotionalism which, in his estimation, pervades every revival of

religion. After objecting to the "human savor" of all outward manifestations of enthusiasm, he insists that the work of God in revivals "as it is in everything else . . . should . . . be in religion marked with simplicity, order, and calmness." However, here is a religion "of tumult and excitement" whose leaders may strive to suppress "all outward marks of agitation," but who still address their appeals to the most excitable passions and shake the soul "to its very foundations." In place of such caricatures of "true" religion, Dewey states his preference for "that great Revival of RELIGION during which man will see:

> poor, misguided wayward, wearied human nature, pursuing at last its true end, and obtaining its true rest-- . . . restless and impatient seekers after good, finding that which they seek . . . --the poor contented, the rich temperate, the lowly high-minded, the lofty humble, and the learned wise, and the votaries of pleasure virtuous . . . [52]

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[52] Ibid., pp. 107-108 and 139-140.

The Spirit's reviewer is greatly disturbed by Dewey's objections and declares that this volume will "be more fatal than the writings of infidels . . . to the minds of the young and unguarded" because it is clothed in a religious garb. But he derives some consolation from his hope that it will warn the friends of revivals to avoid the defects which lead to "an indiscriminate attack on revivals in general" and will lead some Unitarians "to examine more accurately the principles of their leaders and the tendency of their measures."

The "Fruits" of Revivalism

Background

Although the revivalists were able to show that most Unitarian criticism of revivals was unjust, prejudiced, and distorted, they were especially grateful for the far-reaching results of their revival movement. These so-called "fruits" of revivalism, more than any appeal to facts or reasonable argument, justified the Calvinists' faith in revivals and provided them with a highly effective means of refuting their Unitarian opponents. Considering the relative importance of this matter, it is not surprising that the Spirit of the Pilgrims devotes a large number of articles to discussing the revivalistic contribution to the New England churches of the early 1830's. One of the association reporters, for example, states that since the commencement of revivals in his area the churches have witnessed "a more holy reverence toward God," that contributions have increased in amount, that the Bible, Sabbath, and sanctuary are more valued, and "a thrifty economy takes the place of a vicious waste." Another association, while admitting that in some cases the number of converts has fallen short of expectations, still finds that "generally the effect of revivals has been very happy":

> It has softened asperities and healed old difficulties which existed among individuals. . . . Often it has put a new moral aspect upon the whole community--Instead of idling away the Sabbath . . . the inhabitants have become a church-going people who listen to the word . . . and contribute to promote the cause of Christ.

In assessing the general results of recent revivals, Dr. Porter agrees, noting particularly a degree of interest in family devotions and a

humility in pastors never before observed in the church.[53]

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[53]S of P, VI (March, 1833), 129-130. Not mentioned in the Spirit, but also significant, is the number of believers who were added to the various denominations during this period. Weisberger in his excellent commentary on nineteenth-century revivalism (p. 151) states that during the late twenties and early thirties the Presbyterians boasted a four-fold increase and Congregational church membership was said to triple--all as a result of revivals.

Although revivals did in many cases save orthodox congregations either from extinction or absorption into neighboring Unitarian parishes, their impetus to benevolence and social reform was even more significant. While discussing the effect of revivals on society in general, the Spirit quotes the General Assembly of the Presbyterian church (which had, only forty years earlier, despaired of America's future) as believing that:

> the whole customs of society have been changed. Amusements and all practices of a doubtful character . . . have been abandoned. . . . converts are immediately friends of the temperance reformation. . . . [Revivals] close the lips of the profane; they rescue the Sabbath from under the feet of the impious, disperse the assemblies of the wicked. . . . They close up the fountains from whence flow the desolating streams of intemperance, licentiousness, and every vice, and give increasing energy and triumph to all plans of benevolence by which this revolted world is to be brought back to the service and favor of God.[54]

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[54]S of P, IV (August, 1831), 410-411.

Christians, moreover, became increasingly aware that their task was "not merely to preach the gospel to every creature," but "to reorganise human society in accordance with the law of God," to abolish all corruption and abuse in the social system, and "so far as society has been erected on false principles to take it down and erect it anew."[55]

[55]Edward Beecher, "The Nature, Importance, and Means of Eminent Holiness throughout the Church," The American National Preacher, X (1835), quoted in Timothy L. Smith, Revivalism and Social Reform in Mid-Nineteenth Century America (New York, 1954), p. 225.

Although the earliest efforts of the church were dependent on a few determined individuals, men were quick to realize that consolidation would greatly increase their impact. The leader in this movement for organized reform was Lyman Beecher who, at the height of the 1812 revivals, drew the loosely-knit Congregational churches of Connecticut into a "Society for the Reformation of Morals." The society never achieved its immediate goal, the preservation of the standing order in Connecticut. But it did demonstrate to the church that "VIGOROUS AND CONCERTED ACTION FOR GOD" was the only way to achieve success.[56]

[56]Beecher, I, xxvi.

By the mid-twenties ministers from almost every denomination in which revivals figured prominently were promoting various reform and benevolent movements. Finney made a point of telling his converts that in their new life "they must have no separate interests . . . [but] should set out with a determination to aim at being useful in the highest degree possible." He even claimed that a lack of interest in benevolent enterprises was evidence of "a backslidden heart."[57]

[57]Lectures on Revivals of Religion (n.p., n.d.), pp. 374-375, quoted in Barnes, p. 11.

Nathaniel Taylor, though more a theologian than social reformer, developed much of his doctrinal system about benevolence which he defined as one's "elective preference of the highest well-being of all other sentient beings as his supreme object."[58] Beecher, the real

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[58] Lectures on the Moral Government of God, I, 19.

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architect of the voluntary system, made himself available to every worthy cause and was instrumental in the establishment of societies throughout New England and New York.

This burning desire to reform society as well as to save men's souls grew stronger through the 1820's until by the end of the decade, Americans could point with pride to a variety of organizations exceeding even the clergy's fondest hopes. There were societies to halt infidelity, drunkenness, Sabbath-breaking, gambling, and smoking. Others attempted to save sailors at port, send missionaries to the heathen, provide Sunday Schools for children of the lower classes, reform prisons, improve diets, prevent the display of obscene pictures, combat rudeness in omnibuses, and stop the wandering of pigs in the streets. There was even an organization called "The Society for Promoting the Observance of the Seventh Commandment," whose only aim was the denunciation (not the abolition) of prostitution.

Though these societies were originally local in character, they spread rapidly to the county and state level. By 1830 almost all could boast of national organization and say, like the American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions, that:

> the Board . . . is not limited to any section of the country or to any denomination of Christians. Its members, chartered or

> corresponding, and its patrons, auxiliaries and agents are in all the states of the Union, and of nearly all considerable religious communions. In its form and spirit . . . it is a NATIONAL INSTITUTION.[59]

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[59]The First Ten Annual Reports of the American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions (Boston, 1834), p. 316, compiled by Jeremiah Evarts, Jedediah Morse, and Samuel Worcester, quoted in Bodo, p. 19.

This whole cluster of benevolent societies was sometimes called the "benevolent empire." Though the various organizations had no official interrelationship, they were generally co-ordinated by means of interlocking directorates. Furthermore, they flourished in the same areas, they contributed strength and encouragement to each other, and their memberships were substantially identical. They even held their annual meetings at the same time and place so that their members could attend as many different sessions as possible.

Opposition to Societies for Benevolence and Reform

The Unitarians, whose leaders were instrumental in organizing benevolent societies prior to 1820, found it increasingly difficult during the twenties to arouse support for these societies among their wealthy but indifferent congregations. Even the contributors to Unitarian journals were forced to admit a sterility of religious life in too many of their churches, and they sought repeatedly, but with little success, to stimulate their readers to greater religious zeal.[60]

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[60]Allen and Eddy, p. 201.

