

## THE REVEREND WILLIAM ELLERY CHANNING



In regard both to the Reverend [William Ellery Channing](#) and to the poet [Ellery Channing](#) of Thoreau's time period in Concord, bear in mind, as everyone else did during this period, that this name was a most famous name, for regardless of whoever gets credit for creating the [Declaration of Independence](#), a [William Ellery](#) (1727-1820) later cosigned it on behalf of [Rhode Island](#):

**New Hampshire:** *Josiah Bartlett, William Whipple, Matthew Thornton*

**Massachusetts:** *John Hancock, Samuel Adams, John Adams, Robert Treat Paine, Elbridge Gerry*

**Rhode Island:** [Stephen Hopkins](#), [William Ellery](#)

**Connecticut:** *Roger Sherman, Samuel Huntington, William Williams, Oliver Wolcott*

**New York:** *William Floyd, Philip Livingston, Francis Lewis, Lewis Morris*

**New Jersey:** *Richard Stockton, John Witherspoon, Francis Hopkinson, John Hart, Abraham Clark*

**Pennsylvania:** *Robert Morris, Dr. Benjamin Rush, [Benjamin Franklin](#), John Morton, George Clymer, James Smith, George Taylor, James Wilson, George Ross*

**Delaware:** *Caesar Rodney, George Read, Thomas McKean*

**Maryland:** *Samuel Chase, William Paca, Thomas Stone, Charles Carroll of Carrollton*

**Virginia:** *George Wythe, Richard Henry Lee, Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Harrison, Thomas Nelson, Jr., Francis Lightfoot Lee, Carter Braxton*

**North Carolina:** *William Hooper, Joseph Hewes, John Penn*

**South Carolina:** *Edward Rutledge, Thomas Heyward, Jr., Thomas Lynch, Jr., Arthur Middleton*

**Georgia:** *Button Gwinnett, Lyman Hall, George Walton*

1729

The first really<sup>1</sup> Presbyterian church in America began in Henry Deering’s barn on Long Lane in Boston. Long Lane would become Federal Street. This church would first be voted Congregational by its members, and would then evolve into the [Unitarian](#) Federal Street Church of the Reverend [William Ellery Channing](#).

1774

Friend [John Woolman](#)’s JOURNAL was published. Warner Mifflin of Delaware, convinced by Friend John, became the first of our slavemasters to voluntarily [manumit](#) all his [slaves](#).

Walter Mifflin of Delaware was a true son of liberty. He fired a shot heard round the world.

(The Reverend [William Ellery Channing](#), not born yet, would say of Friend John’s journal that “The secret of Woolman’s purity of style is that his eye was single, and that conscience dictated his words.” The Reverend might have said this precise thing of his contemporary [Henry Thoreau](#)’s JOURNAL –had he been privileged to see it– for it is a remark quite as true of our friend Henry as it is of this [Quaker](#) saint. Henry would be faulted in his own day for saying, in effect, that he had no more time for making pencils once he had made some of the best, but of course Friend John had made precisely the same decision in the previous century when his success in the merchandising business had begun to threaten him with what he termed “outward cumbers.” When [Waldo Emerson](#) got on Thoreau’s case for feeling that no one person had any greater right to the earth’s richness than any other, and that therefore really there was no such thing as trespass, Waldo might as well have



Notice the barriers

been criticizing the John Woolman whom he was professing so much to admire, saying of Friend John’s JOURNAL that “I find more wisdom in these pages than in any other book written since the days of the Apostles.” In Friend John’s writings we see that he had been consumed by two great causes, [slavery](#) and poverty — and Thoreau in the following century of course the same. Friend John had said that the solution lay in recognizing the superiority of the spiritual over the temporal values, and the need to shun luxury — and in the following century Thoreau likewise.)

**A TESTIMONY of the Monthly Meeting of Friends, held in Burlington, NJ; Read and approved at our Quarterly Meeting, held the 29th of Eighth Month, 1774**

A TESTIMONY of the Monthly Meeting of Friends, held in Burlington, the First day of the Eighth Month, in the year of

1. The French Church of the [Huguenot](#) in Boston had also been termed Presbyterian.



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our Lord 1774, concerning our esteemed friend, John Woolman, deceased.

HE was born in Northampton, in the county of Burlington and province of West New Jersey, in the Eighth Month, 1720, of religious parents, who instructed him very early in the principles of the Christian religion as professed by the people called Quakers, which he esteemed a blessing to him even in his younger years, tending to preserve him from the infection of wicked children. But, through the workings of the enemy and the levity incident to youth, he frequently deviated from those parental precepts, by which he laid a renewed foundation for repentance that was finally succeeded by a "godly sorrow not to be repented of"; and so he became acquainted with that sanctifying power which qualifies for true gospel ministry, into which he was called about the twenty-second year of his age; and by a faithful use of the talents committed to him he experienced an increase, until he arrived at the state of a father, capable of dividing the word aright to the different states he ministered unto, dispensing milk to babes and meat to those of riper years. Thus he found the efficacy of that power to arise, which, in his own expressions, "prepares the creature to stand like a trumpet through which the Lord speaks to His people." He was a loving husband, a tender father, and was very humane to every part of the creation under his care.

His concern for the poor and those in affliction was evident by his visits to them, whom he frequently relieved by his assistance and charity. He was for many years deeply exercised on account of the poor enslaved Africans, whose cause, as he mentioned, lay almost continually upon him; and he laboured to obtain liberty for those captives both in public and in private, and was favoured to see his endeavours crowned with considerable success. He was particularly desirous that Friends should not be instrumental to lay burdens on this oppressed people, but should remember the days of suffering from which they had been providentially delivered, that, if times of trouble should return, no injustice dealt to those in slavery might rise in judgment against us, but, being clear, we might on such occasions address the Almighty with a degree of confidence for His interposition and relief, being particularly careful as to himself not to countenance slavery even by the use of those conveniences of life which were furnished by their labour.

He was desirous to have his own mind and the minds of others redeemed from the pleasures and immoderate profits of this world, and to fix them on those joys which fade not away; his principal care being after a life of purity, endeavouring to avoid not only the grosser pollutions, but those also which, appearing in a more refined dress, are not sufficiently guarded against by some well-disposed people. In the latter part of his life, he was remarkable for the plainness and simplicity of his dress, and as much as possible avoided the use of plate, costly furniture, and feasting, thereby endeavouring to become an example of temperance and self-denial which he believed himself called unto; and he was favoured with peace therein, although it carried the appearance of great austerity in the view of some. He was very moderate in his charges in the way of business, and



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in his desires after gain; and though a man of industry, he avoided and strove much to lead others out of extreme labour and anxiety after perishable things, being desirous that the strength of our bodies might not be spent in procuring things unprofitable, and that we might use moderation and kindness to the brute animals under our care, to prize the use of them as a great favour, and by no means to abuse them; that the gifts of Providence should be thankfully received and applied to the uses they were designed for.

He several times opened a school at Mount Holly, for the instruction of poor Friend' children and others, being concerned for their help and improvement therein. His love and care for the rising youths among us was truly great, recommending to parents and those who have the charge of them to choose conscientious and pious tutors, saying, "It is a lovely sight to behold innocent children"; and that to "labour for their help against that which would mar the beauty of their minds is a debt we owe them."

His ministry was sound, very deep and penetrating, sometimes pointing out the dangerous situation which indulgence and custom led into, frequently exhorting others, especially the youth, not to be discouraged at the difficulties which occur, but to press after purity. He often expressed an earnest engagement that pure wisdom should be attended to, which would lead into lowliness of mind and resignation to the divine will, in which state small possessions here would be sufficient.

In transacting the affairs of the discipline, his judgment was sound and clear, and he was very useful in treating with those who had done amiss; he visited such in a private way in that plainness which truth dictates, showing great tenderness and Christian forbearance. He was a constant attender of our Yearly Meeting, in which he was a good example and particularly useful, assisting in the business thereof with great weight and attention. He several times visited most of the meetings of Friends in this and the neighbouring provinces, with the concurrence of the Monthly Meeting to which he belonged, and we have reason to believe he did good service therein, generally or always expressing at his return how it had fared with him and the evidence of peace in his mind for thus performing his duty. He was often concerned with other Friends in the important service of visiting families, which he was enabled to go through to satisfaction.

In the minutes of the meeting of ministers and elders for this quarter, at the foot of a list of the members of that meeting, made about five years before his death, we find in his handwriting the following observation and reflections:

"As looking over the minutes made by persons who have put off this body hath sometimes revived in me a thought how ages pass away, so this list may probably revive a like thought in some, when I and the rest of the persons above named are centered in another state of being. The Lord who was the guide of my youth hath in tender mercies helped me hitherto; He hath healed my wounds; He hath helped me out of grievous entanglements; He remains to be the strength of my life, to whom I desire



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to devote myself in time and in eternity.

“John Woolman”

In the Twelfth Month, 1771, he acquainted this meeting that he felt his mind drawn towards a religious visit to Friends in some parts of England, particularly in Yorkshire. In the First Month, 1772, he obtained our certificate, which was approved and indorsed by our Quarterly Meeting, and by the Half-Year's Meeting of ministers and elders at Philadelphia. He embarked on his voyage in the Fifth Month, and arrived in London in the Sixth Month following, at the time of their Annual Meeting in that city. During his short visit to Friends in that kingdom, we are informed that his services were acceptable and edifying. In his last illness he uttered many lively and comfortable expressions, being “resigned, having no will either to live or die,” as appears by the testimony of Friends at York in Great Britain, in the suburbs whereof, at the house of our friend Thomas Priestman, he died of the smallpox, on the 7th of the Tenth Month, 1772, and was buried in Friends' burial-ground in that city, on the 9th of the same, after a solid meeting held on the occasion at their great meeting-house. He was aged near fifty-two, having been a minister upwards of thirty years, during which time he belonged to Mount Holly particular meeting, which he diligently attended when at home and in health of body, and his labours of love and pious care for the prosperity of Friends in the blessed truth, we hope may not be forgotten, but that his good works may be remembered to edification.

Signed in and by order of the said meeting, by  
SAMUEL ALLISON, Clerk.

Read and approved at our Quarterly Meeting, held in Burlington the 29th of the Eighth Month, 1774.

Signed by order of the said meeting,  
DANIEL SMITH, Clerk.

1780

April 7: [William Ellery Channing](#) (the first, famous William Ellery Channing, the Reverend, not the poet ne'er-do-well with whom [Henry Thoreau](#) would associate in Concord) was born in [Newport, Rhode Island](#).

1798

Upon graduation from Harvard College [William Ellery Channing](#), like many young men preparing for the ministry, determined to teach school for a time. He would be spending the following two years as a schoolmaster in Richmond, Virginia.

1803

➡ June 1: France invaded the Electorate of Hanover.

Having been offered his choice of the Brattle Street and Federal Street ministries in Boston, [William Ellery Channing](#) selected the relatively young church on Federal Street. He would never be much of a pastor for its flock, contenting himself with conversations that amounted to theological monologues and settling for reverence from his congregation rather than any intimacy of counsel. Nevertheless he would be highly regarded.<sup>2</sup>



The Channing family fortune, rendered secure by a marriage to his 1st cousin, would enable the Reverend [William Ellery Channing](#) to live to a very high standard indeed.

1809

➡ [Washington Allston](#) got married with Ann Channing, sister of the Reverend [William Ellery Channing](#).

2. In 1825 the Reverend [William Ellery Channing](#) would lead the liberal wing of Congregationalists into a new church and they would term themselves [Unitarians](#) to distinguish themselves from the Trinitarians.

1811

Washington Allston painted the portrait of the 31-year-old abolitionist Unitarian clergyman, the Reverend William Ellery Channing, who would become famous in Thoreauvian circles for having an eponymous nephew who lived in Concord and chummed around with Henry Thoreau. The reverend was the painter's brother-in-law.

