

AMERICAN UNITARIANS, 1830-1865:
A STUDY OF RELIGIOUS OPINION ON
WAR, SLAVERY, AND THE UNION

Thesis for the Degree of Ph. D.
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY
CHARLES RICHARD DENTON
1969



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American Unitarians, 1830-1865: A Study of Religious
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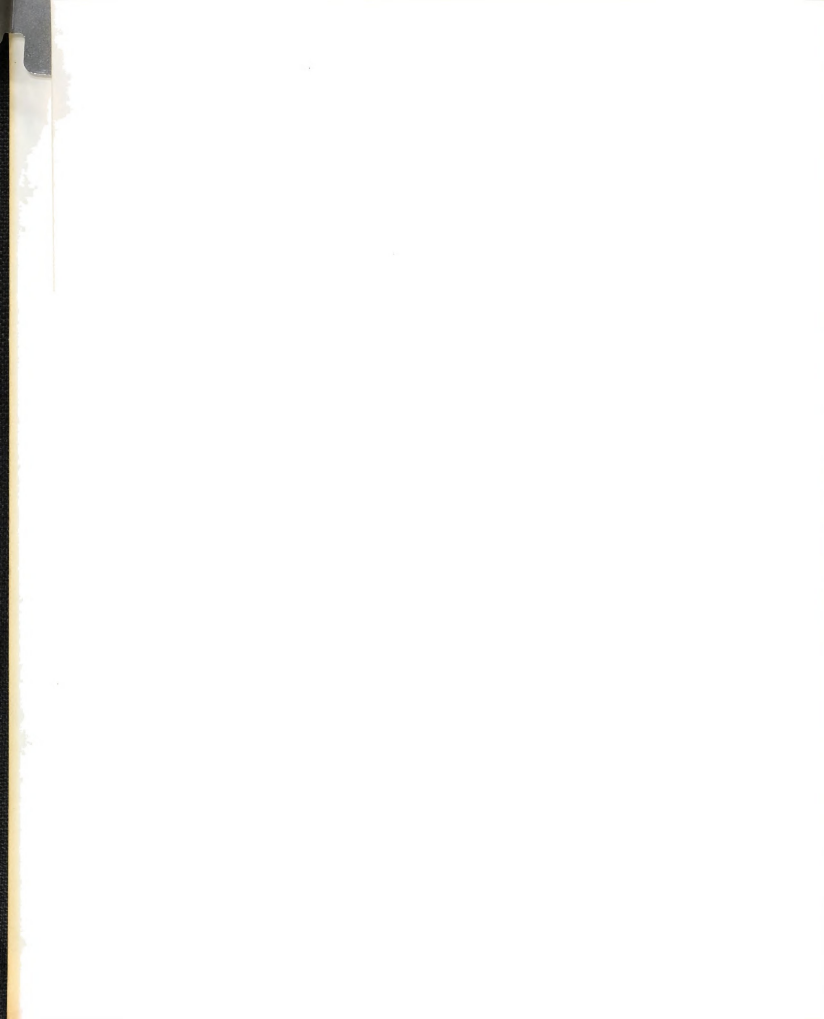
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ABSTRACT

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By

Charles Richard Denton

The Unitarian church in the United States has a reputation for producing outstanding individual reformers, especially in the middle of the nineteenth century. Men and women such as William Ellery Channing, Theodore Parker, George Ripley, Lydia Maria Child, Eliza Follen, James Freeman Clarke, Dorothea Dix, Samuel J. May, Samuel Gridley Howe, and Maria W. Chapman were noted Unitarians and reformers, particularly for the abolition of slavery. And yet few studies, even denominational histories, treat the position of the majority of the faith on the issues of war, slavery, and the Union from 1830 to 1865.

In order to establish the majority view among Unitarians on the matters of war, slavery, and the Union, the following sources were indispensable: denominational periodicals, particularly the weekly Christian Register (Boston) and the weekly Christian Inquirer (New York), the correspondence files of the American Unitarian Association and other manuscript collections, denominational histories, memoirs, biographies, selected secondary and general works, and a number of articles in scholarly journals.

It became clear after this study was begun that an important issue for consideration was the social structure of the Unitarians. A number of historians and biographers have concluded that this faith consisted mostly of the upper classes, the wealthy, and the socially prominent. If true, Unitarian ideas on war, slavery, and the Union should have reflected the attitudes of an elite. But the evidence shows that this



conception is false. Instead, Unitarian doctrines appealed to and attracted men and women from all walks of life: the rich, distinguished, and professional classes, along with farmers, artisans, factory workers, blacksmiths, and even the poor. If anything, the majority of Unitarians during the middle of the nineteenth century came from the middle class rather than from the upper class. Unitarian political and social opinions represented more of a cross section of American society than might have been expected.

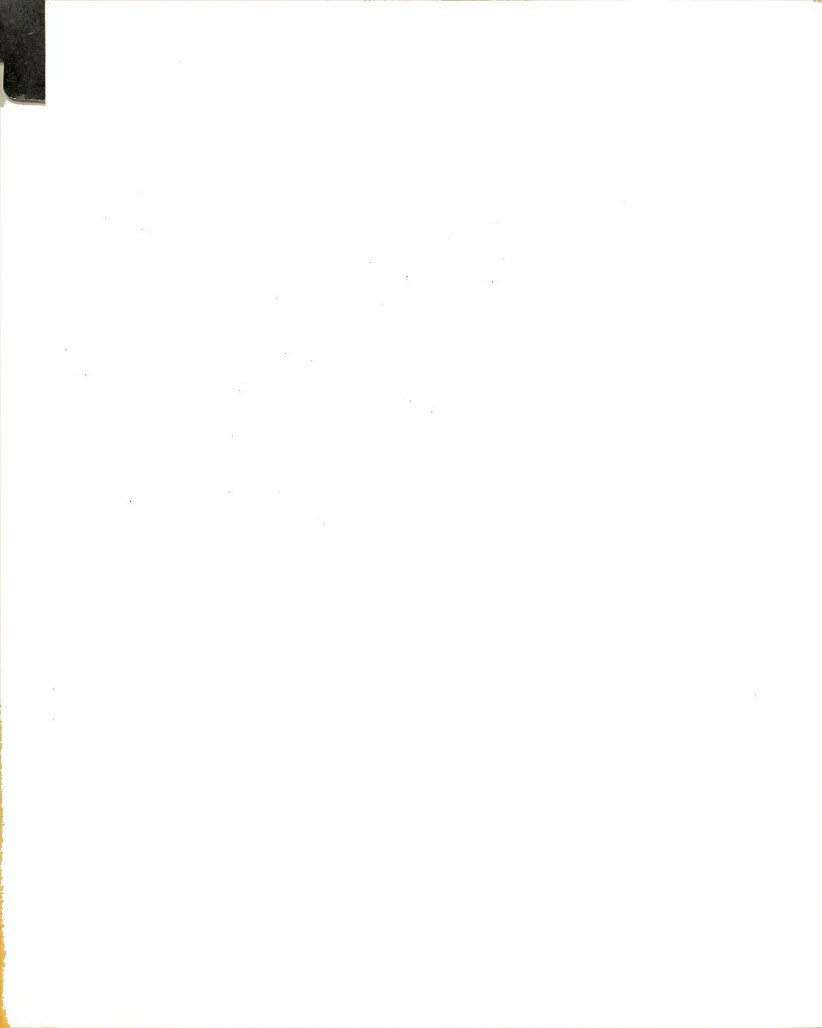
Most Unitarians during the antebellum period opposed slavery but feared that immediate abolition would ignite sectional and servile war, shattering the Union. The few Southern Unitarians, on the other hand, believed the continuation of slavery was necessary to prevent these calamities.

Unitarians expressed different attitudes on the two American wars of this period. Most Unitarians opposed the Mexican War for two principal reasons: they regarded warfare as immoral, and they believed the conflict had been initiated by a slavocracy seeking to extend the area of human bondage. As for the Civil War, nearly all Northern Unitarians supported it because the defeat of the Confederacy would destroy slavery and preserve the Union. Through the war years Unitarians advocated emancipation followed by the social integration of Negroes into American society, thus changing the nature of the Union they fought to maintain.

The issues of war, slavery, and the Union affected the Unitarians in two important ways. The denomination became deeply involved in social and political issues through its periodicals, pulpits, and assemblies. This commitment, in turn, tended to centralize the faith, weakening traditional congregational polity. Concerted denominational actions, such as petitioning Congress to end the Mexican War, establishing a

free soil mission in Kansas, and publishing patriotic literature during the Civil War, meant closer bonds between churches, and a more viable central agency, which emerged after Appomattox with the formation of the National Conference.

Denominational political involvement and centralization were accomplished by Unitarians close to the Christian tradition, as well as by those who had moved away from that tradition. Unitarians who have been styled conservatives on doctrinal matters were as active as the radicals, perhaps more so, in securing sectarian action on social and political issues. Consequently, denominational "social action" and consolidation grew from a broad theological base.



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to Mary Elizabeth Cochran



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My interest in the political and social activities of the Unitarian denomination dates from January 1961. In a seminar on American history conducted by Dr. Mary Elizabeth Cochran at the Kansas State College of Pittsburg, Pittsburg, Kansas, I was directed to write a paper on some phase of the territorial period of Kansas history. At that time I became acquainted with the fact that the Unitarians had established a mission at Lawrence, Kansas, in 1855, for the expressed purpose of stopping the spread of slavery. After completing the Master of Science degree, I pursued the study of Kansas Unitarianism to discover why a supposedly non-missionary faith would begin a mission for a political objective. The fruits of that research appeared in The Kansas Historical Quarterly in 1964. A portion of this work also had been submitted to the Unitarian Historical Society as an entry for the essay contest in honor of the late Earl Morse Wilbur. These findings indicated that antebellum Unitarians had been far more active in political and social matters than had been believed.

A number of individuals have assisted me in completing this study. Dr. Frederick D. Williams and Dr. Robert E. Brown have made invaluable suggestions in writing this paper. Mr. Neil R. Jordahl of the Library at the Meadville Theological School loaned me material without which this study could not have been completed. Martha S. C. Wilson and Rev. Alan Seaburg of the Unitarian Historical Library provided a great deal of necessary information and advice. With the aid of Dr. Dana M.



Greeley and the staff of the Unitarian Universalist Headquarters, I was able to examine the files of the American Unitarian Association. Dr. C. Conrad Wright of the Harvard Divinity School has given me much encouragement.

The staffs of a number of libraries were most helpful: the Kansas State Historical Society, the Massachusetts Historical Society, the New Hampshire Historical Society, the Detroit Public Library, and the Michigan State University Library. Special mention should be made of Miss Anna Louise Borger, the librarian of the El Dorado Public Library, El Dorado, Kansas, who secured several items via interlibrary loan during the period I taught at the Butler County Junior College in that city.

To the following people I owe a large debt for "boarding" me while doing research in Boston: Richard E. and Alice Batchelor, Robert W. and Virginia Hillegass, and Clarence E. and Kathryn Whitten.

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INTRODUCTION

This study will deal primarily with the actions and attitudes of Unitarians in the United States on the issues of war, slavery, and the Union from 1830 to 1865. But before proceeding to those matters, it seems appropriate to provide a brief summary of Unitarian theology, organizational structure, the size of the membership of the faith, and leading denominational periodicals.

By 1830 Unitarians stressed certain concepts which set them apart from other Christians. For a number of years many preferred the term "liberal Christian" to Unitarian for fear of becoming too sectarian. Most Unitarians held that Jesus was the Son of God. They sought a reasonable interpretation of the Bible, a book they considered the revealed Word of God. They scorned as unscriptural and unreasonable the doctrine of the Trinity; they denied the concept of "election," that is, that one is either predestined to salvation or to damnation; and they believed that man is essentially good.¹ Unitarians emphasized

¹Conrad Wright examines 18th century developments of the movement in The Beginnings of Unitarianism in America (Boston: Starr King Press, 1955). Earl Morse Wilbur traces early 19th century activities in A History of Unitarianism in Transylvania, England, and America (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1952), chapter XXI. A more recent study is the first chapter of William R. Hutchison, The Transcendentalist Ministers: Church Reform in the New England Renaissance (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959). An older but still valuable article is C. H. Faust, "The Background of the Unitarian Opposition to Transcendentalism," Modern Philology, XXXV (February, 1938), pp. 297-324. Wilbur wrote a popular account entitled Our Unitarian Heritage, An Introduction to the History of the Unitarian Movement (Boston: The Beacon Press, 1925).

the importance of the freedom of the individual, especially in the interpretation of the Scriptures. Rev. William Ellery Channing believed that individuals who possessed exemplary character would promote Christianity by their conduct. "Such men," he said in 1837, "are the salt of the earth. The might of individual virtue surpasses all other powers."²

One means of safeguarding individual conscience was the congregational nature of the churches. Many thought that congregationalism complemented individualism. Some Unitarians favored a limited general organization, fearing that excessive consolidation might paralyze individual freedom with an imposed creed. Channing declined to serve as president of the American Unitarian Association (AUA) at its formation in 1825, then again in 1836. He believed that a strong ecclesiastical structure would weaken congregationalism and might become attractive to ambitious men seeking power in the religious community. "Those who gain [power]," he declared in 1836, "will not fail to strengthen and extend it;" then he added that "free inquiry will be its prey; and the cardinal virtues of the gospel--humility, meekness, and charity--will be trodden under its feet." In that same year at the AUA annual meeting, Rev. John Gorham Palfrey referred to fears that the Association might infringe on individual freedom, fears he thought exaggerated. In his opinion the AUA performed missionary services that individuals were incapable of doing.³

²William E. Channing, The Works of William E. Channing, D. D., With an Introduction (Boston: American Unitarian Association, 1875), p. 196. Cited hereafter as Channing, Works.

³William H. Channing, The Life of William Ellery Channing, D. D. (The Centenary Memorial edition; Boston: American Unitarian Association, 1904), pp. 223-224. Cited hereafter as W. H. Channing, W. E. Channing. Eleventh Annual Report, AUA, 1836, pp. 24-25.

Palfrey was far more realistic than Channing about the nature of the American Unitarian Association. Throughout the period under study it barely kept afloat. Nearly every annual report from 1826 laments the lack of funds for missionary activities, the Association's chief function. It financed the publication of religious literature, paid officers' salaries, supported a few missionaries who visited isolated groups of "liberal Christians" scattered throughout the country, and made an occasional grant or loan to support a church. Contributions came from the sale of tracts, voluntary donations from churches or individuals, and life memberships. Membership in the Association was an individual matter; churches sent no delegations to annual meetings, or "May Meetings," as is now the case. During the May Meetings the Executive Committee would report on the previous year's activities, new officers would be elected, speeches were given urging more support for missions, a collation would be held, followed by adjournment. After 1852 Unitarians west of the Appalachians formed a similar though weaker organization, the Western Unitarian Conference (WUC).⁴

The AUA and the WUC served few churches in comparison with many other religious faiths in the United States. There were 193 individual societies in 1830, of which 147 had a minister. Sixteen years later

⁴The founding of the AUA is discussed in George W. Cooke, Unitarianism in America: A History of its Origin and Development (Boston: American Unitarian Association, 1902), pp. 126-138. Officers of the AUA from 1825 through 1865 are listed in Appendix A. Receipts and disbursements of the AUA from 1825 through 1865 are shown in Appendix B. Charles H. Lyttle, Freedom Moves West: A History of the Western Unitarian Conference 1852-1952 (Boston: The Beacon Press, 1952), covers the origin of the WUC in chapter 6. Although there were antebellum state and regional organizations only the postwar ones are mentioned in Cooke, Unitarianism in America, pp. 444-446.



236 societies existed of which 186 had a minister. By 1860 the number of societies had risen to 258, but only 196 had clergymen. Massachusetts was the stronghold of Unitarianism with 147 societies in 1830, 158 in 1846, and 164 in 1860.⁵ Yet even in this citadel of "liberal Christianity," Unitarian growth failed to maintain a rate relative to the population increase of the Commonwealth. From 1800 to 1870 the population of Massachusetts rose three and one-half times while the number of Unitarian churches did not quite double. A check of parish records in some rapidly growing cities indicates that this relative decline in the number of societies holds true for membership as well.⁶ One estimate is that Unitarians numbered 31,670 in 1865, having increased from 13,550 in 1855.⁷

Unitarian growth, or lack of it, has sometimes been linked with theological quarrels. During the "Unitarian Controversy" from about 1805 to 1833, the denomination grew rapidly, gaining members from dissatisfied people in other churches, particularly the Calvinist Congregational Church. Quite often the majority in a number of societies went over to the Unitarians. Another dispute began when Ralph Waldo Emerson delivered his famous Divinity School Address in 1838. From this time until the Civil War Unitarians became embroiled in the "Transcendental" or "Radical Controversy." Rev. Theodore Parker's discourse in 1841 on the transient and permanent in Christianity

⁵See Appendix C.

⁶Richard E. Sykes, "The Effect of Rapid Social and Cultural Change on Unitarianism in Massachusetts, 1800-1870" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1966), Chapter III.

⁷Timothy L. Smith, Revivalism and Social Reform in Mid-Nineteenth-Century America (New York and Nashville: Abington Press, 1957), pp. 20-21.

sharpened the conflict. Emerson and Parker exposed to the public what some Unitarians had discussed in private--that neither the authority of scripture nor the personality of Jesus Christ, nor even the miracles of the Bible were vital to sustain Christianity. Emerson, Parker, and their followers--the transcendentalists, or "radicals"--relied on intuition and self-evident moral truths rather than on traditional Christianity. On the other hand, the bulk of the denomination and most of its leaders--occasionally called "conservatives"--continued to adhere to a reasonable interpretation of the Scriptures, including a belief in the divinity of Jesus, as the basis for Christian ethics.⁸

Two denominational historians have presumed that the naturalism of Emerson and Parker was perhaps the major reason why Unitarians withheld contributions to the AUA. In this way they supposedly retarded denominational growth, fearing that their money would be used to propagate radical heresies.⁹ From 1839 to 1842 this assumption appears

⁸In addition to the sources cited in footnote 1, see Conrad Wright, "Henry W. Bellows and the Organization of the National Conference," The Proceedings of the Unitarian Historical Society, XV (1965), Part II, p. 19.

⁹Cooke, Unitarianism in America, pp. 158-160; Wilbur, Our Unitarian Heritage, pp. 441-442; Wilbur, History of Unitarianism, pp. 462-464. Cooke cited receipt figures from 1854 to 1863, excluding book sales and interest on invested funds; he did not mention the 1843-1846 increase. Cooke (p. 153) contradicts himself when he wrote that meetings were held in Boston in 1841 to raise money for missions in the city. That year \$10,000 was pledged for this work and "this sum was secured in 1843 and the next four years, so that larger aid was given to missionary activities and to the building of churches. At the annual meeting of 1849 special attention was given to the subject of domestic missions, and plans were devised for largely extending all the activities in this direction." One of the ministers supported by this money, Rev. John T. Sargent, exchanged pulpits with Theodore Parker in 1844. Sargent was so upset by the rebuke of his employers, the Benevolent Fraternity of Churches, that he resigned from the ministry-at-large. If contributions to the AUA declined because donors feared supporting radicals, why did contributions to the BFC continue high when a radical wolf was found within its benevolent fold?

to be correct as the Association's receipts declined from about \$6,000 to \$4,700. Still, the drop in contributions might be explained in part by the economic dislocation that followed the Panic of 1837. Following the period of decline AUA receipts rose from \$7,000 in 1843 to almost \$13,000 in 1846, nearly doubling in three years. Beginning in 1847, AUA receipts again dropped to \$11,000, in 1848 to \$9,500, and in 1849 to \$7,700. Not until 1854 did receipts surpass the previous high of 1846.¹⁰ If the older interpretation is valid, the decline after 1846 is a remarkable example of delayed reaction to Emerson's Divinity School Address (1838) and Parker's permanent and transient speech (1841). If radicals had headed the AUA during its stringent years, the usual explanation might be reasonable. Instead, the president of the American Unitarian Association from 1847 to 1850 was Rev. Ezra Stiles Gannett, a foe of Parker. His successor from 1851 to 1858 was another paladin of conservatism, Rev. Samuel Kirkland Lothrop.

In 1848 the Executive Committee of the AUA, which was dominated by conservatives, suggested several reasons for the decline in receipts: specific contributions for church construction fell drastically; "an unusual number" of societies were building new or remodelling old meetinghouses and liquidating debts; a number of "country societies" had purchased Channing's Works (sold by the AUA) and could not support missions; many of the urban societies were supporting ministries-at-large which reduced their contributions; a financial recession deterred many who had given generously; and the new Secretary was inexperienced

¹⁰See Appendix B.

at raising money. There is no mention of the "Radical Controversy" as a cause for the decline of AUA receipts.¹¹

The Executive Committee went further by appointing a subcommittee to inquire into the matter of reduced contributions for missions. Reporting in 1849, the subcommittee advanced the notion that Unitarians did not like missions. It found that "to many ears" the word missionary "sounds as the watchword of religious partisanship, or the sign of intellectual poverty and mean dependence." Another cause was Yankee pragmatism: "The question which arises before a Boston man is not What will it cost? but What will it produce?" Missions were too distant to appraise and their accomplishments were often "intangible." Again, there was not a whisper of radicalism as a cause for declining AUA receipts.¹²

Historians have often used a document written in 1853 to support the thesis that Parkerism influenced reduced contributions to the AUA. The Executive Committee of the AUA mentioned radicalism as one of five reasons for the need to issue a "Declaration of Opinion" in that year.¹³ There is some evidence that by 1853 Parker's notions were not as unpopular in Boston as the Executive Committee stated. Rev. Nathaniel L.

¹¹Twenty-Third Annual Report, AUA, 1848, pp. 17-18.

¹²Twenty-Fourth Annual Report, AUA, 1849, pp. 32-33. S. J. May wrote fourteen years earlier that Unitarianism grew slowly because of the absence of a "general organization" and "a great dread of sectarianism among us." Christian Register, 5 December 1835. In 1849 E. S. Gannett cited charges that missionary money had been poorly managed and that missionaries were ill-trained. He did not mention Parker as a reason for reduced interest in missions. Christian Register, 16 June 1849.

¹³Cooke, Unitarianism in America, pp. 158-160; Wilbur, History of Unitarianism, pp. 462-464; Hutchison, Transcendentalist Ministers, p. 130; Lyttle, Freedom Moves West, pp. 79-80; Twenty-Eighth Annual Report, AUA, 1853, pp. 18-23.

Frothingham contacted Rev. Rufus Ellis about candidating for Boston's First Church from which Frothingham was about to retire. Ellis hesitated to leave the freedom of his pulpit at Northampton, Massachusetts. He consulted his brother, Rev. George E. Ellis, who replied that the pulpit at the First Church would be free, a fact stemming in part from Parker's influence in the city. "Mr. Parker's frank publication of opinions which his brethren from the first knew him to hold," George wrote, "but which the public had no real understanding of, has opened the eyes of many to views which they had not realized before. Then I think that the independence of a minister is now respected, and that fair conditions are pretty well established." George Ellis had learned that the pulpit committee of the First Church unanimously approved his brother Rufus, who accepted their offer in March 1853.¹⁴

If Parkerism was in fact a cause of reduced AUA funds for missions, it was at best a minor one. The logic of those who believe that Parkerism reduced contributions is faulty. Why would conservatives fail to aid a conservatively controlled organization like the AUA? Their best offense against radicalism would have been a strengthened Association which could combat the radicals, not an enfeebled one incapable of promoting their interpretations of liberal Christianity. But a strong central agency ran contrary to usual Unitarian suspicion of an ecclesiastical organization which might become an engine of theological oppression. To avoid this danger some might have preferred local missionary activity, like the ministries-at-large in Boston and elsewhere.

¹⁴Arthur B. Ellis, ed., Memoir of Rufus Ellis... (Boston: William B. Clarke and Co., 1891), pp. 112-119. See also Arthur S. Bolster, Jr., James Freeman Clarke, Disciple to Advancing Truth (Boston: The Beacon Press, 1954), pp. 208-209.

The many reasons offered at the time by the conservatives for reduced AUA receipts which hindered missionary expansion outweigh any monistic explanation.

For a religious faith reluctant to engage in extensive missionary campaigns, Unitarians relied heavily on the printed word to propagate their beliefs and to provide links among the converted. Their most important publication was the Christian Register, a weekly, four-page newspaper founded at Boston in 1821 by thirty-one year old David Reed, a licensed minister who never accepted a permanent settlement. Reed published the paper for over forty-five years and usually hired Unitarian ministers to edit and write for it. The Christian Examiner, begun in 1824 at Boston under the name Christian Disciple, was a bi-monthly of a more scholarly and theological cast, yet it contained much on political and social issues. The voice from New York was the Christian Inquirer, another four-page weekly newspaper, started in 1846 by the New York Unitarian Association. The AUA began The Quarterly Journal of the American Unitarian Association in 1853. It became a monthly in 1860 and lasted until 1869. Other magazines and newspapers appeared but were often short-lived.¹⁵

From their pulpits, by their missionary enterprizes, and through their publications, Unitarians proclaimed a belief in freedom from

¹⁵Harris Elwood Starr, "David Reed," Dictionary of American Biography, XV, pp. 444-445; Frank Luther Mott, "The Christian Disciple and the Christian Examiner," The New England Quarterly, I (April, 1928), pp. 197-207; Cooke, Unitarianism in America, pp. 447-452. The Christian Register began with 300 subscribers. By 1835 circulation had risen to 1,900, in 1856 to about 3,000, and in 1863 down to about 2,200. Christian Register, 7 January 1826, 6 June 1835; H. A. Miles to H. W. Bellows, 25 August 1856, Bellows Papers, MHS; E. E. Hale to R. P. Stebbins, 13 January 1863, AUA Letters, 1862 [misfiled]. It is currently published under the name UUA NOW. Editors of the Christian Register from 1821 to 1865 are shown in Appendix D.



outmoded forms of worship and expounded Christian truth as they saw it. Since scholars generally agree that during the years 1830-1865 most Unitarians were conservatives, this study will deal primarily with this preponderant element.

CHAPTER I

THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF THE UNITARIAN DENOMINATION, 1830-1865

Historians often describe antebellum Unitarians as people who were wealthy merchants, professional men, or those drawn from aristocratic old-time families. If most Unitarians occupied such a high social status, their behavior on social and political issues must be seen as the responses and actions of a privileged and affluent minority. On the other hand, if Unitarian congregations were composed of men and women from all walks of life, Unitarian expression on these issues may be interpreted as fairly representative of the position held by most Americans. Discussion of this matter will begin with the findings of two denominational historians, followed by the judgments of other students of American history, and finally by the views of several antebellum Unitarians who commented about the social structure of their church.

In his discussion of early nineteenth-century Unitarians, C. Conrad Wright declared that when parishes began to split on doctrinal issues during the "Unitarian Controversy," the Unitarian faction tended to have "more than their share of the old families of wealth and prestige in their congregations." To discover the Unitarian class structure in New England he analyzed the membership in "upper-class clubs and societies" and the membership of churches

in three towns: King's Chapel in Boston, the three societies at Salem, and the Second Parish (Unitarian) in Worcester.¹

Wright's evidence will be examined to test his generalization regarding church membership. For King's Chapel, Wright used an extensive two-volume history of the church begun by Rev. Henry Wilder Foote, minister there from 1861 until his death in 1889, and finished by Henry H. Edes. Wright quoted a statement from volume two that the church contained "a large proportion of the men of high standing and commanding influence in Boston," then mentioned several prominent men who had worshipped there. A large proportion, however, means little unless there is something with which to compare it. Foote began to provide this information before he died. Edes wrote in the Preface to volume two that Foote had compiled a partial listing of non-pewholding worshippers, but that he, Edes, shrank "from attempting to carry out the original design," an indication that a great number of people who attended King's Chapel did not own pews. Foote, moreover, discovered one thing about the parish's social structure. In the spring of 1827, Rev. F. W. P. Greenwood requested and obtained a special fund from the congregation for charitable uses on which he could draw without soliciting parishioners individually. Greenwood reported in 1840 that about \$10,000 had been collected and disbursed through this fund. Some of it had gone to twenty members of the church who were too destitute to attend services regularly.²

¹Wright, Beginnings of Unitarianism, pp. 259-261.

²Henry Wilder Foote and Henry H. Edes, Annals of King's Chapel From the Puritan Age of New England to the Present Day (2 vols.; Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1882, 1896), II, pp. vii, 468-469.

Turning to Salem, Wright used another secondary source written by Rev. George Batchelor, Unitarian minister at Salem in the 1880's, who had examined parish records of the three Unitarian churches there--East, North, and First--and had found

that the great majority of the men of influence in these three parishes were foreign merchants and ship-masters; and also that these parishes were almost wholly made up of these men, their families, and those who were naturally associated with them in trade, either as assistants or dependents.

The churches also included professional men who served the merchants and ship masters.³ Batchelor's statement is ambiguous: all that is known for certain is that men of wealth and men not so wealthy were Unitarians. Men connected with the sea as merchants or ship masters constituted the majority of the influential men in each parish. We do not know from Batchelor's remarks if the majority in each parish were merchants and ship masters, or if the majority in each parish were their assistants and dependents.

The same is true of Wright's evidence for Worcester. He cited a sermon of Rev. Aaron Bancroft, father of George Bancroft, who said that his Second Parish contained "a large proportion of the professional and distinguished men of the town, and a fair proportion of the farmers and mechanics."⁴ Wright named several men who belonged to Bancroft's parish, some of whom later became famous, but this tells us little of their early position. Another account throws different light on Bancroft's situation. The minister "was talked against, preached against, denounced and shunned" because of his Unitarianism. When his society decided to erect a new meetinghouse in 1789, Bancroft agreed to return one-third of his

³George Batchelor, Social Equilibrium and Other Problems Ethical and Religious (Boston: Geo. H. Ellis, 1887), p. 177.

⁴Wright, Beginnings of Unitarianism, p. 260.

salary to the society as his share of the building fund. "In order to eke out sufficient means of support for his family, [Bancroft] gave instruction to young men and to the daughters of some of his parishioners, and received boarders into his house."⁵ It was a most ungracious way for wealthy and prestigious men to treat their minister by paying him so little that he had to tutor children and rent his home to boarders, unless the parish was in fact somewhat indigent.

These examples show that Unitarianism appealed to merchants, ship masters, sailors, professionals, farmers, mechanics, the rich and the poor. If congregations early in the nineteenth century follow this pattern to the middle of the century, assessments of the Unitarian social structure must be modified.

Another denominational historian, the late Earl Morse Wilbur, perpetuated the notion that Unitarians came from the upper classes. At the end of the "Unitarian Controversy," by the 1830's, "the outlook for the Unitarians seemed full of promise," he wrote. "Their social position, their leadership in offices of state, their controlling influence in education, their leading part in the world of business and in public affairs in general, were undisputed, and their churches were well attended and well supported."⁶ Wilbur supported his case with a statement by Harriet Beecher Stowe who asserted that in the 1820's when her father, Rev. Lyman Beecher, battled the Unitarians in Boston, the Unitarians dominated the city's cultural and political life. Wilbur

⁵"Aaron Bancroft," in Samuel A. Eliot, ed., Heralds of a Liberal Faith (4 vols.; Boston: American Unitarian Association, 1910, 1952), II, p. 22. Cited hereafter as HLF. Russel B. Nye described Bancroft's congregation as "neither large nor affluent" in George Bancroft, Brahmin Rebel (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1944), pp. 8-9.

⁶Wilbur, History of Unitarianism, p. 454.

noted that this passage had been frequently quoted and often mistakenly attributed to Lyman Beecher instead of his daughter. Here is the statement:

When Dr. Beecher came to Boston, Calvinism or orthodoxy was the despised and persecuted form of faith. It was the dethroned royal family wandering like a permitted mendicant in the city where once it had held court, and Unitarianism reigned in its stead.

All the literary men of Massachusetts were Unitarian. All the trustees and professors of Harvard College were Unitarians. 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 hands of the congregation. This power had been used by the majorities to settle ministers of the fashionable and reigning type in many of the towns of Eastern Massachusetts. The dominant majority entered at once into possession of churches and church property, leaving the orthodox minority 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 and teaching 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 on it, and the Hollis professorship of divinity at Cambridge was employed for the furnishing of a class of ministers whose sole distinctive idea was declared warfare with the ideas and intentions of the donor.

So bitter and so 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. But in every such surge of society, however confident and overbearing, there lies the element of a counter reaction, and when Dr. Beecher came to Boston this element had already begun to assert itself.⁷

⁷Charles Beecher, ed., Autobiography, Correspondence, etc., of Lyman Beecher, D. D. (2 vols.; New York: Harper & Brothers, 1865), II, pp. 119-120.

One can find uncritical acceptance of Mrs. Stowe's statement in several books on this period.⁸ When examined closely, however, it falls short of being sound historical evidence. The statement is a published, undated letter Harriet wrote to her brother Charles, the editor of their father's autobiography. Internal evidence suggests that it was written shortly after Lyman Beecher's death (1863) as she mentioned going through his papers as if he had died. Thus, it might have been written between 1863 and 1865 when the Autobiography appeared. Lyman Beecher preached in Boston from 1826 to 1832 when Harriet grew from fifteen to twenty-one years of age. If the dating of the letter is correct, Harriet, past fifty, either recollected conditions of forty years before or simply wrote what the family had told her about Boston. It is obvious that she is a highly partisan witness. And, if the dating of this letter is accurate, it was written when Unitarianism was experiencing a rapid growth. In the Introduction it was shown that during the decade from 1855 to 1865, Unitarian numbers grew from 13,550 to 31,670, an increase of 138%. If anyone was on the defensive it was Harriet Beecher Stowe.

Other American historians have labeled antebellum Unitarians as upper-class patricians. James Truslow Adams, using Harriet and Lyman Beecher, judged that Unitarianism, "instead of being a form of dissent from an established church, with the social disabilities that such a position usually implied, became the religion of all the higher social circles of Massachusetts, and Calvinism occupied the lower social position

⁸Wilbur, History of Unitarianism, pp. 436-437; Jacob C. Meyer, Church and State in Massachusetts... (Cleveland: Western Reserve University Press, 1930), pp. 180-181; James Truslow Adams, New England in the Republic 1776-1850 (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1926), pp. 353-354; Charles Crowe, George Ripley: Transcendentalist and Utopian Socialist (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1967), p. 52. Crowe attributes the statement to Lyman Beecher.

of dissent."⁹ Arthur B. Darling equated Unitarianism with wealth, conservatism, aristocracy, fashion, and capitalism.¹⁰ Helmut Richard Niebuhr asserted that Episcopalians and Unitarians in the first part of the nineteenth century were drawn from "the metropolitan aristocracy of wealth and intellect."¹¹ "No religious body was at this time [1830's and 1840's] quite so respectable as the New England Unitarians," wrote Theodore Maynard, "or any Unitarians quite so respectable as those of Boston."¹² Charles Crowe, a recent biographer of George Ripley, contends that during the 1830's Unitarianism centered in eastern Massachusetts

among the 'enlightened' upper class merchants, ministers, and lawyers whom Ripley had come to admire as a divinity student. Respectful friends of the existing social order, and advocates of gentlemanly scholarship, the early Unitarians followed a 'reasonable' restrained course of action which avoided both the 'dangerous radicalism' of Deistic belief and the 'unseemly' public emotionalism of evangelical religion.¹³

⁹Adams, New England in the Republic, pp. 353-356. See also Henry Steele Commager, Theodore Parker, Yankee Crusader (Boston: The Beacon Press, 1960), p. 156.

¹⁰A. B. Darling, "Jacksonian Democracy in Massachusetts, 1824-1848," The American Historical Review, XXIX (January, 1924), p. 273; A. B. Darling, Political Changes in Massachusetts, 1824-1848, A Study of Liberal Movements in Politics (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1925), p. 38. An echo of Darling is Kinley J. Brauer, Cotton versus Conscience: Massachusetts Whig Politics and Southwestern Expansion, 1843-1848 (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1967), pp. 11-12.

¹¹H. Richard Niebuhr, The Social Sources of Denominationalism (Cleveland and New York: The World Publishing Company, 1957), p. 153. Originally published in 1929, this book was cited in a denominational study in 1936 as proof that early nineteenth century Unitarians were "identified with the more cultured and privileged classes." Frederick May Eliot, et al., Unitarians Face a New Age: The Report of the Commission of Appraisal to the American Unitarian Association (Boston: The Commission of Appraisal of the American Unitarian Association, 1936), p. 315.

¹²Theodore Maynard, Orestes Brownson: Yankee, Radical, Catholic (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1943), p. 61.

¹³Crowe, George Ripley, p. 48.

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And a popular book among Unitarian Universalists in the late 1960's reiterates what the above writers say.¹⁴

It should be expected that American history textbooks would read about the same way. One written by two distinguished historians, G. G. van Deusen and Dexter Perkins, concluded that "the appeal of the [Unitarian] movement was primarily to the intellectual and well-to-do elements of society, and its strength centered in New England."¹⁵ Likewise, in his chapter of a cooperative textbook, Kenneth M. Stampf wrote that Unitarianism "appealed chiefly to the better-educated and more affluent descendants of the New England Puritans" and that "the church's well-fed members, though more reasonable and tolerant than their Puritan ancestors, became at least as smug...."¹⁶

If the preceding conclusions are accepted, one must view Unitarian ideas on social and political issues as those coming from an aristocratic denomination. Some of the sources, however, indicate that people from more humble stations were Unitarians. Even a few of the historians who asserted that Unitarians were mainly upper-class people presented contrary evidence. And if historians credit hostile witnesses like Mrs. Stowe, it seems only fair to allow Unitarians themselves to testify on their own social structure. Data has been gathered from contemporary manuscripts and newspapers, from published letters and memoirs, from

¹⁴Josiah and Laile E. Bartlett, Moment of Truth, Our Next Four Hundred Years... (Berkeley: Published by the authors, 1968), pp. 4-6, 10, 102. The Bartletts cited Niebuhr and the Appraisal of 1936 as evidence of early Unitarian aristocracy.

¹⁵Dexter Perkins and Glyndon G. Van Deusen, The United States of America: A History (2 vols.; New York: The Macmillan Company, 1962), I, p. 463.

¹⁶John M. Blum, Bruce Catton, Edmund S. Morgan, Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., Kenneth M. Stampf, and C. Vann Woodward, The National Experience (New York and Burlingame: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1963), p. 241.

AUA reports, and from sermons having a bearing on the issue. It will be presented on a geographical basis: Boston, Massachusetts, New England parishes, New York, Philadelphia, St. Louis, the western states, and the southern states.

No attempt will be made to analyze the membership of all the Unitarian churches in Boston. There were fourteen in 1830 and twenty-four in 1860. There is evidence, as illustrated by King's Chapel, to suggest that other Boston churches attracted men and women from all walks of life.

Rev. Henry Ware, Jr., son of the Reverend Henry Ware whose election as Hollis Professor of Divinity at Harvard had sparked the "Unitarian Controversy," noted that members of the Second Church in Boston were not all aristocrats. A month following his ordination in January 1817 Ware commented that "my people are all in the middling class, many families exceedingly pleasant, all united and very cordial towards me." Soon after his marriage that same year, Ware bought a house near his church in a neighborhood some of his friends considered undesirable. But as Ware wrote of himself, "his was a North-End parish, and he must be a North-End man."¹⁷

Ware's second wife, Mary Lovell Pickard, also testified to the diversity of social classes in her husband's congregation. After Ware's first wife died in 1824, he married a daughter of Mark Pickard, a Boston merchant, a woman who recalled in later years that most of her youthful companions were "of the wealthy classes." A few weeks after their marriage, Mary Ware wrote that many of her husband's parishioners had called on her. "All classes have come to see me," she said, "even the poorest,

¹⁷John Ware, Memoir of the Life of Henry Ware, Jr.... (2 vols.; Boston: American Unitarian Association, 1868), I, pp. 101-106. This was first published in 1846.

and seem quite disposed to be pleased. I have said distinctly that I wish ours to be entirely a social intercourse, and they take me at my word." A year later Henry's health declined, so he decided to accept an offer to teach divinity at Harvard where the work would be easier. He resigned in 1829, giving as one reason the "destitute condition" of the society, but they refused to let him go. The congregation agreed to hire an associate pastor without reducing Henry Ware's salary in order to lighten the load (the associate was Ralph Waldo Emerson). The Wares went to Europe for a vacation in 1830, and on their return the congregation accepted his resignation. Henry Ware began teaching at Harvard where his work appears to have been more than satisfactory since the University awarded him the Doctor of Divinity degree in 1834. One would expect that an aristocratic denomination would pay their ministers and their teachers of ministers a reasonable salary. But in 1842, about a year before her husband's death, Mary Ware wrote that she was not

unmindful of the difficulties which poverty brings,--the hindrances to the satisfactory education of children, the loss of intellectual privileges, and the wear and tear to the spirit of the uncertainties of daily supply for even the necessary wants of life. I understand it all....¹⁸

Some writers have assumed that the Federal Street Church in Boston, where William Ellery Channing served from 1803 until his death in 1842, contained an upper-class congregation. One biographer suggested that Channing's "more affluent listeners" were probably pained at his remarks that the loss of property during the War of 1812 was only a minor evil.¹⁹

¹⁸ Edward B. Hall, Memoir of Mary L. Ware, Wife of Henry Ware, Jr. (Boston: American Unitarian Association, 1869), pp. 197, 309-310, 371.

¹⁹ Arthur W. Brown, Always Young for Liberty, A Biography of William Ellery Channing (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1956), p. 83.

Another biographer declared that after Channing's book Slavery appeared in 1835, his parishioners, "respectable, conservative citizens, most of them, were painfully distressed."²⁰ After attending one of Channing's services in 1836, William Lloyd Garrison remarked that the minister's sermon on aiding the lower classes probably was "too republican a dose for his aristocratical congregation."²¹ Yet one biographer wrote that occasionally Channing aided "needy parishioners who sought his help and so brought him into contact with some of life's vicissitudes."²² So the Federal Street Church, like King's Chapel, had rich and poor members but we are not sure how many of each.

Channing confirmed the point that Boston Unitarian churches drew men from many social positions. In 1817 he requested his society to provide a vestry building near the meetinghouse for a number of activities: a Sunday School, a singing school, a charity school, religious meetings, and a library. Regarding the library, Channing said:

There are some families of our number, in which individuals may be found with a strong taste for reading, but who cannot afford to purchase any but the most necessary books. In the families of the opulent, too, there are often but few books suited to illustrate the Scriptures, and to furnish religious instruction, and these few are often far from being the best.²³

In 1833 Channing denied the accusation that Unitarianism was an aristocratic faith. "It has often been objected to our views of Christianity," he said, "that they are suited to the educated, rich, fashionable, and not to the wants of the great mass of human beings. This charge, could

²⁰ Madeleine Hooke Rice, Federal Street Pastor: The Life of William Ellery Channing (New York: Bookman Associates, 1961), pp. 222-223. Rice also uses this assumption on pp. 53, 73, 161-162, 168.

²¹ Ibid., pp. 171-172.

²² Ibid., p. 162.

²³ W. H. Channing, W. E. Channing, pp. 296-297.

it be substantiated, would be a weightier argument against them than all others. We know it to be false; and yet why has it been urged?" He answered that Unitarians often did not exhibit "the manifestation of a brotherly concern for the multitude of men," that they were often cold toward others.²⁴ And in an ordination sermon in 1839 for Rev. Robert C. Waterston, he said, "You are now set apart to be a Minister at Large. This is the distinction of your office. Whilst other ministers gather worshippers into their churches from all the conditions of life, you expect to labor chiefly among the less prosperous, the destitute."²⁵

Channing's words are supported by an English Unitarian minister, Rev. William Adam, who visited Boston during May Meetings in 1839. Adam found that the many Unitarian churches of the city were usually crowded on Sunday. In the paraphrased report of his speech he said that "here he saw Unitarian Christianity supported by numbers, by wealth, by associated influence, by the press, and by the pulpit."²⁶

Rev. George Ripley, well-known for his leadership at Brook Farm in the 1840's, settled over a society in Boston that attracted people of various ranks in society. Shortly after Ripley's ordination over the Purchase Street Church in 1826, he told his mother that his parishioners "are chiefly from the middling classes of society." Not long afterward he again wrote his mother that liberal Christianity "has been reproached as a faith merely for men of intellect and taste. It is so, but it also speaks loudly to the poor and uneducated, as I have had ample proof."²⁷

²⁴Ibid., pp. 480-481.

²⁵Channing, Works, p. 93.

²⁶Fourteenth Annual Report, AUA, 1839, p. 36.

²⁷Octavius Brooks Frothingham, George Ripley (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1883), pp. 36-40.