They were able to maintain a certain amount of support for the

Unitarian Tract Society; individual churches sponsored a few missionaries to the American Indians; and some people became involved in the temperance and peace crusades. But by the late twenties apathy was so prevalent that many Unitarian leaders found themselves in the difficult position of having to defend their denominational disinterest by objecting to associations in general. Their task was made somewhat more palatable by the fact that the revivalists almost without exception, held positions of authority in these associations and by virtue of their religious affiliation alone deserved condemnation.

As usual the Unitarians' most eloquent spokesman was William Ellery Channing who published some remarks in the Christian Examiner on "the disposition which now prevails, to form associations and to accomplish all objects by organized masses." Having observed that "everything now is done by societies," Channing determines to consider the effect of associations, "for good or for evil." He admits that a disposition to association is in some cases justifiable and even commendable, for, "our social principles and relations are the great springs of improvement, and of vigorous, and efficient exertion. . . . without impulses and excitements from abroad, without sympathies and communication with our fellow creatures, we should gain nothing and accomplish nothing." But he insists that the associative principle harbors dangers that men seldom consider, particularly in that it "injures free action . . . by accumulating power in a few hands" and "creates tyrants as effectually as standing armies." Because associations tend, furthermore, "to produce dependence, and to destroy self-originated action in the vast multitudes who compose them,"

Channing concludes that men "are in danger of sacrificing . . . individuality . . . to social connexions."[61]

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[61] Christian Examiner, VII (September, 1829), 105-140.

Channing's reviewer in the Spirit of the Pilgrims agrees with him "as to the value of an independent judgment, and of freedom from the tyranny of customs," and admits that men are in danger of losing their individuality. But he is unable to understand how the Unitarians, with their exalted view of human nature, can believe man's "mutual influence to be other than salutary." Observing with amusement that Channing is forced to praise associations even while objecting to their dangerous tendencies, this reviewer suggests that Channing is undoubtedly embarrassed by what he must do and "frightened at the application of his own principles." While the reviewer does not care to discuss every aspect of Channing's article, he contends that the various arguments are full of "empty truisms . . . indistinctness . . . ambiguity" and a profound inability to penetrate the minds and motives of those who support associations.[62]

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[62] S of P, II (March, 1829), 129-141.

A short time later, Enoch Pond, in considering "the benefits of system" as opposed to individual effort, lists several advantages which he believes invariably follow good organization and careful planning. He states, among other things, that where associations are found "more money will be given with less embarrassment," this money will "be expended to much better advantage," and the benevolent

impulse will . . . more likely . . . be continued and . . . permanent" than if conducted on an individual basis. Pond concludes with an appeal to the Spirit's readers to consider themselves "as bound to engage personally and zealously in that grand system of religious charity," so that, "when millennial scenes are ushered in, it will be an honor to us to be remembered, as those who have prayed and labored to advance them."[63]

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[63] S of P, III (November, 1830), 567-572.

The Slavery Question

In addition to defending societies in general from their Unitarian critics, the conductors of the Spirit of the Pilgrims evinced a great concern for the specific benevolent and reform movements in which the American nation was currently involved. The fastest growing of these early nineteenth-century movements was the anti-slavery campaign. During the six years of the Spirit's publication, this campaign underwent a gradual but profound change in character, becoming increasingly militant and radical in its demands. Before 1830 the most widely supported anti-slavery organization was the American Colonization Society, which had been envisioned by Samuel Hopkins in 1773 but was not organized on a national level until 1817. Its members, none of whom played a more active role than the New England clergy, were concerned primarily with transporting to Africa all slaves who received their freedom in the United States. While the Society was originally supported by many southern slaveholders,

including such eminent men as Henry Clay and John Randolph, northerners soon recognized that the freed slave was their problem as well as the South's and, accordingly, fell in line with the organization's objectives. Even Congress and several state legislatures gave public money during the twenties to encourage the continuation of its work.

Though colonization was an essentially honest attempt to recognize and rectify the status of the free Negro in the United States, it met with almost immediate difficulty and hence opposition. The Negroes themselves were frightened and antagonistic; they considered themselves to be Americans and insisted that their destiny lay on this continent, not elsewhere. Moreover, the amount of money necessary to carry on a successful emigration program far exceeded the estimates of the society's founders, and the colony of Liberia, to which the Negroes were sent, proved to be unhealthy for blacks as well as whites. But the society's greatest problem was simply the fact that by 1831, after seventeen years of emigration, it had sent only 3,000 Negroes to Africa and had not alleviated the problem of the black in American society. The fault was not all theirs, for as Benjamin Lundy remarked: "Even to deport their yearly increase would exhaust each year the wealth of a Croesus. We might as well bail dry old Ocean with a thimble."[64] However, men were quick to recognize the

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[64] S of P, VI (June, 1832), 324-326.

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futility of the society's efforts and, consequently, transferred their support to the American Abolition Society whose members were agitating

for immediate, unconditional emancipation of all slaves. The conservative New England clergy, who tried to maintain a middle of the road stance, found their positions severely challenged by extremist elements within the church. Included among these extremists were many former revival ministers who had switched their loyalties from the salvation of souls to the emancipation of men but were still utilizing their old revival tactics and wielding a considerable amount of influence among church members.

Largely due to the varying attitudes of its conductors and contributors toward the anti-slavery movement, the Spirit of the Pilgrims became quite deeply involved in this struggle between the colonizationists and the abolitionists.[65] Beecher, for one, was an

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[65]Barnes states that, of the denominational periodicals, the Spirit is second in value only to the Christian Examiner in its excellent unworked material on the anti-slavery agitation (p. 200).

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ardent supporter of the Colonization Society, but because he deplored division, sought to reconcile the two parties. George B. Cheever, if indeed he was the periodical's second editor, was an outspoken abolitionist who sowed dissension wherever he went. The Spirit's articles on the Negro question, occurring as they do only in volumes one and six, delineate clearly the gradual movement of anti-slavery supporters from unopposed support of the Colonization Society to the conviction that other means also must be attempted.[66]

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[66]The fact that the Spirit demonstrates a deep concern for the slavery problem only in Vol. VI provides us with additional evidence of Cheever's editorship during that year.

In an 1828 review of a Discourse on the occasion of forming the African Mission School Society, Enoch Pond states that, though slavery in the United States must soon be modified, it is still, "to the growth of a great, moral, intelligent, well-regulated nation of free blacks in Africa that we are to look for the complete abolishment of slavery." He admits that results have been slow to appear. But he cautions his readers against impetuosity and reassures them that "with time, and general and steady effort," the goals of its founders will be realized and the American nation relieved of the burden of slavery.[67] However, by the beginning of 1833 the periodical's

[67] S of P, I (October, 1828), 553-554.

tone was considerably different. In a joint review of both the Colonization and Abolition Societies' reports, an anonymous reviewer insists that he has never doubted the great blessings which "might be conferred upon . . . the coast of Africa" through the efforts of colonization. Yet he admits that the movement has raised several unexpected problems, not the least of them being that masters now appear less willing than before to "voluntarily emancipate their slaves." He also protests the idea held by some that the Colonization Society is doing "all that is necessary for the improvement of colored people . . . forgetting that it was formed to accomplish a specific object." He therefore urges his readers, "to hail with joy any other scheme which by proper means should hasten the peaceful liberation of all the slaves in this country."[68]

[68] S of P, VI (June, 1833), 323-329. Since the radical American Anti-Slavery Society had only recently been formed, the reviewer is obviously comparing the new anti-slavery (or emancipationist) society with the old colonization society--a very controversial and important issue at the moment.