[Apparently it would be concluded by some, that if Henry had a friend who was an eponymous nephew of a famous Unitarian reverend, then Henry himself must have been a Unitarian — for instance, there happens to be a Unitarian worship group in Irvine CA, meeting in the upstairs room of a shopping center near the UCI campus, that has actually named itself in honor of “the Reverend Henry Thoreau.”]

For instance, according to page 83 of a just-published volume out of HarperCollins press —publishers of some little reputation— by one Richard Shenkman, while Thoreau was staying at his cabin on Walden Pond “William Ellery Channing, the antislavery clergyman, stayed with him for two weeks.”<sup>3</sup>

How chummy of the right Rev, who had been dead for some time before Henry began to build his shanty!



Samuel F.B. Morse was one of Washington Allston's art pupils and in this year accompanied his master to Europe. After traveling throughout western Europe, Allston would settle in London.

3. The title of this curious 1991 volume which places a prominent Unitarian clergymen in Walden Wood is, *sic*, “I LOVE PAUL REVERE WHETHER HE RODE OR NOT” \*WARREN HARDING. A carefully edited work of original scholarship, this treatise also alleges —evidently in an effort to prove that as in the hermit category Thoreau was something of a fraud— that “Every Saturday his mother and sisters visited. On Sundays Bronson Alcott came.” And it goes on, on page 84, to explain that “The lament that ‘the mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation’ is regarded as one of Thoreau’s keenest insights, and it was. But few realize it was Thoreau who was desperate. That’s why he went into the woods. A Harvard College graduate, he never adopted a regular profession, was a disappointment to his mother, felt inferior to his gregarious brother, and long regarded his life as something of a failure. The one woman he loved he lost. He never married. When his brother died from lockjaw, Thoreau immediately came down with the same symptoms and was bedridden for months though doctors found nothing wrong with him. A psychobiographer has suggested Thoreau secretly felt he must —somehow— have been to blame for his brother’s death.” Then the author got on his horse and tilted some, at more weighty topics.

(By the way —potential commentators take careful note— Henry began to build his shanty at Walden Pond during Spring 1845, and at that point the Reverend Channing had been in his grave for some two and a half years.)

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Lewis Tappan was persuaded by the preaching of the Reverend [William Ellery Channing](#) to abandon the Calvinist creed of his mother in favor of Unitarianism. It is interesting that the parents, Benjamin and Sarah Tappan, had no immediate objection to this because, although the Reverend Channing was understood to be somewhat on the liberal side, while at Harvard Divinity he had been one of Hollis Professor of Divinity, the Reverend Doctor David Tappan's better students. However, by 1815 the Reverend Channing would have become so radical as to be preaching that:

- The Puritan position had overly distrusted the moral capabilities of humankind.
- The Puritans had been considerably in error in painting a portrait of a supreme being who was, essentially, unlovable.
- The doctrine that there were three persons in the Godhead was merely divisive and difficult, was something which somebody had made up which was irrational, unprovable, and unscriptural.

1815



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In this year a portrait of the Reverend was painted by Gilbert Stuart:



1816

➡ [Charles Brooks](#) of Medford graduated from Harvard College. For a short period he would be a reader in the Episcopal Church, and then an exposure to the writings of the Reverend Professor Henry Ware, Sr. and the Reverend [William Ellery Channing](#) would cause him to lean toward the [Unitarians](#), so he would go back for theological training.

1819

➡ During this year and the next in Boston, the Reverend [William Ellery Channing](#) would be beginning the Bay Street conference for [Unitarian](#) ministers.

➡ By this date Sarah Tappan and Benjamin Tappan had learned enough about the new views of the Reverend [William Ellery Channing](#) to become thoroughly frightened for the souls of their children, in particular for Lewis Tappan. The mother began a campaign which would continue until her death in 1826, to persuade the son to:

*shun those fashionable preachers, who prophecy smooth things that will lull you into a false security.*

Meanwhile, however, her son's concern was not so much for the condition of his own soul as for the salvation of others, as he sought to raise funds on a project to send a [Unitarian](#) missionary to redeem the benighted heathens of [India](#), and as he sought a local crusade for the repression of Intemperance.

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 May 5, Wednesday: Stanislaw Moniuszko was born at 4PM at Ubiel near Minsk, the son of Czeslaw Moniuszko, a poet and painter, and Elzbieta Madzarska, an amateur pianist.

The Decurionato (city council) of Catania, Sicily voted to grant their favorite son, Vincenzo Bellini, a pension enabling him to go to Naples to study.

At the ordination of the Reverend [Jared Sparks](#) as the [Unitarian](#) minister in the 1st Independent Church of

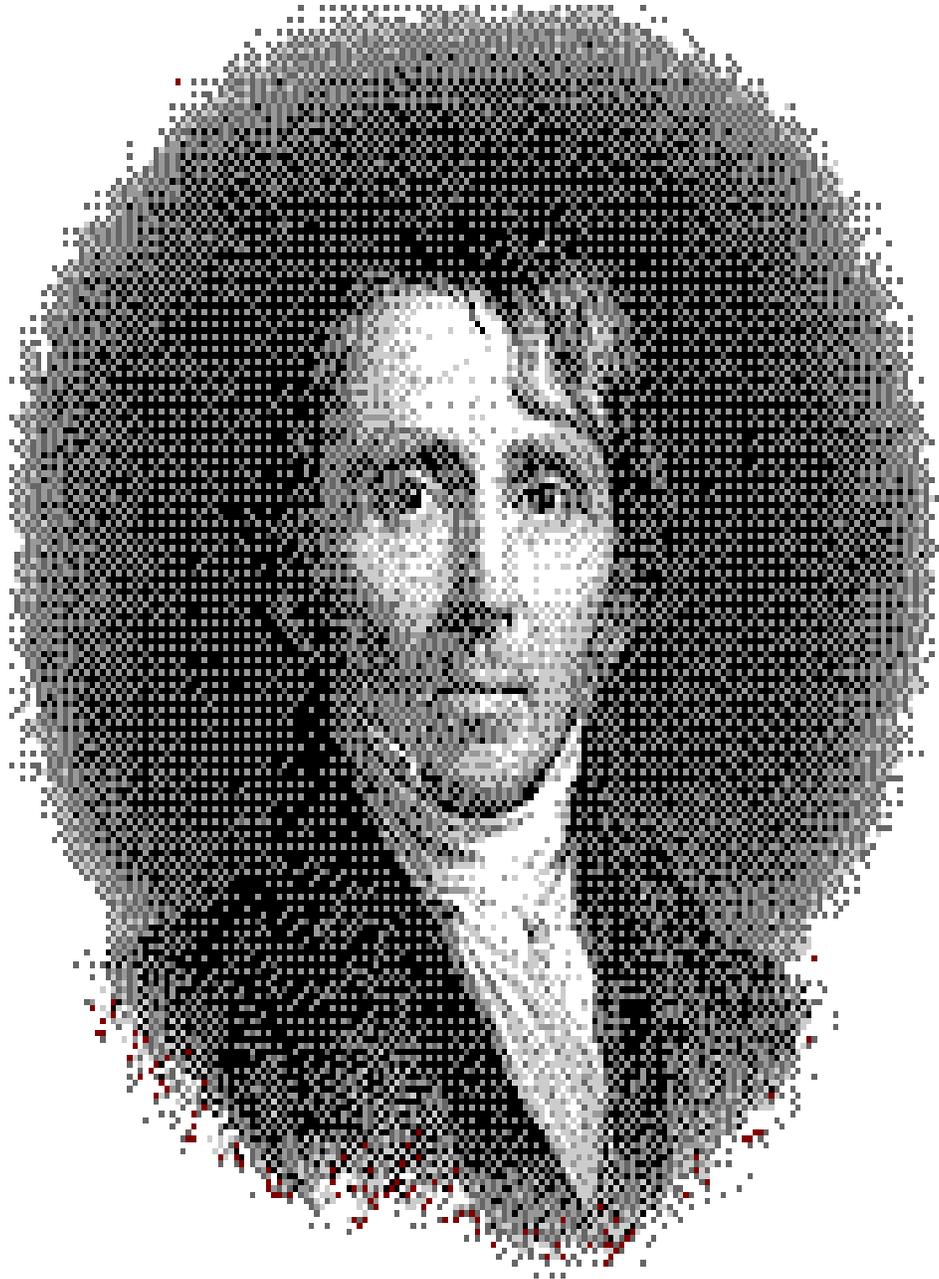


[Baltimore](#), the Reverend [William Ellery Channing](#) delivered his “Pentecost of American Unitarianism” sermon about reflecting God’s love by following the loving example of Christ, upon the text “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good” (I Thessalonians, verse 21) — the definitive sermon of the new faith which eventually would appear under the title “Unitarian Christianity.”

**READ IT AND WEEP**

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[William Ellery Channing](#). “Unitarian Christianity,” published originally in 1819, reprinted as pages 70-102 of



Robinson, David, ed. WILLIAM ELLERY CHANNING: SELECTED WRITINGS. NY: Paulist Press, 1986:

**“A Review From Professor Ross’s Seminar”**

**THEOLOGY**

“Unitarian Christianity” is [William Ellery Channing’s](#) most important theological essay. I wish to call attention to three aspects of Channing’s essay: 1) his hermeneutical strategy with regard to the Bible; 2) the [Unitarian](#) and Calvinist doctrines of God and their moral effects; 3) Channing’s abhorrence of “enthusiastic” religion.

Channing’s view of the Bible advances so-called “higher criticism.” He regards the Bible, not as the iron standard of truth to which we must submit, but rather the expression of God’s paternal love for his creation, which draws us to him. Its meaning is to be found, he says quite radically, “in the same manner as that of other books” (72). Even more than when interpreting others books, when reading the Bible we must use reason as our guide, Channing insists, to keep us from confusing “what was of temporary and local application” (73) from what is eternally true. The Calvinists complain that Unitarians exalt human reason, Channing avers, only because they feel its sting: “its weapons wound themselves” (75).

This emphasis on human reason does not lead Channing to discard the Bible. On the contrary, for Channing, Unitarian views, unlike the Calvinists’, are truly Biblical: “Whatever doctrines seem to us to be clearly taught in the Scriptures, we receive without reserve or exception. We do not, however, attach equal importance to all the books in this collection” (72). The hermeneutical key in this system is, of course, what agrees with reason. Hence, the Unitarian disgust with original sin, the election of some to eternal damnation, the Trinity, etc. Of course, the Calvinists always believed that God’s revelation – Calvinistic religion – accorded with reason, but only when seen in the light of the Holy Spirit’s influence.

Most problematic for Channing is the doctrine of the Trinity, which he dismisses as “irrational and unscriptural” (79). If Jesus is God’s equal, he asks, why do the New Testament writers fail to mention anything like a doctrine of three persons in one? Channing psychologizes the status accorded to Jesus: “Men want an object of worship like themselves” (81). Perhaps this is ironic, considering Channing’s consistently analogical theology (*i.e.* because of our reason, we can affirm as good what God esteems good). Nevertheless, Channing’s meaning is clear: we esteem Jesus because he is human as we are. The “Orthodox” are inconsistent at this point; they claim Jesus to be fully human and fully divine. But how is Jesus truly like us, Channing asks, if in his agonies on the cross his “divine half” is blissfully happy, without any doubts of God’s perfect scheme of Redemption? Such a view “robs his death of interest, [and] weakens our sympathy with his sufferings” (86).