When the "Radical Controversy" erupted with Ripley on the side of the radicals, he became dissatisfied with conservative Unitarianism and decided to leave the ministry, using financial difficulties as a reason. The society admitted its fiscal straits and promised him more support. Ripley remained until the middle of 1841. When he left his parishioners expressed their appreciation with a cash gift of \$500, a set of garden tools, and other small items.²⁸

Throughout much of the nineteenth century the South Congregational Church drew few upper-class members. Rev. Mellish Irving Motte served there from 1828 to 1842. When Motte died in 1881, Rev. Edward Everett Hale described the society of Motte's day in his eulogy as one where the people "lived together, much as the people live in an intelligent country town to-day, with no great thought of the amusements or the occupations of the some-what distant city." Hale related a tradition that until a railroad network had been formed around the city, Motte "was widely known among young people in the Norfolk towns as the Boston minister nearest to the country, and the marriage records of the church fully confirm the tradition." After Motte left, Rev. Frederic Dan Huntington served the society to 1855. When Huntington resigned to accept a teaching position at Harvard, E. E. Hale became the pastor. Apparently before Hale's installation, Huntington told Hale that somewhere between 250 and 275 families belonged to the society along with "many single persons, as clerks, schoolteachers etc, etc. Nearly all of them are young. I think there are not six grey heads among them. They are of the working genuine vital class, young merchants, mechanics, men of the professions. There are babies in any quantity,--increasing

²⁸Crowe, George Ripley, pp. 120-121.

families." Hale's son wrote that the South Congregational society "was made up to a considerable degree...of young men and women with their fortunes to make in the world, and its situation was not very distant from some of the poorer localities that were even then beginning to develop in the newer parts of the city."²⁹

In addition to churches such as those mentioned, Boston had Unitarian churches expressly for the poor whose pastors, "ministers-at-large," were supported by the AUA from 1827 to 1834 when the Benevolent Fraternity of Churches, another Unitarian body, assumed the responsibility.³⁰ No pews were sold in these churches, all seats were free. Rev. Alexander Young, aged twenty-four when ordained for the Sixth Congregational Church (New South) in 1825, cited the ministry-at-large in 1830 as evidence of the appeal Unitarianism had for the poor. He also wrote that the faith had been accepted in New England at first "by the intelligent, reflecting, educated part of the people," but he did not say only among the rich or long-established families.³¹ By 1860 seven Unitarian chapels with ministers-at-large served the poor in Boston. In that year Rev. James Freeman Clarke complained that churches should not be set aside for the poor, but rather the churches should admit rich and poor people. He thought, however, that the ministry-at-large had

²⁹"Mellish Irving Motte," HLF, III, pp. 259-263; Edward E. Hale, Jr., The Life and Letters of Edward Everett Hale (2 vols.; Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1917), I, pp. 283-284.

³⁰Wilbur, History of Unitarianism, p. 442; "Joseph Tuckerman," HLF, II, pp. 103-117. See Cooke's chapter on the ministry-at-large in Unitarianism in America, pp. 247-261.

³¹Alexander Young, Evangelical Unitarianism Adapted to the Poor and Unlearned (2d ed.; Boston: American Unitarian Association, 1832). When first published, the Christian Register thought the tract would "silence this unfounded objection to our principles," 19 June 1830.

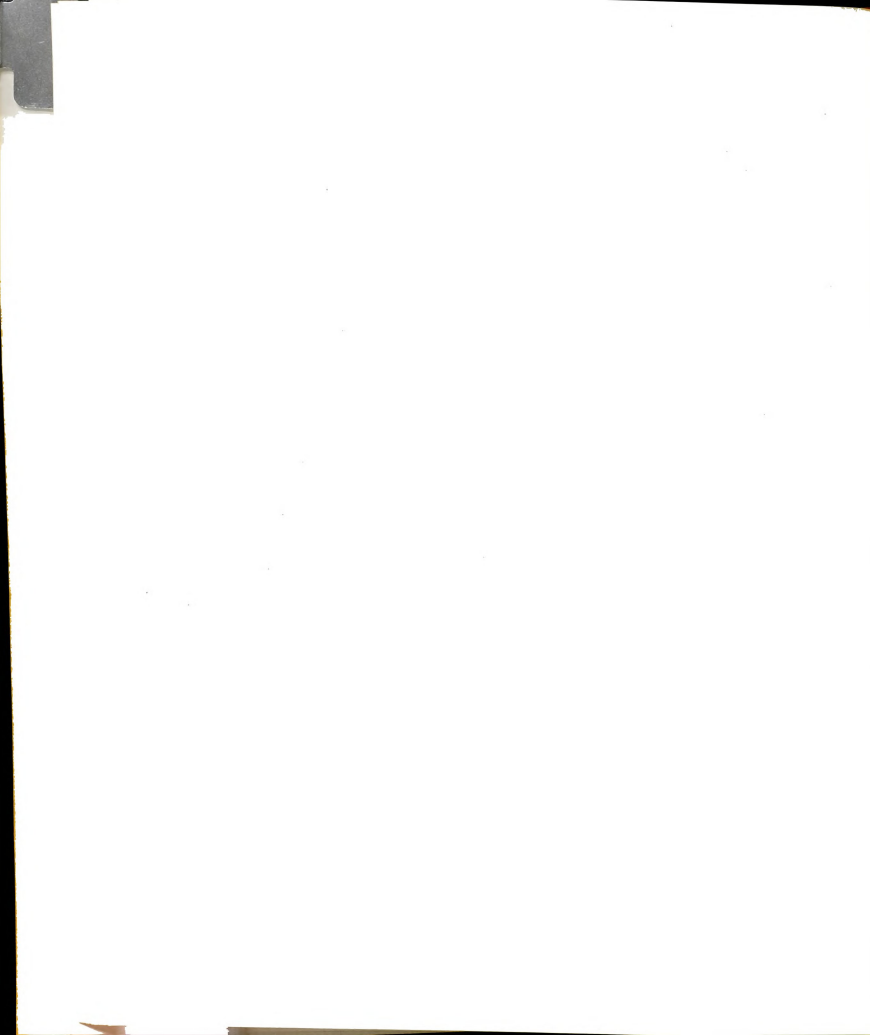
been successful. Should one examine their records, Clarke believed, one would find that these churches had been beneficial, proof of which would be the satisfaction gained by ministers who had served in them.³²

A quarrel in 1836 over the sale of pews produced some statements about the social structure of Boston's churches. In his Discourse on the Wants of the Times in 1836, Rev. Orestes A. Brownson, then in his Unitarian phase, accused the Boston churches of being aristocratic because the sale of pews favored the rich. A correspondent to the Christian Register, signing himself "A Worshipper, Not a Pew-Holder," defended the sale of pews and the annual taxes levied on pewholders usually in proportion to the pewholders' ability to pay. He said some seats in the churches were reserved for the poor; they were not excluded but were invited to attend services. "Many [of the poor]," he wrote, "do come." Another correspondent to the paper rebuked Brownson and detailed the social structure of Boston's Unitarians:

For by whom are our churches filled? And by whom, for the most part, are they possessed? By the wealthy, or the honorable alone? Most surely not. These form but a small portion of any community, whether of a city or a congregation. They cannot fill our churches--which are filled by persons in all conditions, by the Rich in his fullness and the Poor in his straits, by the prosperous in their comforts and the sorrowful in their griefs, by the aged in their infirmities and the youthful in their strength; by the laborious mechanic who owns his pew, and fills it with his numerous flock, and the no less laborious merchant, who has risen from nothing; who came into the city perhaps not many years ago a poor working boy and whose incessant industry alone, with God's blessing, has made him rich.

This writer believed that if the dozen wealthiest families left each of "the most fashionable congregations" those remaining would be people "in the middling, and many below the middling walks of life." Most of those

³²Monthly Journal of the American Unitarian Association, I (January, 1861), pp. 53-54. Cited hereafter as Monthly Journal.



who were rich, moreover, had been less prosperous a few years ago. Older churches, he said, had a higher number of the poor than newer ones or those in the central part of town. Unitarians had been generous with their support of the ministry-at-large, hardly aristocratic behavior to his way of thinking. To him, one had to be "an absolute stranger" in the city to call Unitarians aristocratic. The tendency, if anything, ran against an aristocracy. Brownson's reply in the Boston Reformer, which he edited, and which was reprinted in the Christian Register, did not rebut these statements. Brownson said those churches preferring the pew system were welcome to it, but his Society for Christian Union and Progress would rely on voluntary contributions.³³

The diversity of Boston's Unitarians emerged in 1848 after a protracted dispute between the Christian Register and several Orthodox publications over allegations that Unitarianism was dying in the city. Unitarians contended that the Orthodox had suffered declining church attendance as much as they had. A correspondent to the Christian Register argued that Unitarianism in Boston remained strong. Within the past six years, he wrote, five new Unitarian societies had been formed. Three of them were building meetinghouses. People in the new societies came from Episcopalian, Baptist, and Orthodox backgrounds, "besides numerous others," he added, "who have been gathered in by virtue of the ministry at large, and the influence of the chapels connected with it." While it might be true that the new societies were not large, they accounted for "nearly one thousand families" new to Unitarianism.³⁴ The next year Rev. Samuel Cruft, a minister-at-large with the Suffolk

³³Christian Register, 2 July, 9 July, 30 July 1836.

³⁴Ibid., 12 February 1848.

Street Chapel, reported a membership of 155 families, 43 more than in 1848. Cruft said it was difficult in his chapel to distinguish the poor from the well-to-do because the poor either saved enough to buy nice clothes, or wore borrowed or donated clothing. Cruft related that few of the poor attended his services regularly, but also that few of the "better off" attended either. Poor parents, however, sent their children to Sunday School without hesitation.³⁵

Unitarian churches in other Massachusetts communities evince the same general pattern of social diversity as in Boston. Three societies will be treated in some detail to show that Unitarianism gained adherents from the top of the social ladder down to the lower rungs.

Rev. Ralph Sanger served the predominantly rural parish at Dover from 1812 until his death in 1860. Sanger himself might have been considered an "aristocrat" considering his apparent prominence in the community. He found time to become an officer of the Norfolk Agricultural Society, worked for the creation of the Massachusetts Agricultural College, served five terms in the Massachusetts legislature, and received the D. D. from Harvard in 1857. According to a biographical sketch of Sanger, it was noted that "although his people were poor, they never failed to pay his salary fully and promptly."³⁶

At Northampton, upper-class individuals led in the formation of a Unitarian society stemming from a schism in the Calvinist church, but the majority of the liberal Christians there were not at all upper-class. Two families, the Joseph Lymans and the Samuel Howes, precipitated the division in 1824 by requesting their orthodox pastor to allow liberal

³⁵Ibid., 9 June 1849.

³⁶"Ralph Sanger," HLF, I, pp. 123-124.

clergymen to occupy the pulpit at least six times a year. On his refusal the Unitarians seceded, held meetings in the town hall, and invited Unitarian clergymen to preach for them. About this time Mrs. Howe wrote that such a small number as they had could not then build a meetinghouse nor permanently settle a minister "unless they were very rich, which we are not; or else very willing to beg, which we are not." The society organized with about fifty people, she said, and "of these persons not more than six or seven can be said to be in easy circumstances; the others are persons who supply the wants of every day by the toil of every day. It will be obvious that the principal burden of expense must rest on the six or seven first mentioned, but they are prepared to do the work; and all, even the poorest, have manifested the disposition to do what they can." One person recalled that on Sundays Mrs. Lyman would send a carriage outside the village to "gather up a few liberals who had no means of getting into town."³⁷

Unitarianism in Waltham is an excellent example of this faith's attraction to men and women from various walks of life. Early in the nineteenth century Waltham began to change from a rural to an industrial community with the opening of two cotton factories before 1815. The First Congregational Church became Unitarian under Rev. Samuel

³⁷Susan I. Lesley, Recollections of My Mother, Mrs. Anne Jean Lyman... (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1899), pp. 2-3, 176, 183-184. This had been printed originally in a limited edition for family and friends in 1876. Joseph Lyman graduated from Yale, became well-known in Massachusetts legal circles, and attended the Hartford Convention in 1815. His wife, the former Anne Jean Robbins, and Mrs. Howe were sisters. Their father was Edward Hutchinson Robbins, a shipbuilder, Federalist in politics, a speaker of the Massachusetts House of Representatives, a delegate to the Massachusetts constitutional convention in 1780, lieutenant-governor of the Commonwealth for seven years, and a probate judge when he died. Joseph Lyman and Samuel Howe, both lawyers, were cousins.

Ripley, an uncle of Ralph Waldo Emerson, who served the First Church from 1809 to 1846. The Second Church dismissed an orthodox pastor and invited Rev. Bernard Whitman to its pulpit in 1826. Whitman is well-known in Unitarian annals as a leading exponent of liberal Christianity during the "Unitarian Controversy." Ripley's society was predominantly rural while Whitman's, according to J. F. Clarke who preached before it in 1833, was composed "chiefly of those who worked in the Waltham factories."³⁸

After the two Waltham societies merged when Whitman died, a sociologist, Richard E. Sykes, has suggested that an urban-rural conflict developed within the church. Sykes quoted a comment by Samuel Ripley dated January 1839 that he expected problems in the church with the "heterogeneous mass" now that people had come in from the defunct Second Church. Two months earlier, however, Ripley had expressed exasperation at the furor created by nephew R. W. Emerson's Divinity School Address. While the older man did not agree completely with Emerson, there was much with which he could. It was not only hostile clerical reaction that disturbed Ripley but also that of people in Waltham, including "the common people, even women, [who] look solemn and sad, and roll up their eyes at the mention of R. W. E.: 'Oh, he is a dangerous man; the church is in danger; Unitarianism is disgraced; the party is broken up,' etc., etc." Ripley's use of the term "heterogeneous mass" might have meant that a variety of theological beliefs existed in his

³⁸"Samuel Ripley," HLF, II, pp. 172-178; "Bernard Whitman," HLF, II, pp. 242-249; James B. Thayer, Rev. Samuel Ripley of Waltham (Cambridge, Mass.: John Wilson and Son, 1897), pp. 30-32; Edward Everett Hale, ed., James Freeman Clarke, Autobiography, Diary and Correspondence (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1891), p. 51; Wilbur, History of Unitarianism, p. 452.

new society which complicated the choice of a pastor. But of particular significance is Ripley's observation that "common people" were Unitarians. Syke's evidence for new members in 1839, after the merger, shows that the new church continued to attract urban and rural individuals: 3 traders, 3 machinists, 2 farmers, 2 manufacturers, 1 hatter, 1 clergyman, 1 blacksmith and 5 having unknown occupations.³⁹

Massachusetts churches elsewhere possessed the same social diversity. The society at Charlemont, described as "neither large nor wealthy," drew "upon their narrow resources" to build a meetinghouse in 1829. According to Henry Steele Commager, Rev. Theodore Parker's West Roxbury parish consisted of "plain people, farmers, milkmen, shopkeepers," people who remained loyal when Parker shocked many other Unitarians with his discourse on the permanent and transient in Christianity. Rev. Thomas Wentworth Higginson served the First Religious Society at Newburyport from 1847 to 1849, when he resigned because of dissatisfaction aroused by his political preaching. At the time he declared that he could lead a secession movement with half the parish and form another society but decided against it. "Not a dozen are really opposed to me, but they have all the wealth," Higginson wrote. At the start of his Newburyport career Higginson estimated he had about 400 listeners. Higginson's wealthy dozen appeared to him to be a minority of the congregation. From Beverly one person wrote the Secretary of the AUA in 1845 thanking him for sending a missionary there and surrounding towns where farming

³⁹Thayer, Samuel Ripley, pp. 44-47; Sykes, "The Effect of Rapid Social and Cultural Change on Unitarianism in Massachusetts," pp. 99-105. Sykes thought it "doubtful" that the new pastor, Rev. Thomas Hill, would attract many factory workers. On the other hand, it is more likely that he would since as a youth Hill had been apprenticed first to a printer, then to an apothecary. "Thomas Hill," HLF, III, pp. 170-174.

was the chief occupation. About 1853 Rev. George W. Stacy began preaching at Feltonville and adjacent small towns. Stacy called his society there "respectable for numbers and worthy working men and women." When the AUA made an appeal for funds in 1862, the minister at West Cambridge (now Arlington) replied that the society's contributions for other causes limited what they could give the AUA. Among these causes he mentioned \$40 had been collected "for the poor of the Parish." In response to the same appeal the recently retired minister at East Marshfield replied that he had served that church from 1836 to 1861 and had received an average annual salary of only \$150. The AUA should not expect much from East Marshfield since "there are only about 40 families in the society, and no wealthy men."⁴⁰

New England churches outside Massachusetts exhibited the same social structure. Rev. Samuel Kirkland Lothrop, who served as pastor of the society at Dover, New Hampshire, from 1829 to 1834, declared that the church contained old-time residents, "substantial farmers," a blacksmith, a mill superintendent, his assistant and his clerk, several mill overseers, a number of "factory girls," five lawyers, and three physicians. In 1837 Rev. Henry W. Bellows commented enthusiastically on opportunities for Unitarian expansion in New Hampshire. "Littleton and Lancaster have promising congregations," he wrote, "and as far as I can judge, they are distinguished from other places only in having accidentally heard

⁴⁰Christian Register, 30 January 1830; Commager, Theodore Parker, pp. 41-42; John White Chadwick, Theodore Parker Preacher and Reformer (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1900), pp. 56-58; Mary Thacher Higginson, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, The Story of His Life (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin Company, 1914), pp. 87, 105; C. T. Thayer to C. Briggs, 18 February 1845 (Beverly), AUA Letters, 1845; Stacy to J. F. Clarke (no date), Monthly Journal, II (February, 1861), pp. 90-91; S. A. Smith to an unknown person, 6 January 1862 (W. Cambridge); G. Leonard to C. H. Brigham, 24 January 1862 (E. Marshfield), AUA Letters, 1862.

our views and formed out what their opinions are." When Rev. Samuel J. May accepted the call from the society at Brooklyn, Connecticut, in 1822, he found it had forty families, "all but half a dozen were plain farmers." A layman who visited the Brooklyn society nearly thirty years later said it was entirely free from debt but that few members were able to support the church. One of the more pungent observations about Unitarians came from a Hartford, Connecticut, layman in 1830. "We have very few men of any property amongst us," he declared, "and those few will not do anything decided, because their wives and families are much troubled at their attending worship with us." Most who came to the Hartford society were "nearly all rather in humble circumstances, but I regard it as rather a favorable circumstance that our opinions should spread first amongst industrious mechanics and labourers....The Unitarians here are rather a vulgar sect." A minister traveling through Maine in 1834 found many people living in log cabins expressing an interest in Unitarianism. And nearly all students of William E. Channing know that in 1840 he aided in founding a small society at Portsmouth, Rhode Island, in order to preach to the farmers in the vicinity.⁴¹

Unitarianism in New York City did not at first attract as many of the wealthy and fashionable as it did later. Rev. Henry Ware, Jr., held services in New York in 1819 and drew large audiences. At the same time he believed that the newly formed society would probably be successful

⁴¹Thornton K. Lothrop, ed., Some Reminiscences of the Life of Samuel Kirkland Lothrop (Cambridge: John Wilson and Son, 1888), pp. 166-167; Bellows to E. Peabody, 4 October 1837 (Littleton, N. H.), Bellows Papers, MHS; G. B. Emerson, Samuel May, Jr., and T. J. Mumford, Memoir of Samuel Joseph May (Boston: American Unitarian Association, 1882), pp. 78-79; G. G. Channing to C. Lincoln, 11 November 1851 (Brooklyn, Conn.), AUA Letters, 1851; J. H. Wells to S. Higginson, 2 March 1830 (Hartford, Conn.), AUA Letters, 1830; Christian Register, 18 October 1834; Rice, Federal Street Pastor, p. 179.



in time although at present "they are unable to build a church, but have the promise of several rich men to join them whenever they shall undertake it." Channing spoke in New York also in 1819 but was discouraged about prospects there. Ware assured Channing that "if they love Christianity as much in an unostentatious building, (by the way, a much better one than the upper room in which Paul preached,) as in a splendid church," then the New York society ought to succeed. Catherine Sedgwick, along with her brother Henry and his wife Jane, soon joined the New York society. One of the parish projects in 1823 was a charity school for poor children of the city. "We mean to teach the children the rudiments of learning, and how to mend their clothes, darn their stockings, etc," Catherine wrote. "Our society is small, and far from rich, but we hope to accomplish it." The Second Unitarian Church opened in 1835 and drew some members from the First Church. When Rev. Henry W. Bellows went to the latter in 1836, he feared the society might dissolve; but he was encouraged by the continued attendance of "a number of families admirable for intelligence and refinement,--more particularly the Sedgwick and Schuyler families." Nine years later in an article in the Christian Register, both New York societies were mentioned as having had lean years before becoming "remarkably prosperous," another indication that the well-to-do were not immediately attracted to Unitarianism.⁴²

The development of the Unitarian church at Philadelphia in many ways paralleled that of New York. The first permanent minister was Rev.

⁴²Ware, Henry Ware, Jr., I, pp. 130-131; C. M. Sedgwick to Mrs. Eliza Pomeroy, 10 January 1823 (New York), in Mary E. Dewey, ed., Life and Letters of Catherine M. Sedgwick (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1871), p. 158; Rice, Federal Street Pastor, pp. 92-93; Bellows to William and Charlotte Silsbee, 18 November 1838 (New York), Bellows Papers, MHS; Christian Register, 8 May 1847.

William Henry Furness, aged twenty-two, when he was settled there in 1825. Furness wrote the year he was installed that Unitarians in Philadelphia were "about as obscure and despised as any company of Methodists or such like are in Boston." Catherine Sedgwick visited the city in 1830 and discovered that Philadelphia resembled Boston in many ways and in some respects was better. But she observed that "there is much less religious sentiment in the higher classes, more indifference to the subject, as if it were only fit to interest the vulgar and the weaker sex." Furness and Sedgwick give the impression that few of the upper classes would be Unitarians. Elizabeth Geffen's study of Unitarianism in Philadelphia reveals that members of this denomination were generally from the "upper middle class, usually, though not always, bountifully endowed with the world's goods." Geffen identified the occupation of many members of Furness's church and found a variety of them: attorney, druggist, engraver, physician, plasterer, blacksmith, banker, broker, and that all-inclusive term, merchant.⁴³

The Unitarian church in St. Louis, begun in the early 1830's, could hardly be called an aristocratic society judging from the reminiscences of its first minister, Rev. William Greenleaf Eliot. Eliot became pastor of the society in 1834 where he remained as minister until 1869. As an indication of his difficulties, Eliot told George Ticknor that during the first three years of his pastorate the society raised only \$1,000 for a building fund and paid him \$350 for salary and expenses.⁴⁴

⁴³Elizabeth M. Geffen, Philadelphia Unitarianism 1796-1861 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1961), pp. 121, 145, 167-169; Mary Dewey, Catherine Sedgwick, p. 203.

⁴⁴A layman wrote from St. Louis that the society was "not rich enough to carry their design [to build a church] into execution without assistance" from the East. Christian Register, 28 February 1835.

From his experiences Eliot observed three types of western emigrants: those who were not considered respectable at the East, those who had "a roving disposition," and those "enterprising and industrious" people who sought "to better themselves." Eliot's preaching eventually drew large numbers. His leadership in municipal charities and education (he is considered the founder of Washington University) made him popular. His daughter and memorialist, Charlotte, wrote that the 1850's were the best years of his ministry when he attracted "large, influential, and thinking" listeners, yet these people were "not particularly wealthy, but [were] conspicuous for liberal giving."⁴⁵

The social status of other western Unitarians paralleled those in the East.⁴⁶ Rev. Moses G. Thomas traveled through the West in 1826 where he found a small group of 30 to 60 meeting regularly at Pittsburgh. Local printers refused to sell Unitarian tracts there because of strong anti-Unitarian prejudice, Thomas reported. Benjamin Bakewell, a Pittsburgh glass manufacturer born in England, however, nearly singlehandedly supported the church. Rev. Henry A. Miles visited Pittsburgh a decade later and found within the Unitarian society "several English mechanics with their families, who [had] left Unitarian societies in England." During his journey Thomas found a Unitarian farmer in Ohio who agreed to distribute religious literature. He also met many Unitarians in Cincinnati among whom were "three of the most influential men in the city," but Rev. William Henry Channing, who preached at Cincinnati in

⁴⁵Charlotte C. Eliot, William Greenleaf Eliot: Minister, Educator, Philanthropist (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1904), pp. 29, 34, 62.

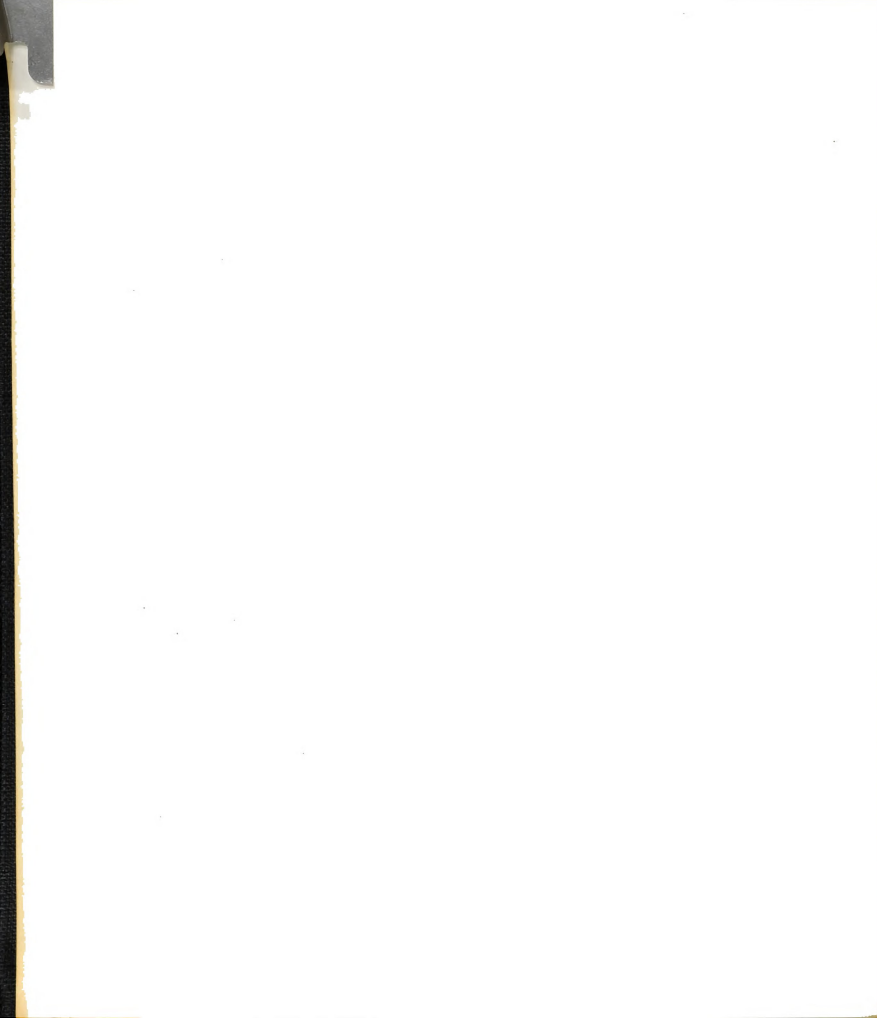
⁴⁶Lytle, Freedom Moves West, chapters 1-8, contains a church-by-church chronicle with little analysis of their social structure.



1839, observed that the society was neither numerous nor wealthy. Fresh from Divinity School, Rev. Ephraim Peabody served as tutor in 1830 to the children of Harm Jan Huidekoper, a wealthy Unitarian in Meadville, Pennsylvania. Peabody preached for the Meadville society without pay, but one of his parishioners, a tailor, made him a coat and pantaloons in appreciation of his services. Rev. William P. Huntington, who preached at Hillsboro, Illinois, and other towns in that state, also received a new black suit and other small gifts from his parishioners who were too poor to pay him much. Rev. W. H. Channing ministered at Meadville for four years after Peabody and discovered that "the Unitarians were few and not rich," according to Channing's biographer, O. B. Frothingham. Rev. Henry W. Bellows declared in 1843 that the society at Albany, New York, contained people who were poor but who "are willing to do what they can. If the [American Unitarian] Association counts its coppers too carefully the effort there will be [in] vain."⁴⁷

In the two decades before the Civil War there is further evidence that Unitarians in the North outside New England came from many walks of life. The Executive Committee of the New York Unitarian Association,

⁴⁷Second Annual Report, AUA, 1827, pp. 52, 55, 61; "Benjamin Bake-well," National Cyclopaedia of American Biography, XXII, pp. 217-218; Christian Register, 13 August 1836; Nina Moore and Francis Tiffany, Harm Jan Huidekoper (Cambridge: Riverside Press, 1904), p. 220; D. B. Jackson to C. Briggs, 27 December 1843 (Hillsboro, Ill.), AUA Letters, 1843; O. B. Frothingham, Memoir of William Henry Channing (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1886), pp. 94, 145; H. W. Bellows to C. Briggs, 3 January 1843 (New York), AUA Letters, 1843. W. P. Huntington described the Hillsboro society in 1839 as one with seven or eight families and a considerable number of bachelors, "but two or three of each class can, however, be reckoned wealthy; nor can it be said that all together have the means of supporting a pastor, who had no other resources than his salary." At Quincy, Illinois, Huntington preached to audiences between 50 and 100. He was told that they were as intelligent and respectable as those of any other local church. "They are mostly new comers," added Huntington, "and as yet unable to appropriate much money to any other object than what more immediately concerns their getting a living." Christian Register, 15 June 1839.



publishers of the Christian Inquirer, informed editor Henry W. Bellows that the newspaper's narrow theological coverage had provoked complaints from readers. They advised him to devote two of the paper's four pages to advertisements and "the current news of the day. This decision will give more variety of matter and make it of more general interest to country subscribers who we hope to be our most numerous readers, and amongst them we hope to do the most good." The minister of the society at Northumberland, Pennsylvania, informed Boston in 1853 that only three or four wealthy families had been able to support his church which contained about seventy-five people. At Alton, Illinois, a minister who attempted to revive the society reported in 1854 a regular attendance of three to four hundred people at his services. "Our members," he said, "are among the best merchants, mechanics, manufacturers, and professional men of the place." A missionary in the Courtland, New York, area encountered considerable opposition to Unitarian preaching from other denominations except the Universalists in 1860. He had preached in Universalist churches, in schoolrooms, and in town halls to which he had drawn

fair audiences from the more intelligent and independent of the "common people." One of my chief encouragements is, that the mass of those who turn out to hear Liberal preaching will not suffer, as to character, in comparison with those who go to the established churches; and I always get most of the reformers, who are longing for a better state of things.⁴⁸

One of the best testimonies that Unitarianism appealed to and attracted the "common man" came at the May Meetings in 1845. The witness was Arthur Buckminster Fuller, brother of Margaret Fuller and son of Timothy Fuller, a noted Federalist congressman and Massachusetts

⁴⁸R. Boynton to Bellows, 9 April 1849 (New York), Bellows Papers, MHS; Quarterly Journal, I (1 January 1854), p. 110; ibid., I (1 April 1854), pp. 290-291; Monthly Journal, I (October, 1860), p. 466.

politician. After graduating from Harvard in 1843, Arthur Fuller went to Belvidere, Illinois, as principal of an academy. He preached and lectured on Unitarianism in several Illinois towns. He held religious services in log cabins, school houses, barns, "and in all places," he wrote, "where men possessing immortal souls would assemble to listen to the glad tidings of a rational and consistent faith." He returned to Massachusetts in 1845 in order to study theology at Harvard. That spring he told the AUA of his experiences in Illinois:

We are often told, that the Unitarian faith is too cold, too metaphysical to take deep root in the hearts of the common people. Sir, I reject this charge, as libellous upon our system: Unitarianism is no mere theory, no barren speculation, but a living principle, clear and simple as it is noble and elevating. The common people heard our Saviour gladly, and so hear they now the words of those who advocate the truths he revealed, if properly presented.⁴⁹

Although Unitarianism made limited inroads in the South, there are some indications that Southern Unitarians were similar in social status to their northern co-religionists. Clarence Gohdes has written an excellent chronicle of antebellum Southern Unitarianism, but he did not discuss the social structure of the societies beyond stating that the faith appealed to intelligent and distinguished individuals.⁵⁰

Two of the South's Unitarian societies apparently contained a large, if not predominant, number of aristocrats. The society at Charleston, South Carolina, under the pastoral care of Rev. Samuel Gilman, is said to have attracted wealthy, intelligent, and influential men in the community. Unfortunately, during the Civil War the antebellum parish records

⁴⁹"Arthur Buckminster Fuller," HLF, III, pp. 128-129; Twentieth Annual Report, AUA, 1845, pp. 17, 36.

⁵⁰Clarence Gohdes, "Some Notes on the Unitarian Church in the Antebellum South..." in David K. Jackson, ed., American Studies in Honor of William Kenneth Boyd,... (Durham: Duke University Press, 1940), pp. 327-366.

were removed to Columbia, where they were destroyed, so we do not know what proportion of Charleston's Unitarians were aristocrats. The Unitarian society at Mobile, Alabama, according to the Executive Committee of the AUA, was "composed mostly of persons of the first respectability in the city." One of the wealthiest supporters of the Mobile society was Samuel St. John, Jr., whose wife had been reared a Unitarian in Baltimore. It is interesting to note, however, that when Rev. Henry W. Bellows preached at Mobile in 1837 he wrote his sister that "persons who do not scruple to visit every vile hole of dissipation talk of their conscientious unwillingness to enter our little church, and wonder what their friends would say if they heard of their going to hear a Unitarian preach!"⁵¹

The social structure of the New Orleans society under Rev. Theodore Clapp is not clear from available evidence. Clapp had been trained as a Congregational minister at the Andover Theological School. He went to the Crescent City as a tutor, began preaching at a Presbyterian church in 1822, and after private study of the Scriptures, adopted Unitarian beliefs. The Presbyterians disowned him in 1833 although a majority of his congregation remained loyal to their pastor. Clapp had a reputation of attracting numerous listeners. One visitor to the city in 1843 wrote that Clapp had a large congregation and was considered "one of the lions of the city," but that many of the more educated and refined people thought him "wanting in dignity and taste." If the educated and refined

⁵¹ Arthur A. Brooks, The History of Unitarianism in the Southern Churches: Charleston, New Orleans, Louisville, Richmond (Boston: American Unitarian Association, n.d.), pp. 6-8; Eleventh Annual Report, AUA, 1836, p. 19; Quarterly Journal, III (1 July 1856), pp. 649-654; Bellows to Harriet A. Bellows, 13 February 1837 (Mobile), Bellows Papers, MHS.

shunned Clapp who still drew sizable audiences, his hearers may not have been so refined or educated.⁵²

The society in Richmond, Virginia, however, does not appear to have had many aristocrats or wealthy individuals. Rev. Charles A. Farley who preached there in 1835 reported that the society had difficulty paying him. After Farley left a layman told the AUA they desired another minister and could pay him \$1,000 a year. But any minister sent them

will not here find Unitarianism a passport to refined society, but he will be avoided by many of the fashionable, and be compelled to hear many severe remarks against him, and his cause--and even some who espouse the cause will hardly own him, untill the cause becomes more fashionable.

Rev. William Silsbee, who preached briefly in Richmond after his graduation from Divinity School in 1836, wrote that the city possessed "'No arts, no letters, no society' I might almost say with Hobbes."⁵³ If what "society" and "fashion" that did exist avoided the Unitarian church, most Richmond Unitarians may have been "unfashionable."

Other evidence indicates that Unitarianism appealed to all classes in the South. Rev. Stephen Greenleaf Bulfinch, son of the architect Charles Bulfinch, preached at Augusta, Georgia, in the 1830's. Initially, he served only twenty to thirty families but he hoped to collect "a

⁵²"Theodore Clapp," HLF, II, pp. 272-273; Theodore Clapp, Autobiographical Sketches and Recollections, During a Thirty-five Years' Residence in New Orleans (Boston: Phillips, Sampson & Company, 1857); R. C. Goodhue to Bellows, 27 April 1843 (New Orleans), Bellows Papers, MHS.

⁵³Ebenezer Robinson and C. A. Farley to C. Briggs, 3 December 1835 (Richmond), AUA Letters, 1835; Isaac Davenport to C. Briggs, 25 January 1836 (Richmond), AUA Letters, 1836; Silsbee to Bellows, 16 October 1836 (Richmond), Bellows Papers, MHS. There is little information on the social structure of the Richmond society in George H. Gibson, "The Unitarian-Universalist Church of Richmond," The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, LXXIV (July, 1966), pp. 321-335. As with Charleston, antebellum documents of the Richmond society have apparently been lost, Brooks, History of Unitarianism in the Southern Churches, p. 22.



respectable society" before long. By 1834 he thought prospects good for the faith in Georgia, even in small towns. But by 1837 Bulfinch had failed to enlarge his congregation. His salary had been raised to \$1,500 but he thought even this might prove burdensome for his parishioners. He resigned that year because the society had been unable to pay him. A layman at Macon, Georgia, asked Boston in 1836 to find a minister for the small society there consisting mostly of young men aged twenty-one to forty, "most of these Northern men in govt business." Rev. Dexter Clapp remarked that his salary at Savannah in 1843 was only \$800 and was all the society could afford. At Washington, D. C., the Unitarian society formed in 1820 drew many of America's leading men usually as listeners but seldom as members. The church continually teetered on the brink of dissolution. Ministers' salaries were as small as the membership. But along with its distinguished visitors the church's Sunday School contained children of poor people in the city, according to a layman, because parents were "glad to send their children without regarding sectarian instruction." Rev. W. H. Channing came to Washington in 1861 and found a dilapidated meetinghouse and a society neither rich nor fashionable. A recent biographer of J. F. Clarke asserts that the Unitarian society at Louisville, Kentucky, was composed mostly of "'better families'--lawyers, judges, and merchants" along with some people of "modest means." Yet one layman appealed to the AUA to finance the traveling expenses of any ministerial candidates the Association might send them, hardly an indication of great wealth among Louisville Unitarians.⁵⁴

⁵⁴Most of the material here is from AUA Letters: Bulfinch to S. Higginson, 22 April 1830 (Augusta); Bulfinch to J. Whitman, 9 June 1834 (Savannah); Bulfinch to C. Briggs, 7 February 1837 (Augusta); Bulfinch to S. Barrett, 14 March 1837 (Augusta); E. A. Ware to H. Ware, 4 October 1836 (Macon); D. Clapp to J. Whitman, 11 July 1843 (Savannah); A. Stearns



One of the more interesting documents on the Unitarian social structure is a statement of the Executive Committee of the AUA justifying its Declaration of Opinion in 1853. The Committee believed that five factors had contributed to the faith's slow growth: 1) an image of theological negativism causing many to believe that Unitarians lacked "well-defined objects" and beliefs; 2) "the almost exclusively intellectual character" of the movement which restricted the appeal of Unitarianism; 3) orthodox prejudice against their views based on misinformation; 4) "the subtle power of social prestige"; and 5) Theodore Parker's radicalism which had brought odium upon the entire denomination.⁵⁵ Several historians who treat this document stress the anti-Parker aspect of it.⁵⁶ The fourth point merits some consideration. The Committee stated that

except in some parts of New England and in a few other places, the so-called best society, the wealth, fashion, power of the Christian world, move in circles alien from our peculiar views, and regarding them with undissembled horror. The immense and dishonorable power thus silently but most effectually wielded is beginning to be felt even here, by means of the universal intercommunication of the world. Elsewhere, in scores of places, this influence is known by us to press with most unfair and disastrous weight against the advance of our cause.

The Committee did not say that "the so-called best society, the wealth,

to S. Higginson, 22 March 1830 (Washington, D. C.); S. B. Sumner to S. Barrett, 13 March 1832 (Louisville); Frothingham, W. H. Channing, p. 322; Bolster, J. F. Clarke, p. 76. As an illustration of the languid support of one prominent Unitarian for the society at Washington, D. C., Edward Everett rose to preside at a Unitarian meeting in Boston and said, "I am always ready to be of service to Unitarianism." "Except at Washington," retorted Rev. Jared Sparks, sitting beside him. Moncure Daniel Conway, Autobiography, Memories and Experiences (2 vols.; Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1904), I, pp. 285-286.

⁵⁵Twenty-eighth Annual Report, AUA, 1853, pp. 18-23; Quarterly Journal, I (October, 1853), pp. 44-49.

⁵⁶Lyttle, Freedom Moves West, pp. 79-80; Commager, Theodore Parker, p. 156; Wilbur, History of Unitarianism, pp. 462-463; Hutchison, Transcendentalist Ministers, p. 130.



fashion, power of the Christian world" had recoiled only from the views of Parker. The best society often had been alienated "from our peculiar views" and had regarded those views "with undissembled horror." Adverse social pressure had begun to influence even the Yankees. Consequently, Unitarianism was not the preserve of the rich and fashionable, and it may have been abandoned by some because it was not fashionable.

This chapter has been devoted primarily to the social status of laymen when in fact ministers are apt to articulate the denomination's position on public issues. Their statements were likely interpreted as the voices of the entire faith. This leads to the question of the social status of the ministers.

Most Unitarian ministers studied at the Harvard Divinity School. One of the contributors to a cooperative history of the School, Conrad Wright, wrote that few divinity students in the first half of the nineteenth century came from prominent families. Most of the students obtained financial assistance from the School which nearly covered the entire cost of their education.⁵⁷

To survey all the denomination's ministers in order to discover their pre-Divinity School social status would be a gargantuan enterprise. A sample from the most significant center of the faith, the ministers of Boston for the years 1830, 1846, and 1860, may suggest the ministers' standing in society. Information has been gathered to show their fathers' occupation as an indication of their social rank before entering the ministry. As was true of the congregations they served, Boston's

⁵⁷Conrad Wright, "The Early Period," in George Huntston Williams, ed., The Harvard Divinity School Its Place in Harvard University and in American Culture (Boston: The Beacon Press, 1954), pp. 60-61. For the assistance given needy divinity students at Harvard by the people of King's Chapel, see Foote and Edes, Annals of King's Chapel, II, p. 469.



ministers came from a variety of social ranks. Among the fathers were seven merchants, five ministers, four farmers, two publishers, two lawyers, one cotton mill overseer, one crockery dealer and tax assessor, one dentist, one machinist, one ship master, one blacksmith, one tavern keeper, one physician, and thirteen unknown.⁵⁸ In the light of the Executive Committee's statement in 1853 that social prestige had become something of a barrier to the spread of Unitarianism, it is revealing what Rev. Charles Brooks, a retired pastor, confided to his journal in 1846 about the changing social status of Unitarian ministers:

Once the office of clergyman was the highest in society--and then a good salary and a permanent situation attached to the office, but, now salaries are cut down to their minimum, and the inconstancy of the tenure of office is proverbial--both wh[ich] causes tend to prevent young men of commanding talents and high families from entering the ministry. Unless very much higher salaries are given, the downward movement must continue and finally few distinguished men will be found in the ranks of the clergy.⁵⁹

This reinforces David B. Tyack's judgment of the social ranking in Boston during George Ticknor's day: "Until the influx of immigrants most Bostonians could claim equal ancestral distinction. The rapid rise of the patricians--the Cabots, Eliots, Grays, Perkins, Storrs, Appletons, Lawrences, Bowditches, Dexters, Wards, Forbes, and the rest--testified to the possibility of acquiring high social position without a distinguished family tree."⁶⁰

From 1830 to 1865 Unitarianism drew people more because of its religious tenets than because it was fashionable. Some of the people

⁵⁸ See Appendix E.

⁵⁹ Entry of 17 November 1846, Journal 1846-1849, Charles Brooks MSS, Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library.

⁶⁰ David B. Tyack, George Ticknor and the Boston Brahmins (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), p. 178.



who adopted those beliefs were wealthy and distinguished, a large number possessed moderate means, and some were poor. The political and social actions and attitudes in this study will reflect the views of religious liberals, not a social elite.⁶¹

⁶¹See Appendix F for comments on the social structure of Unitarian Universalists of the 1960's.



CHAPTER II

WAR, COLONIZATION, AND SLAVERY IN THE 1830's

James Truslow Adams has written that "a craven fear seized upon the American soul" during the 1830's and 1840's regarding the question of Negro slavery. "For the most part," he continued, "all the men of wealth, of learning, of leadership in society, business, and the churches entered into a vast unspoken conspiracy, dictated by fear, to force the American people to abstain from mentioning what was, in reality, the most vital question of the day."¹

Adams's exaggeration will become apparent in this and in the following chapter insofar as American Unitarians are concerned. Members of this faith during the 1830's and 1840's were vitally concerned with slavery and related problems of African colonization and war. Unitarians were interested in these and other public issues, and expressed themselves from their pulpits and through their presses.