The Spirit of the Pilgrims' most significant contribution to the body of anti-slavery writings consists of three articles in which Beecher and an anonymous abolitionist set forth with dramatic clarity the positions of their respective parties. Beecher, though faithful to the colonization cause, deplored the widening breach between his group and the abolitionists, and, with characteristic breadth, envisaged for the future "a great assimilation . . . into one grand brotherhood." In an attempt to heal the rupture which was affecting his periodical as well as the unity of the Congregational church, he prepared for the Spirit two articles in which he questions whether "colonization and abolition [are] opposed to each other after all?"[69]

[69] S of P, VI (July, 1833), 396-402; VI (July, 1833), 539-544. These two articles are anonymous in the Spirit, but Barnes (p. 44) and others state that Beecher was their author.

He professes to be confused by the current controversy, for, if he is not mistaken, "the design, the object, the aim of both is the same": both admit that slavery is a "deplorable evil and . . . should be removed as speedily as possible."

As Beecher sees it, the two parties differ only in the speed with which they hope to see their goal accomplished: the one urging "complete and unqualified emancipation as an immediate duty," and the

other "urging the same, as fast as . . . the thing is practicable." He believes, therefore, that a union of colonizationists and abolitionists is "practicable . . . desirable . . . and a duty . . . the only hope for Africa and the slave in particular." Rejecting the idea that freed slaves may successfully amalgamate with white Americans as "a wild chimera fit only for a visionary," Beecher adds that only through such a union as he proposes will the slave gain "the rights and privileges to which by nature he is as much entitled as his master."

In his second article Beecher considers the guilt of the slave owner, a matter generally stressed by abolitionists and ignored by colonizationists. Although he refuses to absolve owners of all guilt, Beecher frees them from some responsibility by pointing out that a principle of "the limitation of human freedom" underlies America's democratic structure. This principle applies to whites as well as to blacks and can be seen in the authority of parents over children, the power of the state over the individual, the supervision of a drunkard by his guardian, and in the subjection of the slave to his master. Since blacks are "practically incapable of governing themselves," Beecher rejects the idea that their owners are sinning in refusing under present conditions to emancipate them. But he believes that the owners' refusal to prepare their slaves "by proper instruction to receive . . . liberty" is an act both unjust and criminal. As an alternative to the divisive arguments which threaten national unity, he again proposes a plan of assimilation that "precisely meets the difficulty":

> It unties the hands of the master and furnishes him the means of liberating his slaves without violating the law or endangering

> the public safety; and it points both the liberated slaves, and the free black to a place of refuge from the tyranny of prejudice, un-christian perhaps, but irremediable.

His plan is simple, even naive, but sincere:

> Let the abolitionist press abolition and not seek to destroy the colonizationist; and the colonizationist let him press still harder colonization; since that is what he is engaged in. Let each do his own work as a coadjutor of the other in a common cause. . . . let there be harmony, and love, and benevolence after this sort; and who need care for nullification, or tariff, or abolition in opposition to colonization. . . .

Arthur Tappan, wealthy industrialist and philanthropist--as well as chief backer of the American Anti-Slavery Society and friend of Garrison--believed that Beecher's plan was basically unworkable. He therefore, sent to the Spirit of the Pilgrims an anonymous article which purports to "institute a critical inquiry" of Beecher's visionary scheme. The article is accompanied by the following covering letter from Tappan:

> The enclosed communication I trust will find an early place in your columns. Justice to those denominated Abolitionists entitles them to be heard and that the reasons why they cannot unite with Colonizationists should be stated through the medium of your very respectable publication, as the inquiry has been there made.

The author, though he professes to desire union, believes that such union is impossible so long as "certain obstacles exist" and the colonizationists refuse to undergo "a reciprocity of pacification." He then devotes his entire article to an enumeration of the obstacles that abolitionists believe must be removed or surmounted "before cooperation between the two groups becomes a reality." He emphasizes, as his first point, that "every abolitionist believes . . . Colonization . . . is not sufficient" to effect speedy emancipation. The abolitionists, secondly, are unable to understand how they can "press

abolition" without objecting to the conservatives' declaration that colonization "is the only safe and prudent remedy . . . for slavery."

Third, he questions how the abolitionists, without appearing to resist the colonizationists, can operate successfully "against the unprecedented, frightful, and defamitory epithets so perseveringly bestowed on them [the abolitionists]" by the colonizationists. He contends, fourthly, that since abolitionists press abolition "on the present generation," they are bound "to press against the doctrine that would defer it, till a future period." As a final obstacle to union, this author observes that:

> the object of the Abolitionist . . . is to put the American Slave and the American colored man in possession of the blessings and privileges of honorable American citizenship, and the blessings and privileges of Christianity enjoyed in America. . . . To no citizenship or privileges in any other country than that of his birth, has he any rightful claims. . . . To deny the obligation of restoring him these is to deny the obligation of restoring him any.

Recalling Beecher's rejection of any such plan as "a wild chimera," the author justly accuses the colonizationists of fostering prejudice rather than understanding. He concludes that, under the present circumstances, cooperation between his party and Beecher's is unfeasible and undesirable.[70]

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[70] S of P, VI (October, 1833), 569-578. Barnes (p. 45) suggests that the "William Penn" who replied to Beecher may have been the Reverend Joshua Leavitt who during this period wrote several anti-slavery articles for the Christian Spectator and later edited the New York Evangelist and the Emancipator.

Following the publication of this article, Tappan wrote Beecher in Cincinnati, begging him to reconsider his proposal and

urging him to hasten the day of deliverance by giving his complete support to the abolitionists. But Beecher remained faithful to his plan for union, refusing Tappan's request with the characteristic comment that, "I am not apprized of the ground of controversy between the Colonizationists and the Abolitionists. I am myself both without perceiving in myself any inconsistency!"[71] Yet the cause for which he

[71] Beecher, II, 323. Shortly after this Beecher, as president of Lane Theological Seminary, got in trouble for disciplining his abolitionist-minded students, who then transferred to Oberlin where Finney was soon to assume the Presidency. For a summary of the Lane controversy see Barnes, pp. 64-73, and Beecher, II, 242-243.

fought was dying. Even Leonard Bacon who, a few years earlier, had been one of colonization's most ardent advocates, recognized the futility of its endeavors and transferred his allegiance to the abolitionist Anti-Slavery Society. During the mid-thirties the abolitionists themselves encountered a considerable amount of opposition, especially after extremists captured the leadership of their organization and many of the New England revivalists withdrew their support. However, the northerners, as a rule, were not long in recognizing the moral and political issues implicit in the abolitionists' demands for emancipation and, by 1840, were once again contributing in large numbers to the growth and financial support of the American Anti-Slavery Society.

The Sabbath

The orthodox movement to preserve the sanctity of the Sabbath began when Congress, in 1810, passed an act providing that mail should be carried every day of the week including Sunday.[72] It is quite

[72]Unless otherwise noted, background information throughout this section is from Bodo, pp. 39-43. See also Beecher, I, 196-197, where Beecher himself reminisces: "It is impossible to make you or anyone else understand the amount of labor we went through in those days in trying to preserve our institutions . . . that time when we began to bring back the keeping of the Sabbath."

unlikely that any affront to the Christian community was intended, but repercussions were immediate. The first to take up the cause was Beecher who organized a campaign to flood Congress with petitions protesting the government's policy. He and the Connecticut clergy who joined his campaign were certain that, since most states already had laws protecting the Sabbath, all they need do was recall the federal authorities to stricter enforcement of these existing laws. They were therefore totally unprepared for the postmaster general's vehement rejection of their petitions on the basis that, "mail conveys supplies to those in want, consolation to the afflicted, and . . . evangelical correspondence; and this . . . may be regarded as doing good on the Sabbath day."[73]

[73]American Evangelical Magazine and Religious Intelligencer, VIII, 270, quoted in Keller, p. 153.