In addition to his anxiety to separate his views from Calvinism, Channing distances Unitarians from “enthusiasts” as well. Calvinism, he charges, “tends strongly to pervert the moral faculty, to form a gloomy, forbidding, and servile religion” (90). His own “rational” religion, his worship of the moral perfection of God, would be impossible, however, if he were to follow the ecstasies of the revivalists, “whose piety seems at war with reason” (96). Though he claims to prize “forbearance” in religious matters, Channing’s distaste for revivalistic religion is striking:



[William Ellery Channing](#), "Likeness to God," published originally in 1819, reprinted as pages 21-5 of THE TRANSCENDENTALISTS: AN ANTHOLOGY. Miller, Perry, ed. Cambridge MA: Harvard UP, 1950:

### "A Review From Professor Ross's Seminar"

#### THEOLOGY

[William Ellery Channing](#), minister of the Federal Street Church in Boston from 1803-1842, was in Perry Miller's words "the chief spokesman for New England [Unitarianism](#)." His sermon "Likeness to God" suggests why he inspired the Transcendentalists, but also confirms the judgment that Channing himself was no Transcendentalist.

Channing promises his hearers that our relation with God springs from "a principle of sympathy," by which we discover God in everything around us, "from the frail flower to the everlasting stars." Like [Waldo Emerson](#), Channing insists that we gain this perception of the divine fullness not from Reason but from an intuitive insight: "Whence do we derive our knowledge of the attributes and perfections which constitute the Supreme Being?" No where but "from our own souls."

Recognizing that his hearers may not understand or concur with his views, Channing backtracks: "I would ask those to whom I am obscure to pause before they condemn." Nevertheless, he must preach as he does, because the soul "has deep wants, which nothing limited can appease." Again, fearing objections and misunderstandings, Channing dissociates his belief in "traces of infinity in the human mind" from anything evangelical or enthusiastic: "I exhort you to no extravagance." This likeness to God consists, not in "extraordinary or miraculous gifts," but in the right exercise of "our essential faculties."

(Johan Christopherson, January 25, 1992)

#### Unitarian Christianity

The peculiar circumstances of this occasion not only justify, but seem to demand a departure from the course generally followed by preachers at the introduction of a brother into the sacred office. It is usual to speak of the nature, design, duties, and advantages of the Christian ministry; and on these topics I should now be happy to insist, did I not remember that a minister is to be given this day to a religious society, whose peculiarities of opinion have drawn upon them much remark, and may I not add, much reproach. Many good minds, many sincere Christians, I am aware, are apprehensive that the solemnities of this day are to give a degree of influence to principles which they deem false and injurious. The fears and anxieties of such men I respect; and, believing that they are grounded in part on mistake, I have thought it my duty to lay before you, as clearly as I can, some of the distinguishing opinions of that class of Christians in our country, who are known to sympathize with this religious society. I must ask your patience, for such a subject is not to be despatched in a narrow compass. I must also ask you to remember, that it is impossible to exhibit, in a single discourse, our views of every



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doctrine of Revelation, much less the differences of opinion which are known to subsist among ourselves. I shall confine myself to topics, on which our sentiments have been misrepresented, or which distinguish us most widely from others. May I not hope to be heard with candor? God deliver us all from prejudice and unkindness, and fill us with the love of truth and virtue.

There are two natural divisions under which my thoughts will be arranged. I shall endeavour to unfold, 1st, The principles which we adopt in interpreting the Scriptures. And 2dly, Some of the doctrines, which the Scriptures, so interpreted, seem to us clearly to express.

I. We regard the Scriptures as the records of God's successive revelations to mankind, and particularly of the last and most perfect revelation of his will by Jesus Christ. Whatever doctrines seem to us to be clearly taught in the Scriptures; we receive without reserve or exception. We do not, however, attach equal importance to all the books in this collection. Our religion, we believe, lies chiefly in the New Testament. The dispensation of Moses, compared with that of Jesus, we consider as adapted to the childhood of the human race, a preparation for a nobler system, and chiefly useful now as serving to confirm and illustrate the Christian Scriptures. Jesus Christ is the only master of Christians, and whatever he taught, either during his personal ministry, or by his inspired Apostles, we regard as of divine authority, and profess to make the rule of our lives.

This authority, which we give to the Scriptures, is a reason, we conceive, for studying them with peculiar care, and for inquiring anxiously into the principles of interpretation, by which their true meaning may be ascertained. The principles adopted by the class of Christians in whose name I speak, need to be explained, because they are often misunderstood. We are particularly accused of making an unwarrantable use of reason in the interpretation of Scripture. We are said to exalt reason above revelation, to prefer our own wisdom to God's. Loose and undefined charges of this kind are circulated so freely, that we think it due to ourselves, and to the cause of truth, to express our views with some particularity.

Our leading principle in interpreting Scripture is this, that the BIBLE is a book written for men, in the language of men, and that its meaning is to be sought in the same manner as that of other books. We believe that God, when he speaks to the human race, conforms, if we may so say, to the established rules of speaking and writing. How else would the Scriptures avail us more, than if communicated in an unknown tongue?

Now all books, and all conversation, require in the reader or hearer the constant exercise of reason; or their true import is only to be obtained by continual comparison and inference. Human language, you well know, admits various interpretations; and every word and every sentence must be modified and explained according to the subject which is discussed, according to the purposes, feelings, circumstances, and principles of the writer, and according to the genius and idioms of the language which he uses. These are acknowledged principles in the interpretation of human writings; and a man, whose words we should



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explain without reference to these principles, would reproach us justly with a criminal want of candor, and an intention of obscuring or distorting his meaning.

Were the BIBLE written in a language and style of its own, did it consist of words, which admit but a single sense, and of sentences wholly detached from each other, there would be no place for the principles now laid down. We could not reason about it, as about other writings. But such a book would be of little worth; and perhaps, of all books, the Scriptures correspond least to this description. The Word of God bears the stamp of the same hand, which we see in his works. It has infinite connexions and dependences. Every proposition is linked with others, and is to be compared with others; that its full and precise import may be understood. Nothing stands alone. The New Testament is built on the Old. The Christian dispensation is a continuation of the Jewish, the completion of a vast scheme of providence, requiring great extent of view in the reader. Still more, the BIBLE treats of subjects on which we receive ideas from other sources besides itself; such subjects as the nature, passions, relations, and duties of man; and it expects us to restrain and modify its language by the known truths, which observation and experience furnish on these topics.

We profess not to know a book, which demands a more frequent exercise of reason than the BIBLE. In addition to the remarks now made on its infinite connexions, we may observe, that its style nowhere affects the precision of science, or the accuracy of definition. Its language is singularly glowing, bold, and figurative, demanding more frequent departures from the literal sense, than that of our own age and country, and consequently demanding more continual exercise of judgment. -- We find, too, that the different portions of this book, instead of being confined to general truths, refer perpetually to the times when they were written, to states of society, to modes of thinking, to controversies in the church, to feelings and usages which have passed away, and without the knowledge of which we are constantly in danger of extending to all times, and places, what was of temporary and local application. -- We find, too, that some of these books are strongly marked by the genius and character of their respective writers, that the Holy Spirit did not so guide the Apostles as to suspend the peculiarities of their minds, and that a knowledge of their feelings, and of the influences under which they were placed, is one of the preparations for understanding their writings. With these views of the BIBLE, we feel it our bounden duty to exercise our reason upon it perpetually, to compare, to infer, to look beyond the letter to the spirit, to seek in the nature of the subject, and the aim of the writer, his true meaning; and, in general, to make use of what is known, for explaining what is difficult, and for discovering new truths.

Need I descend to particulars, to prove that the Scriptures demand the exercise of reason? Take, for example, the style in which they generally speak of God, and observe how habitually they apply to him human passions and organs. Recollect the declarations of Christ, that he came not to send peace, but a sword; that unless we eat his flesh, and drink his blood, we have



no life in us; that we must hate father and mother, and pluck out the right eye; and a vast number of passages equally bold and unlimited.

Recollect the unqualified manner in which it is said of Christians, that they possess all things, know all things, and can do all things. Recollect the verbal contradiction between Paul and James, and the apparent clashing of some parts of Paul's writings with the general doctrines and end of Christianity. I might extend the enumeration indefinitely; and who does not see, that we must limit all these passages by the known attributes of God, of Jesus Christ, and of human nature, and by the circumstances under which they were written, so as to give the language a quite different import from what it would require, had it been applied to different beings, or used in different connexions.

Enough has been said to show, in what sense we make use of reason in interpreting Scripture. From a variety of possible interpretations, we select that which accords with the nature of the subject and the state of the writer, with the connexion of the passage, with the general strain of Scripture, with the known character and will of God, and with the obvious and acknowledged laws of nature. In other words, we believe that God never contradicts, in one part of scripture, what he teaches in another; and never contradicts, in revelation, what he teaches in his works and providence. And we therefore distrust every interpretation, which, after deliberate attention, seems repugnant to any established truth. We reason about the BIBLE precisely as civilians do about the constitution under which we live; who, you know, are accustomed to limit one provision of that venerable instrument by others, and to fix the precise import of its parts, by inquiring into its general spirit, into the intentions of its authors, and into the prevalent feelings, impressions, and circumstances of the time when it was framed. Without these principles of interpretation, we frankly acknowledge, that we cannot defend the divine authority of the Scriptures. Deny us this latitude, and we must abandon this book to its enemies.

We do not announce these principles as original, or peculiar to ourselves. All Christians occasionally adopt them, not excepting those who most vehemently decry them, when they happen to menace some favorite article of their creed. All Christians are compelled to use them in their controversies with infidels. All sects employ them in their warfare with one another. All willingly avail themselves of reason, when it can be pressed into the service of their own party, and only complain of it, when its weapons wound themselves. None reason more frequently than those from whom we differ. It is astonishing what a fabric they rear from a few slight hints about the fall of our first parents; and how ingeniously they extract, from detached passages, mysterious doctrines about the divine nature. We do not blame them for reasoning so abundantly, but for violating the fundamental rules of reasoning, for sacrificing the plain to the obscure, and the general strain of Scripture to a scanty number of insulated texts.

We object strongly to the contemptuous manner in which human reason is often spoken of by our adversaries, because it leads,



we believe, to universal skepticism. If reason be so dreadfully darkened by the fall, that its most decisive judgments on religion are unworthy of trust, then Christianity, and even natural theology, must be abandoned; for the existence and veracity of God, and the divine original of Christianity, are conclusions of reason, and must stand or fall with it. If revelation be at war with this faculty, it subverts itself, for the great question of its truth is left by God to be decided at the bar of reason. It is worthy of remark, how nearly the bigot and the skeptic approach. Both would annihilate our confidence in our faculties, and both throw doubt and confusion over every truth. We honor revelation too highly to make it the antagonist of reason, or to believe that it calls us to renounce our highest powers.

We answer again, that, if God be infinitely wise, he cannot sport with the understandings of his creatures. A wise teacher discovers his wisdom in adapting himself to the capacities of his pupils, not in perplexing them with what is unintelligible, not in distressing them with apparent contradictions, not in filling them with a skeptical distrust of their own powers. An infinitely wise teacher, who knows the precise extent of our minds, and the best method of enlightening them, will surpass all other instructors in bringing down truth to our apprehension, and in showing its loveliness and harmony. We ought, indeed, to expect occasional obscurity in such a book as the BIBLE, which was written for past and future ages, as well as for the present. But God's wisdom is a pledge, that whatever is necessary for US, and necessary for salvation, is revealed too plainly to be mistaken, and too consistently to be questioned, by a sound and upright mind. It is not the mark of wisdom, to use an unintelligible phraseology, to communicate what is above our capacities, to confuse and unsettle the intellect by appearances of contradiction. We honour our heavenly Teacher too much to ascribe to him such a revelation. A revelation is a gift of light; it cannot thicken and multiply our perplexities.