Another important source for the idea that Unitarians were slothful on slavery and reform in general is Octavius Brooks Frothingham through his Boston Unitarianism, 1820-1850. Frothingham emphasized the conservatism and undemocratic nature of Boston's Unitarians based on their belief in individual rather than institutional means for reform. This stress, he wrote,

¹Adams, New England in the Republic, pp. 401-402.



may help to explain the circumstance that these men, so humane, so compassionate, so kindly, so conscientious, so tenderhearted, so generous, were no more interested in the organizations against slavery, intemperance, the disabilities of working men and women, bad legislation, evil customs. A sense of turpitude was entirely consistent with an apparent apathy which was born of a patient waiting on Providence, and a diligent employment of its prescribed remedies.²

One of the most plain-spoken damnations of the Unitarians on the matter of slavery is that of Rev. Samuel Joseph May in Some Recollections of Our Antislavery Conflict (1869), which had appeared serially in the Christian Register in 1867-1868. May believed that in proportion to their numbers, more Unitarians were abolitionists than were the adherents of any other faith. But Unitarians as a denomination, he wrote,

dealt with the question of slavery in any but an impartial, courageous, and Christian way. Continually in their public meetings the question was staved off and driven out, because of technical, formal, verbal difficulties which were of no real importance, and ought not to have caused a moment's hesitation.... And considering their position as a body, not entangled with any proslavery alliances, not hampered by an ecclesiastical organization, it does seem to me that they were pre-eminently guilty in reference to the enslavement of the millions in our land with its attendant wrongs, cruelties, horrors.

May was nearly seventy years old when he made this judgment. As a fervent pacifist, May had approved the Civil War with painful reluctance. He believed that the denunciation of slavery in antebellum times "alone could have saved our country from our late awful civil war." Rather than a history of the antislavery movement, May's Recollections should actually be read as a polemic against war.³

²Octavius Brooks Frothingham, Boston Unitarianism, 1820-1850... (New York & London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1890), p. 49, ff.

³Samuel J. May, Some Recollections of Our Antislavery Conflict (Boston: Fields, Osgood, & Co., 1869), pp. 335-337.



Until the firing on Fort Sumter, May and other abolitionist Unitarians appear to have agreed with moderate antislavery Unitarians on a key point: war was a greater evil than slavery. The former were prepared, especially in the 1840's, to accept dismemberment of the United States rather than condone self-contamination in a slaveholding country. The latter sought to continue the Union hoping that slavery would peacefully expire. But the thought of the expansion and perpetuation of slavery caused many moderates, some as early as the 1830's, to consider Northern secession. Theological radicals like Theodore Parker and T. W. Higginson possessed no monopoly among Unitarians on prewar disunionism. A number of theological conservatives like Chandler Robbins, E. S. Gannett, and G. E. Ellis were prepared to accept a divided nation before 1861. Abolitionist Unitarians advocated disunionism to avoid conflict. For a time mild antislavery Unitarians resented abolitionist provocations which they believed would lead to sectional and servile war. Some of the moderates then joined the abolitionists on disunionism. But after Fort Sumter nearly all moderates denounced slavery as vehemently as any abolitionist and actively supported military measures to suppress the rebellion and to destroy slavery. During the Civil War abolitionist and moderate antislavery Unitarians sanctioned the use of force to accomplish manumission with all the problems that war and immediate abolition would bring. While it is common in recent times to highlight Northern anti-Negro prejudice in the Civil War era, it should be remembered that fears of sectional and servile war also existed. This apprehension may explain why so many Unitarians shunned abolitionist extremism during the antebellum years.



An illustration of the point that war was considered worse than slavery by abolitionist and moderate antislavery Unitarians can be found in the Christian Examiner of 1835. In this volume Rev. S. J. May and Rev. Andrew Preston Peabody commented on the pacifist book, An Inquiry into the Accordancy of War with the Principles of Christianity, by the English Quaker, Jonathan Dymond. May thought Dymond's presentation "the most thorough examination and complete refutation of the arguments, by which ethical and political writers have attempted to justify war." Peabody, whom May did not list as a strong Unitarian abolitionist in his Recollections, was even more emphatic. "We cannot but regard all war as entirely opposed to the precepts and spirit of the Gospel," he declared. As for the argument that great principles might need force for their defense, Peabody replied "unhesitatingly, No. What right have we to take the lives, the souls, of our brethren, and offer them up, even on the alter of happiness and improvement?" The only war which Americans might justify, according to Peabody, was the War of Independence, and even that was questionable since it had brought corruption, atheism (Thomas Paine in particular), and alcoholism. "The practice of war, requiring naval and military establishments in time of peace," he wrote, "perpetuates military tastes and feelings in the community, and keeps open a perennial source of evil influences. Neither the army nor the navy has ever been a school of morality and piety; our navy and army cannot claim to be so."⁴

⁴May's remarks are in the Christian Examiner, XVIII (March, 1835), p. 119; Peabody's in ibid., (July, 1835), pp. 368-398. A good analysis of May's pacifism is William H. and Jane H. Pease, "Freedom and Peace: A Nineteenth Century Dilemma," The Midwest Quarterly, A Journal of Contemporary Thought, IX (October, 1967), pp. 23-40. May pointedly disavowed force to eliminate slavery in A Discourse on Slavery in the United States, Delivered in Brooklyn [Connecticut], July 3, 1831 (Boston: Garrison and Knapp, 1832), pp. 20-21.



Four years later, Rev. William Ware in the same periodical contended that war might be unavoidable if it "became necessary to prevent or terminate still greater evils." He believed that "there are blessings more valuable than peace itself,--liberty, justice, truth." Ware considered adequate peacetime military preparations to be "among the most effectual means of preserving peace."⁵ He did not believe, however, that force should be employed to destroy slavery. Later that same year he wrote of slavery as "one in a series of imperfect arrangements, which for a time must be endured, but which enlightened men and Christians ought to be doing their best to improve, temperately, gradually, peaceably [italics added], and with good nature; arrangements too, which are yielding, with more or less rapidity, before the influence of science and of the Christian religion."⁶ Repudiation of coercive means to overthrow slavery appears often in Unitarian writings before the Civil War.

Few Unitarians were sympathetic to slavery. When Edward Everett spoke in Congress of the happiness of Southern chattels, the Christian Register rebuked the former Unitarian pastor with the remark that "all the power and splendor of this performance...do nothing to diminish the regret with which we read this passage--contrary, as we conceive, to the spirit of the age, and to the mind of the country." A correspondent to the paper defended Everett, but admitted that many people had been upset by his opinion.⁷

⁵William Ware, "Peace and Peace Societies," Christian Examiner, XXVI (May, 1839), pp. 182-183.

⁶William Ware, "Slavery," Christian Examiner, XXVI (July, 1839), p. 303. The Christian Register carried portions of this article and commented favorably on it. Christian Register, 6 July 1839.

⁷Christian Register, 25 March, 1 April 1826. A discussion of this incident is in Paul Revere Frothingham, Edward Everett, Orator and Statesman (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1925), pp. 103-109.



Some Unitarians hoped to eliminate slavery by the removal of Negroes from the United States to Liberia through the American Colonization Society.⁸ The Christian Register and the Christian Examiner often publicized the objectives of the ACS. Both periodicals also carried censure of the ACS from readers and contributors, and occasionally agreed with them. Whatever the ACS gained from the Unitarian press, it received little money from Unitarians. That anti-Unitarian war horse, Rev. Lyman Beecher, stated that Unitarians "have uniformly proved a dead weight to such enterprizes" as African colonization.⁹

A major article in the Christian Examiner against colonization was penned by Samuel E. Sewall, later a financial backer of William Lloyd Garrison. Sewall considered African colonization a "noble cause" but impossible to succeed in the light of annual increases of blacks born in the United States. At the time he wrote the article (1827) he thought immediate emancipation undesirable, and favored education of slave children who would be freed later. Because of the absence of general manumission laws in the South, Sewall urged individual masters to prepare their slaves for freedom.¹⁰ A prominent spokesman of the ACS, Benjamin B. Thatcher, was given considerable space in the periodical where he stressed the philanthropic character of the organization.¹¹ William

⁸See P. J. Staudenraus, The African Colonization Movement 1816-1865 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961). Unitarians who endorsed colonization at some time included George Bancroft, William Cullen Bryant, A. H. Everett, Edward Everett, Millard Fillmore, Joseph Gales, Sr., E. S. Gannett, Levi Lincoln, John Marshall, Horace Mann, S. J. May, Stephen C. Phillips, W. C. Rives, Jared Sparks, and Daniel Webster.

⁹Quoted in Staudenraus, African Colonization, pp. 133-134.

¹⁰S. E. Sewall, "On Slavery in the United States," Christian Examiner, IV (May, June, 1827), pp. 201-227.

¹¹B. B. Thatcher, "Annual Reports of the American Society...", Christian Examiner, XIII (September, 1832), pp. 96-110.



Joseph Snelling lived up to his reputation for caustic wit and irony by his attack on Thatcher in the next issue. Based on ACS reports and The African Repository, the ACS organ, Snelling denounced the Society for its impracticability, the strength it gave to American slavery, the encouragement it rendered the domestic slave trade, its draining away of an important labor supply, its fostering of racial prejudice, and the hypocrisy of its appeals in the North with antislavery arguments and in the South with proslavery arguments.¹²

The Christian Register also carried material on colonization, pro and con. The paper editorially considered colonization an insufficient answer to the slavery problem. In 1828 the Unitarian weekly called Liberia an "excellent resort" for freed blacks and a safety valve to prevent the build-up of a "disproportionate increase" of the Negro population. The paper admitted that transportation facilities had proved inadequate. In any case slavery was a dying institution which would end either gradually or "by a violent and successful struggle for liberty, like that of our American Revolution." The Christian Register considered "visionary" the idea of miscegenation and integration of Negroes into the mainstream of American life. America would have either a segregated society or she would turn to colonization. Later the paper reiterated its belief that the two races could live together peacefully. A program of education must prepare the freedmen to become "as respectable a class of society as possible" since their complete removal was impossible. In 1831 the paper reprinted an assault on the New York Colonization Society drafted by a convention of New York Negroes who contended that colonization

¹² W. J. Snelling, "The American Colonization Society," Christian Examiner, XIII (November, 1832), pp. 200-224. See A. E. Woodall, "William Joseph Snelling," Dictionary of American Biography, XVII, pp. 381-382.

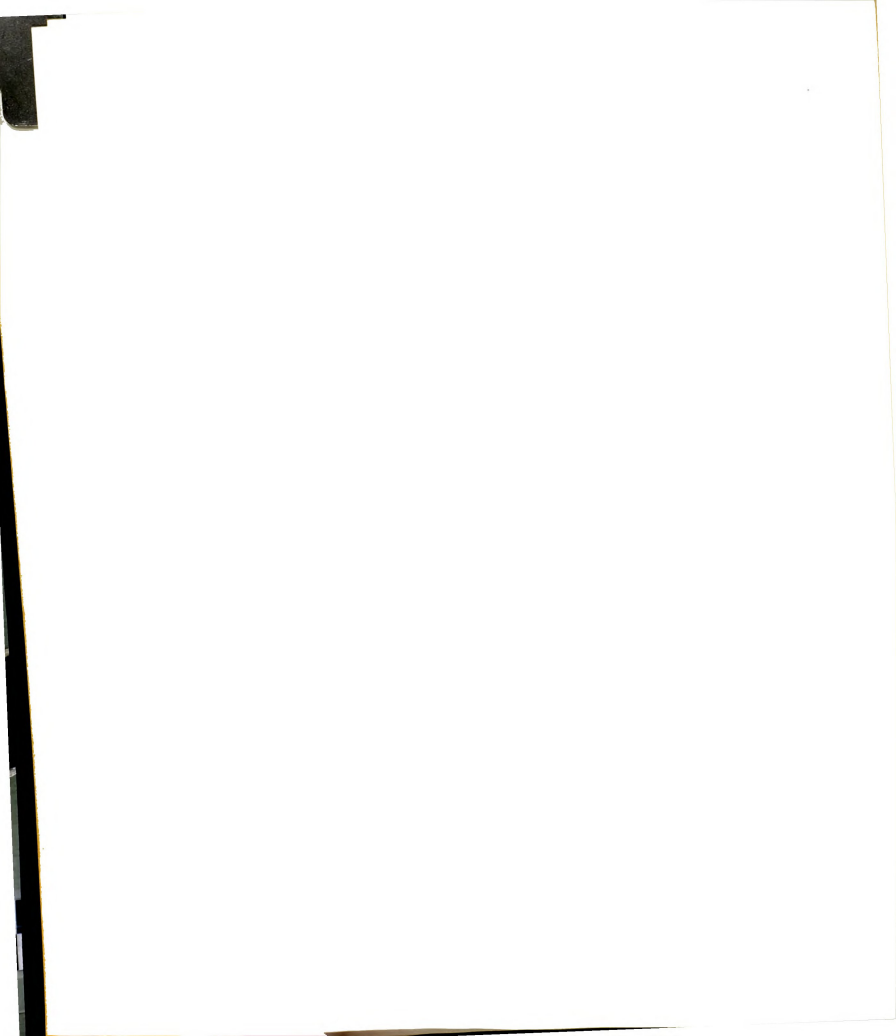


increased racial prejudice and that most Negroes in the United States considered themselves Americans who should not be deported. The Unitarian paper disclaimed reprobation of the colonization principle but noted that the blacks deserved a hearing. Their statement exhibited "spirit and ability" according to the editor.¹³

The article on the New York resolutions triggered a debate over colonization in the pages of the Christian Register throughout the year of 1831. These letters to the editor reveal some of the attitudes in the Unitarian community on the matter of colonization and slavery. Antagonists of the American Colonization Society charged that the organization promoted racial prejudice and perpetuated slavery in America. One correspondent wrote that the United States "is the country of the blacks as well as of the whites; and the rights of the blacks are as deserving of equal consideration with those of the whites." This person derided statements that freedmen became debauched by their freedom and should be deported. If this were true, he reasoned, then many of the Irish who were "ignorant and degraded" should be removed, but no one would think of doing this. The freedmen should be educated, reason and religion should be used to overcome color prejudice, and political disabilities directed against Negroes should be removed.¹⁴ Protagonists of colonization regretted the presence of racial bigotry and admitted that colonization would have little immediate effect on slavery, but an African colony, according to one writer, would be "a germ, that will gradually be expanded and strengthened" which would aid in reducing

¹³Christian Register, 20 December 1828, 1 August 1829, 19 February 1831.

¹⁴Ibid., 26 February, 5 March, 30 April, 15 October, 29 October, 19 November, 3 December, 10 December, 17 December 1831. Opponents of colonization signed themselves "N" and "Justitia."



racial prejudice in all countries.¹⁵ Although the Christian Register thereafter mentioned colonization, the issue of slavery was paramount. Rev. Ezra Stiles Gannett, one of the more active Unitarians in the American Colonization Society, did not really believe that the transportation of Negroes to Africa would have much effect on American slavery.¹⁶ John Quincy Adams concluded that manumission was not an objective of the ACS, "though it may be the day-dream of some of its members," he recorded in his diary.¹⁷

During the late 1820's the Christian Register expressed its opposition to slavery by reprinting excerpts from books or articles on the subject, in notices of books and sermons, in announcements of antislavery meetings, and in editorials. A correspondent brought to the paper's attention the published journal of a young Bostonian traveling in Virginia. The portion of the journal reprinted revealed the Yankee's disgust at planters and merchants bargaining over Negroes--including separating husband and wife--as a Vermont farmer would trade livestock.¹⁸ The Christian Register "cheerfully" recommended that its readers subscribe to Benjamin Lundy's newspaper, Genius of Universal Emancipation, whose prospectus it printed.¹⁹ In 1828 the paper indignantly told of a freedman in Washington, D. C., who had been resold into slavery without

¹⁵ Ibid., 19 March, 2 April, 9 April, 15 October, 22 October 1831. Supporters of the ACS signed themselves "G" and "Ashmun."

¹⁶ William C. Gannett, Ezra Stiles Gannett... (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1875), p. 140.

¹⁷ Allan Nevins, ed., The Diary of John Quincy Adams, 1794-1845 (New York, London, Toronto: Longmans, Green and Co., 1928), p. 442.

¹⁸ Christian Register, 1 September, 17 November 1827.

¹⁹ Ibid., 29 March 1828.



a legal determination of his free status. "Nothing can be added to national dishonor and political turpitude greater than this," the editor fumed.²⁰ The paper urged readers to sign and support petitions to Congress calling for the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia.²¹

The Christian Register's policy of gradual emancipation, which was to begin immediately, survived the Nat Turner insurrection of August 1831. Ironically, two days before Turner began his murderous rampage, the paper feared that pending abolition in the British West Indies might incite servile war in the United States. It advised Southern state governments to begin manumission without delay to prevent slave revolts. When the paper first reported the troubles at Northampton, Virginia, it declared that freedom for the blacks would be "the only measure which can prevent the perpetual recurrence of these outrages." Later, one of the correspondents who had defended colonization cited West Indian emancipation and Turner's revolt as evidence that immediate abolition would produce a race war and would encourage idleness and criminal tendencies in Negroes. He admitted that whites and blacks probably possessed equal mental capacities and that slavery caused Negroes to appear inferior, but that Northern incendiarism and immediatism would ignite servile and sectional war. Yet a month after the Turner revolt the Christian Register blamed only slavery as the cause of that bloodletting.²²

The Christian Register refrained from immediate abolitionism and abstained from abuse of Southern slaveowners. Its early reception of William

²⁰Ibid., 12 April 1828.

²¹Ibid., 27 December 1828, 4 December 1830, 7 January 1832.

²²Ibid., 20 August, 27 August, 3 September, 24 September, 1 October, 8 October 1831.



Lloyd Garrison, however, was cordial. The Unitarian weekly disagreed with Garrison when he called for immediate emancipation in the Genius of Universal Emancipation in 1829. Education for the freedmen, said the paper, should precede emancipation. At the same time the Christian Register advised Southerners of their duty to improve the lot of their Negroes and "to give freedom to their slaves at such times and in such manner, as will be consistent with the safety and welfare of the community." When Garrison appeared in Boston in October 1830 to deliver three lectures on slavery, the Christian Register carried a lengthy abstract of two of them. Garrison argued that immediate abolition was desirable, expedient, and just since only color divided the races. Colonization was impractical, tended to strengthen slavery, and deprived black Americans of their rights. While Northerners should do nothing directly to interfere with slavery, Garrison urged his audience to boycott slave-produced products, to petition Congress praying for abolition in the District of Columbia and for the end of the interstate slave trade, to distribute antislavery literature, and to work to end racial prejudice. The Christian Register opined that it could not "do justice to [Garrison's] sound logic, his ardent zeal, and his bold and manly eloquence." The paper believed that "the measures which he proposes for putting an end to a great national evil, are direct and powerful, and as far as regards the Northern States cannot be objected to as unconstitutional or an improper interference with the Southern States." The paper hoped "that Mr. Garrison will be induced to repeat his lectures in this place. We feel sure that they will interest those whom they fail to convince."²³

²³Ibid., 19 September 1829, 23 October 1830.



The Christian Register's initial response to Garrison's Liberator was one of wariness. After the Liberator appeared, the Unitarian weekly noted that it "is managed with considerable ability, and if its abundant zeal is tempered with discretion, we doubt not it will do something towards the accomplishment of its benevolent purpose." The Christian Register reprinted Garrison's advice to free Negroes to obey the laws and to demand rights of citizenship. Such counsel was "manly, sensible, and temperate," and white people ought to read it in order "to reflect, whether their treatment of those, who are of a different color, is reconcileable [*sic*] with reason, humanity or religion." While the Christian Register was not sure Garrison was correct in saying that the U. S. Constitution guaranteed these rights, it believed that free blacks would "gain much by claiming their rights as men in a fair and respectful manner." The next year the paper carried a generally favorable review of Garrison's Thoughts on African Colonization in which he assailed the scheme. The Christian Register could not entirely agree with its reviewer but it felt obligated to print "an article so candidly written." By January 1835 the Unitarian paper had become thoroughly irked with Garrison's vituperation against Southern slaveowners, but it still considered slavery "a stain upon our otherwise free political institutions." It believed Garrison's descriptions of slavery not exaggerated but held that some masters were kind to their chattels. After Garrison had been attacked by a Boston mob in October 1835, the Christian Register upheld "the unshackled freedom of speech and of the press; the right to speak and print everything which is not immoral or seditious." Although it deplored Garrison's imprudent writings that had sparked the riot, no one had the right to take the law into his own hands. The paper declared "there is no social evil so great as that of superseding or

prostrating the laws as that of the punishment of persons or destruction of property by violence, while it is the design of the laws and the duty of those who execute them to protect both. We know not of any language of reprobation too strong of those acts which place a single individual beyond the protecting power of law."²⁴

The Christian Register's editorial policy on slavery from about 1826 to 1835 can be summarized as follows. Slavery was contrary to the Christian religion. It brutalized human beings. Condemned by all intelligent men North and South, slavery was on the road to extinction. Emancipation, however, required caution, lest servile and civil war engulf the nation. Voluntary colonization of emancipated blacks to Africa was a noble but unrealistic solution. With proper education, Negroes could become an important part of American life. But looking ahead, the paper saw nothing but a segregated society. The power of manumission, the Christian Register insisted, rests with individual slaveowners acting in accord with state authority and not by the power of the federal government.

A number of ministers who preached in the South shared the Christian Register's attitudes. Rev. Jared Sparks, for whom Channing delivered the famous ordination sermon at Baltimore in 1819, wrote from Virginia his belief that Negroes should be returned to Africa.

I am told [he wrote] they are not unhappy. It may be so, but I am very sure they are wretched. Such miserable hovels the people of New England would not build for their horses. I do not believe they are often abused, but they are poorly fed and poorly clothed. An old blanket and the cold earth often constitute their bed and corn meal their only food. My heart often turned away sick at what I saw.²⁵

²⁴Ibid., 15 January 1831, 16 June 1832, 10 January, 31 October 1835.

²⁵Herbert B. Adams, The Life and Writings of Jared Sparks (2 vols.; Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1893), I, p. 165.

Rev. Samuel K. Lothrop recalled after the Civil War that he had preached six weeks in Washington, D. C., during 1828 and had received a call from the society to remain, but declined the opportunity because life in a slave region to him "was in the highest degree repulsive." He remembered one day there when a white man astride a horse led six Negroes roped together down the road at a brisk pace. "It was to me an awful sight; it made me sick and faint," Lothrop recalled, "and whatever desire I may have entertained of the honor of being settled at the capital [sic] of the nation, that scene destroyed forever." Later in New Hampshire, Lothrop delivered an antislavery speech at a "semi-political" gathering in 1831 on the occasion of Virginia's rejection of gradual manumission. He urged resistance to the expansion of slavery but warned against tampering with it where it existed in the hope that Southerners would voluntarily end it. Lothrop denied a request to have his speech published since that would be contrary to its spirit.²⁶ In 1833 a minister wrote from Louisville that the Unitarian movement, although progressing there, faced "many serious obstacles--the first and most fatal is the deadly poison of Slavery, whose mischiefs I had partly dreaded of before coming here. I believe no permanent reform in education, public sentiment or Religion can be effected where it dwells."²⁷

At least one Unitarian minister defended slavery from his pulpit in the South in the 1830's. Boston-born and Harvard-educated (bachelor's degree in 1827 and divinity studies in 1832), Rev. Charles Andrews Farley did not follow the moderate antislavery pattern of many of his

²⁶Lothrop, Lothrop, pp. 151, 171-172.

²⁷George Chapman to S. Barrett, 19 March 1833 (Louisville), AUA Letters, 1833-4.



colleagues. Farley arrived in Richmond, Virginia, in the summer of 1835 to serve as minister of the Unitarian society. In July he complained to the AUA Secretary that abolitionism among Northern Unitarians might injure the faith there. He believed that "a proper expression of feeling from our Community in Boston" on the subject of slavery might be helpful.²⁸ That expression may have been Farley's discourse, Slavery, delivered in August 1835 and later published at the request of some of the congregation. An analysis of his sermon shows how one proslavery minister, and probably several of the laymen, thought about slavery.²⁹

Abolitionism to Farley exhibited "a mock spirit of reform" in an age when reform filled the air. American slavery, however, had "deep foundations" and had been established "in the providence of God...", which, if ever, cannot suddenly be removed without the most fatal consequences--without bringing worse evils than they cure, and which would completely defeat the very object which these men [the abolitionists] profess to have in view." Farley admitted "that slavery in the abstract is a great evil," but it was not "a sin against God" under all circumstances; in some situations slavery "is even preferable to freedom." The Hebrews, ancient Christians, the North American Indians, and Africans themselves had practiced it. The transportation of slaves to America "was not necessarily a sin" as the minister could "easily conceive" that white slavetraders "might conscientiously think that it was an act

²⁸ Farley to C. Briggs, 2 July 1835 (Richmond); same to same, 25 July 1835 (Richmond), AUA Letters, 1835.

²⁹ Charles A. Farley, Slavery: A Discourse Delivered in the Unitarian Church, Richmond, Va., Sunday, August 30, 1835 (Richmond: James C. Walker, 1835). Another proslavery Unitarian sermon is that of Charles M. Taggart, Slavery and Law in the Light of Christianity..., Nashville, Tenn..., June 22D, 1851 (Nashville: John T. S. Fall, 1851).

of mercy to transfer them to a civilized and Christian community." At the present, however, this traffic violated "every righteous principle," and he might have added was illegal. He considered Northern agitation against slavery a trespass of state rights and the compact among the sovereign states. Because the distribution of abolitionist literature in the South infringed on the compact, antislavery writings could be "burned as they deserve in the streets of southern cities, monuments of the folly and sin of the donors."

Farley said it was inconceivable that slavery would ever end at the South. Once a people had forfeited their natural right of freedom, their progeny and the progeny of their masters were committed to the slave-master relation. By natural law masters must treat their bondsmen kindly and provide them with restricted censored religious instruction. Negroes had the physiology of human beings but the intellect of children. A few might be manumitted but they risked northern racial discrimination more oppressive than slavery. Slaves in the South, Farley declared, "are quite as happy as the servants of the north, and perhaps more so." Abolitionism meant a "wild and disorganizing fanaticism" which had gripped "weak minds....Such good men," he believed, "must be treated as bad men--as enemies to the country--as disorganizers."³⁰

Farley's views were not those of the denominational organ. Less than a year before his discourse the Christian Register called the New England Anti-Slavery Society's recent "Address to the People of the United States" a document which "established beyond all controversy" the "utter inconsistency of slavery, with our free institutions of government and

³⁰For a different summary of Farley's sermon, see George H. Gibson, "The Unitarian-Universalist Church of Richmond," The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, LXXIV (July, 1966), p. 327.

declaration of equality of rights,--with the principles of Christianity, and with the inborn feeling of personal freedom, thus constituting a crime against human nature itself." In January 1835 the paper reported the formation of the American Union for the Relief and Improvement of the Colored Race which sought not only the abolition of slavery but also means for the religious and secular education of Negroes. In one issue the paper devoted the entire front page to the American Union. Editor Sidney Willard served as an officer in the American Union and this fact may explain this extensive Christian Register coverage.³¹

Until the autumn of 1835, William Ellery Channing hardly associated with the antislavery movement. He had referred to it in an unpublished sermon in 1826 and had studied slavery in preparation for his book, Slavery, published late in 1835 when he was fifty-five years old. Channing's book ranks as one of the most significant statements by a leading American with a wide reputation not only in the United States but in Europe. The publisher, James Munroe and Company, had a "best seller" with Slavery: the first printing of 3,000 copies sold out in three weeks; a third printing appeared in March 1836. Channing's thoughts on slavery merit a close look.³²

Channing believed slavery to be immoral and contrary to the "implications" drawn from the New Testament. "To hold and treat [a slave] as property," he wrote, "is to inflict a great wrong, to incur the guilt of oppression." Slavery debases morality among Negroes, destroys their intellect, prevents them from having family ties, and turns them into

³¹Christian Register, 4 October 1834, 31 January, 7 February, 28 March, 9 May 1835.

³²Rice, Federal Street Pastor, pp. 213-214; Christian Register, 5 December 1835, 2 January, 12 March 1836.

savages. Slavery constrains masters to seek absolute power, encourages miscegenation, and undermines civil and political liberties. Manumission should occur slowly and rationally. Slaveowners have the sole responsibility for liberating their bondsmen acting through their state governments; the federal government has no responsibility for it. Channing suggested that masters might begin to pay wages to their slaves, forbid the separation of married slaves and the sale of slave children from their parents, and provide religious instruction. Colonization might help some freedmen begin life anew but it would do nothing to end slavery in the United States. Channing seemed to foresee a segregated society after freedom had been accomplished since he considered miscegenation an "evil." He thought, however, that racial amalgamation would decline, for with freedom, Negro women would gain a new dignity. Force must not be used to accomplish abolition. "To instigate the slave to insurrection," he said, "is a crime for which no rebuke and no punishment can be too severe." In a sectional war over slavery, Channing said the free states "would deserve the abhorrence of the world and the indignation of heaven, were they to resort to insurrection and massacre as a means of victory. Better were it for us to bare our own breasts to the knife of the slave, than to arm him with it against his master."

Channing had the peculiar notion that slaveowners who retained their chattels out of fear of the consequences of manumission were somehow less reprehensible than masters who used their slaves for profit. This latter class "ought to tremble before the rebukes of outraged humanity and indignant virtue." Although manumission should be accomplished by individual masters, collective means of promoting abolition could be used. To Channing "the age of individual action is gone. Truth can hardly be



heard unless shouted by a crowd." Should masters fail to respond to moral suasion and should the American people be denied free and open discussion of slavery, the nation "would be changed from a virtuous bond into a league of crime and shame. Language cannot easily do justice to our attachment to the Union. We will yield every thing to it but truth, honor, and liberty. These we can never yield."³³

It is readily apparent that Channing and the Christian Register agreed on many points regarding slavery although some of his biographers paint a different picture. According to one, Channing's Slavery brought the subject to "a class of people who had paid no heed to The Liberator and the numerous antislavery tracts being broadcast at the time."³⁴ Another asserts that "Boston society was scandalized by Channing's endorsement of the antislavery cause. The members of the Federal Street Society, respectable, conservative citizens, most of them, were painfully distressed. Some of them ceased to call at the Channing home; some even cut their pastor in the street." This writer declared that "many" Unitarian clergymen "grew chilly" toward Channing. "In spite of the fact that the publication of portions of Slavery in the Christian Register gave it a kind of official endorsement, there was censure of its author by laymen as well as clergymen."³⁵ A third biographer used as evidence of hostile reaction an undated sermon by Rev. P. R. Frothingham, minister at the Arlington Street Church (successor to Federal Street) from 1900 to 1926, who repeated an anecdote passed down through

³³Channing, Works, pp. 688-743. In order of their arrangement here, quotations from Slavery come from pp. 723, 692, 729, 689, 690, 706, 733, 739.

³⁴Arthur W. Brown, Always Young for Liberty, A Biography of William Ellery Channing (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1956), p. 231.

³⁵Rice, Federal Street Pastor, pp. 222-223.

several generations.³⁶ When one examines these three studies the evidence cited to show Unitarian hostility is all after Channing died, the earliest being a letter of S. J. May in October 1843.³⁷

Channing brought nothing new to the Unitarian community on slavery. In some respects, the Christian Register was more aggressive, like its comment about a boycott of slave-produced goods not being unconstitutional. Channing's biographers picture the minister as a loner, fighting the Boston conservatives in single-handed intellectual combat, when in fact he repeated much of what the Christian Register had been saying for a long time. It is not surprising that the newspaper said that Slavery "ought to go into the hands of every slave-holder. It is impossible that he should repel such a view of the subject; impossible that any bad passions can be excited by it in the breast of any thinking, reasonable man."³⁸ Channing seemed pleased with the reception to his book according to some of his letters in which he made no mention of his congregation's feelings.³⁹ George Ticknor, one of Channing's parishioners and no abolitionist, expressed warm approval of the book for the beneficial effect it would have in Europe.⁴⁰ Channing's Federal Street society did not unanimously approve his antislavery expressions,⁴¹ but his brand of abolitionism was not unique in Boston. And how did Channing's fellow ministers

³⁶David P. Edgell, William Ellery Channing, An Intellectual Portrait (Boston: The Beacon Press, 1955), p. 40.

³⁷Rice, Federal Street Pastor, p. 223.

³⁸Christian Register, 5 December 1835.

³⁹See Channing's letters of 16 December 1835, 4 January and 10 January 1836 in W. H. Channing, W. E. Channing, pp. 538-539.

⁴⁰Ticknor to W. H. Prescott, 8 February 1836 (Dresden), in George S. Hillard, ed., Life, Letters, and Journals of George Ticknor (2 vols.; Boston: James R. Osgood and Company, 1876), I, pp. 479-480.

⁴¹Rice, Federal Street Pastor, p. 246.



and the denomination's leading laymen react to his espousal of anti-slavery principles? They penalized him by electing him President of the American Unitarian Association in May 1836, but he declined to serve.⁴²

Not all Unitarians, North or South, sanctioned and supported anti-slavery at this time. As editor of the Christian Examiner, Rev. F. W. P. Greenwood accepted an antislavery article from S. J. May in 1834 only to be overruled by the periodical's owner.⁴³ That same year Harvard friends of Rev. Henry Ware, Jr., admonished the minister when he announced an antislavery meeting from Channing's pulpit which he supplied temporarily.⁴⁴ Before the Christian Register mentioned Channing's Slavery a Massachusetts clergyman reported dissatisfaction with the newspaper because of its "Abolition doctrines. This is a subject which threatens to make trouble for us before long."⁴⁵ A Richmond, Virginia, layman cancelled his Christian Register subscription because of its abolitionism.⁴⁶ A minister in Virginia stated in 1836 that Channing's Slavery had retarded Unitarianism in that state twenty-five years. "Add to this the course of the Register," he continued, "which is openly denounced in this state as incendiary and prohibited, and you may form some idea of the light in which I, and others, of the same faith and

⁴²Eleventh Annual Report, AUA, 1836, pp. 53-56, shows 69 ministers and 181 laymen as members of the AUA. Channing's refusal to serve went to C. Briggs, 30 July 1836 (Newport, R. I.), AUA Letters, 1836.

⁴³S. J. May, Some Recollections, pp. 138-140.

⁴⁴Ware, Henry Ware, Jr., II, pp. 147-148.

⁴⁵W. B. O. Peabody to J. Whitman, 6 February 1835 (Springfield, Mass.), AUA Letters, 1835.

⁴⁶Isaac Davenport to C. Briggs, 25 January 1836 (Richmond); same to same, 15 May 1836 (Richmond), AUA Letters, 1836.

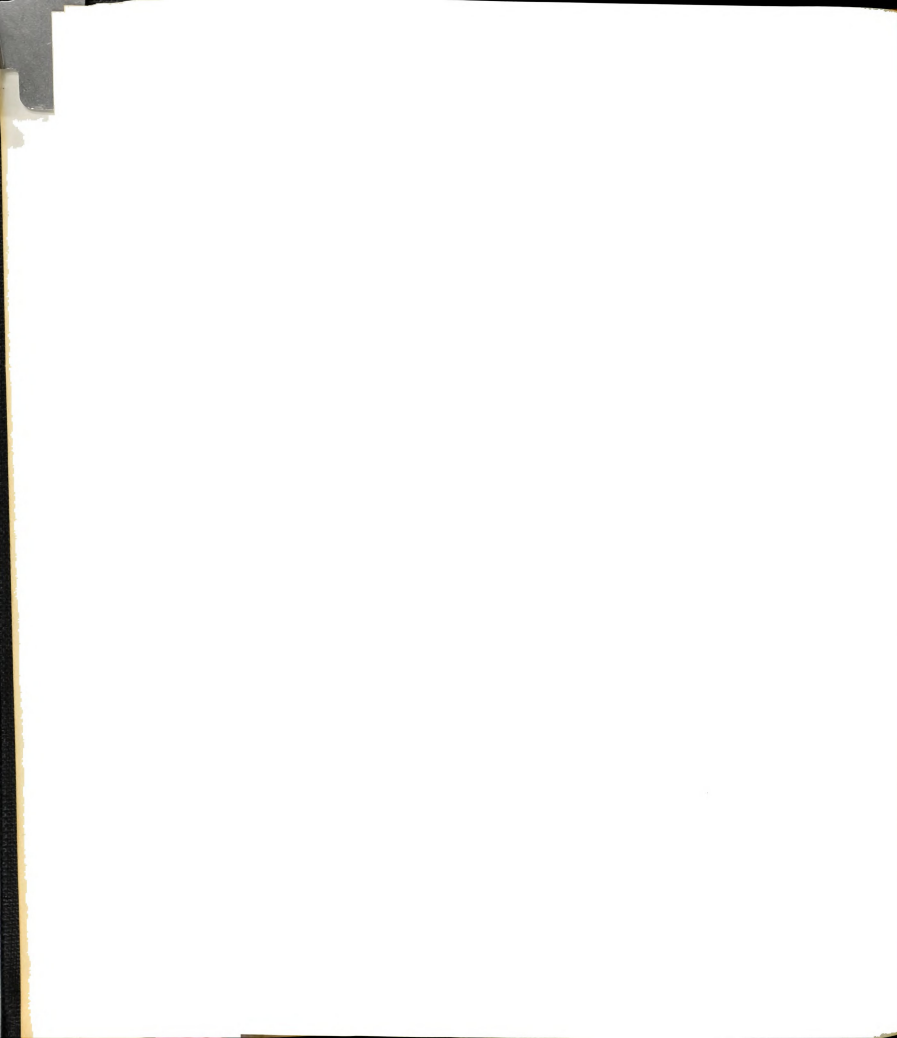
calling, stand."⁴⁷ A Massachusetts-born and reared minister wrote in 1836 from Savannah that "Dr. Channing and the Christian Register have done much to ruin the cause of liberal Christianity. I mean, Christianity in its purity--by leading many to believe and the Orthodox to say--that Unitarianism and Abolitionism are identified. I have a burden on my shoulders that I need many helps to sustain."⁴⁸ In 1837 a prominent Savannah layman, Dr. Richard D. Arnold, believed the Christian Register's antislavery policy, if continued, would ruin the faith in the South, and that Channing "is opening a path over which torrents of bloodshed are destined to roll." Arnold thought that continued abolitionist agitation would produce a civil war.⁴⁹ Southern hostility to Channing is all the more striking, for in 1830 he was popular there. When it became known that he planned a vacation in the Caribbean many hoped he would preach in their towns. One layman wrote: "we think, that his presence here for a short time, would be of great service to the cause of truth, and freedom; and at any rate, it will give the highest gratification to his numerous readers and admirers in the City [Charleston, South Carolina!]."⁵⁰

⁴⁷ A. D. Jones to C. Briggs, 19 January 1836 (Charlottesville, Va.), AUA Letters, 1836.

⁴⁸ E. L. Bascom to C. Briggs, 17 February 1836 (Savannah), AUA Letters, 1836; same to same, 5 May 1836 (Savannah), AUA Letters, 1835 [misfiled].

⁴⁹ Arnold to C. Robbins, 15 August 1837; Arnold to Bascom (c. 1837), in Richard H. Shyrock, ed., Letters of Richard D. Arnold, M. D. 1808-1876... (Durham: The Seeman Press, 1929), pp. 13-14, 17-18. As mayor of Savannah in 1864, Arnold surrendered the city to General W. T. Sherman.

⁵⁰ F. J. Gray to J. G. Palfrey, 14 March 1830; G. W. Burnap to E. S. Gannett, 16 May 1830 (Baltimore); S. G. Bulfinch to E. S. Gannett, 13 September 1830 (Augusta); same to same, 20 September 1830 (Augusta); M. L. Hurlburt to E. S. Gannett, 25 September 1830 (Charleston), AUA Letters, 1830.



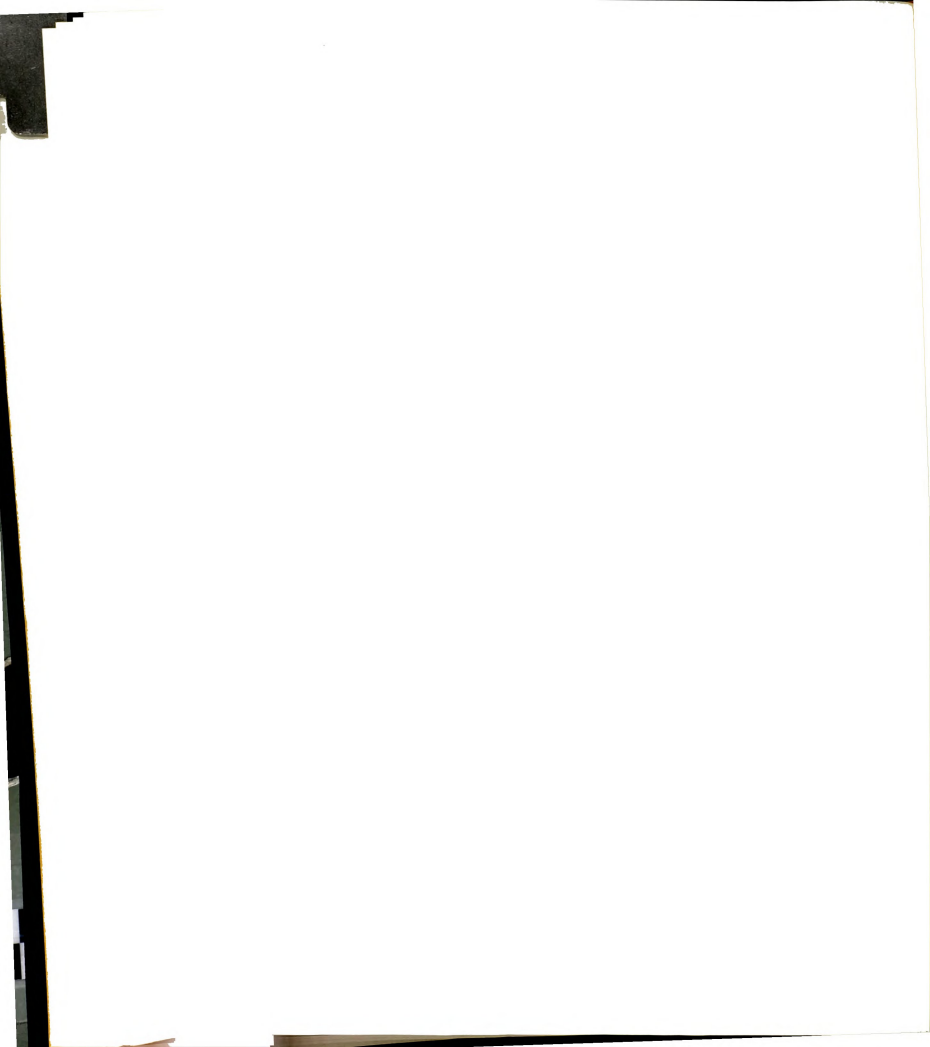
The antislavery posture of Channing and the Christian Register alone failed to undermine Unitarianism in the South. The Richmond society was too weak to support even a proslavery minister, that in Washington, D. C., continually struggled for existence, and other efforts languished from a lack of interest or ineffective preachers.⁵¹ For financial reasons Bulfinch left the Augusta society in the spring of 1837. Later that year a layman doubted if the society would be able to pay a minister at that time and thought it wiser to plan for one in the spring of 1838. Any candidate for Augusta, he warned, "must be selected with care in reference to topicks which are now disturbing the Peace of the Union, as well must he also be a strong man. I doubt if we ever [will] get one who will please us as did Mr. Bulfinch."⁵² The embryonic society at Macon, Georgia, appealed to Boston for a minister in October 1836.⁵³ One person at Savannah reported a unanimous feeling "of cordial satisfaction and approbation" with Rev. William Silsbee in 1839.⁵⁴ Rev. Theodore Clapp, who had founded an independent congregational church in New Orleans, refused to be called a Unitarian

⁵¹J. F. Clarke thought C. A. Farley "rather too unstable" for the church at Mobile, Clarke to C. Briggs, 19 February 1835 (Louisville), AUA Letters, 1835. S. G. Bulfinch informed Boston that Rev. William Farmer at Macon became hysterical in fear of a Negro insurrection. He had been sent to Charleston, became deranged "with a different object of alarm," and sent north, Bulfinch to S. Barrett, 24 March 1837 (Augusta), AUA Letters, 1837. See Bulfinch's optimistic remarks on prospects in the South, Christian Register, 2 June 1837.

⁵²Bulfinch to C. Briggs, 24 March 1837 (Augusta); T. S. Metcalf to C. Briggs, 17 October 1837 (Augusta), AUA Letters, 1837.

⁵³E. A. Ware to H. Ware, 4 October 1836 (Macon), AUA Letters, 1837 [misfiled].