Following this unexpected defeat, resistance to Sunday mails flagged considerably until the government, in 1826, decided to keep its post offices open on Sunday as well as to continue transporting mail on that day. The New England revival ministers, eager to utilize the recently acquired religious zeal of their converts, decided the time was once again ripe for an all-out attack on Sabbath desecration.

Accordingly, in May of 1828, they formed a General Union for Promoting the Observance of the Christian Sabbath. While opposed to Sunday travel, Sunday amusements, and Sunday trade, the society's target was the Sunday mails and by the middle of the year, it had succeeded in flooding Congress with petitions similar to those of the previous decade. The Spirit of the Pilgrims, at one point, states that the initial efforts of the society resulted in 476 Congressional petitions, most of them coming from the "revival belt" of New York and New England.[74] However, other groups sent counterpetitions to both the

[74] S of P, II (August, 1829), 461.

House and Senate, denying that Sabbath mails involved any religious issue and denouncing the clergy for attempting to lower the wall between church and state. The latter cause was immediately supported by a large number of Congressmen who, when the Spirit entered the controversy in March of 1829, had just published their opposition report. Prepared by Richard M. Johnson, senator from Kentucky, this report declares that the petitioners "have not just ground of complaint unless it be conceded that they have a controlling power over the consciences of others." It also insists that the precedents of Jewish theocracy do not apply to American democracy and concludes that because "the line cannot be too strongly drawn between Church and State," Congress will not interfere in this battle between the church and the Post Office Department.[75]

[75] For entire text of Johnson report, see Joseph L. Blau (ed.), Social Theories of Jacksonian Democracy (New York, 1947), pp. 274-281.

With the publication of this unfavorable report, many petitioners conceded that it would be useless to press their case any further. But the Spirit of the Pilgrims did not give up so easily and in a detailed review of Johnson's report attempted to demonstrate why the federal government should commit itself to a program of Sabbath legislation and regulation. The anonymous author of this review believes that "the subject of the Sabbath is the most important one on which a free people were ever called to decide," for it "is the mainspring of our republican institutions, every one of which, without its moral power will most assuredly run down." He notes, as one good reason why Congress should feel compelled to regulate the Sabbath, that:

> the mind has its limits of vigorous and healthful application to study, or to business, and that all taxation beyond the exigencies of six days reacts in nervous prostration, mental aberration . . . [and that] he who made the frame of man prepared it to sustain action six days in the week, and no more.

From this, says the reviewer, it follows that the nation's physical and intellectual output will increase if men are given one day in seven to renew their strength. But even more important is the moral necessity of the Sabbath, for all experience has shown that "cessation from labor" without moral and religious instruction, "results in dissipation and excess, more injurious to mind and body than unintermitted toil." Therefore, continues the reviewer, only by protecting the Sabbath from secular violation will Congress be able to guarantee America's continued civil prosperity.

In stating his case the reviewer displays little concern for the rights of individuals, noting at one point that "violations of

moral law are proper subjects of legislative prohibition . . . whether they invade directly, or only indirectly, the rights of man." He also rejects Johnson's declaration that postal service on Sunday contributes to the national good, and reaffirms the petitioners' belief that "six days will produce a greater income than seven, with . . . higher health, and better spirits, and social enjoyment . . . and peace of conscience." Finally, near the conclusion of his article, the reviewer states that the Congressional committee has grossly misrepresented the petitioners, who never requested that Congress "prohibit the violation and enforce the observance of the Sabbath, by the penalties of law," but who merely ask that Congress:

> cause its own agents of the post office department . . . to pay the same respect to the Sabbath which Congress itself, by its adjournment, pays to it, and which the national courts, and other heads of departments . . . pay to it. . . . [and that] they do this by legislation because they have by legislation . . . sanctioned the anomaly of disregard to the Sabbath in the post office department.

This, plus an unfounded insinuation that the orthodox "are a combination to change the government from a civil to a religious institution," leads the reviewer to conclude that Johnson's report is "an act of real and severe persecution." He is certain, therefore, that Congress, if really concerned for "the perpetuity of our republican institutions," will immediately reject the report, reinstate the "injured petitioners," and "cease to enforce, by law, what they (the petitioners) deem a violation of the Sabbath."[76]

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[76] S of P, II (March, 1829), 142-166.

Only three years later, however, the Spirit of the Pilgrims and

the Sabbath Promotion Society were approaching the problem of Sabbath observance from a more realistic--and scriptural--perspective. While reviewing a series of seven English sermons on The Divine Authority and Perpetual Obligation of the Lord's Day, the Spirit's reviewer agrees with the previous author that the Sabbath is indispensable as a day of rest, a safeguard of civil liberties, and the guardian of good morals. He is convinced, moreover, that the situation is becoming increasingly more serious. Whereas in 1829 the church's greatest concern was the desecration of the Sabbath by postal workers, the Sabbath is now, in 1832, "little more than a holiday, prostituted to gaming, horse-racing, and kindred practices." Something must certainly be done. But, says this reviewer, "it is impossible for laws . . . to enforce a proper observance of the Sabbath." Laws "may manacle the hands, and fetter the feet," yet they cannot force the heart.

The only solution, so far as this author is concerned, is to appeal to the friends of "the Almighty Lawgiver," urging them to use "the same moral means for promoting . . . his holy day, that they employ in persuading men to repent and embrace the gospel." More specifically, he recommends that ministers preach on the Sabbath and then procure the signatures of all who are willing to subscribe to the following pledge:

> Believing that all worldly business and travelling on the Christian Sabbath, except for purposes of piety, necessity, or mercy, and all worldly visiting and amusements on that day are contrary to the divine will, and injurious to the social, civil, and religious interests of men; we, the subscribers, agree that we will abstain from any such violations of the Sabbath, and that we will use our influence to persuade our own families and others to do the same.

If a large body of Christians will rededicate themselves in this way to a sanctified Sabbath, the author is convinced that non-Christians will eventually do the same and the Sabbath "will ere long be fully redeemed." In conclusion, he reaffirms his conviction that individual effort rather than legislation is the key to Sabbath reformation, but warns his readers that the time to act is now:

> while God is granting such copious effusions of his Spirit, . . . when we so peculiarly need its [the Sabbath's] benign influences to sustain and extend these seasons of refreshing from his presence; . . . when the number of its sincere . . . friends is so greatly increased by revivals of pure and undefiled religion.[77]

[77] S of P, V (January, 1832), 39-58; V (February, 1832), 89-104.

Temperance

The temperance crusade, which was born during the early Connecticut awakening and died amid the spiritual torpidity of the 1850's, received more direct support from revivals of religion than any other reform movement of the nineteenth century. Although the opponents of "ardent spirits" may have exaggerated their accounts, we have little reason to doubt that intemperance was widespread. It is known, for example, that in New York City of 1808 there were 2,500 grog shops, that children of five could buy liquor by the penny at the corner grocery, that farmers and other employers served liquor to their hired help, and that ministers and teachers were frequently paid in whiskey or rum.[78]

[78] Blake, pp. 275-276; Edward Channing, pp. 175-176.

The most aggressive temperance advocate among the clergy was Lyman Beecher, who took action after attending an ordination at which many Congregational clergymen grew "slightly exhilarated" on liquor, and "the sideboard . . . looked and smelled like the bar of a very active grog-shop."[79] Within a year Beecher and his fellow ministers

[79]Incident summarized in Beecher, I, 179-183.

had successfully banished strong drink from ecclesiastical meetings and succeeded in diminishing its use in families and entire communities.