I shall here produce an instance of the false illustration that has been employed with a view of shewing the propriety of believing doctrines that are seen to be absurd. Thus speaks Lord Bacon: "As we are obliged to obey the divine law, though our will murmur at it; so we are obliged to believe the word of God, though our reason be shocked at it. For if we should believe only such things as are agreeable to our reason, we assent to the matter and not to the author, which is no more than we do to a suspected witness." Now the few remarks I have already made are surely sufficient to shew the fallacy of such views. The word of God can contain nothing that shocks our judgment; and the reason why we do not believe in contradictions is not because we have any doubt as to God's rectitude and veracity, but because we know that he cannot lay us under any obligation to believe what he himself has rendered it impossible for us to believe. The grand difference between our obligation to obey the divine law, &c. and the supposed obligation we are under of believing contradictions, is this: To give obedience to the divine law, we do see to be agreeable to reason, and God has established within us a principle of conscience, which irresistibly prompts to obedience. On the other hand, to believe



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contradictions, we see to be in opposition to reason. God has implanted within us a principle of intelligence, by the operation of which we are led to believe that he can never contradict himself, or, which is the same thing, can never give us a mental constitution, by the laws of which we are necessarily determined to believe some things as true and reject others as false, and then do violence to his own workmanship by requiring us to believe what he himself as our Maker has rendered us incapable of believing. We are able to obey the divine will, but we are not able to believe contradictions, and we cannot suppose that the Deity can act inconsistently. In the former case, we have from ourselves, within ourselves, and as a part of ourselves, the principle which dictates to us the propriety of doing our Maker's will. In the other case, we have from ourselves, ???

We indeed grant, that the use of reason in religion is accompanied with danger. But we ask any honest man to look back on the history of the church, and say, whether the renunciation of it be not still more dangerous. Besides, it is a plain fact, that men reason as erroneously on all subjects, as on religion. Who does not know the wild and groundless theories, which have been framed in physical and political science? But who ever supposed, that we must cease to exercise reason on nature and society, because men have erred for ages in explaining them? We grant, that the passions continually, and sometimes fatally, disturb the rational faculty in its inquiries into revelation. The ambitious contrive to find doctrines in the BIBLE, which favor their love of dominion. The timid and dejected discover there a gloomy system, and the mystical and fanatical, a visionary theology. The vicious can find examples or assertions on which to build the hope of a late repentance, or of acceptance on easy terms. The falsely refined contrive to light on doctrines which have not been soiled by vulgar handling. But the passions do not distract the reason in religious, any more than in other inquiries, which excite strong and general interest; and this faculty, of consequence, is not to be renounced in religion, unless we are prepared to discard it universally. The true inference from the almost endless errors, which have darkened theology, is, not that we are to neglect and disparage our powers, but to exert them more patiently, circumspectly, uprightly. The worst errors, after all, having sprung up in that church, which proscribes reason, and demands from its members implicit faith. The most pernicious doctrines have been the growth of the darkest times, when the general credulity encouraged bad men and enthusiasts to broach their dreams and inventions, and to stifle the faint remonstrances of reasons, by the menaces of everlasting perdition. Say what we may, God has given us a rational nature, and will call us to account for it. We may let it sleep, but we do so at our peril. Revelation is addressed to us as rational beings. We may wish, in our sloth, that God had given us a system, demand of comparing, limiting, and inferring. But such a system would be at variance with the whole character of our present existence; and it is the part of wisdom to take revelation as it is given to us, and to interpret it by the help of the faculties, which it everywhere supposes, and on which founded. To the views now given, an objection is commonly urged from the character of God. We are told, that God being infinitely wiser than



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men, his discoveries will surpass human reason. In a revelation from such a teacher, we ought to expect propositions, which we cannot reconcile with one another, and which may seem to contradict established truths; and it becomes us not to question or explain them away, but to believe, and adore, and to submit our weak and carnal reason to the Divine Word. To this objection, we have two short answers. We say, first, that it is impossible that a teacher of infinite wisdom should expose those, whom he would teach, to infinite error. But if once we admit, that propositions, which in their literal sense appear plainly repugnant to one another, or to any known truth, are still to be literally understood and received, what possible limit can we set to the belief of contradictions? What shelter have we from the wildest fanaticism, which can always quote passages, that, in their literal and obvious sense, give support to its extravagances? How can the Protestant escape from transubstantiation, a doctrine most clearly taught us, if the submission of reason, now contended for, be a duty? How can we even hold fast the truth of revelation, for if one apparent contradiction may be true, so may another, and the proposition, that Christianity is false, though involving inconsistency, may still be a verity?

within ourselves, and as a part of ourselves, the intuitive perception, that contradictions cannot be true. In the one case, we murmur at that which our reason and conscience should acquiesce in as right and becoming. In the other case, we are shocked at what our reason forces us to be shocked at, of the falsity of which we have irresistible intuitive evidence; and which we have also as much ground to reject, as we have to believe that God is consistent with himself.

Lord Bacon thus continues the passage I have quoted: "But the faith imputed to Abraham for righteousness consisted in a particular laughed at by Sarah, who in that respect was an image of the natural reason. And therefore the more absurd and incredible any divine mystery is, the greater honour we do to God in believing it, and so much the more noble the victory of faith." The object, you see, is to shew that we must believe what our nature necessarily teaches to be false; and to shew the propriety of this, he adduces as a parallel case that of Abraham giving credence to the express promise of God, that his power should alter the course of nature so as that he should have a son. Was Abraham's believing, then, that God could alter the course of nature, which he himself established, and the stability of which depends on his own sovereign will, any thing like one's admitting that which his nature teaches him to be an absurdity, and precludes the possibility of his believing? Did the subject of his faith contradict any of the principles of his understanding, or that perception of truth and error with which the Almighty, who made the promise endued him? The matter of his belief was indeed contrary to his own experience and observation, or, more properly speaking, he only wanted experience of that which he believed. But surely there is as wide a difference between giving credence to that of which one has not had experience, and believing what is opposed to the dictates of one's intellectual nature, as there is between believing that the course of nature, which indeed is only the agency of an intelligent being, may be changed, or that God



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cannot falsify his word, and becoming firmly persuaded of such a proposition as this being true: "three and one are identical terms."

And with respect to those who would seem to imply that a thing may contradict our reason and yet be true to the understandings of other intelligent beings, I would just observe, that, on this principle of reasoning, all things that we are convinced of may be false. As the Divine Being is true and immutable, in the nature of things it is impossible that any proposition within the compass of thought and evidence which God has rendered it necessary for us to esteem a contradiction can appear to other intelligent beings in any different light.

Again, whence originates the conclusion that we must believe contradictions? Certainly from reason. In admitting doctrines contrary to reason from the belief that God has revealed them, we are induced to do so by some kind of consideration which appears rational to the mind. The attempt to check ratiocination, or to destroy the authority of reason in matters of religion, can only be made by an effort of reason. Sentiments the most absurd, positions the most extravagant, can only be reconciled to any mind because in some point of view it appears rational to admit them. The man who insists most strenuously on faith to the subversion of human reason, thinks that he enforces his injunction upon rational principles. He reasons against using reason on the propriety and the duty of doing violence to that very judgment which he himself thus uses with the express purpose of shewing that we should admit what is necessarily repugnant to it. Thus does reason beguile and destroy itself.

I wish Trinitarians would have the candour to see how ill the charge of abusing reason comes from them. Their whole system is a system of reasoning and inference. It presumptuously attempts to scan the nature and the mode of existence of the Eternal Spirit. It analyses the Deity, as it were it enters his very essence, pointing out the distinctions in it. The origin of it was the school of Plato, and the indications of its parentage are visible enough.

A learned defender of orthodoxy thus attempts to shew the propriety of defending Trinitarianism on the principles of reason and demonstration: "It is observable that the fathers of the council of Nice brought all their arguments against the Arians from reason and demonstration, and almost never appealed to Scripture; but they were not acquainted with the inductive system, and therefore argued concretely not abstractly. This proves that in the purest times of the church, reason was applied to the subject in the best manner the reasoners could, and if it was so then, may it not be so now? Upon examination it will be found that almost every one of the arguments used by Athanasius against Arius is taken from reason applied to the subject, but scarcely one from Scripture. Those who deny that reason may be applied to the subject would do well to examine the arguments of the council of Nice as they appear in the Nicene Creed, and the arguments advanced by Athanasius as they appear in the Athanasian Creed. The reader will find the proof of all this in Cudworth. Indeed, till the subject be firmly established by reason and demonstration, those who deny it will never be



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satisfied nor silenced. Our efforts will be the more arduous to convince them, as many of those who deny the Trinity are more learned and profound disputants; so that nothing but the swords, the arrows, and the spears of truth, together with an impregnable coat of mail composed of reason and demonstration, can ward off their powerful and impetuous assaults."

About one hundred and fifty years ago, some of the most learned Trinitarians confessed that the doctrine of the Trinity was not founded on the Scriptures, but in the tradition of the church. The Unitarians were then obliged to maintain as a previous step to the establishment of their opinions, that the Scriptures are the only infallible rule by which to determine religious controversies. "The Socinians (said they) are of a contrary mind. Hath the Holy Spirit, that is, hath God said it? They will believe though all men and angels contradict it. They will always prefer the infinite wisdom of God before the fallible dictates of human or angelic reason."

The fact is, that the Trinity owes its birth not to any clear passages of Scripture, but to that wild spirit of speculation, and that fondness for what is dark and overwhelming, which, not content with simple truth, must have something to amaze and confound the human intellect. In Trinitarianism do we not see the brother of transubstantiation, that darling of Catholics, for the sake of which every thing was made to look like a contradiction, and none more so than the doctrine of the personal unity of God?

It was not long after the first promulgation of Christianity that men enlarged their creeds and confessions of faith, made more and more things explicitly necessary to be believed, and under pretence of explaining infallibly, imposed articles much more intricate to be understood than the Scripture itself, became horridly uncharitable in their censures, and the further they departed from the apostolic form of sound words, the more uncertain and unintelligible their definitions grew. Their taste being characterized by the love of the marvellous and the mystical, they paid little regard to the plain and unerring dictates of inspiration, and by the exercise of a singular ingenuity under the influence of Platonic associations, they soon came to see their own illusions stamped with the sacred authority of Heaven. In their delight to astonish and amaze, they dimmed the moral glory of Christianity, made the gospel of Jesus like some of the incomprehensible systems of heathen philosophy – a religion unworthy of God to give or of man to receive. And now, my brethren, that we honestly wish to dismiss from Christianity every thing which has been foisted into it, we are accused of exalting reason above revelation. I wish the history of the church were better known.



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1820



The Reverend [William Ellery Channing](#) declared his negative evaluation of Calvinism by way of a review of a book published considerably earlier in Boston, in fact in 1809, entitled A GENERAL VIEW OF THE DOCTRINES OF CHRISTIANITY, DESIGNED MORE ESPECIALLY FOR THE EDIFICATION AND INSTRUCTION OF FAMILIES.

**[see following screens]**



The Reverend [William Ellery Channing](#)'s "The Moral Argument Against Calvinism," published originally in 1820, reprinted as pages 103-21 of Robinson, David, ed. WILLIAM ELLERY CHANNING: SELECTED WRITINGS (NY: Paulist Press, 1986)

## "A Review From Professor Ross's Seminar"

### THEOLOGY

Channing's argument against Calvinism is twofold:

- it makes God morally repugnant,
- and earthly life "a curse."

The key to the persistence of Calvinism, in Channing's analysis, is the fear believers have toward God: their

minds and consciences are subdued by terror, so that they dare not confess, even to themselves, the shrinking, which they feel, from the unworthy views which this system gives of God. (105)

Channing's critique of Calvinist dread is not Freud's projection theory, however. His theology springs from an analogical base; put negatively, we cannot ascribe to God what we would condemn in human thought and action. Channing's confidence in human beings arises from his conviction of our "likeness" to God. Made in his image, with the gift of reason to guide our reflections, we are capable of judging as good what God deems good. To argue, as the Calvinists do, that the Fall has damaged our reasoning, makes God look morally suspect: he gives us his "reason" to guide our reflective thought, but fails to make it operative. The Calvinists had always warned against spiritual pride; a more dangerous habit, Channing insists, may be an "affected humility":

we think it ungrateful to disparage the powers which our Creator has given us. (109)

Waldo Emerson inherits this trust in reason from the Unitarians. But for him, especially in the early essays, "reason" means what we might call imagination or intuition. What we know of God we gain not by ratiocination but by "revelation" or "inspiration." Emerson in this regard moves away from Channing's reasonableness and sounds surprisingly like the Calvinists whom Channing and all the Unitarians opposed.