⁵⁴E. L. Bascom to C. Briggs, 12 December 1839 (Savannah), AUA Letters, 1839.



in 1835. But when he visited Thomas Carlyle in 1847 he described himself as "a Unitarian, a Yankee, a democrat, and a radical, all the way from the banks of the Mississippi...." Clapp, who defended slavery, promised his assistance in raising funds for another Unitarian church in New Orleans in the late 1830's.⁵⁵ Thirty-two year old Rev. George Washington Hosmer told Boston in the spring of 1836 that he believed possibilities for Unitarianism in the South were favorable. "I have not seen the insurmountable obstacles and dark signs which Miss [Harriet] Martineau and some others have mentioned." Hosmer had preached at several places in Kentucky as well as in New Orleans and Mobile.⁵⁶

An example of Unitarian strength in the South is the society at Mobile, Alabama, formed, significantly, on 10 January 1836. Rev. James Freeman Clarke helped precipitate this decision by his preaching there. He described Mobile as "a very important post, and a very desirable one." Samuel St. John, Jr., a prominent member of the Mobile society, joined the AUA in August 1836 with a \$1,000 subscription. Rev. Ephraim Peabody preached there in the spring of 1837 and told Boston that the church had "been what in New England would be called well-filled,-- i. e., scarcely a pew in which there were not more or less hearers and this number made up very much of families. Were it not for the money troubles, the people think all the pews would be rented or sold." Peabody told Rev. Henry W. Bellows, who had just finished his divinity studies at

⁵⁵T. Clapp to J. Whitman, 28 February 1835 (New Orleans), AUA Letters, 1835; J. F. Clarke to C. Briggs, 21 December 1835 (New Orleans), AUA Letters, 1835; G. W. Hosmer and E. Peabody to C. Briggs, 28 March 1836 (Mobile), AUA Letters, 1836; C. Briggs to S. Barrett, 18 January 1837 (Mobile), AUA Letters, 1837; Theodore Clapp, Autobiographical Sketches and Recollections... (Boston: Phillips, Sampson & Company, 1857), pp. 340, 375-379.

⁵⁶Hosmer and Peabody to C. Briggs, 28 March 1836 (Mobile), AUA Letters, 1836.



Harvard, of the opportunity to preach at Mobile. Bellows received \$50 from the AUA for missionary work at the South. He spoke to several groups on his way to Mobile, including a sermon before the Georgia Senate. He arrived in Mobile early in December 1837, and by January 1838 he had a membership of 150 with about 300 in his meetinghouse on Sundays. "I confess I am a little intoxicated with my unexpected success here," Bellows wrote.⁵⁷

In spite of his warm reception in the South, Bellows flinched when confronted with slavery. "Every where you see the fruits of Slavery. The more I see of it," he wrote an aunt and uncle in New Hampshire, "the more I deplore it. It seems to me quite as bad for the people as for the Slaves." The institution fomented vice among both blacks and whites. "Slavery taints the whole Southern character," he continued. "It blurs their moral perceptions, it effeminates their frames, and hardens their hearts." But the preacher could not talk openly about it: "I am obliged to hold my peace here on the subject. I should be torn to pieces were I to utter these sentiments publicly...I could never consent to live in a Slave country." A month later he assured his parents they "need not fear that I shall preach about Slavery. My conscience as well as policy would forbid me." He intended to keep his eyes open as well as his own counsel about the institution. He told them they did not know half the perils slavery held for the country. "I see nothing but disunion and civil war before us. But I trust

⁵⁷J. F. Clarke to C. Briggs, 19 February 1835 (Louisville), AUA Letters, 1835; same to same, 4 January 1836 (Mobile), same to same, 11 January 1836 (Mobile), AUA Letters, 1836; E. Peabody to C. Brooks, 8 May 1837 (Mobile); Bellows to C. Briggs, 6 October 1837 (Littleton, N. H.), same to same, 23 November 1837 (Augusta), same to same, 11 December 1837 (Mobile), AUA Letters, 1837; Christian Register, 3 September 1836; Bellows to E. Peabody, 11 December 1837 (Mobile), Bellows to W. Silsbee, 29 January 1838 (Mobile), Bellows Papers, MHS; Thirteenth Annual Report, AUA, 1838, p. 4.



that Providence sees differently. I could not live in a slave country." In these and other letters Bellows remarked on southern hostility toward the North. The Mobile society's chairman of the board of trustees, however, invited Bellows to return in 1838 in order to settle permanently.⁵⁸

Although Unitarian views might be heard in the South regardless of Northern Unitarian antislavery feeling, that feeling continued to worry Southern Unitarians. Samuel St. John, Jr., told Boston in January 1838 that Northern Unitarians exhibited little "sympathy" with their southern co-religionists on slavery. A year later he heatedly complained to Bellows that

there is little sympathy for us of the South by the Unitarians of the North--our Southern members all say this--and what good grounds they have for saying so!! Abolition is so strongly interwoven with the Unitarianism of the North, that that alone I think is destined to prevent that concert which ought to occur.

A month later he candidly told the AUA Secretary that he had found "wherever I move out of my own little Society at Newport [Rhode Island] that abolition or slavery is one of the first topics introduced in conversation among our Unitarian brethren and often[,] very often--too often coupled with remarks that a pure christian [sic] could condemn." St. John said, as in his letter to Bellows, that two brands of Unitarianism had developed with slavery marking the distinction.⁵⁹

⁵⁸Bellows to Uncle (Jacob N. Knapp) and Aunt, 22 November 1837 (Augusta); Bellows to his parents, 25 January 1838 (Mobile); C. Dillinger to Bellows, 11 May 1838 (Mobile), Bellows Papers, MHS.

⁵⁹St. John to Bellows, 15 February 1839 (Mobile), Bellows Papers, MHS; St. John to C. Briggs, 10 January 1838 (Mobile), AUA Letters, 1838; same to same, 13 March 1839 (at sea), AUA Letters, 1839. In the last letter St. John said on his return to Mobile from Cuba he would send Briggs \$400 to the AUA, making a total of \$500 he had donated to day, and in return he wished 50 volumes of AUA tracts for the Mobile parish library.



St. John's complaint of Northern Unitarian antislavery feeling in the late 1830's indicates little change from earlier years. The Christian Register, if anything, became less outspoken. That newspaper under Sidney Willard had suggested inquiring into the propriety of the federal fugitive slave law to see if "such a law is consistent with our institutions," but the matter was not pursued.⁶⁰ Channing's antislavery pamphlets continued to receive favorable comments.⁶¹ When Rev. Chandler Robbins became editor, he learned of a reader's accusation that "Your Editor is Abolitionist to the Core." Robbins could think of only two items which might have inflamed the ire of this southern reader: the paper's report of a Savannah mob assaulting John Hopper, son of abolitionist Isaac T. Hopper, or the letter from aged Rev. Noah Worcester. Worcester had written that fiery speeches like those of Governor McDuffie of Virginia did more to foment servile revolts than anything Northern abolitionists said. Robbins declared that anyone who tried to gag Worcester "would be worthy of advocating slavery itself or enduring it."⁶²

The balanced moderation of the Christian Register on slavery was becoming obsolete. The possibility of the annexation of Texas as a slave state strained the theory of the inevitable withering away of slavery. Slave expansion may have loosened the tongues of many who had been less outspoken. As a Harvard undergraduate, Edward Everett Hale recorded in his diary in 1838 the lament of Rev. William Swett that among Unitarian clergymen "Judea has given way to Texas, and antislavery

⁶⁰Christian Register, 10 September 1836.

⁶¹Ibid., 7 January 1837, 19 August 1837, 13 April 1839.

⁶²Ibid., 25 March, 8 April, 2 June 1837.

and Canada take the place of salvation."⁶³ That same year members of Harvard's Philanthropic Club first attempted, unsuccessfully, to arrange a formal discussion of slavery.⁶⁴ Rev. Ezra Stiles Gannett, who disapproved Christian Register coverage of secular issues, told the American Peace Society in July 1838 that while Congress must not tamper with slavery in the Southern states, "it has a right to touch it in [the District of] Columbia. It ought to do it, and the north would be recreant to itself if it suffered itself to be driven from that great position."⁶⁵ In July 1839 the transcendentalist Rev. William H. Furness preached his first antislavery sermon in Philadelphia.⁶⁶ Later that year Rev. Samuel Willard, sixty-three years old, retired from his parish at Deerfield, Massachusetts, where he had been a leader in the Unitarian movement in 1810, announced through the Christian Register his conversion to immediate emancipation "by moral and constitutional means." Earlier he had opposed abolitionism but he changed his mind. Since his views differed from those on which the Christian Register had "set the seal of its approbation," he wrote the paper asking for publication of his letter with his signature. Willard's decision rested on hearing a reading of Theodore Weld's American Slavery As It Is since he had been blind since 1818.⁶⁷

⁶³Hale, Life and Letters of E. E. Hale, I, p. 39.

⁶⁴Willard L. Sperry, "'A Beautiful Enmity': The Student," in Williams, ed., Harvard Divinity School, pp. 160-161.

⁶⁵Christian Register, 4 August 1838; Gannett to C. Briggs, 5 November 1838 (Boston), AUA Letters, 1838.

⁶⁶Geffen, Philadelphia Unitarianism, p. 178.

⁶⁷Christian Register, 7 September 1839. Willard had prepared a series of articles on slavery for the paper but editor Rufus Johnson refused to publish them for fear of losing subscribers. Mary Willard, ed., Life of Rev. Samuel Willard, D. D.... (Boston: Geo. H. Ellis, 1892), p. 182.



When Samuel Willard changed his mind about abolitionism it appears that Channing may have had second thoughts on the use of force regarding freedom for slaves. Writing in 1829 to an Englishwoman, Channing had rejected absolute nonresistance as impractical for national policy. "War, then, is not absolutely, or in all possible cases, a crime," he had written. Self-defence was justifiable when an enemy invaded one's country. He could not bring himself to approve military preparations for conflict because "most actual wars are unjust," but he could not otherwise distinguish between just and unjust wars.⁶⁸ In 1835 Channing had rejected a sectional war to effect emancipation in Slavery. Writing to another Englishwoman in 1839 Channing believed that slavery, the "only imminent danger" to the United States, might have to be eradicated through violence.

I still cling to the anticipation of the progress of the world by gradual, gentle, peaceful process [Channing wrote]; but the lessons of history and my own observation made me more doubtful whether a worn-out, corrupt state of things is to be transformed by a quiet transition into a fresh and healthy one. Your own account of your National Church makes me fear that, like Catholicism, this mixture of tradition and tyranny will need a storm to sweep it away. There are elements of good in all societies, but often so overpowered by evil growth of centuries, that convulsions are necessary to set them free. I do hope that destruction is not required to renovation; but if they to whom society has a right to look for beneficent renovation, concentrate all their powers to resist[renovation], the same awful Providence which has in past times shaken the social state, will again heave it from its foundations.⁶⁹

While Channing preferred and hoped for peaceful change, the course of events could bring Americans to an impasse that might require a "convulsion" to end slavery. It may be that when Channing became convinced

⁶⁸Channing to Jane E. Roscoe, 9 September 1829, in W. H. Channing, W. E. Channing, pp. 466-467.

⁶⁹Channing to Lucy Aikin, 10 May 1839 (Boston), in Anna Letitia Le Breton, ed., Correspondence of William Ellery Channing, D. D., and Lucy Aikin, From 1826 to 1842 (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1874), p. 342.



that most slaveowners held their bondsmen for profit, he became resigned to the possibility that force might be needed to uproot the institution. He had written Charles Follen in 1837 that "if the basest of all motives [the profit motive] is perpetuating the greatest of wrongs, then it is time to set the proof of this enormity before the people."⁷⁰ Channing may have thought that slavery would wither because of its alleged unprofitability, but changed his mind when convinced that it had become an economical system not easily abandoned. There is a note of the "irrepressible conflict" in the letter of 1839 not sounded in Slavery of 1835.

Whatever Channing's attitude, that of nearly all Unitarians of the 1830's abhorred the use of force to overcome slavery. But most Southern Unitarians considered those members of their faith who sought any means to retard or end slavery as abolitionists whose reform would generate civil strife. They believed their social order threatened by Northern Unitarians. Some would stifle the freedom of the press and the freedom of speech to preserve their society. But the tradition of a free religious expression, a part of the American tradition, also involved the freedom to discuss social and political questions. Unitarians faced new aspects of political expression via religious channels in the 1840's with an unpopular war conducted, in the eyes of many, for the expansion of slavery.

⁷⁰W. H. Channing, W. E. Channing, p. 543. See Edgell, W. E. Channing, pp. 180-181, for Sarah M. Grimké's remarks to Channing on slavery and profits.



CHAPTER III

POLITICAL PREACHING, THE MEXICAN WAR, AND BRITISH UNITARIANS

There are many significant questions one can raise concerning the appropriate role of a church and its ministers regarding social and political issues in a democratic society. Should a minister become involved in politics? To what degree should a religious organization concern itself with public issues? Do ministers and congregations unnecessarily risk the destruction of religious freedom by becoming involved in controversial social and political questions? Are these matters a proper function of religion in a country whose tradition is one of a separation of church and state?¹

According to some writers, many Unitarians before the Civil War avoided denominational involvement with political questions. Rev. John Haynes Holmes, well known for his political and social activities in the twentieth century, scored antebellum Unitarian negligence on the slavery issue. O. B. Frothingham recalled that Boston's Unitarians believed many of the world's evils "were of providential appointment" to be remedied slowly by individual virtue. But Frothingham also

¹Unitarian Universalists in the 1960's overwhelmingly approve denominational concern with social and political issues by their ministers, by special church committees, or by action of the congregation. In a survey conducted for the Unitarian Universalist Association's Committee on Goals, about 85% of those questioned either "approved" or "strongly approved" statements of denominational opinion on social and political issues at annual meetings of the faith. Report of the Committee on Goals (n.p.: Unitarian Universalist Association, [1967]), pp. 35, 38.



mentioned a number of Boston's antislavery ministers who openly expressed their views: Channing, Emerson, Ripley, Pierpont, Clarke, Hall, Weiss, Wasson, Ellis, Willson, "and many another."² Unitarian apathy on slavery, and possibly other issues, may not have been as great as some writers have assumed.

Writers have often claimed that radical Unitarians were more concerned than conservatives about public issues. O. B. Frothingham wrote that "there was not a transcendentalist who was not, in some measure, an anti-slavery man, and thus a reproach." Among leading transcendentalists W. H. Furness preached his first antislavery sermon in 1839, George Ripley made "his first significant comments" on it in 1840, and Theodore Parker first preached on slavery in 1841.³ But the conservative Christian Register had been considered by many in the 1830's as an abolitionist organ, a position that differed very little from the one it had in the late 1820's. Theological dissensions within the denomination appear to have had less bearing on antislavery attitudes than Frothingham may have believed.

Political and social issues other than slavery occupied some space in the Christian Register during the antebellum period. Temperance reform was a constant theme. At Rev. Caleb Stetson's ordination, the paper expressed its "regret that ardent spirits were not entirely

² John Haynes Holmes, "Unitarianism and the Social Question," The Unitarian, III (December, 1908), p. 443; Frothingham, Boston Unitarianism, pp. 190-194. Stow Persons cited both Holmes and Frothingham to indicate official Unitarian unconcern with social problems in Free Religion, An American Faith (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963), p. 5. Information concerning Holmes can be found in I Speak for Myself: The Autobiography of John Haynes Holmes (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1959).

³ Frothingham, Boston Unitarianism, p. 251; Geffen, Philadelphia Unitarianism, p. 178; Crowe, George Ripley, p. 91; Commager, Theodore Parker, pp. 199, 205.



excluded. We know that we utter the general sentiment of those who attend on such occasions, when we say that we hope never to see spirituous liquors provided at an ordination." Forceful transfer of the Creek and Seminole Indians from Florida drew the paper's wrath at the Jackson Administration. Yet the paper heartily endorsed Jackson's denial of the theory of nullification.⁴ Rev. William Ware considered religious periodicals a proper media for the discussion of public issues, better than the pulpit.⁵

The suitable scope for political sermons, however, was vague. The Christian Register in 1829 said that before America's War of Independence congregations expected their ministers to editorialize on public issues from the pulpit. But with the multiplication of newspapers and journals, ministers could afford to be less concerned with political subjects. Ministers needed to dwell on "those great and unchangeable truths" unaltered by current events. Political subjects having a distinct moral overtone, however, would be appropriate for clerical discourses. Ten years later, Rev. Andrew P. Peabody proclaimed that ministers should not even vote in order to avoid partisanship. The Christian Register could not accept Peabody's voluntary clerical disfranchisement, but honored his sentiment that the denomination must

⁴Christian Register, 3 March 1827, 15 August 1829, 19 May, 12 June 1830, 16 March 1831, 15 December, 22 December 1832. When Chief Justice John Marshall, speaking for the Supreme Court in February 1832, ordered the release of two missionaries held by Georgia, the paper feared that Jackson would not sustain the Court. It declared that the matter was one "not only of the Union, but of mankind." Ibid., 24 March 1832. Nearly the entire issue of the Christian Examiner in September 1830 concerned Indian removal.

⁵William Ware, review article of sermons by W. H. Furness, Theodore Parker, and "a Churchman," Christian Examiner, XXXV (September, 1843), pp. 128-130.



shun party politics. The next year the paper answered accusations from several quarters that clergymen who avoided sermonizing on political and social topics lacked independence. The paper believed that silence itself might be a sign of independence. While ministers had preached on such subjects in the past, the pulpit should now be reserved "for the more immediate instruction of men in personal duties, in Christian graces and virtues." At about the same time, however, the Christian Register assented to Rev. Orville Dewey's opinion that the pulpit should be open to any public issue relating to morality. Dewey confessed that he could not understand "by what process of enlightened reasoning and conscience, the preacher can come to the conclusion, that there are wide regions of moral action and peril around him, into which he may not enter, because such unusual words as Commerce, Society, Politics, are written over the threshold."⁶

William Ellery Channing, famous for preaching in all three areas, is not known to have urged denominational social action. He sympathized with non-political organized antislavery activity but never joined an antislavery society. In 1839 he reiterated the necessity for "organized associations against slavery" since that institution had "a strength, a permanence, against which individual power can avail nothing." But Channing went further when he asserted that "the greater the force combined to support an evil [slavery], the greater the force needed for its subversion." Channing illogically concluded that slavery should be abolished by "stern, solemn remonstrances," though he recognized at the same time that slavery was supported "by statutes,

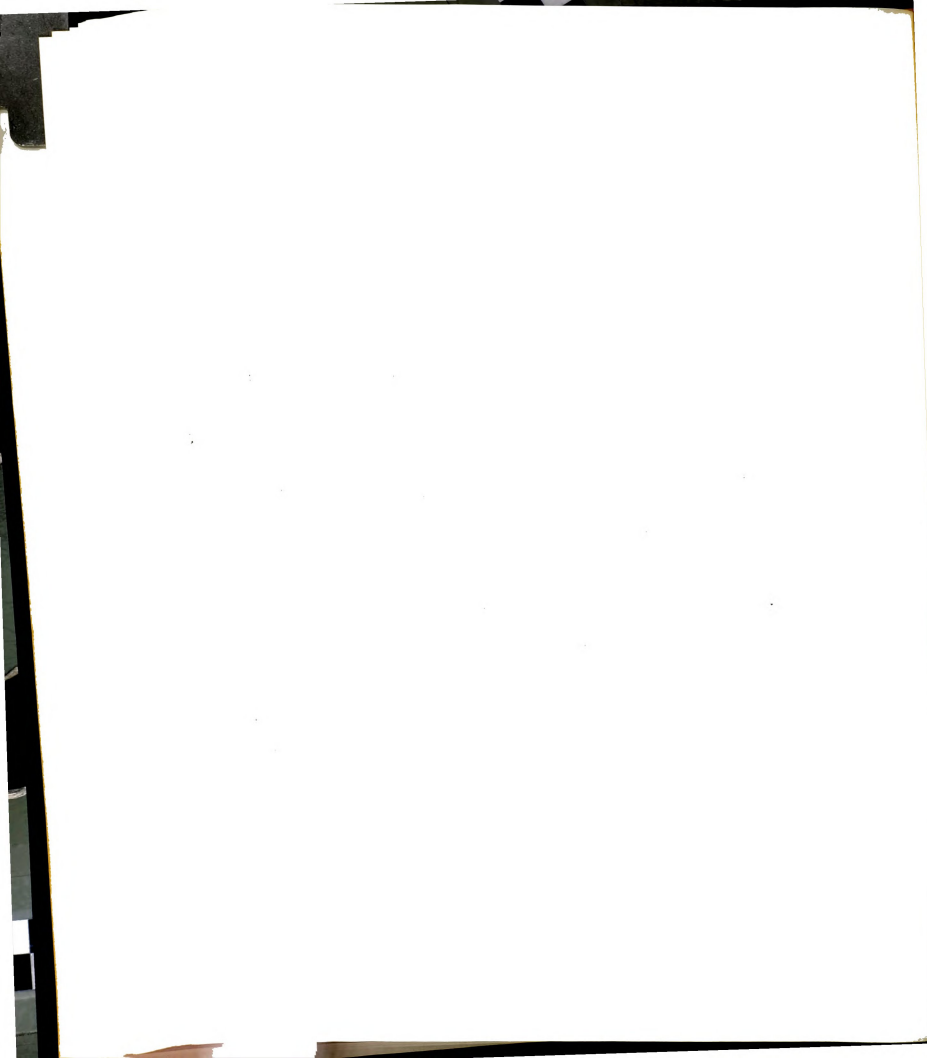
⁶Christian Register, 10 October 1829, 7 July 1838, 16 November, 23 November 1839, 26 September 1840.

by arms."⁷ The Unitarian denomination soon learned that stern, solemn remonstrances would have little effect on Southerners. Two incidents involving Unitarian ministers, at Mobile, Alabama, in 1840, and Savannah, Georgia, in 1843, would not only prove this, but would provoke denominational action on a social issue.

The youthful Rev. George F. Simmons was instantly successful as pastor of the Unitarian society at Mobile. "Mr. Simmons has won the whole Society," a layman told Henry W. Bellows. "Every one is delighted." Mrs. Samuel St. John, Jr., observed that at Simmons' first service "every one that attended last year were there--and many new faces--we had quite a full church--and every one seemed to feel deeply interested." She had learned from another lady sometime later that "if our church does not flourish it will be our own fault." The noted Rev. Alexander Campbell came to Mobile and found all churches save the Unitarian closed to him. During his talk at the Unitarian church he and Simmons engaged in a debate of sorts with Simmons victorious, according to Samuel St. John, Jr.⁸ A Unitarian minister living in Mobile told Bellows that while Simmons was not particularly aggressive in his preaching, "his services are well attended and the society flourishing." Bellows relayed this to the AUA, adding that he had

⁷Channing to E. G. Loring, 11 March 1837, in W. H. Channing, W. E. Channing, pp. 544-545; Channing, Works, p. 786.

⁸H. C. Peabody to Bellows, 22 December 1838 (Mobile); Sophie St. John to Bellows, 27 December 1838 (Newport, R. I.); same to same, 31 December 1838 (Newport); same to same, 7 April 1839 (Newport), Bellows Papers, MHS. See also S. Smith to Bellows, 19 February 1839 (Mobile); Sophie St. John to Bellows, 28 February 1839 (Newport); same to same, 1 May 1839 (Newport), Bellows Papers, MHS.



heard high praise from others for Simmons. Simmons expressed satisfaction with Mobile in his own letters to Boston.⁹

The chief problem at Mobile was not between the society and its minister but between the society and Northern Unitarians. Samuel St. John, Jr.'s vexations with abolitionist Northern Unitarians has been mentioned. St. John growled to Bellows that the AUA, especially Rev. Charles Briggs, had stalled financial aid for the Mobile church. He charged Northerners with indifference for the society's success. Simmons lamented to Briggs on the absence of Northern sympathy for the South "when every thing threatens to divide the different parts of the country, and hostility exists between [the two sections] on so many subjects."¹⁰ Simmons disclosed to Bellows in February 1840 that the society had asked him to settle there but he had agreed only to stay for the rest of the year. "Slavery seems to bar remaining," he wrote, although he hoped to engage in missionary work through the South and the West before accepting a parish elsewhere. In the spring of 1840 he advised Boston to dispatch a missionary to several southern towns--Savannah, Augusta, New Orleans, Montgomery, Huntsville, Nashville, and others,--to promote the faith. He planned to preach at New Orleans and Jackson in Louisiana before returning north, and requested information about Unitarian groups in parts of the South he might visit en route to St. Louis. One person who had heard Simmons

⁹H. B. Brewster to Bellows, 7 January 1839; Bellows to C. Briggs, 23 January 1839 (New York); Simmons to C. Briggs, 1 April 1839 (Mobile); same to same, 3 May 1839 (Mobile); same to same, 20 November 1839 (Mobile), AUA Letters, 1839. See also St. John to C. Briggs, 10 January 1839 (Mobile), AUA Letters, 1838 [misfiled]; same to same, 13 March 1839 (at sea), AUA Letters, 1839.

¹⁰St. John to Bellows, 15 February 1839 (Mobile), Bellows Papers, MHS; Simmons to C. Briggs, 1 April 1839 (Mobile), AUA Letters, 1839.



preach at Jackson, Louisiana, thought that he

has done us much good. His preaching was not only very acceptable to us, but was received with considerable favor by the public, and even drew some expressions of approbation from those who look upon our views with least allowance. His sermons and exercises were very judiciously adapted to our people, and reached ears, and we trust hearts, closed to the voice of others.

This writer closed by saying that "the appearance of a pious Unitarian preacher alone puts to flight a thousand prejudices."¹¹

Southerners pulled the welcome mat out from Simmons' feet in May 1840 when he delivered two sermons on slavery. He suggested that slaveowners begin to educate their chattels immediately in preparation for freedom, that forced separation of families be prohibited, and that Negroes be accorded some civil rights. "In short," he said, "if Slavery be wrong, ought not the removal of it to be the settled policy of the people among whom it exists?"¹² Shortly afterward Simmons' life had been threatened, and, on the advise of friends, he hurriedly took refuge on the brig Emily in the Bay. Later he stated that he had foreseen the consequences of his sermons, but he believed that "by such boldness that the great reform is finally to be effected; and the good spirit in the community receive courage." But the community's "good spirit" may have been expressed by a Mobile layman who opined that Simmons' discourses on slavery

were on subjects too sensitive to the feelings of the Southern people, to be handled by any but a strictly Southern man. A stranger or a sojourner here must not publicly discuss the matter. The feeling is universal and decided. We will not have it. Mr. Simmons'

¹¹Simmons to C. Briggs, 1 April 1840 (Mobile), AUA Letters, 1840; "H. H. G." to an unknown person, 12 May 1840 (Jackson), in Christian Register, 18 July 1840. Simmons' own account, dated 6 May 1840, in Christian Register, 30 May 1840.

¹²Quoted in Christian Examiner, XXIX (November, 1840), p. 259.



departure was by the request and anxious solicitations of his best friends, and we do rejoice that he has gone. He could not have remained here another day with safety, and the moderation of a people in permitting him quietly to depart reflects on their great credit.¹³

Unitarian feeling on the Simmons affair elsewhere was only remorseful. The Christian Register understated the case when it observed that Simmons had "produced considerable excitement at Mobile." The paper saw little difference between the two sermons except that in the second one Simmons had pinpointed specific antislavery measures rather than dealing with slavery metaphysically. The Christian Register felt obliged to remark "that the sermons, though in some passages eloquent and strong, are pervaded by a calm, quiet, gentle, Christian spirit, and it is a melancholy evidence of the evil influence of slavery, that it produces a state of feeling which will not permit so calm and rational discussion of it, as is here presented." Rev. William Ware thought Simmons had presented the subject "in the spirit of the gentlest humanity, as well toward the master, as the slave. The experiment could not have more signally failed." Rev. J. F. Clarke, known in Boston circles as a defender of Emerson, concluded that Christian ministers "under present circumstances" should not preach on slavery in the South.¹⁴

Another imbroglio, in Savannah, involved not only a minister and a congregation, but also the American Unitarian Association. The Savannah

¹³ Simmons to C. Briggs, 23 May 1840 (Mobile Bay); C. Dellinger to C. Briggs, 29 May 1840 (Mobile), AUA Letters, 1840. Dellinger said that the church's debt coupled with Simmons's sermons might ruin the society. But two years later Samuel St. John, Jr. told Briggs that "Mr. Simmons's indiscretion seems to be wearing away" and with the prospects of a good cotton crop the society should do well. St. John to Briggs, 15 July 1842 (at sea), AUA Letters, 1842.

¹⁴ Christian Register, 25 July 1840; Christian Examiner, XXIX (November, 1840), pp. 257-259; Hale, J. F. Clarke, pp. 223-224; Bolster, J. F. Clarke, p. 115.



society, formed in 1831, had never had a settled minister. In response to a request from Savannah for a minister, the AUA sent southern-born Rev. Mellish Irving Motte to preach there late in 1842. Shortly after his arrival, a committee of the church interviewed Motte and rejected him because of his alleged abolitionism. They had learned from others in the city that Motte "had abjured Southern principles," a repudiation confirmed by their catechism. Upon learning of the Savannah society's action, the AUA Executive Committee agreed to pay Motte's traveling expenses but not to expend the balance on hand for another minister.¹⁵

The Savannah society countered by attacking the AUA. The Georgians called Motte "an open and avowed Abolitionist" whose views had been widely known in Savannah. They would not accuse the AUA with deliberate intent to embarrass them,

but if the Officers of the American Unitarian Association had been desirous of chrushing [*sic*] this Society to Earth, they could not possibly have devised a more efficient means than that our Pulpit should have been filled by one who confessed to Members of our Society that he had preached Sermons at the North, which at the South would be deemed "insurrectionary."

Abolition may be an abstraction at the North; but at the South, it is a stern reality, involving our fortunes and lives.¹⁶

The Motte incident stirred considerable controversy in the spring of 1843. One correspondent to the Christian Register applauded the AUA treatment of the Savannah society. He wanted the Southerners to "humble themselves in the sight of God, and acknowledge the common brotherhood of mankind, then the sympathy of the American Unitarian Association and the whole Christian world will be extended to them." Another writer censured the Executive Committee's action and observed that Southern

¹⁵Christian Register, 11 March 1843.

¹⁶Ibid.



recognition of the common brotherhood of mankind would not "spread the gospel of peace among our Southern Churches." The Christian Register itself, whose editors G. E. Ellis and S. K. Lothrop were on the Executive Committee, argued that the Savannah society, not the AUA, had raised the issue of slavery. The paper said Motte had never been regarded in Boston as an abolitionist, nor had he ever spoken or written specifically on the subject of slavery. The paper went on to remark that Motte

is probably no more of an abolitionist now, then when he was an Episcopalian Minister in South Carolina, and as his views upon this subject did not interfere with his usefulness there, they probably would not have done so at Savannah, had they been willing to give him a trial. But they were not; they sent him back, without offering him any compensation for his long journey in their behalf--or making any inquiries as to his pecuniary resources and means of getting back to his family.

The Georgians objected to the manner the Christian Register had reported the entire episode. They declared Motte had told them, "I have preached sermons at the north that would be deemed Insurrectionary at the South." In turn, Motte said he had opposed slavery from childhood but that abolition must be accomplished without violence. "Antislavery preached to the slaveholder is not insurrectionary, I hope," wrote the innocent Mr. Motte.¹⁷

The Motte affair triggered an attempt to commit the AUA to anti-slavery. Rev. John Parkman cited the episode at the May Meetings in 1843 before presenting the following resolution concerning the disposition of AUA missionary funds:

Resolved, That the Executive Committee, whenever affording aid to a society in the slaveholding portion of our

¹⁷ Ibid., 18 March, 1 April, 22 April 1843. For a different version of the Motte affair, see George H. Gibson, "Unitarian Congregations [of Charleston, Augusta, and Savannah] in the Ante-Bellum South," Proceedings of the Unitarian Historical Society, XI (1959), p. 70.



country, be directed to accompany such aid with a solemn protest against the sin of slavery--and that they employ no preacher, who they have reason to suppose will defend that institution.

Although no action was taken on the resolution that year, its presentation was enough to cause the society at Charleston, South Carolina, to return to Boston all copies of the Eighteenth Annual Report of the AUA with the explanation that some of its contents, including Parkman's resolution, "would injure the interests of Unitarian Christianity" in that area.¹⁸

The next year, 1844, Rev. Samuel May, cousin of S. J. May, resurrected the Parkman resolution. After two days of deliberations, Stephen C. Phillips reported a set of resolutions which upheld the action of the Executive Committee in the Motte case, but which did not include Parkman's requirement that an antislavery statement accompany financial aid to any society in a slaveholding state. The Phillips resolutions did contain an antislavery statement, however, which caused the London Inquirer, the British Unitarian weekly, to rejoice that the AUA had become an antislavery organization. The Christian Register denied that the AUA had become such an organization, but it also admitted that many Unitarians who had opposed abolitionism were changing their minds.¹⁹

The Phillips resolutions, passed by the AUA in 1844, were the first "social action" statements voiced by that body. Enacted by theological conservatives, these resolutions served as a precedent for similar

¹⁸ Eighteenth Annual Report, AUA, 1843, pp. 24-28; S. Gilman to James Munroe & Co., 14 September 1843 (Charleston), AUA Letters, 1843. The wording of the resolution in the Christian Register, 3 June 1843, is somewhat different. Rev. John Parkman has been credited as having an influence in making an abolitionist of John P. Hale. Richard H. Sewell, John P. Hale and the Politics of Abolition (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965), p. 33.

¹⁹ Nineteenth Annual Report, AUA, 1844, pp. 39-42; Christian Register, 8 June, 7 September 1844.



resolutions considered by the AUA before the Civil War. Many at that time argued that a general denominational body should not become involved with social and political questions. Disagreement on this matter did not deter a number of clergymen from meeting during Anniversary Week in 1845 to consider and to adopt an antislavery protest that was eventually signed by about two-thirds of the faith's ministers.

The "Protest Against American Slavery," endorsed by 173 Unitarian ministers, is further evidence that Unitarians were beginning to take denominational steps for social change. Sometime before May Meetings several clergymen invited colleagues to discuss their duty regarding slavery. Once the meeting had begun, Rev. S. G. Bulfinch, a former minister at Augusta, Georgia, recommended that they express their anti-slavery sentiments like the Quakers had done. He said that since anti-slavery preaching was impossible in Dixie, they could possibly mold Southern opinion against the institution by circulating copies of an antislavery protest signed by Unitarian ministers. Influenced by Bulfinch's arguments, the clergymen voted 47-7 to create a committee to draft an antislavery statement. In October the statement and the names on it were published. The Protest beseeched all, especially Southerners, "to make every sacrifice of profit or convenience" to rid the nation of this curse. It distinguished, as Channing had done, between masters holding bondsmen for charity and those holding them for profit. Nor did the Protest excommunicate Unitarians who owned slaves: "As our principles of religious liberty do not permit us to exclude our brethren who are Slaveholders from our Christian fellowship, the more should we testify against the Slave system itself."²⁰

²⁰Ibid., 24 May, 31 May, 7 June, 4 October 1845; Christian Examiner, XL (January, 1846), pp. 156-160. The drafting committee included both



Several leading clergymen did not sign the Protest. A correspondent to the Liberator, who listed some notable non-signers, believed that even without their signatures the Protest reflected the rank-and-file of the faith. Rev. G. F. Simmons chastised Bellows for not signing the document which Simmons called "the best written paper on the subject I ever read."²¹

These events of the early 1840's demonstrate that the Unitarian denomination, in the main, had become identified with the antislavery movement. The issue of slavery, moreover, had obliged the faith to consider a national social issue at denominational meetings. Radical and conservative Unitarians engaged in this "social action" above the parish level. Local responses must not be neglected. The experience of six societies, three of which had prominent ministers, may illustrate how individual churches handled political preaching.

Rev. John Pierpont's antislavery and anti-liquor preaching at the Hollis Street Church in Boston is considered by many to have split his society. His temperance sermons angered some distillers in the society who used the church basement to store their spirits. In 1839 the proprietors voted 63 to 60 to dissolve Pierpont's connection with the

radical and conservative Unitarians, along with men who had preached in the South. W. L. Garrison believed the Protest "will fall like a thunderbolt upon the guilty South. Let every religious and every anti-slavery journal in the land publish it in aid of the millions who lie pining in their chains." Liberator, 10 October 1845.

²¹Liberator, 31 October 1845; Simmons to Bellows, 8 November 1845 (Waltham, Mass.), Bellows Papers, MHS. Non-signers of Boston listed in the Liberator were Francis Parkman, N. L. Frothingham, E. S. Gannett, S. K. Lothrop, Alexander Young, and Samuel Barrett. Those outside the city were George Putnam (Roxbury), Alvin Lamson (Dedham), John Brazer (Salem), G. E. Ellis (Charleston), Ichobod Nichols (Portland, Maine), and Orville Dewey and H. W. Bellows (New York). Simmons mentioned other notable non-signers: Cyrus A. Bartol, Ephraim Peabody, and James Walker.



church. A committee of the proprietors declared that Pierpont's anti-slavery sermons accounted for the rupture while the Christian Register in a lead editorial said Pierpont's temperance preaching had precipitated the split. The Unitarian weekly was none too gentle with the congregation on the liquor question. It could not believe that "a respectable religious society in this city" would object to temperance preaching. The paper assured readers that Pierpont would find "sufficient sympathy and support" in Boston. Two years later a council of Unitarian ministers, to which both sides had agreed to submit the dispute, ruled that the Hollis Street majority had no just grounds for dismissing Pierpont, but added that Pierpont had not been altogether charitable during the feud. The controversial minister remained at Hollis Street until 1845 when he resigned.²²

The problem of political preaching disrupted the society at Philadelphia the same year as at Hollis Street. When Rev. W. H. Furness delivered his first antislavery discourse in July 1839, a few parishioners disapproved and two of them resigned. Three years later, when Furness severely assailed slavery from the pulpit, several people walked out during the service. One of the dissenters was Joshua Tevis, a trustee, who attempted unsuccessfully to secure formal censure of the minister at a meeting of the trustees. Tevis then circulated a petition among the membership in order to stop further antislavery preaching, a paper which finally had thirty-nine signers. A counter petition was also circulated showing seventy-eight members who supported the freedom of their minister to discuss slavery. When the society at New Bedford,

²²"John Pierpont," HLF, II, pp. 185-189; Christian Register, 19 October, 26 October 1839. A brief account of this dispute is in Hutchison, Transcendentalist Ministers, pp. 118-119.

Massachusetts, invited Furness to become their pastor in 1846, the preacher informed the Philadelphians he wished to remain. They voted 300 to 3 to keep him. After the Mexican War began, Furness became an avid antiwar and antislavery preacher.²³

At the Unitarian society in Newburyport, Massachusetts, Rev. Thomas Wentworth Higginson encountered little opposition to his political sermons initially. When he accepted that pastorate in 1847 he found that nearly all his parishioners opposed the Mexican War and that he enjoyed remarkable freedom in his preaching. When the society asked him to serve them temporarily in July, the twenty-seven year old Higginson decided to compose several discourses for them in order "to show my worst colors to the Newburyport people..., theological and political.... At any rate I must show what I am," he wrote. Higginson had entered the ministry under the influence of Theodore Parker and James Freeman Clarke, indicating the kind of theology and politics he intended to advocate. Higginson was installed as pastor in the autumn.²⁴

Both of Higginson's recent biographer, Anna Wells and Howard Meyer, agree that the young man's political and social sermons led to his resignation in 1849. Meyer argues that Higginson's exchange with Theodore Parker and his pulpit excoriations of Zachary Taylor, slavery, and materialism gradually created a number of enemies. On the other hand, Wells wrote that most of these disputes were amicably settled except for

²³Geffen, Philadelphia Unitarianism, pp. 190-211, 213-214.

²⁴Howard N. Meyer, Colonel of the Black Regiment, The Life of Thomas Wentworth Higginson (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1967), p. 50; Anna Mary Wells, Dear Preceptor, The Life and Times of Thomas Wentworth Higginson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1963), pp. 52-53; Thomas Wentworth Higginson, Cheerful Yesterdays (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1898), pp. 127-128.



an anti-Taylor sermon which annoyed even parishioners friendly to the preacher. In September 1849, according to Meyer, "a member of the pro-slavery clique" told Higginson that the wealthier members of the church would withdraw unless he resigned. This rich minority, Meyer alleges, had conspired to oust the preacher although he remained popular with the ladies. Meyer wrote that the majority "had been outvoted by the minority of wealth."²⁵ In reality the congregation did not vote to expel Higginson. Wells wrote that the preacher already had become "restive in his work," an indication that Higginson's resignation may not have been a difficult decision.²⁶

Three ministers faced the question of political preaching and each reacted differently: Pierpont fought the issue, Furness let others fight it for him, and Higginson quit. Three other less famous men dealt with this problem and solved it in other ways.

Rev. Linus Hall Shaw's anti-Mexican War sermons irritated a number of people in his society at Sudbury, Massachusetts, and nearly led to his dismissal. In the spring of 1847, a minister apprised Boston of the tense situation at Sudbury and remarked that "things will turn out badly, though Mr. S[haw] was doing good work as a faithful steward." A few months later Shaw told the AUA that for two years parish committees had attempted to silence him on slavery and the Mexican War. "But,"

²⁵Wells, Dear Preceptor, pp. 64-65; Meyer, Colonel of the Black Regiment, pp. 57-59. Rev. Samuel Longfellow, whose transcendental and abolitionist credentials cannot be questioned, thought Higginson's anti-Taylor sermon "not entirely just, since I doubt not there were many men who honestly thought (Heaven knows through what process of logic!) that a vote for Taylor was a vote for freedom." Longfellow to S. Johnson, 27 February 1849 (Fall River, Mass.), in Joseph May, ed., Samuel Longfellow, Memoir and Letters (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1894), p. 135.

²⁶Wells, Dear Preceptor, p. 67.



he wrote, "on my candidly stating to them that my duty was plain, and my course fixed, and that I was ready to go or stay, the opposition ceased and I have gone on independently."²⁷ Shaw remained at Sudbury until his death in 1866.

Rev. William C. Tenney went to the society at Kennebunk, Maine, in 1845 but left before the end of the Mexican War because of parish opposition to his antislavery sermons, or so he told the AUA. He stated that an influential parishioner had persuaded him at some time to sign a pledge not to preach on war and slavery. Later Tenney relented, read the document to the society, and told them he could not remain unless the congregation permitted him to "speak freely on these exciting topics." Tenney denied an accusation that he had signed the document only to keep his job. A layman at Kennebunk, who had supported Tenney, wrote Boston that political preaching was not the only reason for the society's dissatisfaction with their minister. A few had objected to Tenney's initial sermons on the Mexican War and slavery, but these discourses had not been objectionable to the majority. Lately Tenney had become "so warm" on these topics that several had walked out during services. Other matters had also arisen: "A dislikes one thing and B, another, neither of which themselves [sic] amounts to anything--but 'many a mickle makes a muckle.'" According to this layman the Kennebunk society "would not settle any one who would not among other subjects preach against the great evils of war and slavery."²⁸

²⁷G. A. Williams to C. Briggs, 17 March 1847 (Wayland, Mass.), AUA Letters, 1847; Shaw to F. W. Holland, 13 November 1848 (Sudbury), AUA Letters, 1848. Shortly after Shaw wrote this letter the Christian Register denied newspaper reports of Shaw's resignation, 18 November 1848.

²⁸Tenney to C. Briggs, 6 March 1848 (Upton, Mass.); G. W. Browne to C. Briggs, 10 March 1848 (Kennebunk), AUA Letters, 1848.



Rev. W. G. Babcock used unusual means to maintain a free pulpit at Lunenburg, Massachusetts. In the autumn of 1852 he informed Boston that the church proprietors had voted 14 to 11 to dissolve his connection with the church because of his "political preaching." One member, a local politician, had objected to his "free soilism" and temperance sermons, and had led the move for his dismissal. Babcock decided to stand for the Massachusetts General Court on a temperance ticket. Not long afterwards, the politician decided that political preaching was a small enough price to pay to avoid splitting the vote for his party which Babcock's candidacy would mean. Babcock withdrew from the race and opposition to his political sermons vanished. "To Christ belongs under God all the Glory of this event," Babcock modestly affirmed.²⁹

Political sermons, denominational resolutions, and the course of the Christian Register made it clear that Unitarians considered slavery and the Mexican War as moral issues warranting efforts to influence public opinion. The general slant of the Boston Unitarian weekly during the Mexican War era could not help but impress the public that Unitarianism meant opposition to slavery and to its expansion.