The movement grew steadily and in 1826 a group of Beecher's fellow clergymen formed the American Society for the Promotion of Temperance to co-ordinate the work of various independent reformers and harness the zeal of recent revival converts. But by 1830 and '31, when the Spirit of the Pilgrims was from time to time commenting on temperance, the society was already torn by schism. Some of its members merely urged temperance, as they had done fifteen years earlier, while others believed that only total abstinence would save the nation. There was also dissension between the "moral suasionists" who relied on changing individual habits, and the "legal suasionists" who were determined to take legal measures for prohibiting the sale of liquor.[80]

[80]Blake, p. 276.

The most ardent "moral suasionists" of the late twenties were the revival preachers who firmly believed intemperance was a sin rather than a mere departure from decency and who often made it a vivid symbol of the sinner's descent into hell. Convinced that the existence of

intemperance in America was a major hindrance to the millennium, Finney encouraged temperance to the point that the temperance pledge became, in his hands, a sign of conversion and a token of one's new life. The Spirit of the Pilgrims typifies this approach in a letter from the Reverend Asahel Nettleton to a fellow minister in Connecticut. Nettleton, while reminiscing on the revivals of the early twenties, states that, to his knowledge, almost every case of apostacy during these revivals resulted from the individual's inability to control his drinking habits. In view of this fact, Nettleton warns those who drink even moderately that they "drink damnation" and that their salvation is in doubt, for "no class of persons are more likely to be deceived with false hopes" than they. He urges these same individuals to undergo "A CONTINUED COURSE OF ENTIRE ABSTINENCE FROM ARDENT SPIRITS OF EVERY KIND" if they wish to be known as truly repentant persons. Finally, lest the church itself encourage false hopes, Nettleton advises ministers to admit to their fellowship only those who give evidence that they intend to abstain "wholly and forever."[81]

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[81] S of P, II (February, 1829), 112-115.

Other articles and notices in the Spirit of the Pilgrims are of interest, not for their contribution to the body of temperance literature, but for their reflection of the idealism, emotion, and naivete with which many reformers approached the problem. One contributor begins by noting the progress that has been made thus far: many people have "taken the pledge" of total abstinence, employers are coming to the realization that strong drink does not increase the productivity of

their laborers, towns are boasting "temperance hotels," and many colleges have established auxiliary temperance societies. Yet he insists that much remains to be done, for there are as yet "three hundred thousand drunkards in the United States, thirty thousand of whom die annually and prematurely" as well as "twenty-six millions of dollars . . . annually expended to purchase this mighty ruin, temporal and eternal." Such facts, the author concludes, "are enough to bring tears from the marble and a groan of sympathy from the whole inanimate creation."[82] His estimation of cost and loss of life due to "ardent

[82] S of P, I (July, 1828), 341.

spirits" was a favorite device of the temperance reformers, one of whom, in another review, lays before the American public "a bill of charge" totalling $120,000,000 in "pecuniary loss" and "infinite! eternal! . . . losses which cannot be estimated." Included in his staggering estimate are such ingenious items as the "support of 150,000 paupers, made so by intemperance," "losses by depravity of 45,000 criminals," "losses from the carelessness and mismanagement of intemperate seamen," and "1,344,000,000 hours of time wasted by drunkards at 4 cts. per hour."[83]

[83] S of P, I (October, 1828), 557.

One of the era's most emotional and irrational discussions of intemperance was an address delivered by Heman Humphrey, president of Amherst College, entitled A Parallel between Intemperance and the Slave-Trade. The Spirit of the Pilgrims, in reviewing Humphrey's

address, praises his "full and eloquent discussion" and wishes its conductors could call upon every periodical in the country to republish it. Humphrey contends throughout his discourse that the prevalence of liquor in the United States "is a worse evil at this moment, than the slave-trade ever was in the height of its horrible prosperity." In support of this position he observes that "the aggregate of misery resulting from intemperance is greater than that occasioned by the slave-trade," for whatever bodily torture the slave may endure, "he has a clear conscience. He did not sell himself." But the slave of intemperance is pursued forever by his conscience, the fiercest and most relentless of tormenters: "She upbraids him with the guilt of wasting his property, sacrificing his health, blasting his character, destroying his usefulness, disgracing his friends, violating his connubial vows, entailing poverty and infamy upon his children, and ruining his own soul." After contrasting the misery of the slave with that of the drunkard in further vivid detail, Humphrey concludes that slavery, as compared with intemperance, is "the mere sting of an insect, compared with the fangs of a tiger."[84]

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[84] S of P, I (October, 1828), 555-557.

Though these early reviewers aim, like the moral suasionists, to combat intemperance by correcting the habits of the consumer, later articles reflect the position of the legal suasionists, placing the primary responsibility for intemperance on the liquor dealer himself. In one such essay, Professor Moses Stuart considers the question "whether those who . . . traffic in them [intoxicating liquors] are to

be regarded as deserving Christian animadversion and discipline?" After much laborious scriptural investigation and consideration of related matters, Stuart concludes that those who deal in liquor are encouraging its use as a common drink and should, therefore, be subjected to Christian discipline. He believes also that churches should refuse, as a matter of expediency and duty, to admit new members who do not abstain from all traffic in intoxicating drink, even as they now refuse to admit those who continue to use it. The Spirit's reviewer is somewhat reluctant to recommend Stuart's position--which was as yet held primarily by extremists within the temperance society. But he finally concludes that "whatever differences of opinion there may be," the discussion is able and scriptural, "calculated to excite to thought and action."[85]

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[85] S of P, IV (January, 1831), 55-56.

An even stronger condemnation of liquor dealers is found in the Fourth Report of the American Temperance Society, which the Spirit reviews in 1831. Although the report is said to contain a complete history of the temperance reformation, the reviewer considers only that section dealing with the guilt of those who "traffic in spirits." With regard to this, the position of the society is clear:

> Of all the obstructions which the friends of temperance now meet with, which stand in the way, and hinder the progress of that mighty movement which God has awakened, and which takes hold on the destinies of unborn millions for eternity, these men,--yes the men who traffic in ardent spirits,--present the greatest . . .

Since such persons tempt others to sin, the Society is certain that their guilt and, consequently, their retribution will exceed that of the

individual who drinks in ignorance and destroys only himself. Another interesting feature of this report is the documentary evidence which, according to the reviewer, shows clearly that where special attention has been "manifested to the great interests of the soul" through revivals, the effects of the temperance reformation have also been most conspicuous.[86]

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[86] S of P, IV (December, 1831), 625-626.

After the Spirit of the Pilgrims discontinued publication in 1833, advocates of legal control over the buying and selling of liquor grew more numerous and by 1840 were exerting a powerful influence on local and state governments. The first state legislature to heed their demands was that of Massachusetts which in 1838 passed a law forbidding the sale of less than fifteen gallons of liquor.[87] When

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[87] Blake, p. 276.

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the Maine legislature in 1851 completely prohibited the sale of liquor, other states quickly followed suit and by 1855 every northern state but New Jersey had approved some form of prohibition. But the ecstasy of the legal suasionists was short-lived, for these laws proved incapable of enforcement and by 1868 most were already repealed. The temperance reformers were then forced to rely once again on individual appeals and voluntary efforts, as the New England clergy had advocated forty years earlier.

Missions

Prior to the Second Awakening, missionary effort in New England was generally limited to regular pastors whose congregations released them from their church duties for several months so that they might go on missionary tours to recently settled areas. However, by 1808, it was apparent that the church needed a more systematic approach if it was to channel quickening missionary interest and also to utilize the tremendous personal resources provided by recent revivals. The almost immediate result of this growing concern was the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. Founded in 1810 the ABCFM sent out its first missionaries in 1812 and by the late twenties was supporting missionaries in such far-flung places as India, Hawaii, China, Israel, and the American frontier.

The Board took pride in the fact that, after twenty years of existence, it was "already stretching out its arms of influence to the ends of the earth, limited by no longitude or latitude."[88] But rapid

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[88] S of P, I (July, 1828), 341.