(Johan Christopherson, February 13, 1992)

### Moral Argument Against Calvinism

The work of which we have prefixed the title to this article was published several years ago, and has been read by many among us with pleasure and profit. But it is not known as widely as it should be, and we wish to call to it the notice which it merits. It is not an original work, but was compiled chiefly from the writings of the Rev. Robert Fellowes, whose name is probably



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known to most of our readers. The title we think not altogether happy, because it raises an expectation which the book does not answer. We should expect from it a regular statement of the great truths of our religion; but we find, what at present is perhaps as useful, a vindication of Christianity from the gross errors which Calvinism has labored to identify with this divine system. This may easily be supposed from the table of contents. The book professes to treat of the following subjects: The nature of religion and the mistakes that occur on that subject; the free agency and accountableness of man; the fall of Adam, and original sin; the doctrine of faith in general and of religious faith in particular; the doctrine of works; the doctrine of regeneration; the doctrine of repentance; the doctrine of grace; the doctrine of election and reprobation; the doctrine of perseverance; the visiting of the iniquities of the fathers upon the children; and the sin against the Holy Ghost. By those, who are acquainted with the five thorny points of Calvinism, the design of this compilation will be sufficiently understood from the enumeration of topics now given; and few designs are more praiseworthy, than to free Christianity from the reproach brought upon it by that system.

The work under review is professedly popular in its style and mode of discussion. It has little refined and elaborate reasoning, but appeals to the great moral principles of human nature, and to the general strain of the Scriptures. It expresses strongly and without circumlocution the abhorrence with which every mind, uncorrupted by false theology, must look on Calvinism; and although some of its delineations may be overcharged, yet they are substantially correct, and their strength is their excellence. The truth is, that nothing is so necessary on this subject as to awaken moral feeling in men's breasts. Calvinism owes its perpetuity to the influence of fear in palsying the moral nature. Men's minds and consciences are subdued by terror, so that they dare not confess, even to themselves, the shrinking which they feel from the unworthy views which this system gives of God; and, by thus smothering their just abhorrence, they gradually extinguish it, and even come to vindicate in God what would disgrace his creatures. A voice of power and solemn warning is needed to rouse them from this lethargy, to give them a new and a juster dread, the dread of incurring God's displeasure, by making him odious, and exposing religion to insult and aversion. In the present article, we intend to treat this subject with great freedom. But we beg that it may be understood that by Calvinism we intend only the peculiarities or distinguishing features of that system. We would also have it remembered that these peculiarities form a small part of the religious faith of a Calvinist. He joins with them the general, fundamental, and most important truths of Christianity, by which they are always neutralized in a greater or less degree, and in some cases nullified. Accordingly, it has been our happiness to see in the numerous body by which they are professed, some of the brightest examples of Christian virtue. Our hostility to the doctrine does not extend to its advocates. In bearing our strongest testimony against error, we do not the less honor the moral and religious



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worth with which it is often connected.

The book under review will probably be objected to by theologians, because it takes no notice of a distinction, invented by Calvinistic metaphysicians, for rescuing their doctrines from the charge of aspersing God's equity and goodness. We refer to the distinction between natural and moral inability, a subtilty which may be thought to deserve some attention, because it makes such a show in some of the principal books of this sect. But, with due deference to its defenders, it seems to us groundless and idle, a distinction without a difference. An inability to do our duty, which is born with us, is to all intents and according to the established meaning of the word, natural. Call it moral, or what you please, it is still a part of the nature which our Creator gave us, and to suppose that He punishes us for it, because it is an inability seated in the will, is just as absurd, as to suppose him to punish us for a weakness of sight or of a limb. Common people cannot understand this distinction, cannot split this hair, and it is no small objection to Calvinism, that, according to its ablest defenders, it can only be reconciled to God's perfections, by a metaphysical subtilty, which the mass of people cannot comprehend.

If we were to speak as critics of the style of this book, we should say, that, whilst generally clear, and sometimes striking, it has the faults of the style which was very current not many years ago in this country, and which, we rejoice to say, is giving place to a better. The style to which we refer, and which threatened to supplant good writing in this country, intended to be elegant, but fell into jejuneness and insipidity. It delighted in words and arrangements of word, which were little soiled by common use, and mistook a spruce neatness for grace. We had a Procrustes' bed for sentences, and there seemed to be a settled war between the style of writing and the free style of conversation. Times we think have changed. Men have learned more to write as they speak, and are ashamed to dress up familiar thoughts, as if they were just arrived from a far country, and could not appear in public without a foreign and studied attire. They have learned that common words are common, precisely because most fitted to express real feeling and strong conception, and that the circuitous, measured phraseology, which was called elegance, was but the parade of weakness. They have learned that words are the signs of thought, and worthless counterfeits without it, and that style is good, when, instead of being anxiously cast into a mould, it seems a free and natural expression of thought, and gives to us with power the workings of the author's mind.

We have been led to make these remarks on the style which in a degree marks the book before us, from a persuasion, that this mode of writing has been particularly injurious to religion, and to rational religion. It has crept into sermons perhaps more than into any other compositions and has imbued them with that soporific quality, which they have sometimes been found to possess in an eminent degree. How many hearers have been soothed by a smooth, watery flow of words, a regular chime of sentences, and elegantly rocked into repose! We are aware, that preachers,



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above all writers, are excusable for this style, because it is the easiest; and, having too much work to do, they must do it of course in the readiest way. But we mourn the necessity, and mourn still more the effect. It gives us great pleasure to say, that, in this particular, we think we perceive an improvement taking place in this region. Preaching is becoming more direct, aims more at impression, and seeks the nearest way to men's hearts and consciences. We often hear from the pulpit strong thought in plain and strong language. It is hoped, from the state of society, that we shall not fly from one extreme to another, and degenerate into coarseness; but perhaps even this is a less evil than tameness and insipidity.

To return; the principal argument against Calvinism, in the General View of Christian Doctrines, is the moral argument, or that which is drawn from the inconsistency of the system with the divine perfections. It is plain that a doctrine which contradicts our best ideas of goodness and justice, cannot come from the just and good God, or be a truer representation of his character. This moral argument has always been powerful to the pulling down of the strongholds of Calvinism. Even in the dark period, when this system was shaped and finished at Geneva, its advocates often writhed under the weight of it; and we cannot but deem it a mark of the progress of society that Calvinists are more and more troubled with the palpable repugnance of their doctrines to God's nature, and accordingly labor to soften and explain them, until in many cases the name only is retained. If the stern reformer of [Geneva](#) could lift up his head and hear the mitigated tone in which some of his professed followers dispense his fearful doctrines, we fear that he could not lie down in peace until he had poured out his displeasure on their cowardice and degeneracy. He would tell them, with a frown, that moderate Calvinism was a solecism, a contradiction in terms, and would bid them in scorn to join their real friend, Arminius. Such is the power of public opinion and of an improved state of society on creeds, that naked, undisguised Calvinism is not very fond of showing itself, and many of consequence know imperfectly what it means. What, then, is the system against which the View of Christian Doctrines is directed?

Calvinism teaches that, in consequence of Adam's sin in eating the forbidden fruit, God brings into life all his posterity with a nature wholly corrupt, so that they are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all that is spiritually good, and wholly inclined to all evil, and that continually. It teaches, that all mankind, having fallen in Adam, are under God's wrath and curse, and so made liable to all miseries in this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell for ever. It teaches, that, from this ruined race God, out of his mere good pleasure, has elected a certain number to be saved by Christ, not induced to this choice by any foresight of their faith or good works, but wholly by his free grace and love; and that, having thus predestinated them to eternal life, He renews and sanctifies them by his almighty and special agency, and brings them into a state of grace, from which they cannot fall and perish. It teaches, that the rest of mankind He is pleased to pass over, and to ordain them to dishonor and wrath for their sins, to the



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honor of his justice and power; in other words, He leaves the rest to the corruption in which they were born, withholds the grace which is necessary to their recovery, and condemns them to "most grievous torments in soul and body without intermission in hell-fire for ever." Such is Calvinism, as gathered from the most authentic records of the doctrine. Whoever will consult the famous Assembly's Catechisms and Confession, will see the peculiarities of the system in all their length and breadth of deformity. A man of plain sense, whose spirit has not been broken to this creed by education or terror, will think that it is not necessary for us to travel to heathen countries, to learn how mournfully the human mind may misrepresent the Deity.

The moral argument against Calvinism, of which we have spoken, must seem irresistible to common and unperverted minds, after attending to the brief statement now given. It will be asked with astonishment, How is it possible that men can hold these doctrines and yet maintain God's goodness and equity? What principles can be more contradictory? To remove the objection to Calvinism, which is drawn from its repugnance to the divine perfections, recourse has been had, as before observed, to the distinction between natural and moral inability, and to other like subtleties.

But a more common reply, we conceive, has been drawn from the weakness and imperfection of the human mind, and from its incapacity of comprehending God. Calvinists will tell us that because a doctrine opposes our convictions of rectitude, it is not necessarily false; that apparent are not always real inconsistencies; that God is an infinite and incomprehensible being, and not to be tried by our ideas of fitness and morality; that we bring their system to an incompetent tribunal, when we submit it to the decision of human reason and conscience; that we are weak judges of what is right and wrong, good and evil, in the Deity; that the happiness of the universe may require an administration of human affairs which is very offensive to limited understandings; that we must follow revelation, not reason or moral feeling, and must consider doctrines, which shock us in revelation, as awful mysteries, which are dark through our ignorance, and which time will enlighten. How little, it is added, can man explain or understand God's ways! How inconsistent the miseries of life appear with goodness in the Creator! How prone, too, have men always been to confound good and evil, to call the just, unjust. How presumptuous is it in such a being, to sit in judgment upon God, and to question the rectitude of the divine administration, because it shocks his sense of rectitude; such we conceive to be a fair statement of the manner in which the Calvinist frequently meets the objection that his system is at war with God's attributes. Such the reasoning by which the voice of conscience and nature is stifled, and men are reconciled to doctrines, which, if tried by the established principles of morality, would be rejected with horror. On this reasoning we purpose to offer some remarks; and we shall avail ourselves of the opportunity, to give our views of the confidence which is due to our rational and moral faculties in religion.

That God is infinite, and that man often errs, we affirm as



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strongly as our Calvinistic brethren. We desire to think humbly of ourselves, and reverently of our Creator. In the strong language of Scripture, "We now see through a glass darkly." "We cannot by searching find out God unto perfection. Clouds and darkness are round about him. His judgments are a great deep." God is great and good beyond utterance or thought. We have no disposition to idolize our own powers, or to penetrate the secret counsels of the Deity. But, on the other hand, we think it ungrateful to disparage the powers which our Creator has given us, or to question the certainty or importance of the knowledge, which He has seen fit to place within our reach. There is an affected humility, we think, as dangerous as pride. We may rate our faculties too meanly, as well as too boastingly. The worst error in religion, after all, is that of the skeptic, who records triumphantly the weaknesses and wanderings of the human intellect, and maintains that no trust is due to the decisions of this erring reason. We by no means conceive, that man's greatest danger springs from pride of understanding, though we think as badly of this vice as other Christians. The history of the church proves that men may trust their faculties too little as well as too much, and that the timidity which shrinks from investigation has injured the mind, and betrayed the interests of Christianity, as much as an irreverent boldness of thought. It is an important truth, which we apprehend has not been sufficiently developed, that the ultimate reliance of a human being is and must be on his own mind. To confide in God, we must first confide in the faculties by which He is apprehended, and by which the proofs of his existence are weighed. A trust in our ability to distinguish between truth and falsehood is implied in every act of belief; for to question this ability would of necessity unsettle all belief.