In the 1830's the Christian Register opposed the annexation of Texas. Under editor Sidney Willard the paper had voiced its objection to annexation even before William Ellery Channing had published his famous open letter to Henry Clay on the matter. Through summaries of secular news the paper cast slurs on the moral character of the Texans. The Unitarian weekly featured an address of Governor George McDuffie of South Carolina who had spoken against annexation, a remarkable

²⁹Babcock to C. Lincoln, 11 October 1852 (Lunenburg); Babcock to an unknown person, 4 November 1852 (Lunenburg); Babcock to an unknown person, 15 November 1852 (Lunenburg), AUA Letters, 1852.



contrast with the paper's earlier disparaging remarks on the Governor's proslavery extremism. The Christian Register's laudatory review of Channings's letter to Clay thus came as no surprise to its readers. Under Rev. Chandler Robbins, an anti-Parkerite and moderate on slavery, the paper even endorsed Channing's proposal that the North consider secession if slaveholding Texas joined the Union.³⁰

From the spring of 1838 to the spring of 1844, however, the Christian Register relaxed its anti-Texas position. Under the leadership of a number of theologically conservative editors, the paper highlighted Texas' economic resources, applauded news of a growing religious sentiment in Texas, and occasionally expressed contempt for Mexicans. But in April 1844 when the paper forthrightly opposed annexation its editors, S. K. Lothrop and G. E. Ellis, also were conservatives.³¹

From its outset Unitarians assailed the Mexican War and what they believed to be its cause, slavery. During the May Meetings in 1846, Rev. Theodore Parker introduced resolutions against slavery, war in general, and the Mexican War, which were unanimously approved at the Berry Street Conference of Unitarian ministers. When A. P. Peabody learned about the resolutions he told S. K. Lothrop that he liked everything about them except their mover, the heresiarch Parker. Peabody rationalized that the resolutions

were undoubtedly offered merely to entrap the Conference into a new manifestation of denominational identity with him before the public, and to get the most righteous

³⁰Christian Register, 7 February 1835, 16 April, 4 June, 2 July, 17 December 1836, 19 August, 23 September 1837. Channing's publisher advertised that the letter to Clay reached a fifth edition a little over a month after it appeared.

³¹Ibid., 6 April 1844. The editors were Rev. Messrs. Chandler Robbins, Rufus A. Johnson, Samuel Barrett, and S. K. Lothrop.



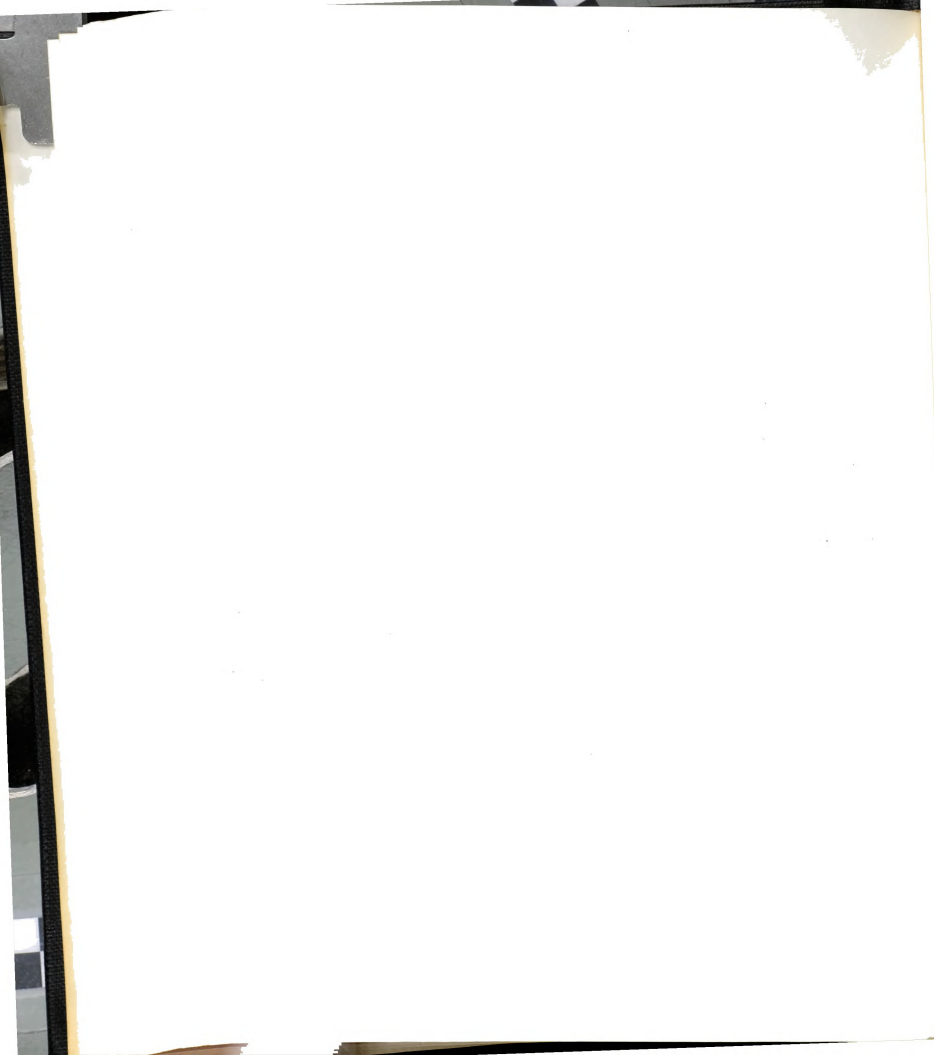
reasons for accusing its individual members of inconsistency in withholding from him the more private expressions of clerical sympathy.

Lothrop, who had been in Washington, D. C., when war was declared, thought that General Taylor had violated Mexican territory when he had advanced to the Rio Grande in March. Lothrop believed that the United States "unquestionably" would take possession "of Mexico, California, etc.," but without war! Lothrop mourned to his wife that Americans had "set the civilized world at defiance by our unjust and dishonorable Conduct, and [I] should not be surprised to find the whole civilized world rise up against us. It would do us good to be brought down a peg."³²

Although the Christian Register had denounced the Mexican War a few weeks before the May Meetings of 1846, the editor, Rev. John H. Morison, worried readers with the implications of Parker's use of the Berry Street Conference for political resolutions. A proslavery body of ministers or a determined coterie seeking to dictate theology might impose their dogmas in the same way, Morison feared.³³ Obviously he felt no compunction in utilizing a religious newspaper for his political beliefs. None of his editorial predecessors had become so upset over the decision on support for Southern churches or over the Protest of 1845. If Parker had jeopardized the independence of the Berry Street Conference the

³²Ibid., 30 May 1846; Peabody to Lothrop, 30 May 1846 (Portsmouth); Lothrop to Mary Lothrop, 11 May [1846] (Washington, D. C.), Lothrop Family Papers, MHS. Lothrop had a personal stake in the annexation of Texas. A younger brother, John T. K. Lothrop, had enlisted in the Texas Navy in 1836 and had become bitter because Texas had failed to pay him what had been promised. Young Lothrop had received some Texas land warrants which appear to have come into the elder Lothrop's hands after John died in August 1844. Lothrop sought advice in Washington, D. C., from no less a Texan than Sam Houston. Lothrop may have wanted to liquidate the warrants which applied to land between the Nueces and Rio Grande rivers. Information taken from various letters in the Lothrop Family Papers, MHS.

³³Christian Register, 16 May, 6 June 1846.



conservatives had only themselves to blame by paving the way for his resolves.

The Christian Register continued to condemn the Mexican War in editorials, by slanted reports of battles, and by notices of antiwar publications and speeches. In signed communications Samuel Willard and A. P. Peabody counseled passive resistance to the war effort.³⁴ A perusal of the Christian Register during the war years substantiates the conclusions of Clayton Ellsworth and Merle Curti that the Unitarian denomination was one of two religious bodies most hostile to the Mexican War.³⁵

Unitarians were actually more antiwar than Ellsworth contended. His statement that Unitarian newspapers like the Christian Register "lacked the distinctive eloquence of such of their ministers as William H. Channing and Theodore Parker" may be questioned. How is eloquence measured? What could be more graphic than Christian Register editorials and news columns featuring the horrors of combat, alleged atrocities committed by American troops, and the killing of innocent Mexican civilians by American artillery?³⁶ Ellsworth also wrote, citing the Christian Register of 10 July 1847, that Western Unitarians showed "hesitation" in opposing the Mexican War. This apparently refers to a letter from Rev. Augustus H. Conant, a Unitarian minister who reported his presentation of two resolutions, one against war in general, and the other against

³⁴Ibid., 13 June 1846, 3 July 1847.

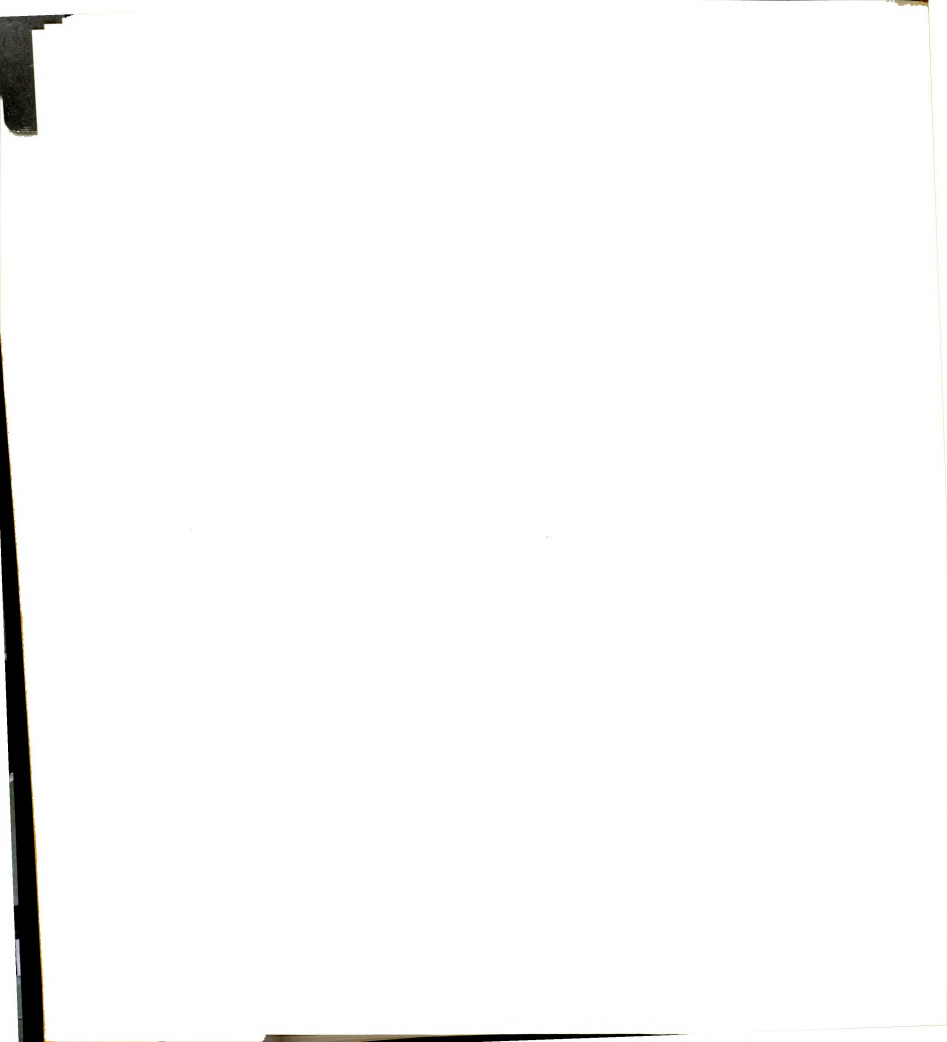
³⁵Clayton Ellsworth, "The American Churches and the Mexican War," The American Historical Review, XLVI (January, 1940), pp. 315-316; Merle Eugene Curti, The American Peace Crusade, 1815-1860 (Durham: Duke University Press, 1929), p. 125. Both authors cite the Unitarians and the Quakers as the most antiwar faiths.

³⁶Christian Register, 6 June 1846, 3 April, 17 April, 24 April, 26 June, 10 July, 18 September 1847.



the Mexican War, at a conference in Johnston, Illinois. The conference passed the former but tabled the latter. It should be pointed out, however, that this action was accomplished by a conference of the "Christian Connection," which was not a Unitarian gathering. Finally, Ellsworth's treatment of the origins of an anti-Mexican War memorial to Congress is somewhat misleading. Ellsworth wrote that the tabling of an anti-Mexican War resolution at the Autumnal Conference in October 1847 provoked a "more radical group" to assemble later where the memorial was composed and plans were drawn for gathering the signatures. But a leading opponent of consideration of the anti-Mexican War resolution at the Autumnal Conference, Rev. Ezra Stiles Gannett, sat on the drafting committee which drew up the memorial. One man who declined to serve on the drafting committee was John Gorham Palfrey, hardly a timid person regarding the Mexican War. In final form, the memorial called the Mexican War unchristian, urged other faiths to petition for the end of the war, demanded a unilateral withdrawal of American forces from Mexico, appealed to Congress to restore all occupied territory to Mexico, and advocated the creation of a Mexican-American commission to compose disputes between the two nations. The Christian Register, controlled by theological conservatives, objected to the memorial only because those signing it would be Unitarians and not Christians of all faiths. The paper had no objections to the substance of the memorial itself.³⁷

³⁷Ibid., 30 October, 6 November, 13 November, 11 December, 25 December 1847, 8 January, 5 February 1848. Clergymen on the drafting committee were Gannett, Caleb Stetson, William H. Channing, William Ware, Cazneau Palfrey, J. F. Clarke, Samuel May, Convers Francis, and Thomas T. Stone; laymen were Joshua P. Blanchard, L. G. Pray, George G. Channing, Charles Sumner, Charles Francis Adams, Stephen Fairbanks, and in Palfrey's place, John A. Andrew.



The Mexican War convinced many Unitarians that a slave power combination controlled events. The Christian Register thought so when it hoped slavery would be prohibited from the territory acquired from Mexico. Simple containment of slavery had proved unworkable according to editor Rev. Nathaniel S. Folsom. "For ourselves," he wrote, "we are constrained to believe that the South, if left to itself, would never free itself from slavery." Southerners who desired to end the institution did not dare to act.³⁸ In his book The War with Mexico Reviewed, Rev. Abiel A. Livermore charged that a slave power conspiracy was the chief cause of the war.³⁹

Along with denunciations of the slave power, conservative Unitarians as well as radicals such as Theodore Parker scorned the Fugitive Slave Law. In the Christian Register Rev. J. H. Morison called Daniel Webster to account on moral grounds for supporting this measure. When the Boston Daily Advertiser sneered at such criticism from a religious newspaper, the Christian Register retorted that many of the nation's influential religious journals also opposed Webster's stand, and the paper reprinted excerpts from various religious newspapers to prove its case. The paper believed that the Fugitive Slave Law would be unenforceable in the North where people would actively resist it. The Christian Register saw no merit in the demands of extreme abolitionists like William Lloyd Garrison and Wendell Phillips for the North to

³⁸ Ibid., 5 August, 30 September 1848.

³⁹ Ibid., 17 March 1849; Abiel Abbott Livermore, The War With Mexico Reviewed (Boston: Wm. Crosby and H. P. Nichols, 1850), p. 40. The American Peace Society awarded Livermore \$500 for his book in 1849. The Christian Register lost two South Carolina subscribers because of the newspaper's abolitionism. One of those who cancelled wrote from Camden that the weekly ought to be renamed the "Southern Denunciator and Disunionist." Christian Register, 26 August 1848.



secede from the Union, but it believed the Fugitive Slave Law had begotten more disunionists than the efforts of those abolitionists.⁴⁰

The Fugitive Slave Law inspired another denominational political statement. At the Autumnal Conference in October 1850, Rev. John Pierpont moved that the Committee on Arrangements report a resolution on the duty of Christians toward fugitive slaves and on the Law. Robert Rantoul objected to the consideration of political matters and moved to table Pierpont's request. The Conference divided equally, forcing the chairman, Rev. Dr. Francis Parkman, to break the tie and he voted to table. Parkman's vote incensed venerable seventy-five year old Rev. Samuel Willard. The next day Willard moved to lift Pierpont's motion from the table, and delivered an emotional speech calling for a statement on the Law. Parkman maintained his opposition to any declaration at the Conference. E. S. Gannett agreed with Parkman, arguing that consideration of such topics would open the door for resolutions on the tariff, or even free postage. The convention had not been called to deliberate on these matters, Gannett said, and whatever statement the Conference adopted would be misconstrued by antislavery newspapers. Rantoul moved to table Willard's motion, but he lost 50 to 53. A number of ministers joined the debate, with the younger ones generally siding with Willard. Willard's motion finally passed "by a large majority," according to the Christian Register. Pierpont's request for a resolution thus went to the Chairman of the Committee on Arrangements, who, with suspicious alacrity, immediately arose and announced that he

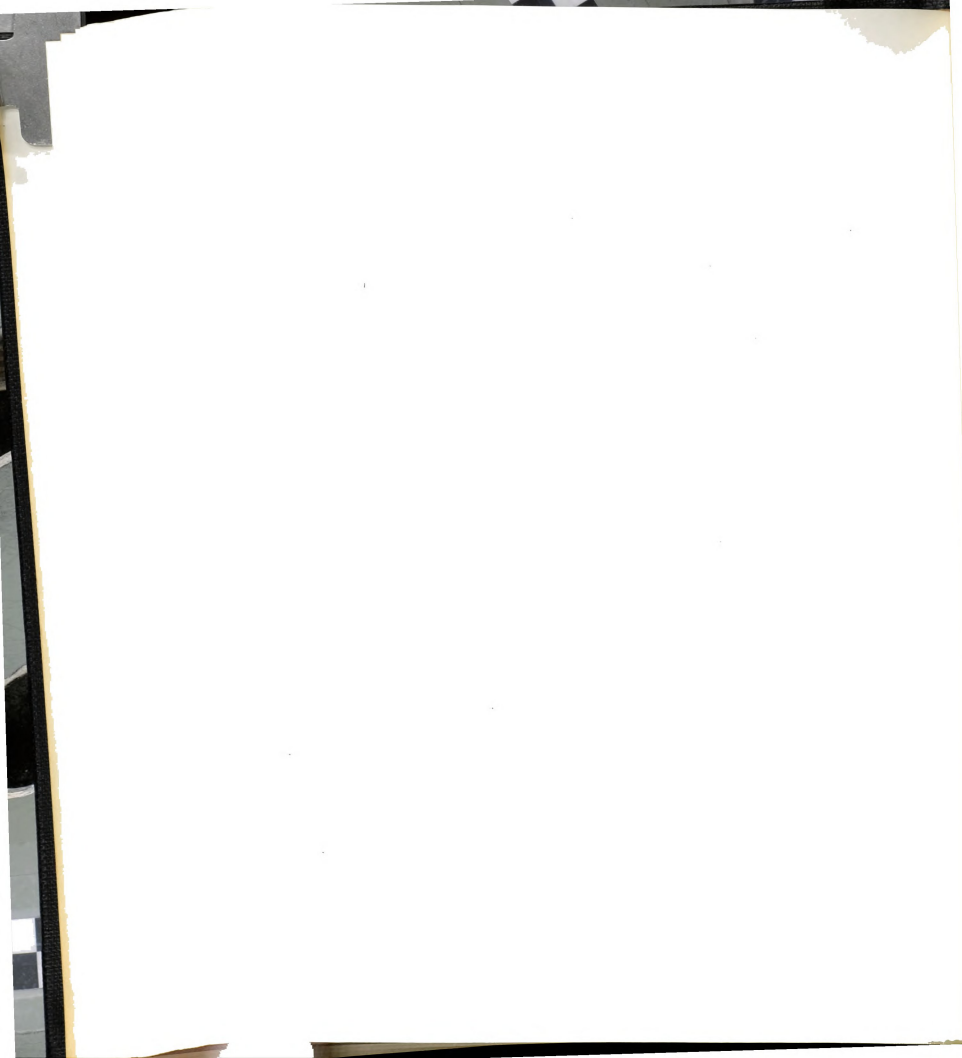
⁴⁰Ibid., 18 March, 17 April, 19 October 1850, Commager, Parker, pp. 205, 211-212. Authorship of Morison's unsigned editorial of 18 March in John Hopkins Morison, A Memoir, by His Children (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1897), p. 155.



just happened to have one ready. Chairman Calvin Lincoln presented a resolution expressing "sorrow and detestation" of the Fugitive Slave Law and urged its repeal. Gannett was not happy with it since it had little bearing on Pierpont's request. After desultory debate the Conference adopted Lincoln's resolution without opposition. Later, the Christian Register frowned at the Autumnal Conference's taking a stand on a matter which may not reflect the general opinion of the faith. A small majority has no right to speak for all, asserted the paper, echoing complaints of Orthodox ministers who earlier had been dispossessed from their churches to make way for Unitarian preachers. During the debate Rev. Rufus Ellis may have expressed the majority view when he said that clergymen were obliged to render a verdict on the Fugitive Slave Law because it was "a fair question in ethics."⁴¹

At the May Meetings in 1851, Rev. Samuel J. May proposed that the AUA condemn not only the Fugitive Slave Law but also censure prominent Unitarians who had supported the Compromise of 1850. May's resolution, seconded by Theodore Parker, was refused consideration at the meeting by five votes. Rev. E. S. Gannett, one of those cited in May's resolution, wrote a few days after the meeting that the debate on the question lasted about four hours and had been conducted "with but little intemperance of speech" and had left no hard feelings. According to Gannett the advocates of the resolution did not desire to pass it but only wanted "an opportunity for [a] friendly exchange of views." Gannett must have been piqued somewhat judging from the tone of a letter S. J. May sent him in August. May wrote that nothing personal had been intended toward any person he had named, adding that he, May, had been treated "as if

⁴¹Ibid., 26 October 1850; May, Some Recollections, p. 366; Willard, Life of Samuel Willard, pp. 182-185.



I had committed an outrage upon the dignitaries of our sect." May was convinced, moreover, that the great majority of those at the meeting opposed the Fugitive Slave Law.⁴²

While American Unitarians were objecting to the annexation of Texas, the Mexican War, and the Fugitive Slave Law, British Unitarians chided them for lassitude in opposing slavery! In the 1840's and again during the Civil War, British Unitarians rankled the Americans with their pious admonitions. The Americans replied vigorously, taunting their trans-Atlantic brethren with criticism of British society and politics. Boston Unitarians especially have had something of an Anglo-ophile reputation;⁴³ nevertheless, for all their admiration of British literature, manners, and morals they could not tolerate British patronizing on war and slavery.

The British began to exhort the Americans on slavery in 1843. Three Irish Unitarians dispatched a formal letter to the Americans in July calling for more energetic pronouncements against slavery. Some Christian Register readers were irked by what they considered unsolicited meddling, sentiments echoed by the paper's editors.⁴⁴ In December a number of Irish and English clergymen signed a petition which suggested

⁴²May, Some Recollections, pp. 368-370; Gannett to an unknown person, 10 June 1851 (Boston); May to Gannett, 7 August 1851 (Syracuse), Ezra Stiles Gannett Papers, MHS. May named President Millard Fillmore, Daniel Webster, Samuel A. Eliot, Edward Everett, Jared Sparks, E. S. Gannett, and Orville Dewey. Gannett's sensitivity is noted by his son in Gannett, E. S. Gannett, pp. 288-290, and by R. K. Webb, Harriet Martineau, A Radical Victorian (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), pp. 149-151.

⁴³Crowe, George Ripley, pp. 62-63; Frank Walker, "Ecumenicity and Liberty..." The Proceedings of the Unitarian Historical Society, XII (1961), part II, p. 7.

⁴⁴Christian Register, 2 September, 30 September 1843.



that the Americans needed advice on the matter of slavery as the British recognized "how easily the mind may be reconciled to inaction, where inconvenience or sacrifice...may happen to lie in the way of more active and immediate endeavors to give effect to our inward convictions."⁴⁵

The Americans could not contain their reaction to the British petition in one reply; they needed two. In the first, the Americans declared that their only course of antislavery action was to appeal to the consciences of masters to liberate their bondsmen since neither the Northern states nor the federal government had any more right to interfere with slavery than did the British government. The second reply was much more astringent. It expressed resentment that the British had arrogated themselves moral superiors when Northern ministers had been speaking out against slavery for some time. It reminded the British that their churches unfortunately had been unable to remedy "the mass of sin and misery around yourselves." The British might appreciate America's difficult domestic problems by a deeper contemplation of their own. Thus spoke ten conservative Unitarian ministers, mostly Bostonians.⁴⁶

The British were not united in their reproaches of the Americans. Rev. James Martineau, one of the most highly respected preachers in both

⁴⁵Christian Register, 27 January 1844; Christian Examiner, XXXVI (March, 1844), pp. 295-298. E. S. Gannett said in the Christian Examiner that the British letter was the first formal communication between the two bodies. Adding to American resentment was the fact that Rev. Samuel May while visiting England in 1843 had inspired the British petition, May, Some Recollections, p. 338.

⁴⁶Christian Examiner, XXXVII (January, 1845), pp. 140-144; Christian World, 1 February 1845. Signers of the second letter were Ephraim Peabody, Samuel K. Lothrop, George Putnam, Francis Parkman, Nathaniel L. Frothingham, Charles W. Upham, Alexander Young, Orville Dewey, Alvin Lamson, and Nathaniel Whitman. Even the abolitionist Samuel J. May became annoyed by British Unitarian "inaction against the unrighteous institutions of their country..." S. J. May to S. K. Lothrop, 10 April 1844 (Lexington), Lothrop Family Papers, MHS.

Great Britain and the United States, refused to sign the petition of 1843 as well as a later one in 1847. When James Haughton, an abolitionist Irishman reared a Catholic but converted to Unitarianism, publicly attacked Rev. Dr. Francis Parkman for not preaching anti-slavery sermons, correspondents to the London Inquirer sustained and opposed Haughton's invective.⁴⁷

If a number of British Unitarians thought American Unitarians were lax in opposing slavery, both groups of religious liberals opposed the American government's annexation of Texas. The London Inquirer believed that President Polk's message to Congress in December 1845 exhibited Polk's "skill in expounding and putting the best face upon his policy" on Texas, Oregon, and the tariff. The paper denied that Europe had tried to block the annexation of Texas. The British government had acted in Texas from "a just hatred of slavery" and not for any selfish national interest. The tenor of the chief executive's speech showed him to be "a warlike chief, who regards force as the natural and legitimate means of settling differences between nations." The paper admitted that Great Britain had her own "bullies and men of violence as well as the Americans" but that few British warmongers occupied influential positions in the government.⁴⁸

The London Inquirer's judgment that the British government was less bellicose than the American government was annulled by Great Britain's wars in India, conflicts which contributed to the estrangement of British and American Unitarians. In the same month the

⁴⁷J. Estlin Carpenter, James Martineau... (London: P. Green, 1905), pp. 254-255; London Inquirer, 18 January, 30 August, 1 November 1845.

⁴⁸London Inquirer, 17 December 1845.



British paper accused President Polk of undue belligerency, events along the Sutlej River in northwest India drew the British into the First Sikh War in much the same way the United States would be drawn into the Mexican War. The Sutlej, one of five major tributaries of the Indus, then divided British-controlled India from the Sikhs. Anarchy had prevailed among the Sikhs for some time. After the assassination of a pro-British maharaja in 1843, Sikh chieftains resolved to stop further British encroachments into the Punjab. Sikh forces crossed the Sutlej in December 1845 to strengthen their claim to both banks of the river. The British commander in the area engaged the Sikhs twice but failed to destroy them. With reinforcements and skilled leadership, the British successfully concluded hostilities by February 1846. The spoils included the Kashmir, later sold to the Raja of Jammu for a million pounds, and an indemnity of five hundred thousand pounds. Violence erupted again with the Second Sikh War which the British also won and for which they annexed the entire Punjab in 1849.⁴⁹

British Unitarians became far less excited over their government's expansionism than over that of the United States. The London Inquirer, saddened by the strife in India, admired heroism and courage, but held that militarism must not be glorified for its own sake. "Whatever may be thought of the necessity of this war," the paper said, "and of our being forced into it by the misconduct of others [...], it is a most distressing subject for contemplation." The paper could not condone British behavior in India, for wiser statesmanship might have prevented the struggle. But the war was, according to the Inquirer, "a most unhappy

⁴⁹E. L. Woodward, The Age of Reform 1815-1870 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1938), pp. 407-409.

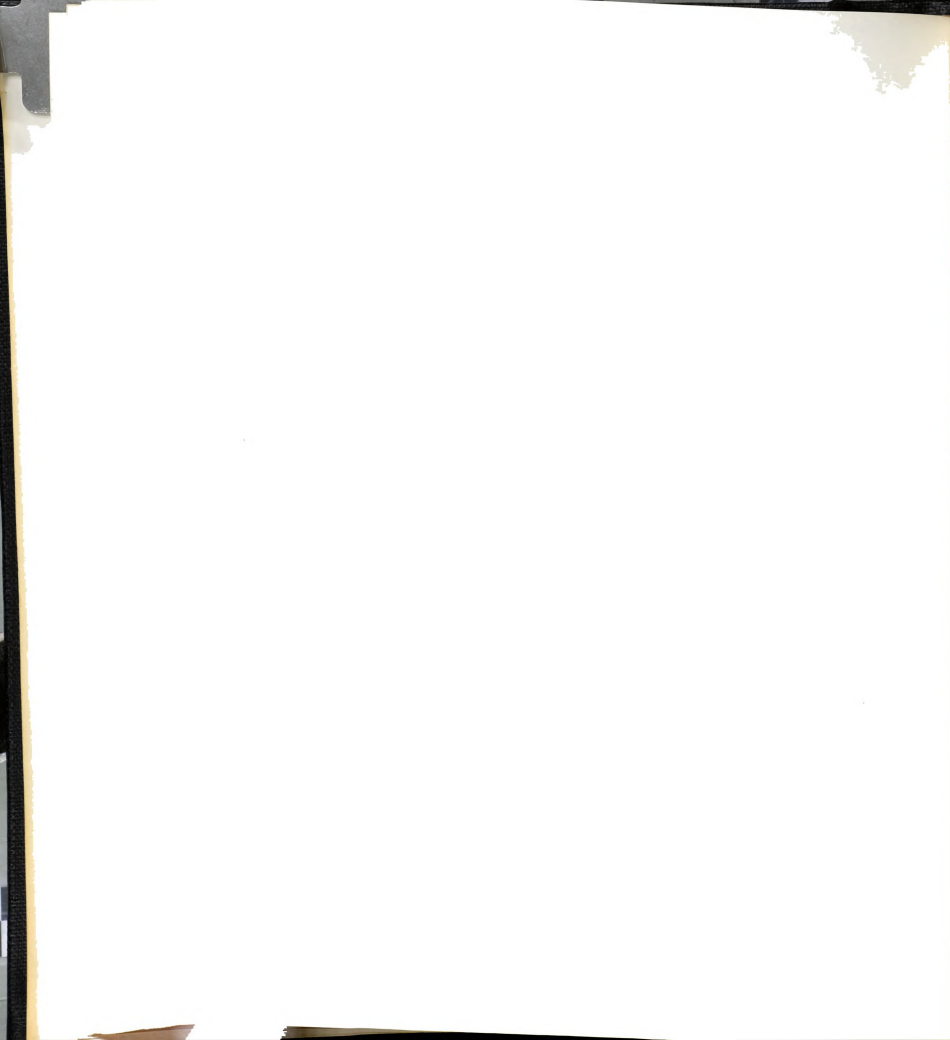
necessity; and any satisfaction derived from victory is moderated by so many considerations, that the expression of triumph would appear to us misplaced and presumptuous." More revealing than the attitude of the London Inquirer was the lack of concern over India at Unitarian meetings. No one submitted a resolution on peace in India at the British and Foreign Unitarian Association in June 1846. At the Irish Unitarian Christian Society's convention in May, the only peace discussed was that between Great Britain and the United States; India came into their deliberations only as a field for missionary activity.⁵⁰

British and American Unitarians might agree with the London Inquirer's opinion that the Mexican conflict was an "aggressive war sanctioned by Congress," but some American Unitarians considered British behavior in India to be just as reprehensible as American actions in Mexico. In 1846 some English Sunday School teachers dispatched a "peace address" to the Sunday School teachers in the society at Concord, New Hampshire. The English condemned war and urged peace between the United States and Great Britain. The Concord teachers replied that war was wicked, examples of which were the war with Mexico and "the recent bloody and inhuman butcheries in India..., for victory through such dreadful human bloodshed, tells us that the same spirit is raging with you."⁵¹

Another example of the tension between British and American Unitarians occurred in 1847 when several Boston ministers invited British Unitarians to the forthcoming AUA convention. The British and Foreign

⁵⁰London Inquirer, 28 March, 23 May, 6 June 1846. An examination of the reports of several British Unitarian meetings in the 1840's revealed no formal discussion or condemnation of British behavior in India.

⁵¹Ibid., 30 May, 4 July, 24 October 1846; Christian Register, 15 August 1846.



Unitarian Association formally rejected the offer. They refused to fraternize with the Americans because a vice-president of the AUA, J. B. Whittridge of Charleston, South Carolina, was a slaveowner.⁵² In transmitting the refusal signed by 1,484 British Unitarians, Rev. James Hutton wrote that Englishmen were able "perhaps [to] see the path of duty [on slavery] more clearly than some of you because we have now no temptation to wander from it." Hutton also noted the "apparent apathy" toward slavery by former AUA President Orville Dewey, eliciting a heated rejoinder from Dewey.⁵³

The British rejection drew a bitter response from Rev. George E. Ellis, then thirty-three years old, and on his mother's side a descendant of Loyalists during the War of Independence. In a lengthy review of the entire controversy, Ellis expressed puzzlement at British hauteur with the AUA when so many social and political problems continued to afflict Great Britain. He pointed to the established church that restricted religious liberty, the exclusiveness of British universities, "the thrusting of opium down the throats of the Chinese at the point of a bayonet,--the wars of the Scinde [in India],--and the oppression of Ireland." The long piece of paper containing the British refusal and the many signatures had been displayed in the office of the AUA official who had nominated the slaveowning Whittridge. Upon this official, Ellis mocked,

⁵²During the May Meetings in 1847, Rev. Samuel May attempted to dump Whittridge by proposing that no slaveowner could serve as an officer or agent of the AUA. His motion failed, but the posts of honorary vice-president were abolished. May's effort to oust Whittridge violated the letter of the Protest of 1845, a document he had signed.

⁵³Christian Register, 10 July, 7 August, 14 August 1847; London Inquirer, 29 May, 20 November 1847.

lies the burden of the Vice-President. How it will haunt his slumbers and conjure up dread terrors before his guilty soul! Let copies of the document with its signatures be printed, and distributed to each of our ministers, so that any of them who may hereafter go abroad may understand that they are not to expect tea,--not yet muffins,--from any one who signed that remonstrance.⁵⁴

Fifteen years later during another American war, Ellis would renew his onslaughts against the British with ammunition from the same magazine.

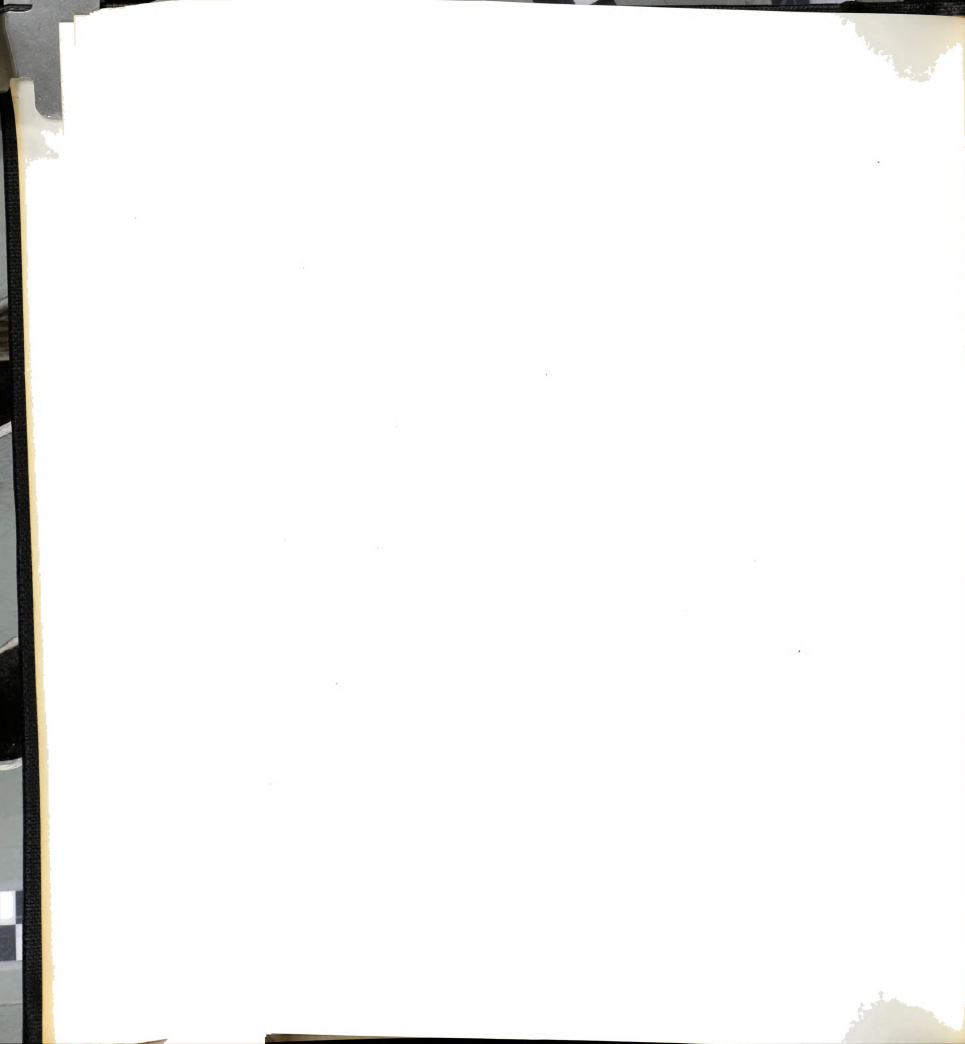
Not all British Unitarians were so hostile toward the Americans. The London Inquirer had been in the editorial hands of Rev. William Hincks from its start in 1842 to the end of May 1847. Hincks had energetically denounced American slavery and slaveowners, and had permitted similar material in the paper. From June 1847 to January 1849 no editor is listed for the Inquirer. During this period, however, the paper abandoned its strident anti-Americanism and modified its abolitionism. Late in the summer of 1847, the Inquirer acknowledged a de facto American victory in Mexico. The paper hoped slavery would not take root in the territory acquired from Mexico, and that slavery could be contained in those states where it legally existed. At this, the Irish abolitionist James Haughton nearly accused the editor of being a slavemonger. Then in January 1849 the Inquirer acquired as editor a professional journalist, John Lalor, an Irishman reared a Catholic but who had become a Unitarian. Lalor continued the moderate policy toward slavery and American Unitarians that had been adopted after Hincks. Lalor, moreover, strenuously opposed the annexation of the Punjab after the Second Sikh War. Should that occur, he wrote, world opinion would place the British

⁵⁴Ibid., 11 December 1847. Ellis's sarcasm so impressed William Lloyd Garrison that he included portions of this article in his "Refuge of Oppression" column of the Liberator, 31 December 1847.

on the same low plane as the Americans because of their spoliation of Mexican territory.⁵⁵

During the 1840's the Unitarian denomination in the United States became an important segment of the antislavery movement through its press, sermons from its ministers, and resolutions passed by denominational meetings. As a religious body, Unitarians did not advocate the immediate abolition of slavery which they feared would bring on violence. After 1846, many Unitarian spokesmen believed that a slave power, not abolitionism, had brought about a foreign war to enlarge the area of human bondage. The Mexican War, and, in a negative way, the British Unitarians, impelled this faith into a more active role in political and social affairs.

⁵⁵London Inquirer, 28 August, 25 September, 31 November 1847, 27 January, 3 February, 10 February, 17 February 1849.



CHAPTER IV

THE KANSAS MISSION, JOHN BROWN AND THE SECESSION CRISIS

The Kansas mission established by the Unitarian church was extraordinary in two major respects. The denomination had not made it a practice to undertake missionary activity, let alone in a region where few Unitarians were to be found. Yet, from 1855 to 1859 the Kansas mission received nearly \$13,000 through AUA channels, a sum expended for the religious improvement of only twenty-nine proprietors. But more importantly the denomination sustained a society whose chief purpose was to help stem the expansion of slavery.¹

Unitarians were active in promoting free soil settlement in Kansas. Even before President Franklin Pierce signed the Kansas-Nebraska Act, the Christian Register had urged antislavery men to emigrate to that region. The paper publicized the New England Emigrant Aid Company as long as it remained active. Rev. Edward Everett Hale assisted the Aid Company by writing articles on Kansas, some for the Christian Register, and by writing the first book on the area, Kanzas and Nebraska.²

¹The Kansas mission is detailed in Charles Richard Denton, "The Unitarian Church and 'Kanzas Territory,' 1854-1861," The Kansas Historical Quarterly, XXX (Autumn, Winter, 1964), pp. 307-338, 455-491.

²Christian Register, 15 April, 20 May 1854; Jean Holloway, Edward Everett Hale, A Biography (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1956), p. 79; Samuel A. Johnson, The Battle Cry of Freedom, The New England Emigrant Aid Company in the Kansas Crusade (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1954), p. 114; Cora Dolbee, "The First Book on Kansas, The Story



Because of its limited resources, the American Unitarian Association was unable to organize a mission quickly. Hale, an early advocate of a mission, discussed the matter with several ministers and advised AUA Secretary Rev. Henry A. Miles that their faith should establish a post in the new territory. Not until the autumn of 1854 did the Executive Committee formally acknowledge the possibilities of a Kansas mission. The AUA's small budget prevented immediate action other than sending some books to an "Athenaeum" in Lawrence, Kansas Territory, and providing religious literature for sale by a colporteur who had emigrated there.³

In March 1855 the Executive Committee of the AUA chose Rev. Ephraim Nute, Jr., the minister at Chicopee, Massachusetts, for the Kansas mission. Aged thirty-five with ten years of pulpit experience, Nute had served briefly in the West as a missionary. Hale thought Nute "providentially well fitted for the duty," but admitted that he knew of no Unitarians who planned to emigrate to Kansas. Those who were going, he said, were "young people,--who go to better their fortune,--too poor therefore to belong to a rich and respectable [religious] body here." Hale believed that these people would be receptive to Unitarian preaching.⁴ Many of the emigrants, he said, were educated men seeking their fortunes who would also augment Unitarian societies. Soon after his installation as a missionary at Chicopee, Nute left for Kansas.⁵

of Edward Everett Hale's Kansas and Nebraska," KHQ, II (May, 1933), pp. 139-181. Hale urged that Kansas be spelled with a "z."

³Denton, "Unitarian Church," KHQ, XXX (Autumn, 1964), pp. 311-314.

⁴Here is another indication that the faith might attract people other than the wealthy and fashionable.

⁵Hale to Miles, 1 March 1855 (Worcester, Mass.), AUA Letters, 1855; Christian Register, 14 April 1855.



Eastern Unitarians clearly stated that their Kansas mission was meant to stop the expansion of slavery. In its report to the thirtieth annual meeting of the AUA in 1855, the Executive Committee stated that the Kansas mission was a part of "the great question which marks the middle of the nineteenth century,--the strife between freedom and slavery." They quickly added that the mission did not commit the Association to any political party, nor did the Association seek to widen the division between the North and the South.⁶ At the Autumnal Conference later that year, the Kansas mission was called a practical measure to contain slavery. Rev. Robert Hassall introduced an antislavery resolution at the Conference, but withdrew it in favor of one by Mr. George Bond who proposed that the Conference declare its abhorrence of human bondage by appealing to all Unitarians to assist the Kansas mission. Bond's resolution passed without dissent.⁷

The military practicality of the Kansas mission was demonstrated during the "Wakarusa War" in December 1855. Several hundred proslave Missourians gathered at the Wakarusa River south of Lawrence with the aim of destroying the free state town. Along with other free state men Nute took his "repeating rifle" into town where some of the timber earmarked for the Unitarian meetinghouse was utilized in the fortification of Lawrence. The incomplete church itself was occupied by free state defenders.⁸

The Christian Register vindicated the settlers' defensive actions which, in its opinion, had prevented a massacre. The lack of proper

⁶Quarterly Journal, II (1 July 1855), pp. 418-419.

⁷Christian Register, 24 October 1855.