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expansion created many problems and brought up unanswered questions, one of which was whether the missionaries should attend first "to the temporal condition or eternal prospects" of the heathen whom they encountered.[89] There was widespread support for the former position,

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[89] S of P, III (January, 1830), 54.

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particularly among the missionaries themselves who knew that the most effective means of establishing contact with a people was to provide

them with schools and hospitals, and then later to offer them the Gospel message. Favoring the latter position were the orthodox clergy of New England who, because they had never engaged in mission work, were more idealistic than the missionaries themselves. Dr. Benjamin Wisner, a close friend of Beecher and one of the Spirit's original projectors, typifies this approach in a sermon delivered at the Old South Church in 1829. Wisner begins by asking the question, "Shall our primary object be to civilize or christianize the heathen?" After studying the directives of Christ, the example of the apostles, and "well-authenticated facts," he concludes that the heathen nations "must first be Christianized" before the church makes any effort to alleviate their physical sufferings. He adds, moreover, that missionaries must not "inculcate only the simpler and more general principles" of the faith but should:

> at once present and urge upon their acceptance, its most sublime and distinctive truths such as the incarnation of the Son of God, the propitiation made in his blood for the sins of the world, the lost condition of unrenewed men, [and] the necessity of their renovation by the Holy Spirit.[90]

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[90] S of P, III (January, 1830), 54-56.

One wonders whether Wisner and his reviewer, who concurs with him completely, ever modified their views with experience!

Still another controversy concerned the natural state of the heathen who, in the eyes of the Unitarians were innately good, but who, according to the orthodox, were totally depraved and in dire need of spiritual assistance. Several of the Spirit's contributors were content to deliver lurid accounts of native life, "proving" that the

heathen were indeed wicked and depraved. Others were more concerned with establishing an adequate philosophical and theological defense of missionary endeavors in general. One such contributor premises his remarks with the statement that the heathen as well as civilized men "are accountable subjects of the government of God . . . with all the powers requisite to complete accountability." They have "intellect to understand law; conscience to feel obligations; and faculties to perform all which God requires of them." Thus, says the author, their persistent idol worship is not simply "the result of involuntary and unavoidable ignorance" but "a voluntary, criminal, inexcusable diversion to other gods of the worship due to Jehovah alone." Because the heathen "instead of doing as well as they can . . . deliberately do as bad as they can," God must hold them responsible for their sinful condition. Thus, concludes the author, all heathen must be excluded from heaven unless Christians support the missionary efforts of their churches and personally assume the responsibility of sending "the healing balm of the Gospel" to these "600 millions" of unregenerate people around the world.[91]

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[91] S of P, II (September, 1829), 481-487.

In addition to providing a rationale for the work of foreign missions, the conductors of the Spirit of the Pilgrims printed several articles describing the adventures of missionaries around the world. Such accounts, they hoped, would contribute to the financial support of the ABCFM, as well as "increase the general reputation of our missionaries as . . . men of enterprize and intelligence [and] . . .

piety." The number of personal missionary narratives in the Spirit increased significantly in volume six because, as one author remarks, "there is at the present time a lamentable degree of ignorance and criminal apathy on this subject in many of the American churches."[92]

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[92]S of P, VI (August, 1833), 480.

While the Spirit's accounts of missionary experiences in Polynesia, the Sandwich Islands, and Japan were timely, exciting, and reportedly quite popular, its most significant contribution to the missionary enterprise was a lengthy commentary on the Researches of the Rev. E. Smith and Rev. H. G. O. Dwight, in Armenia. In 1830 the ABCFM had sent Smith and Dwight to explore the eastern portion of the Turkish empire as a prelude to establishing missions there. For fifteen months the two men travelled by pony and on foot, lived under the most primitive conditions, and studied every aspect of native life. After returning to the United States, they wrote their Researches in Armenia, an amazingly accurate compendium of information respecting "the countries traversed, the manner of the people, the state of their intellectual and moral culture, and especially their religion." The Spirit's anonymous reviewer of these two volumes is impressed by the authors' "scrupulous accuracy" and their ability to "illustrate the character and spirit of the people." He also praises their "physical resolution and intrepidity," without which they could never have journeyed in a country "traversed by rude and predatory hordes, destitute of roads, of inns, and of almost every other accommodation necessary to the comfort and even safety of travellers." Though the

reviewer manages to discuss every aspect of Smith and Dwight's journey, he notes with particular satisfaction their objective comments on the native Gregorian church whose congregations they sought to understand but not to proselytize. He concludes "by expressing it as our confident opinion that this work . . . will be considered as a valuable addition to the literature of our country."[93]

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[93] S of P, VI (August, 1833), 464-482. Background obtained from William E. Strong, The Story of the American Board: An Account of the First Hundred Years of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (Boston, 1910), pp. 88-89.

The Cherokee Problem

Although interest in foreign missions was high, the issue of greatest immediate concern to the Spirit's conductors involved the Cherokees of Georgia in their struggle with the state and federal governments. Among the many contemporary discussions of this Cherokee problem, the Spirit's account stands out as more thorough and objective than those of other religious periodicals and more indicative of public feeling than those prepared by government sources.

The Cherokee Indians of the 1820's were a partly civilized tribe living on land given them by treaty in 1791 and renewed sixteen times by the cabinets of Washington, Adams, Jefferson, Madison, and Monroe. Due to the intensive efforts of the ABCFM, which sent some of its first and finest missionaries to Georgia, the Cherokees were quick to adapt to modern ways and improve their standard of living. By 1826 they were said to possess, among other things: "2,943 ploughs . . . 2,500 sheep . . . 2,200 cattle . . . 46,000 swine . . . 762 looms . . .

10 saw mills . . . and 62 blacksmiths' shops." They also governed themselves in an admirable manner, developed their own alphabet, printed a newspaper, and attended church regularly. But while newspapers and magazines across the land were praising the Cherokees for their remarkable strides toward civilization, the Georgia legislature grew increasingly fearful that their progress would lead to demands for power and American citizenship. They therefore passed a series of laws in the autumn of 1828 giving the state of Georgia jurisdiction over all Cherokee land. The legislature also declared that all laws and customs of the Indians were null and void and announced that henceforth no Cherokee might serve as a witness or party to any lawsuit in which the defendant was a white man.

Within the next two years, other laws were passed prohibiting Indian councils and public meetings, invalidating all contracts between Indians and white men, even forbidding the Indians to dig for gold on their own land. But not until the United States Congress in 1830 supported Georgia's demands by ruling that the Indians must leave the state, did the general public rise to the support of the Cherokees. Leading this opposition were the great constitutional lawyer, William Wirt, Senator Daniel Webster, and Jeremiah Evarts, editor of the Christian Herald. In 1829, anticipating Congressional legislation, Evarts had published in the National Intelligencer a series of articles exposing the fallacy of Georgia's argument that the Indians were only tenants on land which rightfully belonged to the state.

The Spirit's reviewer, while commenting on Evarts' arguments, agrees with Chief Justice John Marshall that they are "the most

conclusive . . . on any subject whatever," and sees "no possibility of evading their conclusiveness." He admits that if the Cherokees did not have a title to their land, or if they were to cede it voluntarily, the situation would be quite different. But under the present circumstances, only "tyrants" or "monsters of despotism" would attempt to deprive them of what is rightfully theirs. The author is especially critical of President Andrew Jackson who, he believes, has been encouraging Georgia to carry out her removal policy. He reminds the President and his supporters that there has never been a time when the Cherokees did not own the land on which they are living and that they, for this reason, possess sovereign as well as political rights to it:

> Unless, therefore, they [the Cherokees] make a voluntary relinquishment, those who hold this reversionary interest [the government of Georgia] . . . have no right to advance and claim upon the soil or the jurisdiction of the Indian territory until time shall be no more.