We cannot take a step in reasoning or action without a secret reliance on our own minds. Religion in particular implies, that we have understandings endowed and qualified for the highest employments of intellect. In affirming the existence and perfections of God, we suppose and affirm the existence in ourselves of faculties which correspond to these sublime objects, and which are fitted to discern them. Religion is a conviction and an act of the human soul, so that, in denying confidence to the one, we subvert the truth and claims of the other. Nothing is gained to piety by degrading human nature, for in the competency of this nature to know and judge of God all piety has its foundation. Our proneness to err instructs us, indeed, to use our powers with great caution, but not to contemn and neglect them. The occasional abuse of our faculties, be it ever so enormous, does not prove them unfit for their highest end, which is, to form clear and consistent views of God. Because our eyes sometimes fail or deceive us, would a wise man pluck them out, or cover them with a bandage, and choose to walk and work in the dark? or, because they cannot distinguish distant objects, can they discern nothing clearly in their proper sphere, and is sight to be pronounced a fallacious guide? Men who, to support a creed, would shake our trust in the calm, deliberate, and distinct decisions of our rational and moral powers, endanger religion more than its open foes, and forge the



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deadliest weapon for the infidel.

It is true that God is an infinite Being, and also true that his powers and perfections, his purposes and operations, his ends and means, being unlimited, are incomprehensible. In other words, they cannot be wholly taken in or embraced by the human mind. In the strong and figurative language of Scripture, we "know nothing" of God's ways; that is, we know very few of them. But this is just as true of the most advanced archangel as of man. In comparison with the vastness of God's system, the range of the highest created intellect is narrow; and, in this particular, man's lot does not differ from that of his elder brethren in heaven. We are both confined in our observation and experience to a little spot in the creation. But are an angel's faculties worthy of no trust, or is his knowledge uncertain, because he learns and reasons from a small part of God's works? or are his judgments respecting the Creator to be charged with presumption, because his views do not spread through the whole extent of the universe? We grant that our understandings cannot stretch beyond a very narrow sphere. But still the lessons, which we learn within this sphere are just as sure as if it were indefinitely enlarged. Because much is unexplored, we are not to suspect what we have actually discovered. Knowledge is not the less real because confined. The man who has never set foot beyond his native village knows its scenery and inhabitants as undoubtingly as if he had travelled to the poles. We indeed see very little; but that little is as true as if every thing else were seen; and our future discoveries must agree with and support it. Should the whole order and purposes of the universe be opened to us, it is certain that nothing would be disclosed which would in any degree shake our persuasion that the earth is inhabited by rational and moral beings, who are authorized to expect from their Creator the most benevolent and equitable government. No extent of observation can unsettle those primary and fundamental principles of moral truth, which we derive from our highest faculties operating in the relations in which God has fixed us. In every region and period of the universe, it will be as true as it is now on the earth, that knowledge and power are the measures of responsibility, and that natural incapacity absolves from guilt. These and other moral verities, which are among our clearest perceptions, would, if possible, be strengthened, in proportion as our powers should be enlarged; because harmony and consistency are the characters of God's administration, and all our researches into the universe only serve to manifest its unity, and to show a wider operation of the laws which we witness and experience on earth.

We grant that God is incomprehensible, in the sense already given. But He is not therefore unintelligible; and this distinction we conceive to be important. We do not pretend to know the whole nature and properties of God, but still we can form some clear ideas of him, and can reason from these ideas as justly as from any other. The truth is, that we cannot be said to comprehend any being whatever, not the simplest plant or animal. All have hidden properties. Our knowledge of all is limited. But have we therefore no distinct ideas of the objects around us, and is all our reasoning about them unworthy of



trust? Because God is infinite, his name is not therefore a mere sound. It is a representative of some distinct conceptions of our Creator; and these conceptions are as sure, and important, and as proper materials for the reasoning faculty, as they would be if our views were indefinitely enlarged. We cannot indeed trace God's goodness and rectitude through the whole field of his operations; but we know the essential nature of these attributes, and therefore can often judge what accords with and opposes them. God's goodness, because infinite, does not cease to be goodness, or essentially differ from the same attribute in man; nor does justice change its nature, so that it cannot be understood, because it is seated in an unbounded mind. There have indeed been philosophers, "falsely so called," who have argued from the unlimited nature of God, that we cannot ascribe to him justice and other moral attributes, in any proper or definite sense of those words; and the inference is plain, that all religion or worship, wanting an intelligible object, must be a misplaced, wasted offering. This doctrine from the infidel we reject with abhorrence; but something, not very different, too often reaches us from the mistaken Christian, who, to save his creed, shrouds the Creator in utter darkness. In opposition to both, we maintain that God's attributes are intelligible, and that we can conceive as truly of his goodness and justice, as of these qualities in men. In fact, these qualities are essentially the same in God and man, though differing in degree, in purity, and in extent of operation. We know not and we cannot conceive of any other justice or goodness, than we learn from our own nature; and if God have not these, he is altogether unknown to us as a moral being; he offers nothing for esteem and love to rest upon; the objection of the infidel is just, that worship is wasted; "We worship we know not what."

It is asked, On what authority do we ascribe to God goodness and rectitude, in the sense in which these attributes belong to men, or how can we judge of the nature of attributes in the mind of the Creator? We answer by asking, How is it that we become acquainted with the mind of a fellow-creature? The last is as invisible, as removed from immediate inspection, as the first. Still we do not hesitate to speak of the justice and goodness of a neighbour; and how do we gain our knowledge? We answer, by witnessing the effects, operations, and expressions of these attributes. It is a law of our nature to argue from the effect to the cause, from the action to the agent, from the ends proposed and from the means of pursuing them, to the character and disposition of the being in whom we observe them. By these processes, we learn the invisible mind and character of man; and by the same we ascend to the mind of God, whose works, effects, operations, and ends are as expressive and significant of justice and goodness, as the best and most decisive actions of men.

If this reasoning be sound (and all religion rests upon it,) then God's justice and goodness are intelligible attributes, agreeing essentially with the same qualities in ourselves. Their operation indeed is infinitely wider, and they are employed in accomplishing not only immediate but remote and unknown ends. Of consequence, we must expect that many parts of the divine



administration will be obscure, that is, will not produce immediate good, and an immediate distinction between virtue and vice. But still the unbounded operation of these attributes does not change their nature. They are still the same, as if they acted in the narrowest sphere. We can still determine in many cases what does not accord with them. We are particularly sure that those essential principles of justice, which enter into and even form our conception of this attribute, must pervade every province and every period of the administration of a just being, and that to suppose the Creator in any instance to forsake them, is to charge him directly with unrighteousness, however loudly the lips may compliment his equity.

"But is it not presumptuous in man," it is continually said, "to sit in judgment on God?" We answer, that to "sit in judgment on God" is an ambiguous and offensive phrase, conveying to common minds the ideas of irreverence, boldness, familiarity. The question would be better stated thus: Is it not presumptuous in man to judge concerning God, and concerning what agrees or disagrees with his attributes? We answer confidently, No; for in many cases we are competent and even bound to judge. And we plead first in our defence the Scriptures. How continually does God in his word appeal to the understanding and moral judgment of man. "O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, between me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it." We observe, in the next place, that all religion supposes and is built on judgments passed by us on God and on his operations. Is it not, for example, our duty and a leading part of piety to praise God: And what is praising a being, but to adjudge and ascribe to him just and generous deeds and motives? And of what value is praise, except from those, who are capable of distinguishing between actions which exalt and actions which degrade the character? Is it presumption to call God excellent? And what is this, but to refer his character to a standard of excellence, to try it by the established principles of rectitude, and to pronounce its conformity to them; that is, to judge of God and his operations?

We are presumptuous, we are told, in judging of our Creator. But He himself has made this our duty, in giving us a moral faculty; and to decline it, is to violate the primary law of our nature. Conscience, the sense of right, the power of perceiving moral distinctions, the power of discerning between justice and injustice, excellence and baseness, is the highest faculty given us by God, the whole foundation of our responsibility, and our sole capacity for religion. Now we are forbidden by this faculty to love a being, who wants, or who fails to discover, moral excellence. God, in giving us conscience, has implanted a principle within us, which forbids us to prostrate ourselves before mere power, or to offer praise where we do not discover worth; a principle, which challenges our supreme homage for supreme goodness, and which absolves us from guilt, when we abhor a severe and unjust administration. Our Creator has consequently waived his own claims on our veneration and obedience, any farther than he discovers himself to us in characters of benevolence, equity, and righteousness. He rests



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his authority on the perfect coincidence of his will and government with those great and fundamental principles of morality written on our souls.

He desires no worship, but that which springs from the exercise of our moral faculties upon his character, from our discernment and persuasion of his rectitude and goodness. He asks, he accepts, no love or admiration but from those, who can understand the nature and the proofs of moral excellence.

There are two or three striking facts, which show that there is no presumption in judging of God, and of what agrees or disagrees with his attributes. The first fact is, that the most intelligent and devout men have often employed themselves in proving the existence and perfections of God, and have been honored for this service to the cause of religion. Now we ask, what is meant by the proofs of a divine perfection? They are certain acts, operations, and methods of government, which are proper and natural effects, signs, and expressions of this perfection, and from which, according to the established principles of reasoning, it may be inferred. To prove the divine attributes is to collect and arrange those works and ways of the Creator, which accord with these attributes, correspond to them, flow from them, and express them. Of consequence, to prove them requires and implies the power of judging of what agrees with them, of discerning their proper marks and expressions. All our treatises on natural theology rest on this power. Every argument in support of a divine perfection is an exercise of it. To deny it, is to overthrow all religion.

Now, if such are the proofs of God's goodness and justice, and if we are capable of discerning them, then we are not necessarily presumptuous, when we say of particular measures ascribed to him, that they are inconsistent with his attributes, and cannot belong to him. There is plainly no more presumption in affirming of certain principles of administration, that they oppose God's equity and would prove him unrighteous, than to affirm of others, that they prove him upright and good. There are signs and evidences of injustice as unequivocal as those of justice; and our faculties are as adequate to the perception of the last as of the first. If they must not be trusted in deciding what would prove God unjust, they are unworthy of confidence when they gather evidences of his rectitude; and of course, the whole structure of religion must fall.

It is no slight objection to the mode of reasoning adopted by the Calvinist, that it renders the proof of the divine attributes impossible. When we object to his representations of the divine government, that they shock our clearest ideas of goodness and justice, he replies, that still they may be true, because we know very little of God, and what seems unjust to man, may be in the Creator the perfection of rectitude. Now this weapon has a double edge. If the strongest marks and expressions of injustice do not prove God unjust, then the strongest marks of the opposite character do not prove him righteous. If the first do not deserve confidence, because of our narrow views of God, neither do the last. If, when more shall be known, the first may be found consistent with perfect rectitude, so, when more shall be known, the last may be found consistent with infinite



malignity and oppression. This reasoning of our opponents casts us on an ocean of awful uncertainty. Admit it, and we have no proofs of God's goodness and equity to rely upon. What we call proofs, may be mere appearances, which a wider knowledge of God may reverse. The future may show us, that the very laws and works of the Creator, from which we now infer his kindness, are consistent with the most determined purpose to spread infinite misery and guilt, and were intended, by raising hope, to add the agony of disappointment to our other woes. Why may not these anticipations, horrible as they are, be verified by the unfolding of God's system, if our reasonings about his attributes are rendered so very uncertain, as Calvinism teaches, by the infinity of his nature?