⁸Denton, "Unitarian Church," KHQ, XXX (Autumn, 1964), pp. 333-334. The "war" ended when a blizzard struck on the night of 8-9 December.

federal protection had thrown the settlers "on their own natural resources" for self-protection. The Kansans had been "justified before God and in the judgment of all civilized men, in seeking aid from all who sympathise with the oppressed." Two weeks later the paper stated that it usually favored peace, but "we do not believe that all evil should always go unresisted with actual, deadly conflict. When and how, and by whom it shall be resisted, is often a question of expediency.... There is a moral necessity, we hold, as the world is, that evil should sometimes be resisted with force, whoever does it with a just, generous, and considerate spirit, and for just cause, humors our common human nature, asserts our common sacred human right."⁹

Other signs that Unitarians approved forceful resistance to the spread of slavery appeared at the May Meetings in 1856. Nute attended the thirty-first annual meeting of the AUA a week after Congressman Preston Brooks had clubbed Senator Charles Sumner in Washington, D. C., and when "border ruffians" once again threatened Lawrence. Hailed from the floor to speak, Nute excoriated "the apathy manifest in this [New England] community on this subject [of Kansas]." He assailed the "outrageous statutes and penalties" relating to slavery in the Territory enacted by the "bogus" legislature fraudulently elected by Missourians. The free state people of Lawrence "had taken up arms; and now that they had made the last appeal, they were still left without the needed protection, abandoned to the mercy of an armed mob from States even as remote as Georgia." Furthermore, he cried,

The people of Lawrence had considered the American Unitarian Association as one of the most radical bodies on the face of the earth, who had sent a man there to

⁹Christian Register, 16 February, 1 March 1856.

preach FREEDOM! Would this Association sustain him in the position he had taken in their place? Were they really in earnest in so doing? Did they wish him to go on, even unto death?

According to the Christian Register, "there was a general and hearty response from the audience in sympathy with the speaker." The Association then passed two resolutions, one sympathizing with the suffering free state men in Kansas, the other grieving at Senator Sumner's injury and condemning "the barbarity of the slavepower which has attempted to silence him by a brutal outrage."¹⁰

Some western Unitarians were less committal. When Rev. A. H. Conant presented similar resolutions on Kansas and Senator Sumner to the Western Unitarian Conference in June, Conant was pressured to withdraw them when it was feared the Conference might overstep its authority. A number of ministers and laymen debated the matter of the propriety of the WUC to consider them. One of those who "warmly advocated the passage of the resolutions," according to the Christian Inquirer, was that anti-Parkerite, Rev. Samuel Kirkland Lothrop. Rev. George W. Hosmer, in opposing passage and in reference to AUA approval of them, mentioned that the WUC was not as firmly established as the AUA and could not risk losing members by such action. Nearly all who spoke against Conant's resolutions proclaimed themselves against slavery, often adding that they had delivered antislavery sermons in their pulpits.¹¹

¹⁰ Christian Register, 7 June 1856.

¹¹ Quarterly Journal, IV (1 October 1856), p. 128; Christian Inquirer, 28 June 1856. One opponent of Conant's resolutions, Rev. W. D. Haley, denounced the Missourians from his pulpit in July 1856. Pressure from local newspapers and some parishioners prompted him to resign, but the congregation later that month refused it. Christian Inquirer, 16 August 1856.

Back in troubled Kansas in July 1856, Nute was caught up in the anarchy that reigned throughout the Territory. Several free state men, including the future first governor of the state of Kansas and one of Nute's parishioners, Charles Robinson, were imprisoned by federal dragoons. In the middle of August, Nute's brother-in-law, William Hopps, was murdered, allegedly by one Charles Fuget. While Nute assisted his bereaved sister out of the Territory, "border ruffians" seized him as a free state incendiary. After his release Nute detailed Hopps's murder and his own incarceration in several letters to eastern newspapers.¹²

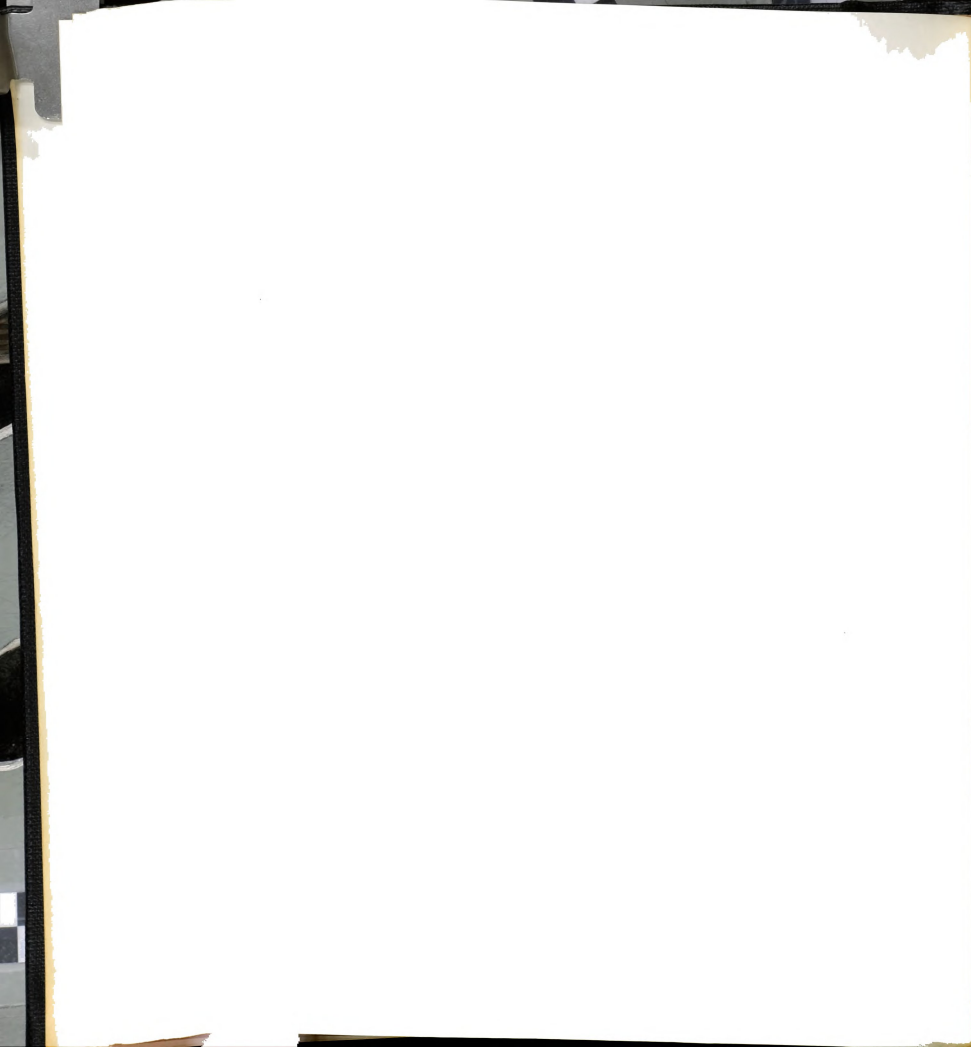
AUA leaders seemed satisfied with Nute's mission. "Most of the facts about our mission to Kansas are well known," S. K. Lothrop declared in October 1856. He thought Nute "will be a man of commanding influence in directing the future fortunes of that Territory. Our name, and aims, and wishes, and faith, and works, are not unknown in that region, and we should desert a noble and rare hope of influence were we to desert that mission, or fail to give it a full and adequate support."¹³ The Association continued to support the Kansas mission from 1857 to 1859 with far more funds than it received specifically for that post. But personal rivalries, attempts of the AUA to control its investment in the Kansas meetinghouse, and factionalism within the Kansas society all but destroyed the mission before the Civil War.¹⁴

The Kansas mission and the support given it by the denomination, both in cash and publicity, clearly showed the public that most

¹²Denton, "Unitarian Church," KHQ, XXX (Winter, 1964), pp. 466-474.

¹³Quarterly Journal, IV (1 January 1857), p. 211.

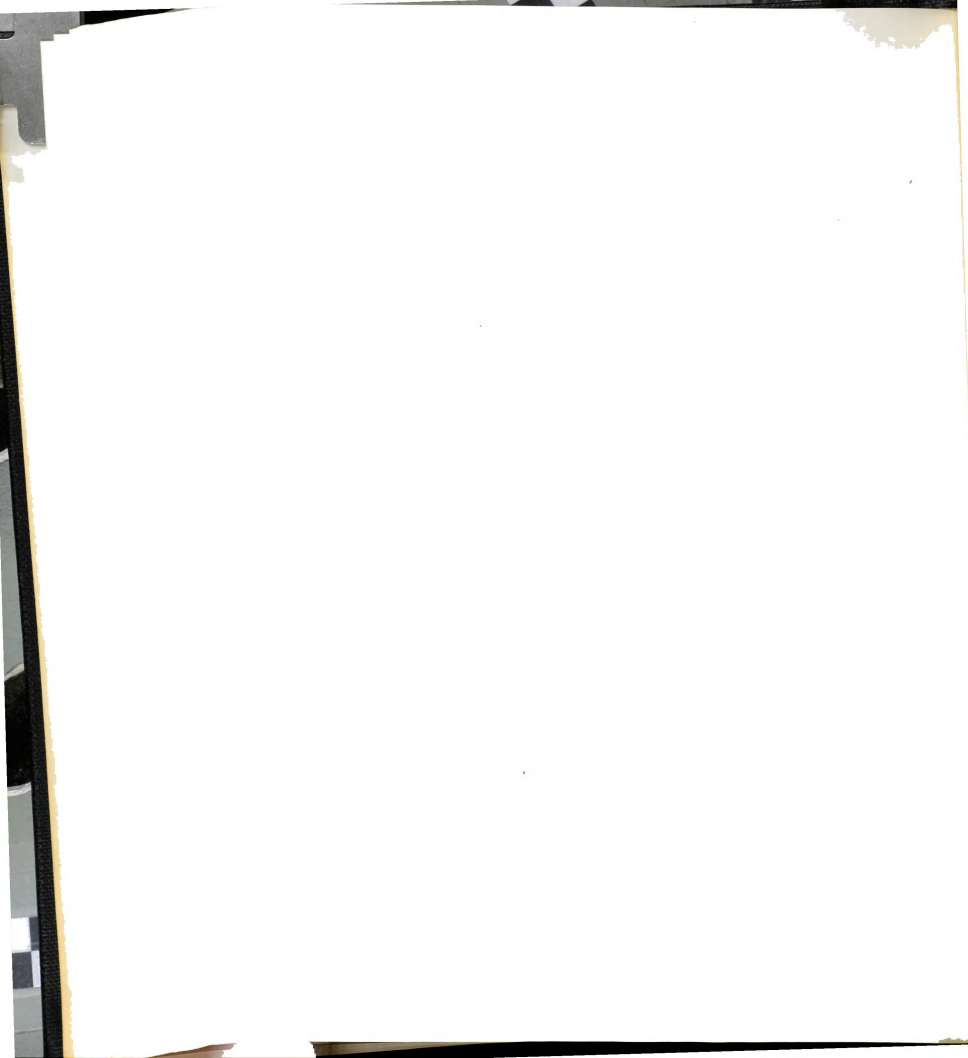
¹⁴Denton, "Unitarian Church," KHQ, XXX (Winter, 1964), pp. 474, 479-482.



Unitarians were free soilers, if not abolitionists. The American Unitarian Association, organized only as a missionary society, became a free soil organization by promoting the Kansas mission and by its free soil resolutions in 1856. In 1857, over the objections of Rev. William G. Eliot and his associates from St. Louis, the Western Unitarian Conference jointed the AUA as a free soil group by going on record against slavery. In protest, Eliot and a few others walked out of the Conference. Eliot told his St. Louis society later that the Conference's passage of an antislavery resolution had jeopardized congregational polity and weakened the Conference's efficacy. Social action by religious organizations, Eliot believed, endangered religious beliefs and hindered true reform. "No social improvement is permanent except that which comes through individual virtue," Eliot said, "and to elevate society you must regenerate the individuals of whom it is composed." The Christian Inquirer editorially acknowledged that Eliot's sermon contained much of value, but his discourse failed "to convince us that Slavery, politics, business, and, in short, everything in which men are concerned, as social and civil beings, should not come under the review of the pulpit, the religious conference, and the full action of the Gospel of Christ."¹⁵

With the denomination publicly committed to the exclusion of slavery from the Territories, Unitarians soon confronted the matter of violent means of destroying slavery. In October 1859 John Brown led a band of white and black men against the federal arsenal at Harper's Ferry, Virginia, in an unsuccessful effort to secure arms for a massive servile uprising. Trapped in the arsenal by Virginia militia, some of the insurrectionists including two of Brown's sons were killed. The militia

¹⁵Christian Inquirer, 30 May, 8 August, 15 August 1857; Lyttle, Freedom Moves West, pp. 88-89.



seized the wounded leader. Brown was found guilty of treason against the Commonwealth of Virginia and was hanged on 2 December 1859.¹⁶

Although Unitarians deplored the violence, many admired the heroism Brown had displayed. James Freeman Clarke declared that Brown's insanity was the kind to make heroes. William Henry Furness eulogized Brown in Philadelphia on the day of his execution. Moncure D. Conway's assessment of Brown traversed a complete circle in the span of five or six years. At first he condemned the raid at Harper's Ferry and excused its leader for his insanity. When he learned that eastern abolitionists, such as William Lloyd Garrison, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and others had praised Brown, Conway fell into line. But after the Civil War, Conway reverted to the view "that few men ever wrought so much evil" as John Brown. Mrs. Lydia M. Child thrilled at Brown's "sublime martyrdom," while the veteran abolitionist Samuel J. May believed Brown had aided abolitionism. "John Brown knew a great deal," May wrote, "but he has worked and 'buildest better than he knew.' All honour to his Example." Even the theological conservative Ezra Stiles Gannett proclaimed that the Harper's Ferry raid was "the maddest attempt ever made by one of the noblest of men." And shortly after Brown's execution the Christian Register called Brown a fanatic whose "iron faith," however blind to reason, "wondrously illustrates for us the power of religion to strengthen and sustain."¹⁷

¹⁶For an exhaustive account of Brown, see James C. Malin, John Brown and the Legend of Fifty-Six (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1942).

¹⁷Hale, J. F. Clarke, p. 236; Geffen, Philadelphia Unitarianism, p. 230; Conway, Autobiography, I, pp. 299-303; Child to Mrs. S. M. Parsons, December 1859 (Wayland), in Lydia Maria Child, Letters of Lydia Maria Child... (Boston: Houghton Mifflin and Company, 1883), p. 137; May to R. D. Webb, 10 January 1860, cited in Webb, Harriet Martineau, p. 325; Gannett, E. S. Gannett, pp. 302-303; Christian Register, 10 December 1859.

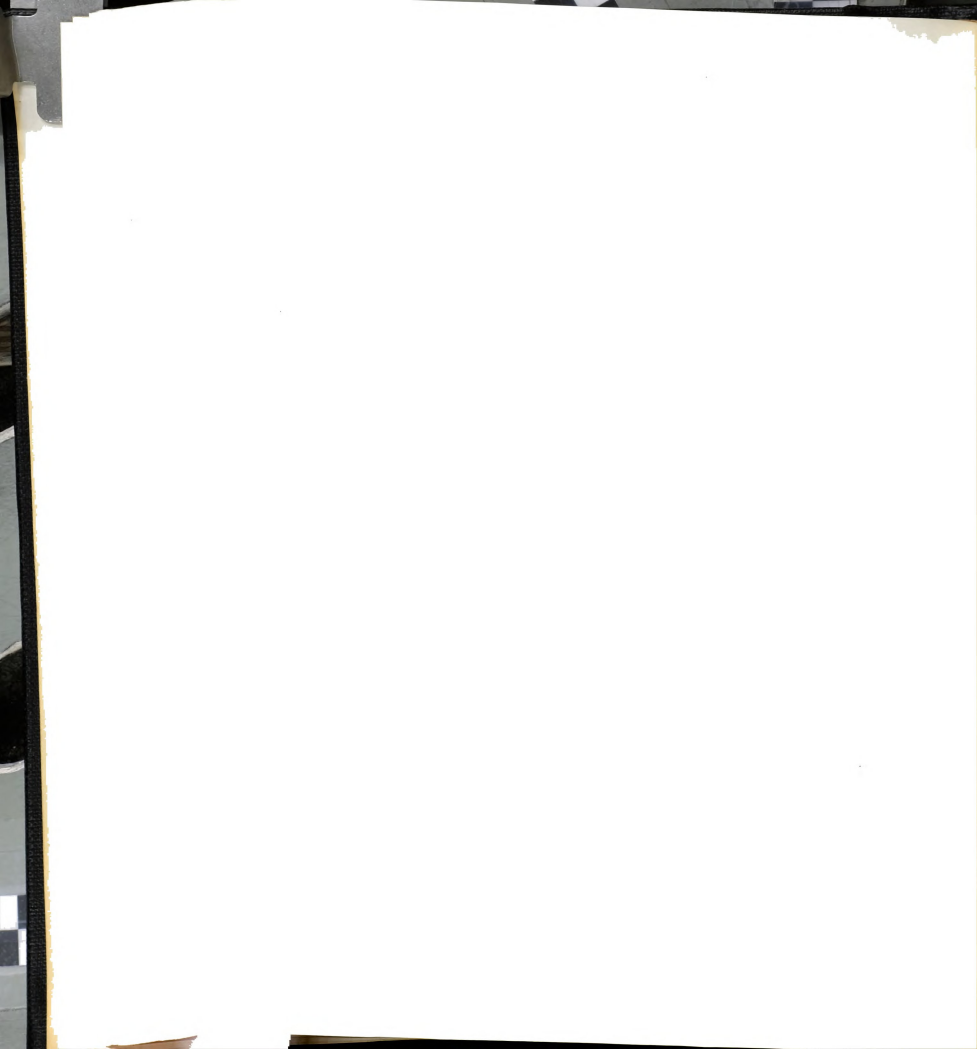
Across the Atlantic the London Inquirer at first believed that Harper's Ferry was a Negro insurrection and called the raid "badly planned and organized" since no abolition leaders had been involved. The Inquirer sympathized with the blacks believing they had been driven to rebellion by the severity of the slaveowners. Long known as expressive of British Unitarian hostility to slavery, the Inquirer presented what some might call a characteristically British attitude:

If we have ever entertained any doubts about the capabilities of the negro race, they arise from the very fact that they have so long borne slavery so patiently and submissively. An Anglo-Saxon race we proudly felt could never thus have been held in subjection.

This editorial apparently had been put to bed before the news arrived, published in the same issue, that Brown and other white men were implicated. With the knowledge that white men were involved, the paper believed the raid had been "organized with considerable care"! The paper considered Brown a brave martyr misguided by his zeal for the cause of freedom.¹⁸

John Brown's raid made any antislavery preaching in the South impossible. Rev. Jacob G. Forman found Southerners so suspicious after Harper's Ferry that "every northern man is so thoroughly catechized that I fear we must say, like one of old, 'Ephraim is joined to his idols, let him alone.'" A Unitarian layman wrote from Baltimore that Northern abolitionism and John Brown had provoked more repression of the Negroes than ever before. He added that Massachusetts had no more right to interfere with slavery in the South than did a foreign country. In the spring of 1860 the Christian Inquirer carried a discussion on Unitarian preaching in the South. One correspondent, apparently a Southerner,

¹⁸London Inquirer, 29 October, 5 November, 24 December 1859.



denied that slavery should prevent ministers from settling in Dixie. Clergymen had only to accept a call, preach Christianity, and lead "a blameless life as the best exponent of his views of morality." In reply, a reader from Meadville, Pennsylvania, wrote that no "gospel Unitarian" minister would remove to a slaveholding state. Such a minister would feel compelled to preach antislavery sermons for which "the South would tar and feather, whip, drown, imprison or hang him for bringing the same to it." Another Northerner, who challenged the Pennsylvanian's definition of a "gospel Unitarian" minister, insisted that antislavery preaching in the South would lead to John Brownism.¹⁹

Many Northern Unitarians who lauded Brown's martyrdom either had sympathies for or were outright supporters of northern secession from the Union. Among these were abolitionist Unitarian ministers such as James Freeman Clarke, Moncure D. Conway, Samuel J. May, Samuel Longfellow, and Thomas Wentworth Higginson. These men embraced disunionism as a positive means to attack slavery and to cleanse their souls of the sin of human bondage. They believed, along with William Lloyd Garrison, that the Constitution of the United States was an "agreement with hell" which could not be rectified by ordinary constitutional processes.²⁰

¹⁹Forman to J. F. Clarke, 13 December 1859 (Alton, Ill.) AUA Letters, 1859; Christian Register, 4 February 1860; Christian Inquirer, 31 March, 14 April, 28 April 1860.

²⁰Hale, J. F. Clarke, pp. 234-235; Bolster, J. F. Clarke, p. 253; Conway, Autobiography, I, pp. 321-323; W. H. and J. H. Pease, "Freedom and Peace: A Nineteenth Century Dilemma [of Samuel J. May]," The Midwest Quarterly, A Journal of Contemporary Thought, IX (Autumn, 1967), pp. 36-40; May, Samuel Longfellow, p. 245; Higginson to Harriet Prescott, January 1861, in M. T. Higginson, T. W. Higginson, pp. 181-182. An excellent discussion of Garrison's path to disunionism is in John L. Thomas, The Liberator, William Lloyd Garrison, A Biography (Boston: Little, Brown, 1963), pp. 397-401.

The above names lend substance to David Potter's contention that abolitionists among New England's intelligentsia tended to disunionism.²¹

Other Unitarians, who did not consider themselves as abolitionists and unlike many of the above were conservative Unitarians, would accept a peaceful separation of the nation. Clergymen such as Ezra Stiles Gannett, George E. Ellis, Amory D. Mayo, Cyrus A. Bartol, Charles Carroll Everett, and George Putnam publicly affirmed their opposition to the use of force to keep the South within the Union. Some, like Ellis and Mayo, feared that coercion of the seceded states would touch off a servile insurrection. As late as 4 April 1861, Putnam said that small countries like Holland, Prussia, Belgium, and Switzerland possessed "the essential elements of well-being," and so could the North without the South.²²

The two Unitarian weeklies also voiced disunionism. The Christian Inquirer concurred with and quoted the Irish politician, Daniel O'Connell, that "no political change is worth one drop of blood." The paper added that Americans "are not going to turn into Mexicans and South Americans in a day, or become butchers and savages, and bury the fair temple which Washington reared in brothers' blood." The Christian Register observed that disunion would relieve the North from any responsibility for slavery, thus enhancing the North's prestige in the world. It argued that "Europe gets along with scores of nationalities; why should not this continent? The Rhine and the Danube pass through more independent States than the

²¹David M. Potter, Lincoln and His Party in the Secession Crisis (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1942), p. 54. Potter listed the following Unitarians as disunionists: E. Rockwood Hoar, Charles Eliot Norton, Samuel Gridley Howe, James Freeman Clarke, John Pierpont, Henry W. Longfellow, and Charles Sumner.

²²Bellows to Bartol, 28 June 1854 (New York); Bartol to Bellows, 16 February 1861, Bellows Papers, MHS; Christian Register, 22 December 1860, 16 February, 13 April 1861; Christian Inquirer, 9 March 1861.



Mississippi is likely to; and the toll at the mouth of the Baltic has been amicably negotiated out of existence."²³

Some Unitarians were simply undecided on the question of union versus division. Ministers such as Charles T. Brooks, Frederick Frothingham, and Henry W. Bellows were not clear where they stood.²⁴ Bellows has been described by George Frederickson as one of the "early advocates of 'coercion' even if it resulted in civil war," while Kenneth M. Stampp listed Bellows among some "abolitionist clergymen" who, before Fort Sumter, "had concluded that force was the only means of reaching their goal."²⁵ On the other hand, Conrad Wright has concluded that Bellows "would have been willing, in January, 1861, to let the fifteen slave-holding states leave the Union in peace," but that only after Fort Sumter did he support coercive measures against the South.²⁶ Bellows delivered a "Fast Day" sermon on 4 January 1861 in which he declared his opposition to the use of force to retain any of the seceded states, but that he would support coercive measures against them should they seek to break up the government! It is significant that a Southerner interpreted Bellows' speech at the time as one favoring peaceful disunion.²⁷ In his private correspondence Bellows reveals a confused mind, swinging

²³Christian Inquirer, 15 December 1860; Christian Register, 9 February 1861.

²⁴Christian Inquirer, 9 February, 9 March 1861.

²⁵George M. Frederickson, The Inner Civil War, Northern Intellectuals and the Crisis of the Union (New York and Evanston: Harper Torchbacks, 1968), p. 55; Kenneth M. Stampp, And the War Came, The North and the Secession Crisis, 1860-1861 (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1950), p. 250.

²⁶Wright, "Minister as Reformer," p. 19.

²⁷Christian Inquirer, 12 January, 2 February 1861.

from acquiescence to secession to belligerency against the South. Perhaps the remark to his son early in March 1861 best expresses how Bellows felt: "God alone knows how the policy of the country is to turn."²⁸

A number of Unitarians, usually classed as theological conservatives, challenged the supposed benefits separation would confer. Rev. Samuel Osgood thought that disunion would lead to greater perils. "What evil," he asked, "except the utter abandonment of principle, can be greater to North or South, bond or free, than disunion, with all its quarrels and collisions, and perhaps its civil wars?" Osgood believed that a viable Union was necessary "to check the slave-trade" which an independent Confederacy might legalize. Rev. E. E. Hale, sometimes considered as sympathetic to disunionism, argued that even if a peaceable separation occurred, "the generations that succeed us would contend for centuries to recover their rights until conquest or annihilation ended the struggle." Rev. Augustus Woodbury, who later became chaplain of a Rhode Island regiment, declared that disunion would bring anarchy to the North. In St. Louis, Rev. William G. Eliot defended the Union before his society as a necessity to prevent foreign attack and to provide a means to end slavery. Eliot scored Northern personal liberty laws and Southern ordinances of secession as treason. He singled out Massachusetts Governor John A. Andrew, a fellow Unitarian, as being no better than the secessionist Governor of South Carolina, Francis W. Pickens. Above all Eliot feared that the disregard of law by both sides would bring on chaos everywhere. Not long before this discourse

²⁸ Bellows to Bartol, 8 January 1861 (New York); Bellows to an unknown person, 13 February 1861 (New York); Bellows to Russell Bellows, 3 March 1861 (New York); Bellows to Bartol, 12 March 1861 (New York); Bellows to Russell Bellows, 7 April 1861 (New York), Bellows Papers, MHS.



Eliot had written J. F. Clarke that Southern secession "wants a spanking, and is likely to get one, on the fattest parts." Before Fort Sumter, Rev. John H. Morison decried the acquiescence of Southern secession doctrines in the North since that lead to anarchy. He opposed the use of force against the South unless that should be forced on the government. Morison did not believe that war was the worst "calamity" and that force could be justified in order to preserve the nation.²⁹

Perhaps the best forecast of the possible consequences of disunion came from Rev. Orville Dewey. By 1860 Dewey had alienated extremists of both sides. He had fallen into disrepute among the abolitionists for his statement in 1851 that he would rather sell his relatives into slavery, or even himself, than see the nation split.³⁰ Dewey delivered a free soil speech in 1856 that angered his proslavery friends at Charleston, South Carolina.³¹ In January 1861, with secession a reality, Dewey delivered two discourses on the crisis. He recognized that two civilizations had developed in the United States: the South with slavery and the North without it. He reiterated the free soil doctrine that slavery should be contained within the slaveholding states. If the North would accept slavery, sectional disputes would probably cease. But people in the North, he said, "cannot, if we would, pay that price for [the South's] love, or for union." But disunion would bring a boundary "festering with wounds ever renewed, with sores ever breaking out." Both sides would garrison their frontiers, Dewey predicted, and would create "standing

²⁹Christian Register, 5 January, 12 January, 20 April 1861; Christian Inquirer, 22 December 1860, 19 January, 6 April 1861; Eliot, W. G. Eliot, p. 156; Eliot to Clarke, 10 December 1860 (St. Louis), AUA Letters, 1860.

³⁰M. D. Conway and H. W. Bellows continued to hassle over what Dewey had actually said up to 1860. Christian Inquirer, 1 September 1860.

³¹Dewey, Orville Dewey, pp. 241-242.



armies, entailing endless taxation and burdens of national debt, which shall weigh down the masses of the people to poverty, low wages, miserable degradation, preparing for horrible military despotisms, to fight out with more shocking atrocities, the terrible battle between the two kingdoms and civilizations of the North and the South." Dewey said that disunion could be compared to "the miserable Mexican states, disjointed and broken into fragments."³²

Dewey did not advocate a preventive war; he said that separation would lead to war. He reasoned that the nation might split in two without war, but the two rival parts could never remain at peace. Consequently, both would maintain armed might and would run the risk of becoming tyrannical. Even with a pruning of his embellished rhetoric, Dewey advanced beyond moralistic pronouncements to consider the power factors involved in disunion.

Dewey's prewar assessment contrasts with J. F. Clarke's confusing judgments before and after the Civil War. Years after Appomattox, Clarke stated that secession by the Confederacy without attacks on Federal forts would have resulted in Northern recognition of Southern independence, and with a continuation of slavery in the South. Clarke forgot, or simply ignored, his own prewar disunionist dialectic that a separation of the nation would lead to a collapse of slavery in the South.³³ Dewey's point was that such an attack was inevitable, and given contemporary conditions, was much more realistic.

Less than a month after Fort Sumter an editorial in the Christian Register underscored Dewey's arguments. The writer warned that military

³²Christian Register, 19 January, 9 February 1861.

³³Clarke, Anti-Slavery Days, pp. 130, 180; Bolster, J. F. Clarke, p. 253.



reverses were likely to occur but that the war had to be fought to end slavery. Freedom must prevail throughout the nation. The writer had recently spoken with a Spaniard who wished republican institutions for his country. On being reminded of the slow progress of Spain during the past forty years, the Spaniard replied, "Yet, but we were three hundred years in driving out the Moors." The writer commented that "we may honor his perseverance, but we do not want an internal border warfare of three hundred years!"³⁴ Consequently, Unitarian support for a complete suppression of the rebellion derived from a determination to prevent continual strife that seemed likely to persist between the two nations.

³⁴Christian Register, 4 May 1861.



CHAPTER V

UNITARIANS AND THE CIVIL WAR: PUBLIC AFFAIRS

From the opening shots in Charleston to the stillness at Appomattox, most American, but not British, Unitarians vigorously supported military and civil measures employed by the Lincoln Administration to crush the Confederacy. From their pulpits and through their periodicals this religious faith sustained the war effort on several key issues. British Unitarians, however, objected to the use of force against the rebellious states. American Unitarians heatedly condemned the pro-Confederate gestures of their trans-Atlantic co-religionists, and by so doing strengthened their attachment to the Union. Finally, as the war progressed, American Unitarians grew to respect the executive and moral leadership of President Abraham Lincoln.

Those who had been prewar unionists continued to support the government during the Civil War. Rev. Augustus Woodbury resigned his pastorate at Providence, Rhode Island, to become Chaplain of the First Rhode Island Infantry Regiment in April 1861. But the Providence society rejected his resignation and continued to pay him while he served in the army. Shortly after Fort Sumter, Rev. W. G. Eliot delivered what he later called a "perhaps too emphatic" Union sermon in St. Louis that drove away nearly one-fourth of his congregation. "But the bone and sinew and heart and brains held fast," he remembered, "and the four years of crucial trial were bravely borne." Rev. Orville Dewey

called the conflict a "holy war" in October 1861, a war that would bring eventual freedom for the slaves.¹

Those who had been undecided about Southern secession before April became strongly pro-Union once the fighting had begun. The lead editorial of the Christian Register in the first issue after Fort Sumter may have expressed the thoughts of many Unitarians. The paper believed that the Lincoln Administration had "pursued a pacific course to the utmost extent consistent with honor and the preservation of the respect and confidence of the people. Forbearance was no longer a virtue. All measures of conciliation were spurned, and finally the mad blow has been struck by the traitors." The Christian Register declared further that the Confederates had begun "a war which, whether long or short, must carry to all concerned, untold miseries in its train," but that the federal government must be energetic "for the silencing and punishment of [the] traitors." In May 1861 Rev. Dr. James Walker, who had recently resigned as President of Harvard, advised moderation in the conduct of the war. He believed, nonetheless, that force had become necessary to end the threat to free government by a slave-dominated social order. Walker said that Southerners had "put themselves in opposition to the settled conviction and moral sense of good men all over the world." After fifteen months of warfare Henry W. Bellows wrote Thomas Starr King that "we have simply got to make a main strength business of it; get mad; strip to the work and suppress or annihilate these rebels, like so much

¹Christian Inquirer, 27 April, 12 October 1861; Eliot, W. G. Eliot, pp. 149-150. Considering Unitarian opposition to the Mexican War, it is ironical that the Christian Inquirer noted with pleasure that Woodbury would serve with "several officers who [had] distinguished themselves in the Mexican war." The paper's editor at this time was Rev. A. A. Livermore who had written the anti-Mexican War book, The War with Mexico Reviewed.



vermin. It is a dreadful necessity. But I really see nothing else left. You might as well compromise and make treaties with rattle-snakes and wildcats." The rebellion would continue, Bellows exclaimed, until "we bind the South with iron chain shot, helpless and hopeless, and hold her there till she cries enough, or gives up the Ghost."²

A number of prewar disunionists jettisoned their ideas of a separate northern republic and joined the chorus that clamoured for the defeat of the Confederacy. Samuel J. May, Samuel Longfellow, J. F. Clarke, T. W. Higginson and John Pierpont were a few who changed their minds. Clarke may have expressed the sentiments of many in June 1861 when he wrote that "bad as war is, there is something worse. Anarchy is worse; slavery is worse; disunion and disintegration of a noble nation is worse. If these can be hindered by war, then war becomes necessary and right."³

Two notable prewar disunionists, however, refused to support the Union publicly. The radical Rev. Moncure D. Conway, initially caught up in the enthusiasm after Fort Sumter, soon turned against coercion of the South. The conservative Rev. Ezra Stiles Gannett avoided any mention of the war from his pulpit. Both men hoped that the North would win but they refused to give any sanction to military measures.⁴

²Christian Register, 20 April, 8 June 1861; Bellows to King, 4 July 1862 (New York), Bellows Papers, MHS.

³W. H. and J. H. Pease, "Freedom and Peace: A Nineteenth Century Dilemma," The Midwest Quarterly, IX (October, 1967), p. 39; May, Samuel Longfellow, pp. 215-217; Monthly Journal, II (June, 1861), p. 276. Higginson became a captain in the Fifty-First Massachusetts Infantry before his appointment as commanding officer of the First South Carolina, a Negro regiment that Higginson described in his Army Life in a Black Regiment. Pierpont served briefly as Chaplain in the Twenty-Second Massachusetts.

⁴Conway, Autobiography, I, pp. 321-323, 436; Gannett, E. S. Gannett, pp. 303-305.



Unitarian firmness on the prosecution of the war included approval of restrictions on criticism of the government. Less than a month after Fort Sumter, the Christian Register warned its readers that "all attempts to exert an influence against the great movement ought to be promptly suppressed." While warfare ought to be as humane as possible, the paper supported the government's arrest of individuals who uttered "violent complaints" at the Lincoln Administration. Such people "know very well that there are times when if a government waited for the slow process of legal judgments, a nation's life might be sacrificed. Arms must be resisted by arms, and those who sympathize with armed rebellion, by deed or word give aid and comfort to the armed enemy, must take the consequences." The Christian Inquirer similarly approved curtailments of speech and of the press. Henry W. Bellows, who had been abusively censured for his kind remarks on the Southern character in the autumn of 1862, may have redeemed himself partially by his pamphlet Unconditional Loyalty published early in 1863. Bellows justified Lincoln's suspension of the writ of habeas corpus in order to facilitate the arrest of alleged Confederate sympathizers. Bellows regarded extreme critics of the government as "semi-rebels at home." He contended that "the Constitution is preserved, as a life is saved, by despising ordinary precautions and rules."⁵

As with Unitarian approval of the suspension of civil rights, the denomination also sustained the government's conscription of citizens for duty in the armed forces. The Christian Register printed a summary

⁵Christian Register, 4 May 1861, 19 September 1863; Christian Inquirer, 6 August 1864; Henry W. Bellows, Unconditional Loyalty (New York: Anson D. F. Randolph, 1863), pp. 8-10. Bellows' sympathetic remarks for the South can be found in Monthly Journal, III (November, 1862), p. 510, and G. E. Ellis's criticism of Bellows in ibid., p. 515. See also Bellows to Bartol, 24 October 1862 (New York), Bellows Papers, MHS.



of the federal draft law soon after its passage in 1863. The paper noted that other religious journals had endorsed that portion of the law which did not exempt clergymen. While the Christian Register winced somewhat at the thought of a clergyman bearing arms, it believed that all classes of society had to shoulder "the burdens of this great context for humanity." Later the paper used clerical vulnerability to the draft as a way of chiding those who had objected to political preaching. "How is it," the paper asked, "that we hear no objections now to [the clergy] being forced to take a part, and a very active part too, in the most intensely secular and political work that men can do?" The Christian Register speculated that military service might even improve a minister's preaching by making it "less conventional and artificial, less starched and prim, less sanctimonious and technical." When some clergymen complained about their liability to the draft, the Christian Register advised them to "ask the next Congress to change [the law]. Until then nobody has a right to do anything but execute and obey it."⁶

Early in the war Unitarians of various shades of theology linked slavery with the war. Less than a month after hostilities had commenced both the Christian Register and the Christian Inquirer concluded that slavery was the major cause of the Civil War. Among the conservatives, Rev. George E. Ellis in September 1861 believed that a long war would destroy slavery which he thought was the major cause of the conflict. Ellis preferred a scheme of compensated emancipation but he was willing

⁶Christian Register, 21 March, 25 April, 23 May, 18 July, 25 July, 1 August 1863; Christian Inquirer, 25 July 1863. E. E. Hale, W. H. Furness, and R. W. Emerson favored some form of compulsory military service during the Civil War. Hale, Life and Letters of E. E. Hale, I, p. 330; W. H. Furness, Our American Institutions...Discourse...August 6th 1863 (Philadelphia: T. B. Pugh, 1863), pp. 11-12; Emerson to E. W. Emerson, May? 1864? in Ralph L. Rusk, ed., The Letters of Ralph Waldo Emerson (6 vols.; New York: Columbia University Press, 1939), V, pp. 378-379.



to accept compulsory manumission as a war measure. Although Ellis believed the first objective of the government was to restore the Union, he observed that the people had begun to insist that abolition also should become a war aim. Another conservative, George Ticknor, wrote the English geologist Sir Charles Lyell in February 1862 that all chances for the gradual elimination of slavery had evaporated when the Confederates had started the war. Ticknor had "no vaticinations" for the future of the South. "The blackness of thick darkness rests upon them, and they deserve all they will suffer," Ticknor wrote. "I admit that a portion of the North, and sometimes the whole North, has been very unjust to them.... But it is all no justification of civil war.... It is the unpardonable sin in a really free State." The radical Rev. O. B. Frothingham justified the war in May 1861 since its ultimate aim was humanitarian. Two months later Rev. W. J. Potter, another radical, declared that the federal government ought to use its war powers to free the slaves.⁷

Generally speaking, the Unitarian press supported the Lincoln Administration on the matter of emancipation. The Christian Register sustained President Lincoln's revocation of the emancipation orders issued by Generals John C. Frémont and David Hunter. Both the Christian Register and the Christian Inquirer were pleased when the President called on Congress for federal-state cooperation on the matter of gradual compensated emancipation in March 1862. One editorial in the Christian Register of April 1862 advanced the view that executive war powers should not be used to end slavery. But when Lincoln issued his

⁷Christian Register, 4 May, 12 October 1861; Christian Inquirer, 27 April, 29 June, 21 September 1861; Ticknor to Lyell, 11 February 1862 (Boston), in Hillard, Life of Ticknor, II, pp. 446-447.



preliminary emancipation proclamation in September 1862, an executive decision based on the President's war powers, both Unitarian weeklies heartily endorsed it.⁸

The enrollment of Negroes into the Union army produced considerable controversy. Many people objected to black soldiers, fearing demoralization of white troops and doubting the effectiveness of black men under arms. But as early as May 1862, and more emphatically in September, the Christian Register pressed the government to permit Negro enlistments. After Negroes had been officially mustered into federal service, the Christian Register conceded that much of the bias against Negro soldiers could not be speedily surmounted, but that this prejudice must be erased. By January 1864 an editorial writer for the Christian Register, apparently someone who had had military experience with black soldiers, observed that "the negroes in the service vary in their moral worth as much as the same number of white men, and when we prophesy concerning them we ought to discriminate more than we have done in times past." Perhaps the publication late in 1863 of Chaplain George H. Hepworth's Whip, Hoe, and Sword, in which this Unitarian minister lauded the fighting qualities of black soldiers he had seen in Louisiana, had some influence in overcoming objections to Negro troops in the uniform of the United States Army.⁹

⁸Christian Register, 14 September, 28 September 1861, 15 March, 5 April, 24 May, 27 September 1862; Christian Inquirer, 8 February, 15 March, 27 September 1862.

⁹Christian Register, 3 May, 6 September 1862, 28 March, 20 June 1863, 23 January, 7 May 1864; George H. Hepworth, The Whip, Hoe, and Sword; or, The Gulf-Department in '63 (Boston: Walker, Wise, and Company, 1864), pp. 190-191. The history of Negro troops in the federal forces is discussed in Dudley Taylor Cornish, The Sable Arm, Negro Troops in the Union Army, 1861-1865 (New York, London, Toronto: Longmans, Green and Co., 1956). For contemporary arguments opposing the use of black soldiers see pp. 40-41, 48-49, 110.



Wartime emancipation stimulated wartime idealism. The Christian Register read the last rites over the corpse of African colonization. The transportation of all American Negroes to Africa, the paper declared in December 1862, "is simply an impossibility, and were it not, would be inexpedient." Negroes were needed to grow southern crops not as slaves but as free wage earners. More than this, the black man "must play a great part for good or for evil in the future history of our country. Which it shall be depends upon us [*italics added.*]" Already the paper had carried features and editorials on the abilities of freedmen to earn a living and to absorb formal education. One reader of the Christian Register told the story of a Negro slave named Titus who had been owned by the minister of the First Congregational (Unitarian) Church in Sandwich, Massachusetts, at the time slavery was legal in the Commonwealth. After receiving his freedom upon the minister's death, Titus went to sea as a steward. Saving his money, Titus purchased a clock for the tower of the Sandwich meetinghouse. Titus also established a fund which by the 1860's earned for the society (to which he had belonged) an annual income of between two and three hundred dollars. The reader indignantly concluded that "we hear it said that the negro slave is so shiftless and improvident that if he were given his freedom he could not take care of himself!" By May 1864 the Christian Register insisted that institutions of higher learning admit blacks and whites on equal terms. The paper predicted that before long "Cambridge, Yale, Brown and Dartmouth will throw upon their doors. We must estimate the possibilities of a race by its leading minds, and when the future Frederick Douglass shall compete with the sons of Mr. Winthrop or Mr. Everett for the honors of the University, and doubtless sometimes carry off the palm of victory, it will be too late to deny the negro the justice of his due." In March



1865, Rev. J. H. Allen cited the return of Frederick Douglass to Baltimore, a colored preacher discussing slavery from a pulpit in Washington, D. C., and a Negro attorney having been admitted to practice before the United States Supreme Court as significant changes resulting from the war. "These are the high-water marks, so far," he wrote, "of that social revolution which is following up the steps of war."¹⁰

Few Unitarians believed that America would or should have an immediate racially integrated society. One of the better recent studies of this aspect of the Civil War, The Struggle for Equality, by James M. McPherson, shows that the gentle racism of some of the most outspoken abolitionists, such as Rev. J. F. Clarke and Rev. M. D. Conway, must be considered in the context of an age when the overwhelming popular and scientific thought of the day believed in the absolute inferiority of the black man.¹¹ Almost as remarkable, moreover, is the change Unitarians underwent regarding the issues of war and race during the Civil War. Before 1861 many had feared a sectional war would bring on servile insurrections. Many either had preferred or would accept a peaceful disunion during the secession crisis in order to avoid the double calamity of civil and servile violence. But after Fort Sumter most of these same people accepted the responsibility of a war they believed had been caused by slavery, an institution they hoped the war would destroy. Not only did they advocate arming black men to insure reunion and abolition,

¹⁰ Christian Register, 18 January, 8 February, 22 March, 20 December 1862, 7 May 1864. See articles on the freedmen in the issues of 2 July 1864, 7 January, 4 February, 1 April, 29 April 1865. Joseph Henry Allen, "The Fourth of March," Christian Examiner, LXXVIII (March, 1865), p. 284.

¹¹ James M. McPherson, The Struggle for Equality, Abolitionists and the Negro in the Civil War and Reconstruction (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), pp. 143-147.

but they also sought to begin the process of racial integration in the United States. The failure of British Unitarians to appreciate this dynamic war idealism generated bitterness among their American co-religionists and fanned the fires of patriotism even hotter among American liberal Christians.

As Anglo-American relations chilled during the Civil War, those of British and American Unitarians also became frigid. Wounds inflicted during the Mexican War reopened. Since theological conservatives had been especially Anglophobe in the 1840's, they found it easy to renew combat with the British in the 1860's. Some historians have asserted that most British Unitarians favored the Union,¹² but there is evidence to refute this conclusion.