In conclusion, this writer suggests that if anyone is to be forced to leave Georgia, it must be the white men who have demoralized the Indians and encouraged them to resort "to the inebriating poison . . . of ardent spirits."[94]

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[94] S of P, III (March, 1830), 141-161. Chief Justice Marshall is quoted in E. C. Tracy, Memorial of Jeremiah Evarts, Esq. (1751-1831) (Boston, 1845), p. 339.

By the end of 1830 all America was aware of Georgia's removal policy and public sentiment in favor of the Cherokees was running high. Reflecting this general attitude, another of the Spirit's contributors characterizes Congress' passage of the Indian Removal Bill as "the

accomplishment of a contemplated perfidy," a "violation of the constitution," "a page of the darkest guilt . . . written in our country's history," and "a blot on our national honor." He also strikes out at Jackson, who, "in virtually abrogating the treaties with the Indian nations," has violated the Constitution and undertaken "the wildest, most visionary" scheme in the history of man. Now that the nation's legislators and president have betrayed their trust to the American people, this writer can only hope that the friends of the Cherokees will rise with "truth, justice and benevolence . . . on their side" and flood Congress with petitions indicating the feelings of its constituents.[95]

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[95] S of P, III (September, 1830), 492-502; III (October, 1830), 518-532.

A year later the Spirit of the Pilgrims discusses William Wirt's defense of the Cherokee nation before the Supreme Court, a proceeding which many, including the Spirit's conductors, believed would restore the disputed lands to the Cherokees. But a majority of the justices rejected Wirt's eloquent argument that the Indian nation "in the sense of the constitution" is a foreign nation, subject only to its own laws. They chose instead to regard the Indians "as a domestic, dependent" nation, subject to legislation but outside of Supreme Court jurisdiction. This decision left the Cherokees with no alternative but to submit to the laws of Georgia and migrate to western lands "consisting chiefly in prairies almost entirely destitute of wood and water."[96] Although the Spirit does not comment beyond

[96] S of P, IV (September, 1831), 492-513.

this point, other sources tell us that a majority of the Cherokees, despite the fact that they had no legal support, were determined to retain their lands until forcibly ejected. However, a small group of approximately 100 Cherokee men, who preferred peace to controversy, met secretly with federal government agents in 1835 and signed a treaty whereby they relinquished all Cherokee land to the federal government and in return received a tract of land west of the Mississippi. Shortly thereafter the entire Cherokee nation began its westward march.[97]

[97] Robert S. Walker, Torchlight to the Cherokees, the Brainerd Mission (New York, 1931), pp. 179-197.

A related issue of particular concern to the Spirit's conductors was the atrocious treatment accorded by Georgia officials to three New England missionaries to the Indians. Aware that the missionaries were responsible for the Indians' improved status as well as supporting them in the current removal controversy, the state of Georgia, in 1830, passed a law stating that, "white persons are excluded from the territory of the Indians, unless they purchase a license from the governor of the state, and take the oath of allegiance to the state of Georgia." Because they refused to comply with the law's demands, three missionaries, all working for the ABCFM, were arrested and imprisoned by a posse of twenty-five armed men. According to the Spirit, whose information came by mail from the

still-imprisoned missionaries, they were treated in a most inhumane manner:

> loaded with curses and blasphemies--chained--beaten--dragged through forests by the neck--their horses taken from them, and they compelled to travel long and perilous distances on foot--threatened with lashes . . . --and finally immured in loathsome prisons, without table, bed, or chair.

The Spirit's contributor recognizes the unconstitutionality of the laws which have resulted in this state of affairs and compares the situation with the "dark ages of Popish superstition." Hoping to secure the release of the three men, he reminds his readers (and the federal government) that "these missionaries are our own free-born citizens . . . men of highly cultivated minds" who were "quietly pursuing their benevolent labors" when they were torn from their families in this dastardly manner. He asks, therefore, if the government has no means of redress, "no remedy for vexations and injuries such as these?" But his appeal went unanswered.[98]

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[98] S of P, IV (September, 1831), 508-513; Robert Walker, pp. 258-292.

Although the Spirit of the Pilgrims does not again mention the predicament of the missionaries, other sources inform us that further efforts by the ABCFM were also unsuccessful. President Jackson again supported the state, giving it the right to establish laws over all its inhabitants. Finally in 1832, the Supreme Court under Chief Justice Marshall ruled that the missionaries must be released, but Georgia's courts refused to obey their mandate. Not until late in 1833, when public indignation reached its highest peak, did Georgia

release the missionaries--with the comment that the men had appealed to the magnanimity of the state and been granted clemency! Thus ended one of early America's most publicized and inflammatory legal cases.

Conclusion

So intense were the New England revivalists in their efforts to redeem the world and reform society that they, in large part, can be credited with a significant share in the increased humanitarian tendencies of mid-nineteenth-century America. Following the example of these tireless and dedicated clergymen, Americans, during the forties and fifties, supported a multitude of societies which provided for the poor, established asylums for the insane, developed new methods for teaching the deaf and blind, improved schools, and, above all, restored the church to its former position at the center of American life. There were, in fact, so many societies that Orestes Brownson complained, "matters have come to such a pass that a peaceable man can hardly venture to eat or drink, or get up or correct his children or kiss his wife" without the guidance and sanction of some society.[99]

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[99]Stow Persons, American Minds (New York, 1958), p. 160.

But neither the revivals nor the benevolent organizations of this period were as closely connected to the established Congregational and Presbyterian churches as they had been during the time of the Spirit of the Pilgrims. Professional reformers, many of them former revival ministers, took over the anti-slavery and temperance

movements as well as several others, transforming them into highly structured but generally less successful organizations. Without a millennium to hasten, men simply saw no reason to work so hard or so fast. Furthermore, revivals, after losing such men as Beecher, Finney, and Taylor to colleges and city parishes, were conducted by second-rate men, many of whom looked upon revivalism as a trade rather than a privilege and put more stock in their own manipulative abilities than in the intervention of the Holy Spirit. These professional revivalists were often minor reformers as well as ministers and devoted more time to promoting their favorite societies than to providing for the souls of men. The result of such revivals was a spiritual apathy such as America had not experienced since the post-revolutionary era.

The Spirit of the Pilgrims hints at none of this, for it ceased publication at the height of revivalistic fervor and reforming zeal--one reason being that its conductors were confident they no longer needed a periodical to promote their cause. Little did these men realize that within fifteen years a Congregational clergyman, a former student of Nathanial Taylor's by the name of Horace Bushnell, would declare that the church was placing altogether too much emphasis on the actual experience of conversion and should instead stress the gradual formation of Christian character. With the publication of Bushnell's Christian Nurture, orthodoxy came full circle, returning after some fifty years to the very liberalism whose defeat the Calvinistic clergy of 1800 had hoped to hasten by means of revivals and such periodicals as the Spirit of the Pilgrims.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

Although I originally intended to comment upon each of the Spirit of the Pilgrims' major topics, I soon recognized the virtual impossibility of such an undertaking within the scope of this thesis. Having, therefore, limited my discussion to contemporary doctrinal controversies and revivalism, I have been forced to omit many topics of interest and importance to the early New England Calvinists. One series of articles to which I have not even briefly referred, concerns the Harvard financial scandal of 1829 during which the college's president and treasurer were accused of conspiring to embezzle more than $6,000 of the institution's funds. In part due to the persistent demands of the Spirit's conductors (who had long been convinced that Harvard was a hotbed of atheism and no place to send a pious young man), the issue was thoroughly investigated and, in time, resolved.