We have mentioned one fact to show that it is not presumptuous to judge of God, and of what accords with and opposes his attributes; namely, the fact that his attributes are thought susceptible of proof. Another fact, very decisive on this point, is, that Christians of all classes have concurred in resting the truth of Christianity in a great degree on its internal evidence, that is, on its accordance with the perfections of God. How common is it to hear from religious teachers, that Christianity is worthy of a good and righteous being, that it bears the marks of a divine original! Volumes have been written on its internal proofs, on the coincidence of its purposes and spirit with our highest conceptions of God. How common, too, is it to say of other religions, that they are at war with the divine nature, with God's rectitude and goodness, and that we want no other proofs of their falsehood! And what does all this reasoning imply? Clearly this, that we are capable of determining, in many cases, what is worthy and what is unworthy of God, what accords with and what opposes his moral attributes. Deny us this capacity, and it would be no presumption against a professed revelation, that it ascribed to the Supreme Being the most detestable practices. It might still be said in support of such a system, that it is arrogant in man to determine what kind of revelation suits the character of the Creator. Christianity then leans, at least in part, and some think chiefly, on internal evidence, or on its agreeableness to God's moral attributes; and is it probable, that this religion, having this foundation, contains representations of God's government which shock our ideas of rectitude, and that it silences our objections by telling us, that we are no judges of what suits or opposes his infinite nature?

We will name one more fact to show that it is not presumption to form these judgments of the Creator. All Christians are accustomed to reason from God's attributes, and to use them as tests of doctrines. In their controversies with one another, they spare no pains to show that their particular views accord best with the divine perfections, and every sect labors to throw on its adversaries the odium of maintaining what is unworthy of God. Theological writings are filled with such arguments; and yet we, it seems, are guilty of awful presumption when we deny of God principles of administration, against which every pure and good sentiment in our breasts rises in abhorrence.

We shall conclude this discussion with an important inquiry. If



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God's justice and goodness are consistent with those operations and modes of government, which Calvinism ascribes to him, of what use is our belief in these perfections? What expectations can we found upon them? If it consist with divine rectitude to consign to everlasting misery beings who have come guilty and impotent from his hand, we beg to know what interest we have in this rectitude, what pledge of good it contains, or what evil can be imagined which may not be its natural result? If justice and goodness, when stretched to infinity, take such strange forms and appear in such unexpected and apparently inconsistent operations, how are we sure, that they will not give up the best men to ruin, and leave the universe to the powers of darkness? Such results indeed seem incompatible with these attributes, but not more so than the acts attributed to God by Calvinism. Is it said that the divine faithfulness is pledged in the Scriptures to a happier issue of things? But why should not divine faithfulness transcend our poor understandings as much as divine goodness and justice, and why may not God, consistently with this attribute, crush every hope which his word has raised? Thus all the divine perfections are lost to us as grounds of encouragement and consolation, if we maintain, that their infinity places them beyond our judgment, and that we must expect from them measures and operations entirely I opposed to what seems to us most accordant with their nature.

We have thus endeavored to show, that the testimony of our rational and moral faculties against Calvinism is worthy of trust. We know that this reasoning will be met by the question, What, then becomes of Christianity? for this religion plainly teaches the doctrines you have condemned. Our answer is ready. Christianity contains no such doctrines. Christianity, reason, and conscience are perfectly harmonious on the subject under discussion. Our religion, fairly construed, gives no countenance to that system, which has arrogated to itself the distinction of Evangelical. We cannot, however, enter this field at present. We will only say, that the general spirit of Christianity affords a very strong presumption, that its records teach no such doctrines as we have opposed. This spirit is love, charity, benevolence. Christianity, we all agree, is designed to manifest God as perfect benevolence, and to bring men to love and imitate him. Now it is probable, that a religion, having this object, gives views of the Supreme Being, from which our moral convictions and benevolent sentiments shrink with horror, and which, if made our pattern, would convert us into monsters? It is plain, that, were a human parent to form himself on the Universal Father, as described by Calvinism, that is, were he to bring his children into life totally depraved, and then to pursue them with endless punishment, we should charge him with a cruelty not surpassed in the annals of the world; or, were a sovereign to incapacitate his subjects in any way whatever for obeying his laws, and then to torture them in dungeons of perpetual woe, we should say that history records no darker crime. And is it probable, that a religion, which aims to attract and assimilate us to God, considered as love, should hold him up to us in these heart-withering characters? We may confidently expect to find in such a system the brightest views of the divine



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nature; and the same objections lie against interpretations of its records, which savor of cruelty and injustice, as lie against the literal sense of passages which ascribe to God bodily wants and organs. Let the Scriptures be read with a recollection of the spirit of Christianity, and with that modification of particular texts by this general spirit, which a just criticism requires, and Calvinism would no more enter the mind of the reader, than Popery, we had almost said, than Heathenism.

In the remarks now made, it will be seen, we hope, that we have aimed to expose doctrines, not to condemn their professors. It is true, that men are apt to think themselves assailed, when their system only is called to account. But we have no foe but error. We are less and less disposed to measure the piety of others by peculiarities of faith. Men's characters are determined, not by the opinions which they profess, but by those on which their thoughts habitually fasten, which recur to them most forcibly, and which color their ordinary views of God and duty. The creed of habit, imitation, or fear, may be defended stoutly, and yet have little practical influence. The mind, when compelled by education or other circumstances to receive irrational doctrines, has yet a power of keeping them, as it were, on its surface, of excluding them from its depths, of refusing to incorporate them with its own being; and, when burdened with a mixed, incongruous system, it often discovers a sagacity, which reminds us of the instinct of inferior animals, in selecting the healthful and nutritious portions, and in making them its daily food. Accordingly the real faith often corresponds little with that which is professed. It often happens, that, through the progress of the mind in light and virtue, opinions, once central, are gradually thrown outward, lose their vitality, and cease to be principles of action, whilst through habit they are defended as articles of faith.

The words of the creed survive, but its advocates sympathize with it little more than its foes. These remarks are particularly applicable to the present subject. A large number, perhaps a majority of those, who surname themselves with the name of Calvin, have little more title to it than ourselves. They keep the name, and drop the principles which it signifies. They adhere to the system as a whole, but shrink from all its parts and distinguishing points. This silent but real defection from Calvinism is spreading more and more widely. The grim features of this system are softening, and its stern spirit yielding to conciliation and charity. We beg our readers to consult for themselves the two Catechisms and the Confession of the Westminster Assembly, and to compare these standards of Calvinism, with what now bears its name. They will rejoice, we doubt not, in the triumphs of truth. With these views, we have no disposition to disparage the professors of the system which we condemn, although we believe that its influence is yet so extensive and pernicious as to bind us to oppose it.

Calvinism, we are persuaded, is giving place to better views. It has passed its meridian, and is sinking, to rise no more. It has to contend with foes more formidable than theologians, with foes, from whom it cannot shield itself in mystery and

metaphysical subtilties, we mean with the progress of the human mind, and with the progress of the spirit of the gospel. Society is going forward in intelligence and charity, and of course is leaving the theology of the sixteenth century behind it. We hail this revolution of opinion as a most auspicious event to the Christian cause. We hear much at present of efforts to spread the gospel. But Christianity is gaining more by the removal of degrading errors, than it would by armies of missionaries who should carry with them a corrupted form of the religion. We think the decline of Calvinism one of the most encouraging facts in our passing history; for this system, by outraging conscience and reason, tends to array these high faculties against revelation. Its errors are peculiarly mournful, because they relate to the character of God. It darkens and stains his pure nature; spoils his character of its sacredness, loveliness, glory, and thus quenches the central light of the universe, makes existence a curse, and the extinction of it a consummation devoutly to be wished. We now speak of the peculiarities of this system, and of their natural influence, when not counteracted, as they always are in a greater or less degree, by better views, derived from the spirit and plain lessons of Christianity. We have had so much to do with our subject, that we have neglected to make the usual extracts from the book which we proposed to review. We earnestly wish, that a work, answering to the title of this, which should give us "a general view of Christian doctrines," might be undertaken by a powerful hand. Next to a good commentary on the Scriptures, it would be the best service which could be rendered to Christian truth.

 January 22, Saturday: [William Francis Channing](#) was born, a son of the Reverend [William Ellery Channing](#).



Edward Bransfield, on a Royal Navy expedition aboard the Williams, landed on King George Island in the South Shetlands and claimed it for Britain.

In the diary of [Thomas Nuttall](#) we find: "This morning we were visited by three Choctaws in quest of whiskey. Their complexions were much fairer than most of the Indians we meet with on the Mississippi. Two of them were boys of about 18 or 19, and possessed the handsomest features I have ever seen among the natives, though rather too effeminate. About 20 miles below the Arkansa, in the Cypress bend, we saw the first appearance of *Tillandsia* or Long moss."

1821

➡ March 14, Wednesday: The Reverend [William Ellery Channing](#) delivered a lecture on “The Evidence of Revealed Religion” at [Harvard College](#), which [Waldo Emerson](#) thought was just the most brilliant thing he had ever heard.



In the Konigliche Hofbuhne, Berlin, incidental music to Wolff’s play Preciosa by Carl Maria von Weber was performed for the initial time, to great success with the public.

1822

➡ Though [Lydia Maria Francis](#) ([Lydia Maria Child](#)) was living with her brother the [Reverend Convers Francis, Jr.](#), who had become a Unitarian minister at First Parish in Watertown, and was attending his church regularly, she had become a member of the Boston Society of the New Jerusalem. Apparently, she maintained some connection there until the 1830s, when the pro-slavery stance of the pastor made her doubt “whether such a church could have come down from heaven.” Later she would be drawn to the preaching of the Reverend [William Ellery Channing](#), though she despaired over his reluctance to embrace abolitionism wholeheartedly. She found [Unitarianism](#) “a mere half-way house, where spiritual travelers find themselves well accommodated for the night, but where they grow weary of spending the day.”

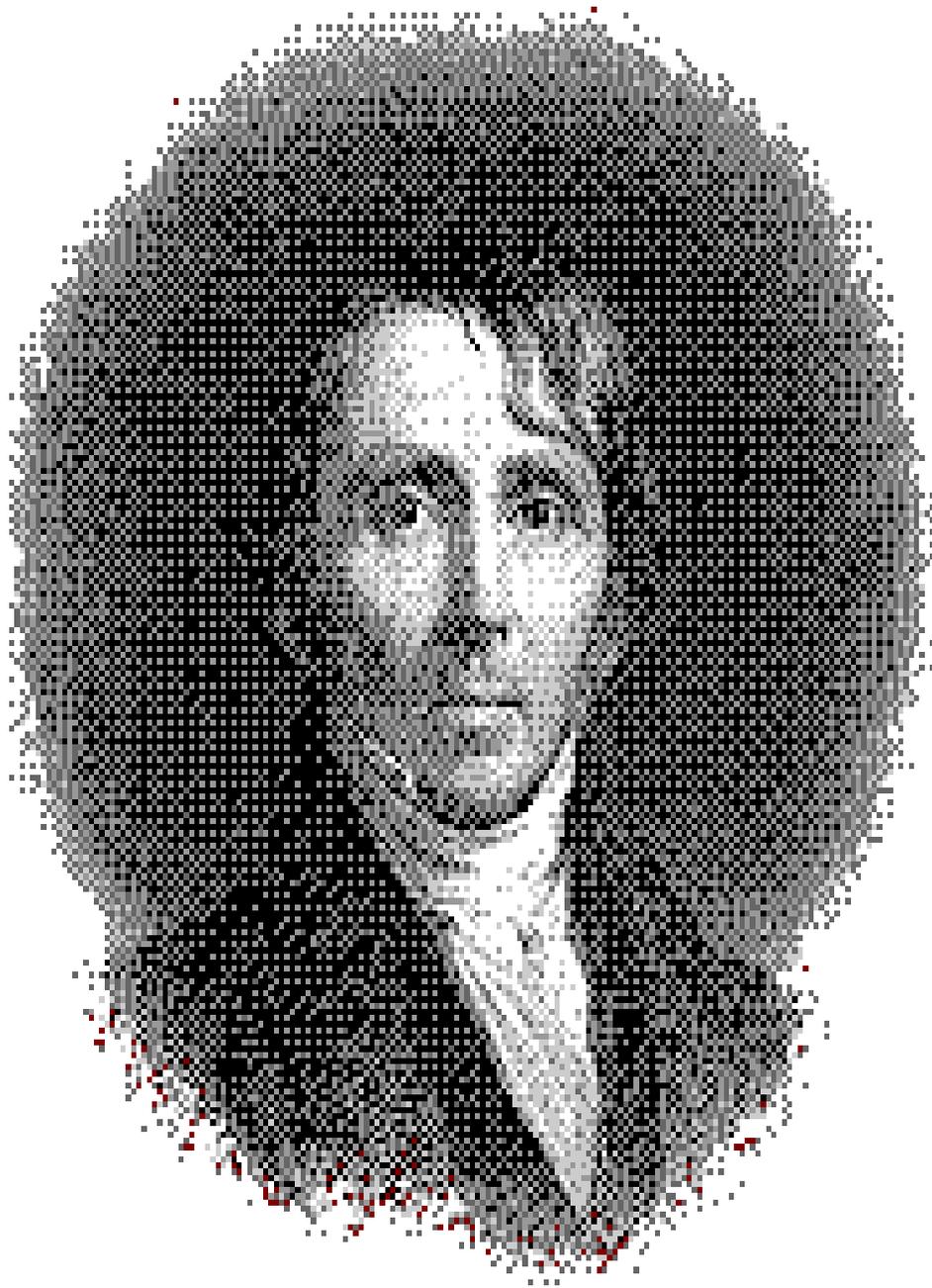


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1823

➔ The Reverend William Adam of the Calcutta [Unitarian](#) Committee wrote to the Reverend [William Ellery Channing](#) in the USA,