Some American Unitarians believed from the start that their British brethren would back the North. In 1861, Rev. William H. Channing, who had lived in England for seven years, left the country believing that many British Unitarians supported the Union cause. At a Harvard Divinity School alumni meeting in July, Channing declared that the North could bank on British support if abolition became a war aim. Without this objective the British would remain lukewarm.¹³

A considerable number of American Unitarians were skeptical of British good will. Rev. George E. Ellis challenged Channing at the alumni meeting by alluding to the limited British sympathy for a war

¹²Donaldson Jordan and Edwin J. Pratt, Europe and the American Civil War (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1931), p. 94; Raymond V. Holt, The Unitarian Contribution to Social Progress in England (London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1938), p. 138. Neither work contains evidence to support the view that British Unitarians supported the Union.

¹³Frothingham, W. H. Channing, pp. 279, 308; Channing to Clarke, 18 May 1861 (Liverpool), in Monthly Journal, II (June, 1861), pp. 164-166; Christian Inquirer, 27 July 1861; Christian Register, 20 July 1861.



to preserve constitutional liberty. Rev. Samuel Osgood added that Americans could expect little support from a government which had mistreated the Chinese during the Opium War. Although Channing gained some support for his views from Rev. E. B. Hall, the Christian Register believed Channing's reasoning was not "satisfactory."¹⁴

Some Unitarians dispaired of the British government looking with favor on the Union because of the social and political structure of Great Britain. Rev. E. E. Hale described the British political system as one controlled by a merchant aristocracy and administered by a hereditary aristocracy, both pro-Southern. Hale pointed out that the British masses, who might favor the North, were politically impotent, and he expressed the belief that genuine antislavery sentiment had declined in Great Britain. He hoped that the British would follow a policy of non-intervention in American affairs, a policy they had pursued during the Italian troubles in 1859. The Christian Inquirer also disparaged the chances for British support because of the similarity of the British social structure with that of the Confederacy. The British, according to the New York Unitarian newspaper, were even more aristocratic than the French, the Germans, or even the Russians!¹⁵

British Unitarian feeling, even before the Trent affair, was not overwhelmingly pro-Union. By September 1861 the London Inquirer was known in the United States for its pro-Confederate position. The Unitarian Herald, published at Manchester, carried a report of the Divinity

¹⁴Christian Register, 20 July 1861; Christian Inquirer, 27 July 1861. Ellis elaborated his views in "Why Has the North Felt Aggrieved with England?" Atlantic Monthly, VII (November, 1861), pp. 612-625.

¹⁵Edward Everett Hale, "England and America," Christian Examiner, LXXI (September, 1861), pp. 181-198; Christian Inquirer, 7 September 1861.



School alumni meeting with the comment that it could not support a slaveholding Confederacy. Yet the Herald was perplexed by American Unitarians who, not long before Fort Sumter, had sought concessions for the South, but after the war had started had countenanced coercion "as a desperate measure of aggression" to reunite the country. It considered Ellis's remarks that the war was vital to sustain constitutional liberty a "delicate euphuism." The Herald hoped, however, that the Christian Register and the Christian Inquirer were correct in believing that the effect of the war would bring an end to slavery. Mrs. Elizabeth Gaskell, wife of a British Unitarian preacher, may have spoken for many of her faith when she queried Charles Eliot Norton why the North insisted on keeping the corrupted South. Admitting that the Confederates had been guilty of firing the first shot, she asked "what are you going to do when you have conquered the South, as no one doubts that you will." The subjugation of that section, she believed, would transform the United States into a militarist nation. A parallel situation might happen in Great Britain if the Scots should rebel (she thought it "not a fair comparison" to consider an Irish revolt!), but the English would be in the wrong to suppress a Scottish revolution.¹⁶

Unitarian Anglophobia scaled new heights over the Trent affair. In November 1861 Chaptain Charles Wilkes, commander of the federal warship San Jacinto, stopped the British mail steamer Trent and removed Confederate foreign commissioners James Murray Mason and John Slidell. The Christian Register acclaimed Wilkes as a "patriotic and meritorious

¹⁶Christian Inquirer, 7 September 1861; The Unitarian Herald, I (14 September 1861), p. 266; Mrs. Gaskell to Norton, 10 June 1861 (Manchester, Eng.), in Jane Whitehall, ed., Letters of Mrs. Gaskell and Charles Eliot Norton, 1855-1865 (London: Oxford University Press, 1932), pp. 82-85.

officer" who "had rendered so important and brilliant a service to his country" with "this bold arrest of two of the leading conspirators and traitors in the unholy rebellion." Shortly after the Administration released Mason and Slidell, the Christian Register upbraided the government and rattled its holy sabre at British threats. The newspaper had no fear that in a war with Great Britain "the downtrodden masses of the old world" would rise up against monarchical government. "The question should be universally pressed home," the paper declared, "what will be the worth to us of anything we may have left, if we are subjected to the rule of a Southern Oligarchy, backed by the unprincipled monarchies of Europe?" The Christian Inquirer observed that British resentment at the seizure of the Confederates proved British hatred of the United States. Undesirable as an Anglo-American war would be, the paper estimated that 300,000 Irishmen would enlist to fight the British. The editor repeated what he had overheard from a group of Irish in New York during the crisis: "Come, boys, handle your muskets; now, for ould England." But the best means to prevent foreign intervention, opined the Christian Inquirer, would be Union military victories.¹⁷

American and British rancor fed upon themselves. Harriet Martineau, who had had no qualms about the North's use of force to reunite the nation when the war began, became "hysterical" over the Trent affair. As the British correspondent to the New York Anti-Slavery Standard, she dispatched a violent missive anathematizing Wilke's conduct. The Anti-Slavery Standard lost readers and severed its ties with the fiery Englishwoman. Sarah B. Shaw, mother of the commander of the famous Massachusetts Fifty-Fourth regiment, became almost shrill about Miss Martineau:

¹⁷Christian Register, 30 November 1861, 4 January 1862; Christian Inquirer, 21 December, 28 December 1861, 4 January 1862.

Will you just excuse me for saying I wish I could punch Miss Martineau's head for her? I know that sounds dreadfully vulgar, but I have lost all sense of propriety and lady-like deportment. I have given up my 4 subscriptions to the Standard, because I will not pay one penny for English insolence to come over here. I think we have enough of it, "free, gratis, for nothing," don't you?What does it all mean dear Friend? Isn't it extraordinary? Hear Miss M. talk about the outrageous insult to their flag, etc. I wonder what she thinks of the insult to ours, when the South Carolinians shot it down, which England thought a trifle not worth our minding. What a besotted people they are! I'd like to punch all their heads.

Rev. E. E. Hale told his brother that "the only pity is that M.[ason] and S.[lidell] were not well hung before this row from England came over." The poet-physician Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes vividly expressed his opinion of the British:

Those beautiful breasts of our "mother" country, from which it seemed that nothing could wean us, have shrivelled into the wolf's dugs, and there is no more milk in them for us henceforth evermore.... I do believe Hell is empty of Devils for this last year, this planet has been so full of them helping the secession liars.¹⁸

Shortly after the Trent affair the London Inquirer ignited a heated trans-Atlantic debate. The British Unitarian weekly took exception to "two highly inflammatory and patriotic sermons" of Rev. Frederic Henry Hedge, President of the AUA, and Rev. W. H. Furness. Describing the Confederacy as a "great nation which is struggling for independent power in opposition to the aggression of the North," the London Inquirer prognosticated that Hedge and Furness would "look back upon their present utterances as the frantic delusion of a day of terrible excitement."¹⁹

¹⁸Webb, Harriet Martineau, pp. 328, 332-333; Sarah B. Shaw to Lydia M. Chapman, 2 January [1862], S. J. May Collection, Cornell University Libraries; Hale to Charles Hale, 19 December 1861 (Boston), in Hale, Life and Letters of E. E. Hale, I, pp. 339-340; Holmes to Motley, 3 February 1862, in John T. Morse, Life and Letters of Oliver Wendell Holmes (2 vols.; Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin and Company, 1896), II, pp. 159-160.

¹⁹London Inquirer, 8 February 1862, cited in Christian Register, 1 March 1862.

Apparently this was too much for forty-seven year old Rev. George E. Ellis, a veteran of the First Anglo-American Unitarian War fifteen years earlier. With his enlistment in the Second Anglo-American Unitarian War, Ellis championed his country just as the British did theirs. Ellis does not have a reputation as a polemicist except through the energetic defense of his faith in A Half Century of the Unitarian Controversy, published in 1857.²⁰ Ellis accused the London Inquirer of "poisoning the minds of the less intelligent of your readers with such an unintentional yet cruel and outrageous misrepresentation" of the facts regarding the North's alleged aggression against the South. "Nor is it true," he continued, "that 'all other nations' take the view of you Englishmen of our affairs. Russia, Prussia, Holland, Switzerland, and even Austria, have judged us more wisely and truly than you have." Considering American abuse of the Habsburgs and the Romanovs, especially after the revolutions of 1848, this was rather extreme. Ellis had learned, moreover,

that our best informed men have come to the conviction, that it is utterly in vain to attempt to set ourselves right in the opinion of Englishmen, because there is either a stolidity, or a warp, or a perversity of judgment among them which only time and better information, gained by their own pains, will remove.

Ellis recalled the ill-feelings of the 1840's springing from British reprimands of the Americans for their alleged tepid antislavery posture. The British had no cause for their captiousness according to Ellis. Americans had temporarily tolerated the evil of slavery, he wrote,

just as many of you Englishmen reconciled yourselves to the impositions of a privileged aristocracy, or to the trifling with solemn sanctities with Christian liberty

²⁰James Truslow Adams, "George Edward Ellis," DAB, VI, pp. 103-104; Samuel J. Barrows, "George Edward Ellis," HLF, III, p. 100; Sydney E. Ahlstrom, "The Middle Period," in Williams, ed., Harvard Divinity School, pp. 110-111, 132.



in a Church Establishment; just as you reconcile yourselves to a [government] subsidy for Popery in the endowment of the [Catholic] College at Maynooth [in Ireland], or to a connivance with idolatry in India, and to the outrages perpetuated by your government there and in China.

The issue of the Christian Register carrying Ellis's letter rapidly sold out. By popular demand the paper reprinted it three weeks later with additional copies priced five cents for a single issue, thirty-six cents a dozen!²¹

The editor of the London Inquirer, Rev. Thomas Lethbridge Marshall, printed Ellis's onset and counterattacked. Although he had approved Lincoln's election, Marshall still opposed the war. The Republicans had befouled their antislavery garments by enforcing the Fugitive Slave Law for the benefit of loyal masters. Marshall remained true to prewar Garrisonian disunionism by arguing that Southern slavery would wither if isolated. The Confederacy could not last; consequently, all the bloodshed was in vain. As for Great Britain's past uses of force to suppress rebellions, these had required only a fraction of the power currently employed by the federal government against the South. "A page in our history which we would willingly blot out," Marshall wrote, "has been the volume on which Americans feed their hostile feelings." A war which had injured English textile workers and which had needlessly expended human life could not be just, reasoned the British editor.²²

In his rejoinder Ellis touched on the possibility of an Irish rebellion and wondered if England "would mildly acquiesce" to it. He recalled that when Pope Pius IX had issued a bull in 1850 dividing Great Britain into twelve territorial districts, Lord John Russell, then Prime

²¹Christian Register, 5 April, 26 April 1862.

²²Quoted in Christian Register, 17 May 1862.



Minister, had denounced that edict as the "aggression of a foreign power" which threatened "the spiritual independence of the nation." Parliament later nullified the bull.²³ Had Ireland seceded as a result of Parliament's action, Ellis asked, what would the English have thought if the United States had made its sympathy with the British government contingent on the extermination of Roman Catholicism from Ireland? "My friend," Ellis counseled, "I assure you, that neither I, nor our Government can be held one whit more accountable for the existence of Slavery in some of our States than you are, or than your Government is, for the Roman Catholic Religion in Ireland." The American people had faced three alternatives during the secession crisis, Ellis said. One was continued submission to Southern control of the national government, but that "would have been corrupting and ruinous" and "most probably" would have led to the legalization of the slave trade.²⁴ Another was the peaceful secession of the lower South, which Ellis now (he had been acquiescent about a separation during the secession crisis) denied could have been possible, for civil disturbances in the border states would eventually embroil both sections (had Orville Dewey convinced him of this?). The third choice was that followed by the Lincoln Administration, a course Ellis approved.²⁵

In supporting Ellis's statements, the Christian Register defended the Union on the basis of national interest, decrying the argument of the London Inquirer that the North should have allowed the Confederacy to

²³Spencer Walpole, The Life of Lord John Russell (2 vols.; Longmans, Green, and Co., 1891), II, pp. 119-121; J. A. R. Marriott, England Since Waterloo (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1913), pp. 195-196.

²⁴This possibility had been raised in at least one British newspaper, The Illustrated London News, 18 January 1861, cited in Philip Van Doren Stern, When the Guns Roared, World Aspects of the Civil War (Garden City: Doubleday & Co., 1965), p. 102.

²⁵Christian Register, 17 May 1862.

secede on the moral grounds that slavery would naturally collapse, and that coercion of the South was contrary to Christianity. A divided America "would have been most advantageous for England," the Christian Register said, "and of course that must seem alone consonant with probity, as naturally and unconsciously of selfish bias as the dog's killing of the squirrel." The London Inquirer had contended that Ireland possessed insufficient wealth and resources for independence, to which the Christian Register retorted "but how is it with India? Is not that both large enough and populous enough? Yet rebellion was cruelly crushed in India, and not an English press raised a type against the crushing."²⁶

Other items indicate that the Christian Register placed some emphasis on national interest within a global framework during the Civil War. In February 1864, before news had arrived of hostilities between Denmark and the alliance of Prussia and Austria over the provinces of Schleswig-Holstein, the Christian Register touched on the rumors of a possible continental war that would reduce the odds of European diplomatic intervention in America's struggle. The paper happily speculated that such a war would be for the North "a positive gain."²⁷ Under new editorial management in January 1864, the paper acquired four British Unitarian ministers as European correspondents. By 1865, the Christian Register regularly featured foreign secular news on its front page; before the Civil War foreign news occupied a portion of a column on page three.

The employment of Britishers to write for the Christian Register raises the question of the intensity of Anglo-American Unitarian enmity during the Civil War. The Ellis-London Inquirer feud gives evidence

²⁶Ibid., 14 June 1862.

²⁷Ibid., 6 February 1864.



of considerable bitterness. Americans who had held Rev. James Martineau in high regard must have been severely downcast by his pro-Confederate utterances. Even after the Emancipation Proclamation he admitted to an American Unitarian clergyman that while he agreed that slavery had caused the war, the peculiar institution should not be abolished by force. Martineau declared that a divided United States would be "the one gleam of hope that has opened on the sad history of the coloured race in America. The Free States, discharged from their slave-responsibilities, would spring at once to the head of the great league of nations against the oppression of an inferior race." Martineau thought the Civil War would mean one of two things: either the sections would re-unite and slavery be maintained, or the war would become "so frightful and uncontrollable as to outbid slavery itself in crime and misery."²⁸ Near the end of the war the London Inquirer, like Martineau, remained unconvinced that the North had been morally right in resorting to force. Rev. George E. Ellis returned to his desk to compose another fiery reply on the very day the North celebrated Lee's surrender at Appomattox. Ellis told the London Inquirer that the breach between American and British Unitarians would continue for a long time since "so many of you came so far short of what we had a right to expect of you in our darker hours of suffering, sacrifice, and peril." Ellis was chagrined that Rev. R. L. Carpenter, a British preacher, had changed his mind and now denounced the war. "What a stupendous misconception, covering a thousand errors and blinds of judgment, underlies this conceit!" Ellis scolded.²⁹

²⁸ Martineau to J. H. Allen, 14 April 1863 (London), in Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts, VI (1899, 1900), p. 428. See Allen's undated reply, pp. 431-432, and Carpenter, James Martineau, pp. 424-428.

²⁹ Christian Register, 25 March, 27 May 1865.



Evidence of British-American hostility can be found also in official correspondence between the two groups. After Lincoln's death, three British Unitarian organizations sent condolences to the American Unitarian Association. With the approval of the Executive Committee, AUA Secretary Rev. Charles Lowe answered two of them. In one reply Lowe spoke for "the general sentiment of our body, when I affirm that there is nothing of past disappointment that prevents us now from heartily welcoming the cordial fellowship you proffer." He added that American Unitarians "have borne themselves so nobly during the late crisis in our national history,--...even though it were in ways that you could not understand,--that history will be our advocate." In the other Lowe wrote that "it would be idle to disguise the fact of our disappointment that such sympathy was withheld, at the time when we needed it most, in a cause which has in no respect changed except by its ultimate success." The last response was penned by John Gorham Palfrey in the capacity of President of the American Unitarian Association. He remarked that the Civil War "would have been less protracted, and less afflictive to both conquerors and conquered, had a friendly sentiment abroad been more widely diffused and more earnest."³⁰ If most British Unitarians had supported the Union cause American Unitarians did not know it.

During the Civil War, American Unitarians came to admire Abraham Lincoln as a great wartime leader. His character and statesmanship impressed them as shown by denominational support of most of his policies. But Lincoln as a person favorably affected Unitarians along with his policies.

³⁰The British letters and the American replies are in the Monthly Journal, VI (September, 1865), pp. 419-422; (October, 1865), pp. 465-470.

Neither the Christian Register nor the Christian Inquirer devoted much space to any of the presidential candidates in 1860. Before the election, Rev. Solon W. Bush, a Boston minister, sent an evaluation of Lincoln to the London Inquirer which may have reflected the feelings of some Unitarians toward the Republican nominee. Bush told of Lincoln's humble origins, of his lack of political experience compared with that of Stephen A. Douglas, and of the national reputation Lincoln had acquired through his debates with Douglas in 1858.

Mr. Lincoln has a clear logical mind [Bush wrote], more marked for quickness than breadth, and deals with the principles of government. Should he be elected his course will be firm, direct, and conservative. In his past career he has risen higher as every new energy has presented itself, and his mind promises far more comprehensive achievements³¹ than he has yet performed in the career of statesmanship.

Meeting the President face-to-face sometimes increased respect for Lincoln. Emerson found that Lincoln would have made a good Harvard man in that he possessed "that kind of sincerity and jolly good meaning that our class meetings on Commencement Days show, in telling our old stories over." Rev. S. K. Lothrop journeyed to the White House hoping to secure the release of a prisoner. Crowded with other favor-seekers in the President's office, Lothrop remembered laughing at Lincoln's jokes in spite of his bewilderment that the American people could have chosen such an uncouth man for the presidency. But when Lincoln explained his reasons for declining to release a man who had been arrested for refusing to swear allegiance to the country, the President won the admiration of Lothrop. On the other hand, Rev. Henry W. Bellows was disappointed after meeting the President. Early in the war he privately questioned

³¹London Inquirer, 29 September 1860. When Bush became editor of the Christian Register in 1864, that paper endorsed Lincoln for re-election.



Lincoln's grasp of affairs. At no time did Bellows suspect Lincoln's honesty or sincerity, but the preacher wavered in his judgment of Lincoln's strength of purpose. At the beginning of 1862 he thought of Lincoln as "a shrewd, firm, clear and strong man," while in the middle of the same year he found the Chief Executive "too amiable to be firm, and too conscientious to be as savage as the crisis requires."³²

Unitarians defended Lincoln from carping criticism. The Christian Register believed that while the President may have made some mistakes and had been too tender with "the semi-patriarchs of the Border States" on the slavery issue, the paper thought it not "becoming, or generous, or expedient" for critics "to pour out on him a torrent of angry, unsparing and contemptuous abuse." With remarkable empathy Rev. George W. Hosmer justified Lincoln's jokes: "Let Mr. Lincoln tell his stories, if by his humor he can keep alive under his awful responsibilities; but for his laughable story telling he would have been dead months ago." Even Bellows could say in public that beneath Lincoln's humor "burns a solemn earnestness of patriotism; amid his prudence a great courage; in all his gentleness and compliance a determined grasp of the reins; and a firmness not inferior to General Jackson's though without its passion and caprice." At the Autumnal Conference where Bellows praised the man he privately doubted, the assembled clergy and

³² Emerson, Journals, IX, p. 375; Lothrop, Lothrop, pp. 236-240; Bellows to his wife, 20 May 1861 (Washington, D. C.); Bellows to Joseph Dorr, 1 February 1862 (New York); Bellows to Hale, 5 July 1862 (New York), Bellows Papers, MHS. In his reminiscences Lothrop failed to say whether or not he gained his request. Regarding Emerson's comment that Lincoln would have succeeded at Harvard, it should be mentioned that Robert Todd Lincoln, the President's son, attended Harvard during the first years of the Civil War.



laity passed unanimously a resolution of support for the President, approbation for a political figure unprecedented at a Unitarian meeting.³³

In 1864 most Unitarians probably favored the re-election of the President, and both Unitarian newspapers endorsed Lincoln for another term in the White House. Joseph H. Allen and E. E. Hale wrote that nearly all the readers of the Christian Examiner had voted for Lincoln. The President, according to the two preachers, had "shown himself wiser than most of his counsellors." He was "a democrat of the democrats, in complete sympathy with the true democratic idea." Quoting the Democratic Boston Post, the Christian Register declared that before the election the city's clergy had "turned their pulpits into rostrums for belching forth Republican politics." The Unitarian weekly commented that this was simply "the old complaint" about ministers mixing politics with religion. The paper went on to expound on the legitimacy of Christian ministers to comment on current events. Even that crusty female abolitionist Lydia Maria Child viewed Lincoln's election with pleasure. "He has his faults, and I have sometimes been out of patience with him," she wrote, "but I will say of him that I have constantly gone on liking him better and better."³⁴

Lincoln's death stirred as much sorrow among Unitarians as could be found in America. "I have said as hard things of him as any man I know," E. E. Hale confessed, "perhaps we do of those we really love

³³Christian Register, 13 September, 27 September, 18 October, 25 October 1862. See also Orville Dewey's favorable comments on Lincoln in Christian Register, 28 February 1863.

³⁴Christian Register, 5 November, 12 November 1864; Christian Inquirer, 1 October, 15 October 1864; J. H. Allen and E. E. Hale, "The Presidential Election," Christian Examiner, LXXVII (November, 1864), pp. 351, 355; Child to Eliza Scudder, 1864, in Child, Letters of L. M. Child, pp. 183-184.



best. Now all is over." Starting from its obituary in the middle of April, the Christian Register and the Christian Inquirer ran excerpts from the many eulogies written by ministers for the late Chief Executive. And just before Christmas, the Christian Register hailed Lincoln as a great liberal Christian.³⁵

During the Civil War, Unitarian spokesmen advocated a vigorous prosecution of the war and approved extraordinary measures to ensure the preservation of the Union. Many believed slavery to have been a cause, if not the cause, of hostilities. Consequently, the nation they endeavored to save would be free of slavery and would provide social and political opportunities for black Americans. When British Unitarians either belittled or opposed this war for emancipation and social change, American Unitarians bristled with indignation. Anglo-American Unitarian antipathy during the Civil War ran quite high and indicates that in an allegedly pro-British community Anglophobia was much stronger than has been believed. Finally, Unitarians of various theological shades supported a war effort that drew the denomination deeply into a variety of social and political questions.

³⁵Hale to Bellows, 26 April 1865 (Boston), Bellows Papers, MHS; Christian Register, 9 December 1865. In more recent times, one Unitarian minister has called Lincoln a "religious liberal" but without pinning either a Unitarian or Universalist tag on him. Waldemar Argow, "Abraham Lincoln: Religious Liberal," The Register-Leader, CIL (February, 1967), pp. 7-9.



CHAPTER VI

UNITARIANS AND THE CIVIL WAR: DENOMINATIONAL AFFAIRS

Unitarianism did not expand greatly during the Civil War. Most people devoted their time, energy, and money on the war effort. A number of denominational leaders, such as Henry W. Bellows with the United States Sanitary Commission, and William G. Eliot with the Western Sanitary Commission, carried out philanthropic work. But denominational limitations did not prevent some wartime religious activity, particularly the supply of chaplains to Northern regiments and the publication and distribution of religious literature to the troops.

Beginning in 1864, moreover, the psychology of wartime unity began to modify traditional congregational polity. At the end of the war Unitarians held a National Conference composed of delegates from churches, a contrast to the American Unitarian Association whose members were only interested individuals. The war had forged a new and more energetic denomination, due in part to its involvement in the war effort.

As best as can be determined, fifty-four Unitarian ministers served as chaplains in Northern units.¹ Some later served in the ranks. Regiments from Maine to Kansas contained Unitarian chaplains but most of them were in Massachusetts units. At the end of 1861 the Monthly Journal and the Christian Register quoted the observations of non-Unitarian religious

¹See Appendix G.



journals that the Unitarians had supplied a larger proportion of chaplains than any other faith.²

Chaplains performed many tasks in the army, among them reading and writing letters for illiterate enlisted men, distributing tracts, serving as postal clerks, hospital attendants, personal counselors, and teamsters. One chaplain even became cheery about army life: "In health and contentment of spirit, I never realized what life was till now. This kind of life is so full of out-of-doors, so direct, simple and earnest, so free from mannerisms and shams, that I heartily enjoy it and thrive on it."³ Later in the war, one minister refused to consider a chaplaincy in the belief that few chaplains he had known were successful, and of the few who claimed success in their work nearly all remained in the army only a short time.⁴

Not all chaplains were so pessimistic. When the Executive Committee of the AUA asked several chaplains about their work, most replied that they felt they were doing useful things. Many thought sectarian prejudices had been greatly reduced by the war, and that this more liberal attitude benefitted Unitarianism. Rev. W. G. Eliot asserted that "our Unitarian faith works well in time of trial". No other church

²Monthly Journal, II (September, 1861), pp. 423-424; Christian Register, 16 November 1861. Perhaps the oldest Unitarian chaplain was feisty John Pierpont, who in 1861, at the age of seventy-six, volunteered with the Massachusetts Twenty-Second. Before long he found "that tho' my spirit was willing, my flesh was weak, [and] I have resigned the honor." During the war Pierpont worked as a clerk in the Treasury Department. "John Pierpont," HLF, II, p. 191; Pierpont to an unknown person, 1 November 1861, AUA Letters, 1861.

³Christian Register, 18 January 1862.

⁴W. B. Smith to C. Lowe, 2 February 1865 (Cambridge, Mass.), AUA Letters, 1865. Smith had been asked to serve with a Negro regiment but his remarks pertained to the state of chaplains in general.



has been so uniformly and thoroughly loyal, and no other has done more for the sick and dying." To the question about the effectiveness of denominational literature provided them by the AUA, nearly all approved it. One exception was Rev. James K. Hosmer who was serving in the ranks. Hosmer declared that increased enlistments would be more helpful to the army than religious tracts.⁵

The American Unitarian Association provided a considerable amount of religious reading matter for the troops. In August 1861 George B. Emerson, a noted Boston educator and chairman of the AUA's finance committee, suggested that the Association publish special material for the army. After some discussion, the Executive Committee resolved that suitable reading material and song books were needed to help the troops withstand irreverence, profanity, lying, alcohol, "profligacy, and the mean-spirited slothfulness, and hatred of regular and honorable employment, which have so often stigmatized the discharged soldier on his return from war."⁶ The Executive Committee published a military edition of the Monthly Journal entitled The Soldier's Companion. It contained hymns, patriotic songs, verses from the Bible, and inspirational statements from politicians and preachers. It also gave the soldier some practical medical advice, urging him to wear clean, dry socks, to get plenty of sleep, and, "if disease begins to prevail, wear a wide bandage of flannel around the bowels." Over 57,000 copies of The Soldier's Companion were published and distributed during the war.⁷

⁵Monthly Journal, IV (July-August, 1863), pp. 338-350.

⁶Ibid., II (September, 1861), pp. 439-441.

⁷Ibid., II (October, 1861), p. 489, passim.; VI (July, 1865), p. 311. The Association published several editions of The Soldier's Companion.



The Association also published twenty different tracts in what it called the "Army Series."⁸ Rev. J. F. W. Ware wrote fourteen of them. One each came from the pens of Rev. George Putnam, Mr. Elbridge J. Cutler, Rev. Robert Collyer, Rev. S. H. Winkley, one anonymous writer, and Charles Eliot Norton. Because of his later fame as an editor and his wartime compositions for the Loyal Publication Society, Norton's ideas merit some attention. Peace, he said early in the war, had made Americans "rich and weak." The end of the "treacherous truce" in Charleston harbor could only strengthen the North. "Happy for us that the delusion has not lasted too long, and that now, when the truth is discovered, and the call comes to us to arms, we are ready to seize them, though we be little prepared to use them." The major theme of Norton's tract was that "the good soldier's first sacrifice is that of his individual will."⁹

Eventually the AUA operated a rather large publishing and distributing enterprise. The Association appealed repeatedly for donations to support the cost of The Soldier's Companion, the tracts of the "Army Series," and the distribution of these plus denominational and secular newspapers. In addition to the chaplains about seventy laymen assisted the Association in circulating an estimated 3,000,000 pages of printed matter annually to Union soldiers during the war. Although many believed

⁸ All the tracts were reprinted under one cover after the war with the title, Tracts of the American Unitarian Association, Army Series (Boston: American Unitarian Association, 1865).

⁹ Charles Eliot Norton, "The Soldier of the Good Cause," in Army Series. While preparing the tract Norton wrote H. W. Bellows that the war would produce "manliness" in the American people making them "capable of ruling and of working out with vigor and uprightness the desires of the nation." Norton to Bellows, 25 August 1861, Bellows Papers, MHS. The work of Norton and Bellows with the Union League is treated by Frank Fridel, "The Loyal Publication Society: A Pro-Union Propaganda Agency," The Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XXVI (December, 1939), pp. 359-376.



this literature had won converts, the Executive Committee agreed to omit the Association's imprint on some tracts to avoid charges of sectarianism.¹⁰

However Northern Unitarian preaching and literature may have been accepted by Union soldiers, Southern Unitarians had little to do with either. By early 1862 pulpits were empty at New Orleans, Mobile, Nashville, Charleston, and Richmond.¹¹ In the border state of Missouri Rev. W. G. Eliot mentioned that several had resigned from his St. Louis society and that "no secessionist comes near us. For though I rarely introduce the subject [of the war], the 'status' of the church is very thoroughly understood, and the atmosphere does not agree with the 'facing-two ways.'" ¹² As the war drew to a close, the AUA inquired into the rejuvenation of a number of Southern societies. Rev. C. J. Bowen found that the meetinghouse at Charleston, South Carolina, had escaped damage, but he thought it "premature" to attempt rebuilding the society. Chaplain E. W. Wheelock informed Boston that the New Orleans society had a reputation of "notorious disloyalty" and that it had refused to allow Northerners to preach there. Equally pessimistic reports came from Savannah and Norfolk.¹³

¹⁰ Monthly Journal, IV (January, 1863), p. 16; ibid., (July-August, 1863), p. 304; ibid., V (November, 1864), pp. 519-522; ibid., VI (July, 1865), p. 311; Cooke, Unitarianism in America, pp. 184-185. Only when the war had about ended did someone think of sending material to the navy. W. A. P. Willard to G. W. Fox, 15 February 1865, AUA Letters, 1865. One layman who had been in the army nearly four years reported that AUA tracts were seldom read but were used for toilet paper! J. E. Mason to C. Lowe, 23 February 1865, AUA Letters, 1865.

¹¹ Monthly Journal, III (February, 1862), p. 87.

¹² Eliot to an unknown person, 21 May 1863 (St. Louis), AUA Letters, 1863.

¹³ Bowen to R. P. Stebbins, 3 March 1865 (Baltimore); Bowen to C. Lowe, 14 March 1865 (Baltimore); Wheelock to C. Lowe, 8 March 1865



Whether by accident or design, few Southern Unitarians participated in the "National Conference" of Unitarians in April 1865.¹⁴ The objective of this meeting was to promote Unitarianism by organizing a constituent assembly composed of delegates from churches to help raise money for missionary activities and for general promotion of the faith. The National Conference remained distinct from the American Unitarian Association until 1925 when the two merged. The AUA name remained as did representation by the churches.¹⁵ The National Conference adopted a simple Constitution with a Preamble and eight articles. Octavius B. Frothingham and other radicals became suspicious of what they considered a theologically conservative hue to the proceedings. Open warfare erupted between the two factions the next year at Syracuse when some radicals unsuccessfully attempted to substitute a new preamble providing for greater theological latitude. Their failure drove some radicals from the denomination while others remained. Many of the radicals formed the Free Religious Association in 1867.¹⁶

(New Orleans); S. Padelford to R. P. Stebbins, 28 March 1865 (Savannah); L. A. Smith to R. P. Stebbins, 9 April 1865 (Norfolk), AUA Letters, 1865.

¹⁴ Rather than the term "National Conference" a more descriptive one would be "Loyalist Northern Conference." Delegates from the following states attended: Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New York, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, Kentucky, and Missouri. Christian Register, 1 April 1865; Gohdes, "Some Notes on the Unitarian Church in the Ante-Bellum South," in Jackson, ed., American Studies in Honor of William Kenneth Boyd, p. 355.

¹⁵ Eliot, Unitarians Face a New Age, pp. 242-243.

¹⁶ Cooke, Unitarianism in America, pp. 187-202; Persons, Free Religion, pp. 12-17; Walker, "Ecumenicity and Liberty," Proceedings of the Unitarian Historical Society (1961), pp. 1-24; Wright, "Henry W. Bellows and the Organization of the National Conference," Proceedings of the Unitarian Historical Society, (1965), pp. 17-46.



In one sense it is a mistake to believe that only after the Civil War Unitarianism became "national." The faith was perhaps more national in scope before the war than immediately after it. According to the Directory of the Unitarian Universalist Association in 1965, only seven societies in the former Confederacy could trace their lineage to ante-bellum days, and of those seven only two (Charleston and New Orleans) were Unitarian. The vast majority of today's Southern churches and fellowships were organized after 1950, and of the remainder most were formed in the first half of the twentieth century.

The Civil War centralized Unitarianism to a degree. Although historians dealing with the origins of the National Conference credit Henry W. Bellows as the prime mover of this development, even before the Civil War others had discussed the need for a tighter organization. Some discussed a new organization early in the Civil War. But beginning in January 1864, the Christian Register, with a new editor, Rev. Solon W. Bush, and a staff of other conservatives, hammered away in a number of editorials for a more effective "denominational union."¹⁷ The labors of Unitarian laymen, ministers, and chaplains in the network to publish and to distribute religious literature to the army may have facilitated the accomplishment of this objective. It seems clear that the Civil War effected a more consolidated religious denomination, one which had prided itself on its congregationalism; and conservatives led the way.

¹⁷Examples of articles promoting the "denominational union" can be found in the Christian Register, 2 January, 30 January, 13 February, 5 March, 16 April, 23 April 1864.



CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

From 1830 to 1865 the Unitarian denomination in the United States was a predominantly middle-class faith that became vitally concerned with the issues of war, slavery, and the Union. Although this group was a minority among the Christian churches, its basic belief in a rational form of Christianity drew people who sought not only greater religious freedom, but also those who endeavored to practice their liberal Christianity in public affairs.

Even before 1830 Unitarians believed that slavery was an immoral blot on American society. During the 1830's they looked to the day when that degrading institution would gradually disappear, hopefully by voluntary manumission regulated by state governments. They avoided abolitionism because they feared that that movement would result in a sectional war that would shatter the Union and produce a bloody race war in the South. But these fears did diminish their detestation of slavery as expressed in their periodicals and by their ministers.

In the early 1840's Unitarians discovered that moderate and non-inflammatory antislavery preaching would not be tolerated in the South, even by Southern Unitarians. Northern Unitarians responded by denouncing slavery through the American Unitarian Association, as well as from the pulpit and in the press.



In consequence of their actions, Northern Unitarians came under attack from two sides. Southern Unitarians, likewise fearing sectional and servile war, turned implacably hostile to discussions of slavery and closed their pulpits to antislavery preaching. All the while British Unitarians censured Northern Unitarians for doing too little against slaveholding. The British did not hesitate to suggest a division of the Union as a solution to the problem.

The Mexican War increased Northern Unitarian opposition to war and slavery since that conflict had been caused, they believed, by a slaveryocracy bent on expanding human bondage. Unitarianism in the North became more identified with the antislavery movement and more involved in political and social questions.

After the Mexican War, the Kansas-Nebraska Act reopened the issue of slave extension. This time Northern Unitarians as a denomination established a mission in Kansas Territory whose stated purpose was to aid in stopping the spread of slavery. During the days of "bleeding Kansas" in the 1850's, Unitarians became acquainted with the idea of forceful measures to halt slave expansion. Few entertained the idea of a direct attack on slavery in the South, as shown by their opposition to the John Brown raid at Harper's Ferry and by their hesitation to permit forceful means to hold the South during the secession crisis. But fewer yet would permit Southern secession by violent means.

When the Confederates fired on Fort Sumter, nearly all Northern Unitarians believed that the Southerners had committed an act of aggression. Through the war years they supported extraordinary measures for suppressing the rebellion, but they hoped and expected that the Union they endeavored to save would be different from that of antebellum times. Not only did they seek the abolition of slavery, whether as a



war measure by the President or as an act of justice, but they also urged at least a partial integration of black citizens into American life. British Unitarians, unsympathetic to a war for emancipation, although retaining their hatred of slavery, scolded the Americans for sanctioning military means to preserve the Union and to abolish slavery. Unionist American Unitarians, in turn, berated the British for their pro-Confederate leanings. During the war, moreover, Unitarians shifted somewhat from a congregational church structure to one with a greater degree of centralization.

From 1830 to 1865 Unitarians of various theological shadings moved the denomination into a greater concern for political and social questions. If anything, conservative Unitarians--those closer to the Christian tradition than the radicals--led the way in transforming the denomination from a passive agency of spiritual salvation to an agency for "social action." The foundations for later Unitarian concern for public issues were laid during the three decades before 1860 and were cemented by the Civil War.



BIBLIOGRAPHICAL ESSAY



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Unitarian clergymen have written the three general histories of the denomination in the United States that have been consulted for this study. A scholarly survey is that of Earl Morse Wilbur, A History of Unitarianism in Transylvania, England, and America (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1952). This work continues from Wilbur's study of European Unitarianism, A History of Unitarianism, Socinianism and its Antecedents (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1947). Wilbur condensed his writing into a more popular account, Our Unitarian Heritage, An Introduction to the History of the Unitarian Movement (Boston: The Beacon Press, 1925). A pioneer work is George Willis Cooke, Unitarianism in America: A History of its Origin and Development (Boston: American Unitarian Association, 1902).

The following studies of Unitarian theology were helpful. The seventeenth, eighteenth, and early nineteenth centuries of the movement in New England are discussed in Conrad Wright, The Beginnings of Unitarianism in America (Boston: Starr King Press, 1955). Since most Unitarian ministers studied at Harvard, one can learn much about their training in George Huntston Williams, ed., The Harvard Divinity School: Its Place in Harvard University and in American Culture (Boston: The Beacon Press, 1954). A significant article on theological controversies involving Unitarians is C. H. Faust, "The Background of the Unitarian Opposition to Transcendentalism," Modern Philology, XXXV (February, 1938), pp. 297-324. Another discussion of a theological nature and



one which differs in important respects from the works of Wilbur and Cooke is William R. Hutchison, The Transcendentalist Ministers: Church Reform in the New England Renaissance (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959). A chronicle of trans-Appalachian Unitarianism is found in Charles H. Lyttle, Freedom Moves West, A History of the Western Unitarian Conference 1852-1952 (Boston: The Beacon Press, 1952).

Two Unitarian studies deal with the denomination's social structure. Unitarians in the nineteenth century were mostly professionals, merchants, financiers, manufacturers and intellectuals according to Richard E. Sykes, "The Effect of Rapid Social and Cultural Change on Unitarianism in Massachusetts, 1800-1870," (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1966). Sykes presents considerable amounts of evidence to refute his conclusion. In Appendix II of his dissertation he gives samples of church membership according to occupation in several Massachusetts towns indicating a broad appeal to many levels of society. The other work, important because of its popularity among Unitarian Universalists today, is Josiah R. Bartlett and Laile E. Bartlett, Moment of Truth; Our Next Four Hundred Years, An Analysis of Unitarian Universalism (Berkeley, California: Published by the authors, 1968). The Bartletts occasionally refer to nineteenth century Unitarians as "upper middle class," "aristocratic," and "respectable," basing their judgments on secondary sources.

Studies of antislavery and antiwar Unitarian ministers along with a few of the writings of some ministers on these subjects were important. Rev. Samuel Joseph May ranks high in both categories. Among May's works that were helpful are A Discourse on Slavery in the United States, Delivered in Brooklyn [Connecticut], July 3, 1831 (Boston: Garrison and Knapp, 1832), and Some Recollections of Our Antislavery Conflict (Boston:



Fields, Osgood & Co., 1869). A critical study of May is William H. Pease and Jane H. Pease, "Freedom and Peace: A Nineteenth Century Dilemma," The Midwest Quarterly, A Journal of Contemporary Thought, IX (October, 1967), pp. 23-40. A provocative study of three clergymen--Samuel J. May, Henry W. Bellows, and Orville Dewey--is that of Conrad Wright, "The Minister as Reformer: Profiles of Unitarian Ministers in the Anti-Slavery Reform," an essay soon to be published. Another reminiscence by a Unitarian abolitionist is James Freeman Clarke, Anti-Slavery Days, A Sketch of the Struggle Which Ended in the Abolition of Slavery in the United States (New York: R. Worthington, 1884). A contemporary antislavery and antiwar book by a minister is Abiel Abbott Livermore, The War with Mexico Reviewed (Boston: Wm. Crosby and H. P. Nichols, 1850). Unitarian antislavery and antiwar sentiments are somewhat imperfectly presented by Clayton Ellsworth, "The American Churches and the Mexican War," The American Historical Review, XLVI (January, 1940), pp. 301-326. Helpful to some degree on the Mexican War was Merle Eugene Curti, The American Peace Crusade, 1815-1860 (Durham: Duke University Press, 1929). P. J. Staudenraus, The African Colonization Movement 1816-1865 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), has important information on individual Unitarians.

Works on Southern Unitarianism that have been examined are Arthur A. Brooks, The History of Unitarianism in the Southern Churches (Boston: American Unitarian Association, n.d.); Clarence Gohdes, "Some Notes on the Unitarian Church in the Ante-Bellum South: A Contribution to the History of Southern Liberalism," in David K. Jackson, ed., American Studies in Honor of William Kenneth Boyd, by Members of the Americana Club of Duke University (Durham: Duke University Press, 1940); George H. Gibson, "Unitarian Congregations [of Charleston, Augusta, and Savannah]



in the Ante-Bellum South," Proceedings of the Unitarian Historical Society, XI (1959), pp. 53-78; and George H. Gibson, "The Unitarian-Universalist Church of Richmond," The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, LXXIV (July, 1966), pp. 321-335. All of these writers appear reluctant to admit that a considerable number of Southern Unitarians were proslavery. Two published proslavery sermons by Unitarian ministers are Charles A. Farley, Slavery; A Discourse Delivered in the Unitarian Church, Richmond, Va., Sunday, August 30, 1835 (Richmond: Printed by James C. Walker, 1835), and Charles M. Taggart, Slavery and Law in the Light of Christianity. A Discourse Delivered Before the Congregation of Unitarian Christians of Nashville, Tenn. on Sunday Evening June 22D, 1851 (Nashville: John T. S. Fall, 1851).

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A number of official denominational documents have been examined. The published Annual Reports of the American Unitarian Association from 1826 to 1865 are filled with a surprising amount of material for this study. One of the most important sources is the official correspondence



(regretfully, only letters received) of the American Unitarian Association. These unpublished "AUA Letters" are safeguarded in the Treasurer's Office of the Unitarian Universalist Association in Boston. Fortunately for the researcher, they are bound together by year and have been arranged chronologically within each volume. Important for the view Unitarians of the 1930's had of the social structure of nineteenth century Unitarians is Frederick May Eliot, et al., Unitarians Face a New Age: The Report of the Commission of Appraisal to the American Unitarian Association (Boston: The Commission of Appraisal of the American Unitarian Association, 1936). On the social structure and opinion on political preaching of the 1960's see the Report of the Committee on Goals (n.p.: Unitarian Universalist Association, [1967]).

Contemporary periodicals provided much information on all aspects of this study. The Christian Examiner (Boston) contained numerous articles on social and political questions. For a discussion of this periodical see Frank Luther Mott, "The Christian Disciple and the Christian Examiner," The New England Quarterly, I (April, 1928), pp. 197-207. The key to the Christian Examiner is William Cushing, ed., Index to the Christian Examiner, Volumes I.-LXXXVII., 1824-1869. I. Index of Subjects. II. Index of Writers (Boston: J. S. Cushing, Printer, 1879). Two weekly newspapers, the Christian Register (Boston) and the Christian Inquirer (New York) are invaluable. Also important is The Quarterly Journal of the American Unitarian Association (Boston), begun in 1853 and which became a monthly in 1860. Some useful information was found in William Lloyd Garrison's abolitionist newspaper, The Liberator (Boston), and in the Christian World (Boston), a weekly newspaper published by the Church of the Disciples.