Another matter to which the Spirit makes repeated reference is the education of ministerial students, stressing in particular the advantages of Andover over Harvard and other liberal institutions. For ministers already serving churches, the periodical provided a type of continuing education program, with many articles emphasizing the necessity of unadorned sermon rhetoric, plain delivery, Hopkinsian doctrine, and even ministerial sobriety--both in and out of the pulpit. Also omitted is the Spirit's denunciation of religious sects other than the Unitarians. The Universalists, who believed that God in his goodness would eventually save all men, were generally lumped with the

Unitarians as arch-heretics and enemies of the church. But the Hicksites, a group of radical Quaker separatists, and the Christ-ians, a minor fundamentalist body without founder, creed, organization, or discipline--but plenty of members--were also censured from time to time.

In view of the revivalists' emphasis on the spiritual progress of young Christians, it is not surprising that several contributors to the Spirit of the Pilgrims felt it their duty to caution these recent converts against participating in various popular amusements. Dancing, card playing, gambling, duelling, and novel reading are all duly censured, but the theater, "a scene of dissipation . . . a school of profligacy . . . a fountain of corruption," receives the most severe condemnation.[1] Book reviews are still another of the Spirit's primary

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[1] S of P, III (November, 1830), 597-601. Mott calls this one of the strongest anti-theater presentations of the period.

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concerns. While many reviews of books of a theological nature have been discussed in connection with doctrinal topics, I have been forced to exclude those dealing with Milton, Cowper, Byron, Mrs. Lydia Sigourney, and other literary figures of varying repute. Reflecting the somewhat distorted literary tastes of the periodical's reviewers is the fact that Robert Pollok, a certain minor poet of dubious ability, is accorded the Spirit's lengthiest literary review and highest approbation.

The articles whose omission I most strongly regret are those dealing with the rights of Congregational churches in Massachusetts.

Written by Enoch Pond, this series was prompted by an 1819 decision of the Massachusetts Supreme Court which transferred the control of church policy and practice from the church members themselves to the parish or entire community. Thus, the Unitarians, who frequently outnumbered the Calvinists, were legally enabled to oust many orthodox ministers and assume ownership of church property, leaving the former congregations without leadership, sanctuary, or financial support. Pond, in his series, attempts to restore the traditional privileges of the Congregational churches by demonstrating the unconstitutionality of the court's decision. Robert Baird, some twenty years later, calls this series the fullest and best contemporary account of the matter.[2]

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[2]Baird, p. 194.

However, the state courts disregarded Pond's attempt and not until the Unitarian decline of the late thirties were the orthodox able to reoccupy their former church homes. Further omissions involve such matters as the peace crusade, biographical sketches of eminent men, the American Sunday School Union, the American Tract and Bible Societies, pious death-bed conversions, even a plan for avoiding dyspepsia.

Assessing the contemporary influence and contribution of a periodical whose contents are as diverse and controversial as the Spirit's is a highly speculative task. Enoch Pond, from whom we might reasonably expect some valuable information, covers the entire six years of the Spirit's operation with the unenlightening comment that, "of the manner in which this periodical was conducted, it does not become me to speak. It has long been before the public, and the

opinion of the public has long been formed and expressed respecting it." The most helpful near-contemporary account of the periodical's influence comes from Dr. Samuel Harris of New Haven who states that it, "was ably and vigorously conducted and was regarded as a powerful agency in vindicating the truth; and it commanded the respect even of its opponents."[3] Though the Christian Examiner and other Unitarian

[3]Pond, Autobiography, pp. 57 and 58.

periodicals consistently criticize the Spirit of the Pilgrims, the very intensity of their attack indicates that they did indeed, consider it a formidable foe.

Modern students of the early nineteenth century, if they cite the Spirit at all, are unanimous in their praise of both its religious and social aspects. But many appear to be totally unaware of the periodical's existence and turn to better known, yet frequently less helpful, periodicals for primary materials on the period. Our only additional source of information is the Spirit of the Pilgrims itself whose conductors are characteristically modest in their commendation, stating at one point that "it does not become us to decide with what measure of ability the work has been conducted," and at another that "concerning the amount of good accomplished by our labors, it is also proper that we should be silent." Yet they also contend that "its cessation would cause a paean among the impugners of our faith,"[4] and

[4]S of P, II (December, 1829), 687-688.

in discontinuing publication after six years, imply that they have

been more than gratified by the Spirit's success.

On the basis of such comments, as well as a considerable amount of reading in various nineteenth-century periodicals, I can only conclude that the Spirit was, all things considered, as successful and influential as any general religious periodical of its time. This success is most clearly evinced by the results of the Unitarian-Calvinistic controversy in which the Spirit almost singlehandedly opposed the tenets and practices of Unitarianism. This controversy, admittedly, did not resolve any doctrinal matters and few Unitarians were won to the conservative cause. But the Spirit's conductors did achieve their primary objective which, as stated in the first article of volume one, was to drive Unitarianism from concealment and force its leaders to define and defend their liberal doctrines. Moreover, after six years of relentless and capable orthodox attack, the Unitarians were forced to concede that henceforth they must minimize doctrine, in which their system was obviously deficient, and emphasize instead their limited ethical appeal. With this decision they all but removed themselves from further competition with the orthodox.

Although the Spirit's conductors were reluctant to participate in the intra-orthodox controversy and continued it only as long as they believed desirable, here too they made a significant contribution. Only in the Spirit of the Pilgrims were people able to read a relatively balanced presentation of both sides of the Andover-Yale debate with a minimum of the vituperative and false accusations that characterized similar accounts. In fact, without the persistent

efforts of such men as Beecher, Woods, and Pond to maintain both doctrinal and denominational unity, division within orthodoxy would have occurred at an earlier date, and Unitarianism would not have been dealt so early a defeat.

Although both Pond and Beecher believed their periodical's greatest service lay in its opposition to the Unitarian heresy, the Spirit was equally influential in its vigorous campaign for true revivals of religion. While revivals, when conducted in accord with scriptural injunctions, renewed evangelical fervor as nothing else could, error was common and conversions frequently negligible. Like their predecessors in the Connecticut Evangelical Magazine, the Spirit's conductors repeatedly emphasized the value of revivals to the church of Christ, but concomitantly deplored the use of doubtful means, the presence of excessive emotion, failure to rely on the Holy Spirit, and inadequate instruction of the hopeful. In doing this, they not only promoted the continuation of the revival movement but also provided the New England church with guidelines enabling it to maintain approved standards of decency and to withstand extremist tendencies.

In these and other areas the Spirit of the Pilgrims exerted a powerful, practical influence on the religious life of New England. Various divinity school journals, such as the Christian Spectator and the Princeton Review, were reputed to be its equal in the theological sphere, and the sentimental Christian Parlor Magazine was undoubtedly more popular with the masses. However, insofar as I have been able to determine, the only contemporary religious periodical to achieve greater popularity and respect among educated New Englanders was the

Christian Examiner. This was due, I believe, not to superior writing talent or more credible arguments, but to the Examiner's less pervasive religious orientation which enabled its editors to print many original literary works and to include articles of a secular nature. Also attractive was the Examiner's liberal interpretation of current moral issues such as Sabbath observance, associationism, and amusements. Yet among New England's large and powerful body of conservative Calvinists, no periodical was more respected or believed to be more influential in promoting "the great causes of religion and morality, of civil freedom and expansive benevolence" than the Spirit of the Pilgrims. It had, without a doubt, attained each of its original objectives:

> [to] meet this disposition of the intellectual inhabitants of Boston to investigate . . . to state our own views of divine truth, in our own manner, and to defend them by our own arguments . . . [to] meet the Unitarians on their own ground. . . . to provide additional means of improvement, of instruction, of confirmation, and of encouragement . . . to the body of orthodox Christians, . . . [and to] provide the orthodox with some regular channel of communicating with the public.[5]

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[5] S of P, I (January, 1828), 20.

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