As for manuscript collections, three at the Massachusetts Historical Society proved highly informative: the large Henry W. Bellows Papers, the smaller Lothrop Family Papers, and the few items in the Ezra Stiles Gannett Papers. A number of manuscripts cited in my Kansas article are to be found at the hospitable rooms of the Kansas State Historical Society. The Charles Brooks Manuscripts at the Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library, contain the journal and letters of a Boston minister during the 1840's. One item, a letter written by Sara B. Shaw on the English during the Civil War, came from the Samuel J. May Collection at the Cornell University Libraries.

A number of memoirs, autobiographies, biographies, collected works, and published letters have been employed in this study. Those of clergymen will be mentioned followed by those of laymen.

William Ellery Channing was one of the most significant persons in Unitarian and American history. Although there are several editions of his writings, the one used was The Works of William E. Channing, D. D., With an Introduction (Boston: American Unitarian Association, 1875). The first biography of Channing was written by his nephew, William Henry Channing, The Life of William Ellery Channing, D. D. (The Centenary Memorial edition; Boston: American Unitarian Association, 1904). This contains a number of letters but it is neither a digested nor a readable book. Another important source for Channing's thoughts is Anna Letitia Le Breton, ed., Correspondence of William Ellery Channing, D. D., and Lucy Aikin, From 1826 to 1842 (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1874). Three modern biographies have been consulted: David P. Edgell, William Ellery Channing, An Intellectual Portrait (Boston: The Beacon Press, 1955); Arthur W. Brown, Always Young for Liberty, A Biography of William Ellery



Channing (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1956); and Madeleine Hooke Rice, Federal Street Pastor: The Life of William Ellery Channing (New York: Bookman Associates, 1961).

Theodore Maynard, Orestes Brownson: Yankee, Radical, Catholic (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1943), perpetuates the notion of Unitarian aristocracy. There is evidence indicating a broader social appeal of the faith and some information on Unitarian attitudes on social questions in Octavius Brooks Frothingham, Memoir of William Henry Channing (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1886). While interesting on aspects of Southern life, there is little denominational history in the reminiscences of a proslavery Unitarian minister, Theodore Clapp, Autobiographical Sketches and Recollections, During a Thirty-Five Years' Residence in New Orleans (Boston: Phillips, Sampson & Company, 1857).

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more information about the faith: Charlotte C. Eliot, William Greenleaf Eliot, Minister, Educator, Philanthropist (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin, and Company, 1904), and Arthur B. Ellis, ed., Memoir of Rufus Ellis, Including Selections from his Journal and Letters (Boston: William B. Clarke and Co., 1891).

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Samuel Longfellow, a brother of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, has been memorialized by Joseph May, ed., Samuel Longfellow, Memoir and Letters (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1894). Longfellow's letters reveal the thinking of one theological radical on political matters.

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Like Lothrop, Samuel J. May's father lost his money. May's experiences as a minister also show evidence of the wide social appeal of Unitarianism in G. B. Emerson, Samuel May, Jr., and T. J. Mumford, Memoir of Samuel Joseph May (Boston: American Unitarian Association, 1882). Another instance of early misfortune of a minister can be found in John Hopkins Morison, A Memoir, by His Children (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1897).



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James B. Thayer memorialized his father-in-law in Rev. Samuel Ripley of Waltham (Cambridge, Mass.: John Wilson and Son, 1897), a book about a working-class Unitarian church. In his The Life and Writings of Jared Sparks (2 vols.; Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1893), Herbert B. Adams tells of a minister who served in the South and who later became a noted historian. John Ware, Memoir of the Life of Henry Ware, Jr. by His Brother, John Ware, M. D. (2 vols.; Boston: American Unitarian Association, 1868), describes the life of a Boston minister and Harvard Divinity School professor.

One of the most delightful memoirs examined was that of Mary Willard, ed., Life of Rev. Samuel Willard, D. D., A. A. S., of Deerfield, Mass. (Boston: Geo. H. Ellis, 1892). Willard was one of the earliest Unitarian ministers in the United States. That his theology was accepted in the rural community of Deerfield testifies to the attraction of the faith among men and women outside urban areas. Willard tells of his early struggles against the orthodox, how his blindness compelled him to resign



his pastorate, and how he continued to remain active by arranging sacred music for publication. The book tells of his conversion to abolitionism late in life and his efforts to move the denomination to a stronger anti-slavery position.

Unitarian laymen who achieved prominence often had little to record on denominational matters. The following works contained some information: Allan Nevins, ed., The Diary of John Quincy Adams, 1794-1845: American Political, Social and Intellectual Life from Washington to Polk (New York, London, Toronto: Longmans, Green and Co., 1928); Lydia Maria Child, Letters of Lydia Maria Child with a Biographical Introduction by John G. Whittier and An Appendix by Wendell Phillips (Boston: Houghton Mifflin and Company, 1883); Ralph L. Rusk, ed., The Letters of Ralph Waldo Emerson (6 vols.; New York: Columbia University Press, 1939); Edward Waldo Emerson and Waldo Emerson Forbes, eds., Journals of Ralph Waldo Emerson, With Annotations (10 vols.; Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1913); Paul Revere Frothingham, Edward Everett, Orator and Statesman (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1925); John L. Thomas, The Liberator, William Lloyd Garrison, A Biography (Boston: Little, Brown, 1963); Richard H. Sewell, John P. Hale and the Politics of Abolition (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1965); John T. Morse, Life and Letters of Oliver Wendell Holmes (2 vols.; Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1896); David B. Tyack, George Ticknor and the Boston Brahmins (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967); and George S. Hillard, ed., Life, Letters, and Journals of George Ticknor (2 vols.; Boston: James R. Osgood and Company, 1876).



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A small book with a long title gave considerable evidence of the growth of Unitarianism in western Massachusetts is Susan I. Lesley, Recollections of My Mother, Mrs. Anne Jean Lyman of Northampton, Being a Picture of Domestic and Social Life in New England in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1899). With an introduction by James Freeman Clarke, the book contains a number of letters.

Two other works about distaff Unitarians are Mary E. Dewey, ed., Life and Letters of Catherine M. Sedgwick (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1871), which deals with the faith in New York, while Edward B. Hall, Memoir of Mary L. Ware, Wife of Henry Ware, Jr. (Boston: American Unitarian Association, 1869), treats with the faith in Boston. Both have letters pertinent to this study.

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Whig Politics and Southwestern Expansion, 1843-1848 (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1967); Arthur B. Darling, "Jacksonian Democracy in Massachusetts, 1824-1848," The American Historical Review, XXIX (January, 1924), pp. 271-287; Arthur B. Darling, Political Changes in Massachusetts, 1824-1848, A Study of Liberal Movements in Politics (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1925); and Jacob C. Meyer, Church and State in Massachusetts from 1740 to 1833; A Chapter in the History of the Development of Individual Freedom (Cleveland: Western Reserve University Press, 1930). In the same vein is H. Richard Niebuhr, The Social Sources of Denominationalism (Cleveland and New York: The World Publishing Company, 1957).

The upper class nature of Unitarianism has carried over into at least two leading American history textbooks: John M. Blum, Bruce Catton, Edmund S. Morgan, Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., Kenneth M. Stamp, and C. Vann Woodward, The National Experience (New York and Burlingame: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1963), and Dexter Perkins and Glyndon G. Van Deusen, The United States of America: A History (2 vols.; New York: The Macmillan Company, 1962).

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University of Kansas Press, 1954). How Kansas interested one minister is treated in Cora Dolbee, "The First Book on Kansas: The Story of Edward Everett Hale's 'Kansas and Nebraska,'" The Kansas Historical Quarterly, II (May, 1933), pp. 139-181.

The works of a number of scholars were helpful on the Civil War era. Among them are Dudley Taylor Cornish, The Sable Arm: Negro Troops in the Union Army, 1861-1865 (New York, London, Toronto: Longmans, Green and Co., 1956); George M. Frederickson, The Inner Civil War, Northern Intellectuals and the Crisis of the Union (New York and Evanston: Harper Torchbacks, 1968); Frank Freidel, "The Loyal Publication Society: A Pro-Union Propaganda Agency," The Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XXVI (December, 1939), pp. 359-376; Donaldson Jordan and Edwin J. Pratt, Europe and the American Civil War (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1931); James M. McPherson, The Struggle for Equality, Abolitionists and the Negro in the Civil War and Reconstruction (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964); David M. Potter, Lincoln and His Party in the Secession Crisis (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1942); Kenneth M. Stampp, And the War Came, The North and the Secession Crisis, 1860-1861 (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1950); and Philip Van Doren Stern, When the Guns Roared: World Aspects of the Civil War (Garden City: Doubleday & Co., 1965).

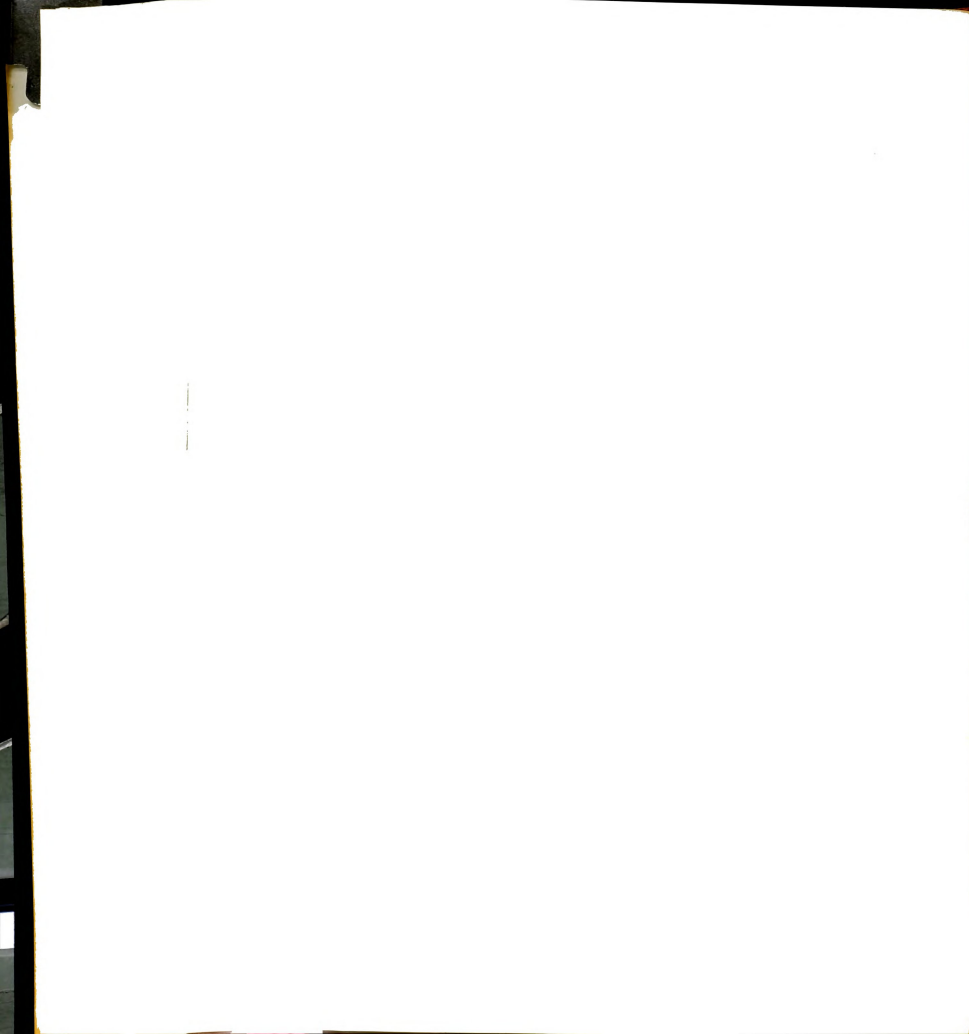
Some of the Civil War writings by Unitarians that were examined include Henry W. Bellows, Unconditional Loyalty (New York: Anson D. F. Randolph, 1863); George E. Ellis, "Why Has the North Felt Aggrieved with England?" Atlantic Monthly, VIII (November, 1861), pp. 612-625; W. H. Furness, Our American Institutions. A Thanksgiving Discourse Delivered in the First Congregational Unitarian Church in Philadelphia, August 6th



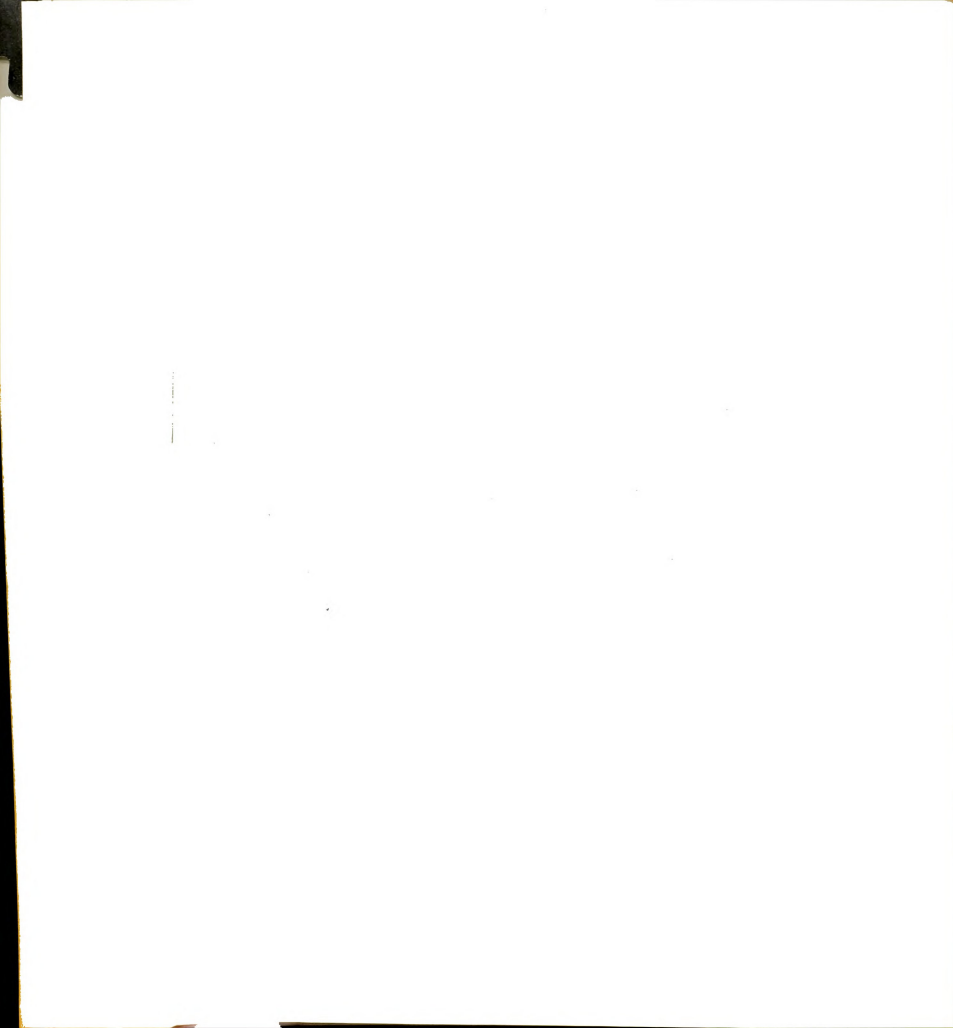
1863 (Philadelphia: T. B. Pugh, 1863); George H. Hepworth, The Whip, Hoe, and Sword: or, The Gulf-Department in '63 (Boston: Walker, Wise & Co., 1864); and Tracts of the American Unitarian Association, Army Series (Boston: American Unitarian Association, 1865).

Locating biographical data on prominent Unitarians is not difficult. The major work used was Samuel A. Eliot, ed., Heralds of a Liberal Faith (3 vols.; Boston: American Unitarian Association, 1910). A fourth volume, also edited by Eliot, appeared in 1952 published by the Beacon Press. Also useful are Alan Johnson and Dumas Malone, eds., Dictionary of American Biography (22 vols.; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1928, 1944, 1958), and The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography (61 vols.; New York: James T. White & Co., 1898+). For less known individuals I had the cooperation of the Unitarian Historical Library under Martha S. C. Wilson, until this was converted to an Archives, now under Rev. Alan Seaburg.

A number of items used do not clearly fit with any previous categories. Harriet Beecher Stowe's frequently cited remarks on Unitarian aristocracy can be found in Charles Beecher, ed., Autobiography, Correspondence, etc., of Lyman Beecher, D. D. (2 vols.; New York: Harper & Brothers, 1865). A contemporary statement of the broad social appeal of Unitarianism is Alexander Young, Evangelical Unitarianism Adapted to the Poor and Unlearned (2nd edition; Boston: American Unitarian Association, 1832). Antebellum Unitarians were criticized for indifference on slavery by John Haynes Holmes, "Unitarianism and the Social Question," The Unitarian, III (December, 1908), pp. 419-441. Holmes tells of his own social reform activities in I Speak for Myself: The Autobiography of John Haynes Holmes (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1959). A recent



Unitarian view of Abraham Lincoln's religion can be found in Waldemar Argow, "Abraham Lincoln: Religious Liberal," The Register-Leader, CIL (February, 1967), pp. 7-9. National statistics on income used to compare with Unitarian income in the 1960's came from "Summary of Income by States and Regions [Estimates 1967]," Sales Management: The Marketing Magazine, C (10 June 1968), p. B. Some helpful explanations of social, political, and military events in British history came from the following: E. L. Woodward, The Age of Reform 1815-1870 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1938); Spencer Walpole, The Life of Lord John Russell (2 vols.; London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1891); and J. A. R. Marriott, England Since Waterloo (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1913).



APPENDICES



APPENDIX A

OFFICERS OF THE AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION, 1825-1865

PRESIDENTS	YEARS OF SERVICE
Rev. William Ellery Channing	1825 (declined to serve)
Rev. Aaron Bancroft	1825-1836
Rev. William Ellery Channing	1836 (declined to serve)
Rev. Ichabod Nichols	1837-1844
Hon. Joseph Story	1844-1845
Rev. Orville Dewey	1845-1847
Rev. Ezra Stiles Gannett	1847-1851
Rev. Samuel Kirkland Lothrop	1851-1858
Rev. Edward Brooks Hall	1858-1859
Rev. Frederick Henry Hedge	1859-1862
Rev. Rufus Phineas Stebbins	1862-1865
Hon. John Gorham Palfrey	1865

VICE-PRESIDENTS

Hon. Joseph Story	1825-1837
Hon. Joseph Lyman	1825-1847
Hon. Stephen Longfellow	1825-1847
Hon. Charles H. Atherton	1825-1847
Hon. Henry Wheaton	1825-1847
Hon. James Taylor	1825-1844
Hon. Henry Payson	1825-1845
Hon. William Cranch	1825-1847
Hon. Martin L. Hurlburt	1825-1842
Hon. Samuel Hoar, Jr.	1827-1847
Hon. Samuel S. Wilde	1827-1847
Rev. Timothy Flint	1830-1840
Hon. William Sullivan	1832-1839
Hon. Lemuel H. Arnold	1834-1847
Hon. Benjamin Bakewell	1837-1843
Hon. Harm Jan Huidekoper	1837-1847
Hon. Jonathan Phillips	1840-1844
Hon. Richard Sullivan	1841-1847
Hon. Daniel A. White	1844-1847
Hon. John Fairfield	1844-1847
Hon. James M. Wayne	1844-1847
Hon. James H. Wells	1845-1847
Hon. J. B. Whittridge	1846-1847



VICE-PRESIDENTS (cont.)

YEARS OF SERVICE

Hon. Stephen Fairbanks	1847-1858
Rev. Samuel Kirkland Lothrop	1847-1851
Rev. Edward Brooks Hall	1851-1858
Hon. E. Rockwood Hoar	1858-1859
Hon. Benjamin F. Thomas	1859-1861
Hon. George B. Emerson	1861-1863
Hon. Frederic W. Lincoln	1861-1864
Hon. Charles G. Loring	1863-1864
Hon. Henry P. Kidder	1864-1865
Hon. George Livermore	1864-1865

TREASURERS

Hon. Lewis Tappen	1825-1826
Hon. Samuel Dorr	1827-1828
Hon. Henry Rice	1828-1841
Hon. Henry P. Fairbanks	1841-1854
Hon. Calvin W. Clark	1854-1862
Hon. Charles C. Smith	1862-1865
Hon. Warren Sawyer	1864

SECRETARIES

Rev. Ezra Stiles Gannett*	1825-1831
Rev. Alexander Young*	1831-1832
Rev. Samuel Barrett*	1833-1834
Rev. John Gorham Palfrey ⁺	1828 (declined to serve)
Rev. Henry Ware, Jr. ⁺	1829-1834
Rev. Jason Whitman	1834-1835
Rev. Charles Briggs	1835-1847
Rev. William Greenleaf Eliot	1847-1848
Rev. Frederick West Holland	1848-1850
Rev. Calvin Lincoln	1850-1853
Rev. Henry Adolphus Miles	1853-1859
Rev. James Freeman Clarke	1859-1861
Hon. George W. Fox	1861-1865
Rev. Charles Lowe	1865

ASSISTANT SECRETARIES

Rev. Samuel Barrett	1834-1837
Rev. Samuel Kirkland Lothrop	1837-1847

*Acted as Domestic Secretary

⁺Acted as Foreign Secretary



DIRECTORS

YEARS OF SERVICE

Rev. Andrews Norton	1825-1826
Rev. Jared Sparks	1825-1826
Rev. James Walker	1825-1834
Rev. Henry Ware, Jr.	1827-1829, 1834-1838
Rev. Samuel Barrett	1827-1833, 1837-1841, 1861-1865
Rev. Francis Parkman	1829-1831
Rev. Ezra Stiles Gannett	1831-1835
Rev. Alexander Young	1833-1834
Rev. George Ripley	1834-1840
Rev. Samuel Kirkland Lothrop	1835-1837
Rev. Chandler Robbins	1837-1839
Rev. Artemas Bowers Muzzey	1839-1846
Rev. George Edward Ellis	1840-1846
Rev. Nathaniel Hall	1841-1846
Rev. James Freeman Clarke	1845-1847
Hon. Henry B. Rogers	1845-1846, 1858-1859
Hon. Isaiah Bangs	1845-1853
Rev. Ephraim Peabody	1846-1848
Rev. Frederick Tarrell Gray	1846-1847
Rev. Frederick Dan Huntington	1846-1848
Hon. C. K. Dillaway	1846-1847
Rev. James William Thompson	1847-1851
Hon. Lewis G. Pray	1847-1848
Hon. Albert Fearing	1848-1858
Rev. Alonzo Hill	1848-1851
Rev. Charles Brooks	1848-1852
Rev. Henry Adolphus Miles	1851-1853, 1859-1861
Rev. George Ware Briggs	1851-1857
Rev. William Rounseville Alger	1852-1861
Rev. Calvin Lincoln	1853-1856, 1858-1859
Hon. George Callender	1853-1857
Rev. Frederick Henry Hedge	1856-1859, 1862-1865
Rev. Edward Everett Hale	1857 (declined to serve)
Hon. John H. Rogers	1857-1858
Rev. George Washington Hosmer	1857-1861, 1862-1865
Rev. Henry Whitney Bellows	1857-1861
Rev. William Greenleaf Eliot	1857-1861, 1862-1865
Rev. Cazneau Palfrey	1857-1861
Hon. E. P. Whipple	1857-1859
Rev. Charles Henry Brigham	1859-1865
Hon. George B. Emerson	1859-1861
Rev. Thomas Hill	1859-1861



DIRECTORS (cont.)

YEARS OF SERVICE

Rev. James Freeman Clarke	1861-1865
Rev. William Newell	1861-1864
Rev. Rufus Phineas Stebbins	1861-1862
Rev. Frederic Hinckley	1861-1865
Rev. Samuel Hobart Winkley	1861-1865
Hon. William Sawyer	1861-1864, 1865
Hon. George H. Nichols	1861-1863
Rev. John Healy Heywood	1864-1865
Rev. Carlton Albert Staples	1864-1865
Rev. John Fothergill Waterhouse Ware	1862-1865
Rev. William Orne White	1862-1864
Rev. Samuel Osgood	1862-1864, 1865
Hon. Charles Eliot Norton	1863-1864
Rev. Charles Lowe	1864-1865
Hon. Charles C. Smith	1864-1865
Hon. George O. Shattuck	1864-1865
Rev. Leonard Jarvis Livermore	1865
Rev. George Hughes Hepworth	1865
Hon. George W. Fox	1865
Hon. Henry G. Denny	1865

Sources: Annual Reports of the American Unitarian Association,
1826-1865.



APPENDIX B

RECEIPTS AND EXPENDITURES OF THE AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION, 1826-1865 (Money Amounts in Dollars)

YEAR	BALANCE BROUGHT FORWARD	RECEIPTS	EXPENDITURES
1825	--	851.42	306.20
1826	545.22	727.50	562.74
1827	709.98	2,696.73	2,554.16
1828	852.55	3,396.98	2,711.90
1829	1,537.63	2,310.67	2,390.62
1830	1,457.68	1,846.07	2,170.85
1831	1,132.90	2,561.43	2,964.55
1832	729.78	3,330.66	3,610.73
1833	449.71	4,221.90	3,571.71
1834	1,099.90	2,809.68	2,169.71
1835	1,739.87	1,983.49	2,547.31
1836	1,176.05	3,153.86	1,985.34
1837	2,344.57	2,849.51	2,182.42
1838	3,011.66	2,957.05	4,759.49
1839	1,209.22	6,095.17	6,257.29
1840	1,047.10	5,200.68	5,412.91
1841	834.87	4,880.15	4,962.04
1842	752.98	4,734.89	4,995.77
1843	492.10	7,019.22	6,119.92
1844	1,361.40	8,823.63	7,962.00
1845	2,223.03	9,032.51	9,149.90
1846	2,105.64	12,929.42	14,835.33
1847	199.73	11,057.68*	11,120.96
1848	136.45	9,569.75	9,110.75
1849	595.45	7,730.31	6,914.80
1850	1,410.96	12,597.04	12,545.36
1851	1,462.64	8,676.89	9,754.04
1852	385.49	7,903.99+	8,289.48
1853	--	8,523.46 ^x	8,523.46
1854	--	16,168.31	16,099.28
1855	69.03	21,715.36	21,040.31
1856	744.08	33,483.60	32,620.28
1857	1,607.40	17,798.37	17,447.89
1858	1,957.88	13,402.47	13,818.21
1859	1,542.14	15,138.78	15,188.21



YEAR	BALANCE BROUGHT FORWARD	RECEIPTS	EXPENDITURES
1860	1,492.71	19,650.05	17,912.14
1861	3,230.62	19,146.41	21,474.91
1862	902.12	11,618.95	10,408.92
1863	2,112.15	15,492.11	15,952.81
1864	1,651.45	16,860.84	16,323.17
1865	2,189.12	85,995.96	73,919.80

*Receipts of 1847 include \$2,000 loan.

+Receipts of 1852 include \$1,500 loan.

xReceipts of 1853 include \$1,000 loan.

Sources: Annual Reports of the American Unitarian Association,
1826-1865.



APPENDIX C

UNITARIAN CHURCHES IN THE UNITED STATES FOR THE YEARS 1830, 1846, 1860, AND 1865, BY STATES

STATES	NUMBER OF CHURCHES BY YEAR			
	1830	1846	1860	1865
Massachusetts	147	158	164	164
Maine	12	15	15	18
New Hampshire	11	13	15	16
Vermont	3	5	3	5
Connecticut	2	4	2	1
Rhode Island	2	3	3	3
New York	5	12	16	14
New Jersey	0	1	2	1
Pennsylvania	5	2	5	5
Maryland	1	1	2	1
District of Columbia	1	1	1	1
South Carolina	1	1	1	1
Georgia	1	2	0	0
Alabama	0	1	0	0
Kentucky	1	1	1	1
Louisiana	0	1	1	1
Missouri	0	1	1	1
Ohio	1	2	5	6
Illinois	0	7	11	9
Indiana	0	2	0	0
Wisconsin	0	1	3	4
Michigan	0	0	2	2
Iowa	0	0	1	1
Kansas	0	0	1	1
California	0	0	1	1
Minnesota	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>
TOTALS	193	234	257	258

Sources: "Unitarian Congregations & Ministers," mss. dated May 1830, in AUA Letters, 1830; The Unitarian Annual Register, for the Year 1846 (Boston: Wm. Crosby & H. P. Nichols, 1845), pp. 16-19; Monthly Journal, I (January, 1860), pp. 37-41; Monthly Journal, VI (January, 1865), pp. 42-47.



APPENDIX D

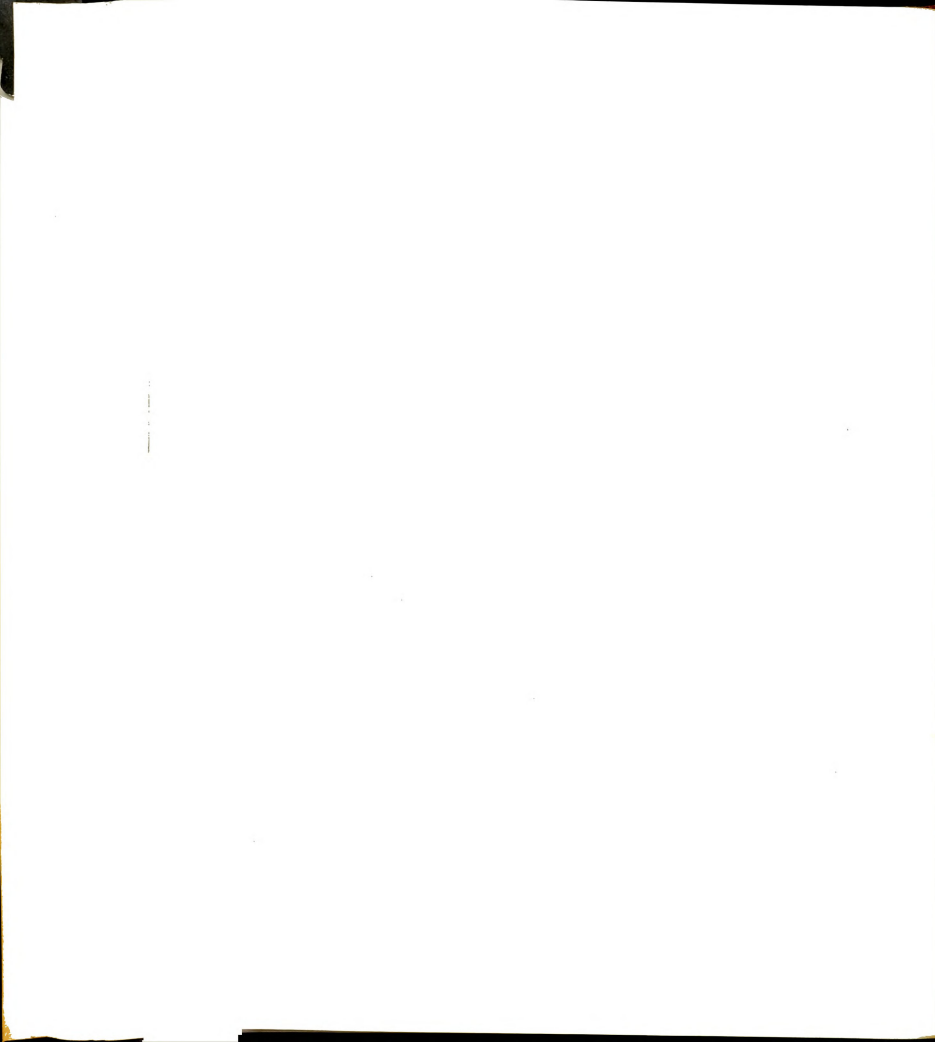
EDITORS OF THE CHRISTIAN REGISTER, 1821-1865*

EDITOR(S)	YEARS	REMARKS
David Reed	Aug. 1821-Dec. 1825	<u>Christian Register</u> , 7 January 1826
Edmund Q. Sewall	Jan. 1826-? 1826	The AUA published the newspaper this year and paid Sewall \$230 to edit it (<u>Second Annual Report</u> , AUA, 1827, p. 5.).
David Reed	? 1826-March 1829	<u>Christian Register</u> , 29 September 1849.
Francis Parkman, E. S. Gannett, Samuel Barrett, George Ripley, George S. Hillard, and J. P. Blanchard	March 1829-Dec. 1833	<u>Christian Register</u> , 29 September 1849.
George Ripley and George S. Hillard	Jan. 1833-April 1834	David Reed to Alexander Young, 1 January 1833, AUA Letters, 1833; <u>Christian Register</u> , 19 April 1834.
David Reed	April 1834-Aug. 1834	<u>Christian Register</u> , 9 August 1834
Sidney Willard	Aug. 1834-Dec. 1836	<u>Christian Register</u> , 13 September 1834.

*To the best of my knowledge, this is the most complete listing of the editors of the Christian Register from 1821 to 1865. Generally, the editor(s) is shown in the paper either by name or by initials. Often, however, the editor would remain unknown for months. The sources identifying the editor(s) is shown in the REMARKS.



EDITOR(S)	YEARS	REMARKS
Chandler Robbins	Jan. 1837-March 1839	<u>Christian Register</u> , 7 January 1837, 30 March 1839.
Rufus A. Johnson	April 1839-July 1840	<u>Christian Register</u> , 23 November 1839, 11 July 1840.
Samuel Barrett and Samuel K. Lothrop	July 1840-July 1842	<u>Christian Register</u> , 18 July 1840, 28 July 1842. Both men went on a leave.
UNKNOWN (David Reed?)	July 1842-Sept. 1842	
Samuel K. Lothrop and George E. Ellis	Sept. 1842-March 1845	<u>Christian Register</u> , 24 September 1842, 1 March 1845.
Charles W. Upham	March 1845-March 1846	<u>Christian Register</u> , 8 March 1845, 28 March 1846.
John H. Morison	March 1846-June 1847	<u>Christian Register</u> , 28 March 1846, 26 June 1847.
UNKNOWN (David Reed?)	July 1847-Sept. 1847	
Nathaniel S. Folsom	Sept. 1847-Sept. 1849	<u>Christian Register</u> , 20 November 1847, 15 September 1849.
John H. Morison, Ephraim Peabody, F. D. Huntington, and A. P. Peabody	Oct. 1849-May 1851	<u>Christian Register</u> , 13 October 1849
John H. Morison, A. P. Peabody, and F. D. Huntington	June 1851-Dec. 1851	
UNKNOWN	Jan. 1852-Dec. 1863	<u>Christian Register</u> , 3 January 1852.
Solon W. Bush	Jan. 1864-Dec. 1865	



APPENDIX E

BOSTON UNITARIAN MINISTERS FOR THE YEARS 1830, 1846, AND 1860, WITH THE OCCUPATION OF THEIR FATHERS*

MINISTER AND CHURCH	YEAR	FATHER'S OCCUPATION
Alger, William R. (Bulfinch St.)	1860	UNKNOWN
Barnard, Charles F. (Warren St.)	1846	Merchant
Barrett, Samuel (Twelfth Congre.)	1830, 1846, 1860	Farmer
Bartol, Cyrus A. (West Church)	1846, 1860	Merchant
Capen, Lemuel (Hawes Place)	1830	UNKNOWN
Coolidge, J. I. T. (Purchase St.)	1846	UNKNOWN
Cruft, Samuel B. (Suffolk Chapel)	1846	Merchant
Cudworth, Warren H. (East Church)	1860	Overseer in Cotton mill
Dawes, Thomas (Hawes Place)	1860	UNKNOWN
Dewey, Orville (New South)	1860	Farmer

*Information has been collected from the Dictionary of American Biography, National Cyclopaedia of American Biography, Heralds of a Liberal Faith, a few biographies and memoirs, and the kind assistance of Rev. Alan Seaburg at the Archives of the Unitarian Universalist Association.



MINISTER AND CHURCH	YEAR	FATHER'S OCCUPATION
Ellis, Rufus (First Church)	1860	Merchant
Emerson, Ralph W. (Second Church)	1830	Minister
Farley, Charles A. (East Boston)	1846	UNKNOWN
Fosdick, David, Jr. (Hollis St.)	1846	UNKNOWN
Fox, Thomas B. (Warren St.)	1846	UNKNOWN
Frothingham, N. L. (First Church)	1830, 1846	Crockery dealer and tax assessor
Gannett, Ezra S. (Federal St.)	1830, 1846, 1860	Minister
Gerry, Edwin J. (Hanover St.)	1860	UNKNOWN
Gray, Frederick T. (Bulfinch St.)	1846	UNKNOWN
Greenwood, F. W. P. (King's Chapel)	1830	Dentist
Hale, Edward E. (South Congre.)	1860	Newspaper publisher
Huntington, Frederick D. (South Congre.)	1846	Minister
Hepworth, George H. (Church of the Unity)	1860	Machinist
King, Thomas S. (Hollis St.)	1860	Minister
Lippitt, George W. (Hawes Place)	1846	UNKNOWN
Lothrop, Samuel K. (Brattle St.)	1846, 1860	Lawyer



MINISTER AND CHURCH	YEAR	FATHER'S OCCUPATION
Lowell, Charles (West St.)	1830, 1846, 1860	Lawyer
Motte, Mellish I. (South Congre.)	1830	UNKNOWN
Palfrey, John G. (Brattle St.)	1830	Merchant, planter
Parker, Theodore (28th Congre. Soc.)	1846, 1860	Farmer
Parkman, Francis (New North)	1830, 1846	Merchant
Peabody, Ephraim (King's Chapel)	1846	Blacksmith
Pierpont, John (Hollis St.)	1830	Farmer
Ripley, George (Purchase St.)	1830	Tavern keeper
Robbins, Chandler (Second Church)	1846, 1860	Physician
Squire, Edmund (Washington Village)	1860	UNKNOWN
Thomas, Moses G. (Broadway, South Boston)	1846	UNKNOWN
Ware, Henry, Jr. (Second Church)	1830	Minister
Waterston, Robert C. (Church of the Saviour)	1846	Merchant
Winkley, Samuel H. (Pitts St.)	1860	Shipmaster
Young, Alexander (New South)	1830, 1846	Publisher

APPENDIX F

SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF UNITARIAN UNIVERSALISTS IN THE 1960'S

It may be of some interest to compare the social structure of antebellum Unitarians with those of the 1960's. In 1965, the Board of Trustees of the Unitarian Universalist Association created a Committee on Goals to study the denomination's current status and structure in order to establish short- and long-term objectives. A portion of the Committee's report was a survey of Unitarian Universalists conducted by the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago. From this survey the Committee on Goals concluded that Unitarian Universalists "are dominantly an upper income, highly-educated, professionally-employed group. Three-fourths of us have family incomes above the United States mean; only three percent (and these are probably mostly young single individuals) have annual incomes below \$3,000." According to the survey, two-thirds of the denomination are professionally employed and fewer than ten per cent are "blue collar" workers. About ninety-five percent of adult church members are high school graduates, sixty percent of adult church members have college degrees, and more than twenty-five percent of adult church members have one or more graduate degrees. "This means that we have ten times 'our share' of the



college graduates," the report stated, "and more than ten times 'our share' of those in professional occupations."*

Some of the statistics from the survey indicate something of the social status of Unitarian Universalists. Of those questioned, 8.7% earned \$4,999 or less, 7.6% earned \$25,000 or more, and 83.6% earned between \$5,000 and \$24,999--all figures before taxes. These figures may be compared with estimates of American income in 1967 when 10.5% earned \$4,999 or less, 15.1% earned \$25,000 or more, and 74.4% earned between \$5,000 and \$25,000. Notice that the percentage of the American people earning more than \$25,000 is about double that of the Unitarian Universalists. From the survey people were asked, "How would you describe the social status of most of the other members of your local church?" In reply 4.3% believed they possessed a higher status than most of their fellows, 81.1% believed all had about the same status, and 14.6% believed most of the others had a higher status. And if other religious faiths are considered "lower class," it is of interest that the survey revealed that only about 12% of those responding were reared Unitarians or Universalists. The largest element in the denomination came from "Liberal Protestant" families (27.9%) and the next largest came from "Fundamental Protestant" families (20.7%).⁺

These figures suggest that the social status of Unitarians in the context of their times may not have changed very much. Unitarians of the antebellum period thought that many, perhaps most, of their own members were drawn from the "middling class," and the same seems true

*Report of the Committee on Goals (n.p.: Unitarian Universalist Association, [1967]), p. 14.

⁺Ibid., pp. 36, 40, 43; Summary of Income by States and Regions [Estimates 1967], "Sales Management: The Marketing Magazine, C (10 June 1968), p. B.



of the 1960's. Unitarian Universalists of the 1960's probably have comparatively higher incomes and more formal education than their antecedents. Antebellum Unitarians, however, prized intellectual pursuits and insisted on an educated ministry. Ministers continued to be drawn from a wide variety of groups in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as pointed out by Samuel Atkins Eliot.* There is every reason to believe that Americans are Unitarian Universalists in the 1960's more because of conviction than class.

*Samuel Atkins Eliot, "Introduction," HLF, IV, pp. xvii-xix.



APPENDIX G

UNITARIAN CHAPLAINS IN THE UNION ARMY*

CHAPLAIN	UNIT
Babbidge, Charles	6 Mass. Inf., 26 Mass. Inf.
Ball, George Sumner	21 Mass. Inf.
Barker, Stephen	14 Mass. Vols.
Bartlett, George Washington	13 Maine Inf., 1 Regt. Maine Cav.
Billings, Liberty	4 New Hampshire Inf.
Bowen, Charles James	National Hospital, Baltimore
Camp, Stephen Henry	U. S. Colored Regt., Port Hudson
Canfield, Charles T.	36 Mass. Inf.
Channing, William Henry	Stanton Hospital, Washington, D. C.
Collyer, Robert	Chaplain-at-Large, Army of the Potomac
Conant, Augustus Hammond	19 Illinois Vols.
Cudworth, Warren Handel	1 Mass. Inf.
Cummings, Gilbert	51 Mass. Inf.
Eliot, William Greenleaf	Missouri Militia

*Sources: Heralds of a Liberal Faith, Dictionary of American Biography, Monthly Journal (1861-1865), and Cooke, Unitarianism in America, p. 176.



CHAPLAIN

UNIT

Fairchild, E. B.	34 Mass. Inf.
Fitzgerald, Gerald	12 Mass. Vols.
Forman, Jacob Gilbert	Lyon Regt., Mo.
Foster, Daniel	33 Mass. Inf.
Fowler, James H.	Colored Regt.
Fuller, Arthur Buckminster	16 Mass. Vols.
Galvin, Edward I.	42 Mass. Inf.
Haley, William D'Arcy	17 Mass. Inf.
Hall, Edward Henry	44 Mass. Vols.
Haskell, Augustus Mellen	40 Mass. Inf.
Hassall, Robert	50 Mass. Inf.
Hepworth, George Hughes	47 Mass. Inf.
Howard, Thomas D.	78 U. S. Colored Inf.
Humphreys, Charles A.	2 Reg. Mass. Cav.
Hunting, Sylvan Stanley	27 Mich. Inf.
Kimball, John Calvin	8 Mass. Inf.
Lovering, Joseph	17 Maine Inf.
Lowe, Charles	Served draftees on Long Island, Bos- ton Harbor
Mason, L. B.	UNKNOWN
McDaniel, Samuel W.	34 Mass. Inf.
Miller, Milton Jennings	110 Ohio Inf.
Moors, John Farwell	52 Mass. Inf.
Newell, Frederick R.	1 Minnesota Inf.
Noyes, Charles	"Draft Rendezvous," Boston



CHAPLAIN

UNIT

Nute, Ephraim	1 Kansas Inf.
Pierpont, John	22 Mass. Inf.
Potter, William James	Camp at Alexandria, Va.
Richardson, James	Unknown hospital
Scandlin, William George	15 Mass. Inf.
Shaw, George Stetson	135 U. S. Colored Inf.
Staples, Carlton Albert	Engineer Regt., Mo. Vols.
Staples, Nahor Augustus	6 Wisconsin Inf.
Webster, Charles B.	18 Corps d'Afrique
Wheelock, Edwin Miller	15 New Hampshire Inf.
Whitney, Leonard	11 Illinois Cav.
Williams, Francis C.	8 Vermont Inf.
Willis, Martin W.	4 New Hampshire Inf.
Willson, Edmund Burke	24 Mass. Vols.
Woodbury, Augustus	1 Rhode Island Inf.
Woodward, George W.	45 Illinois Inf.



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