and this letter was forwarded to the Reverend Henry Ware, Jr., seated in the Hollis Chair of Divinity at [Harvard](#)



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[College](#). The Reverend Ware wrote to the Rajah Rammohan Roy in [India](#), asking “whether it be desirable that the inhabitants of India should be converted to Christianity, in what degree desirable, and for what reasons?” Appropriate questions, those — one wonders whether they had ever before been broached.

The Rajah responded reasonably enough that conversion to a different religion probably wouldn't be seemly or necessary, because after all, of “what is set forth in scripture, that ‘in every nation he that **feareth** God and worketh righteousness is accepted with him,’” applies regardless of whatever was the “form of worship he may have been taught to glorify God.” However, he elaborated that with the further remark that Christianity, “if properly inculcated, has a greater tendency to improve the moral and political state of mankind, than any other known religious system.”

However, the Reverend William Adam's [Unitarian](#) Church did not do well in Calcutta, and by the end of the year its doors were closed and he was on his way home to England. In addition, the Raja's press, the *Mirat-ul-Akhbar*, was forced to cease publication and Roy submitted a memorial to the Supreme Court against the Press Ordinance. He wrote a letter to Amherst pleading for promotion of a “more liberal and enlightened system of instruction.”



One Sunday in October: [Waldo Emerson](#) was deeply impressed by a “Discourse upon Revelation” by the Reverend [William Ellery Channing](#), preaching in the Reverend [Frederic Henry Hedge](#)'s Federal Street Church in [Boston](#):

*I heard Dr Channing deliver a discourse upon Revelation as standing in comparison with Nature. I have heard no sermon approaching in excellence to this, since the Dudleian Lecture. The language was a transparent medium, conveying with the utmost distinctness, the pictures in his mind, to the minds of the hearers. He considered God's word to be the only expounder of his works, & that Nature had always been found insufficient to teach men the great doctrines which Revelation inculcated. Astronomy had in one or two ways an unhappy tendency. An universe of matter in which Deity would display his power & greatness must be of infinite extent & complicate relations and of course too vast to be measured by the eye & understanding of man. Hence errors. Astron. reveals to us infinite number of worlds like our own accommodated for the residence of such beings as we of gross matter. But to kindle our piety & urge our faith, we do not want such a world as this but a purer, a world of morals & of spirits. La Place has written in the mountain album of Switzerland his avowal of Atheism. Newton had a better master than Suns & Stars. He learned of heaven ere he philosophized, & after travelling through mazes of the universe he returned to bow his laurelled head at the feet of Jesus of Nazareth. Dr C. regarded Revelation as much a part of the order of things as any other event. It would have been wise to have made an abstract of the Discourse immediately.*

ASTRONOMY



October 18, Saturday: The Reverend [William Ellery Channing](#) delivered a speech “Remarks on National Literature” before the American Philosophical Association in Philadelphia, prefiguring [Waldo Emerson](#)’s declaration of 1837 on this subject:<sup>4</sup>

A people, into whose minds the thoughts of foreigners are poured perpetually, needs an energy within itself to resist, to modify this mighty influence, and, without it, will inevitably sink under the worst bondage, will become intellectually tame and enslaved.



In [Newport, Rhode Island](#), Friend [Stephen Wanton Gould](#) wrote in his journal:

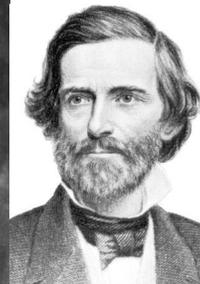
*7th day 18 of 10 M / This evening recd Letters From our fr William Rickman of Rochester in England & our dear Sister Elizabeth R Nichols - the first that has been recd from her Since she has been at her new home in Salem, which gave a very Satisfactory account of her reception at her new home. For this I rejoice & the Language of my heart is "Peace & the God of Peace be with them, & with us, evermore Amen." Nothing very remarkable is contained in Wm Rickmans Letter, but it is pleasant to hear that he is well, & that Friends in that country are in unity. - & also to find that in his advanced age, he is alive in the Truth. -*

RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS

4.This speech would see publication, but not until years later, in the [Christian Examiner](#) in 1830.

1824

➡ [Samuel Gridley Howe](#) graduated from [Harvard Medical School](#) and sailed to participate for six years in the Greek revolution, first as a soldier, then as a surgeon, then as a participant in the postwar reconstruction.



Professors [George Ticknor](#), [Edward Everett](#), and [George Bancroft](#), as high-minded academic emissaries from the backwaters in America, went off to Europe to witness real cultural currents. These three Harvard men (Ticknor the professor of belles lettres; Everett the professor of classics, Bancroft the tutor) would later become important in Massachusetts politics. While in Europe the three scholars would come belatedly in contact with the writings left behind by [Herr Professor Immanuel Kant](#), Johann Gottlieb Fichte, Friedrich von Schelling, as well as with the contemporary writings of [Samuel Taylor Coleridge](#). Contact with German metaphysicians would reinforce the conservatism of Ticknor and Everett while developing in Bancroft what has been referred to as “democratic ideals.” Once safely back in Cambridge, the three would serve as catalysts for the new view of the world. Ticknor would advocate a really higher education, such as transforming [Harvard](#) into a university by broadening its curriculum and testing and grading students rather than tolerating advancement through mere seniority. The Reverend [William Ellery Channing](#) would also be being challenged by these three visitors to real culture, from the 1830s on, to formulate his new Unitarianism.



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1825

 May 26, Thursday: There was a meeting at the church of the Reverend [William Ellery Channing](#) in [Boston](#) to determine questions of organization. The Reverends [Jared Sparks](#), Henry Ware, Sr., and John G. Palfrey were in attendance. Lewis Tappan was selected as the first treasurer of a new body, the American [Unitarian](#) Association. He would discover, however, that these Unitarians were not interested in the state of other people's souls to the exclusion of an interest in the state of their own souls, and that the practical impact of this was that, in his personal crusade for funds to send a Unitarian missionary off to [India](#), to redeem a few benighted Indians from their pagan savagery, he was shouting up a stump. And this would make him more and more dissatisfied.

1828

 May 14, Wednesday: The Reverend [William Ellery Channing](#) wrote to [Daniel Webster](#) about overreaction to the enslavement of black Americans, out of fear that this might give rise to something he feared far more — a disruptive sectionalism that would have the effect of pitting white Americans against white Americans:

**Boston, May 14, 1828.**

MY DEAR SIR.—

I wish to call your attention to a subject of general interest. A little while ago, Mr. Lundy of Baltimore, the editor of a paper called "The Genius of Universal Emancipation," visited this part of the country, to stir us up to the work of abolishing slavery at the South, and the intention is to organize societies for this purpose. I know few objects into which I should enter with more zeal, but I am aware how cautiously exertions are to be made for it in this part of the country. I know that our Southern brethren interpret every word from this region on the subject of slavery as an expression of hostility. I would ask if they cannot be brought to understand us better, and if we can do any good till we remove their misapprehensions. It seems to me that, before moving in this matter, we ought to say to them distinctly, "We consider slavery as your calamity, not your crime, and we will share with you the burden of putting an end to it. We will consent that the public lands shall be appropriated to this object; or that the general government shall be clothed with power to apply a portion of revenue to it."

I throw out these suggestions merely to illustrate my views. We must first let the Southern States see that we are their **friends** in this affair; that we sympathize with them, and, from principles of patriotism and philanthropy, are willing to share the toil and expense of abolishing slavery, or I fear our interference will avail nothing. I am the more sensitive on this subject from my increased solicitude for the preservation of the Union. I know no public interest so important as this. I ask from the general government hardly any other boon than that it will hold us together, and preserve pacific relations and intercourse among the States. I deprecate every thing which sows



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discord and exasperates sectional animosities. If it will simply keep us at peace, and will maintain in full power the national courts, for the purpose of settling quietly among citizens of different States questions which might otherwise be settled by arms, I shall be satisfied.

My fear in regard to our efforts against slavery is, that we shall make the case worse by rousing sectional pride and passion for its support, and that we shall only break the country into two great parties, which may shake the foundations of government.

I have written to you because your situation gives you advantages which perhaps no other man enjoys for ascertaining the method, if any can be devised, by which we may operate beneficially and safely in regard to slavery. Appeals will probably be made soon to the people here, and I wish that wise men would save us from the rashness of enthusiasts, and from the perils to which our very virtues expose us.

With great respect, your friend,

WM. E. CHANNING

HON. DANIEL WEBSTER.

1829



The Reverend [William Ellery Channing](#)'s REMARKS ON THE CHARACTER AND WRITINGS OF [FENELON](#), that had appeared in the [Christian Examiner](#) for March, was republished by Edward Rainford, 13 Red Lion Passage, Red Lion Square in London, as a 34-page booklet.

CHANNING ON FENELON



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1830

 The Reverend [William Ellery Channing](#)'s DISCOURSES, REVIEWS, & MISCELLANIES (Boston: Published by Gray and Bowen, Stereotyped by Lyman Thurston and Company). A copy of this would be in the personal library of [Henry David Thoreau](#).

### DISCOURSES, ETC.

Also, the Reverend [Channing](#)'s essay "Remarks on National Literature," essentially a rewrite of the speech he had delivered before the American Philosophical Association in Philadelphia on October 18, 1823, was printed in the [Christian Examiner](#), prefiguring [Waldo Emerson](#)'s famous declaration of 1837 on this subject:

A people, into whose minds the thoughts of foreigners are poured perpetually, needs an energy within itself to resist, to modify this mighty influence, and, without it, will inevitably sink under the worst bondage, will become intellectually tame and enslaved.



### CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF ENGLISH AND AMERICAN LITERATURE

During this year a reading of the Reverend [Channing](#)'s famous sermon "Likeness to God" would reawaken [Orestes Augustus Brownson's](#) interest in Christianity. Channing's emphasis upon humankind's having been created in God's image and likeness, in contrast with Calvin's stress on the wide gap between God and man, would favorably disposed him toward [Unitarianism](#), and he would resume preaching — but as an independent.

The Reverend [Channing](#) would be seeing enough in the West Indies in this year, and the next, to cause him to take out a personal subscription to [The Liberator](#), but it would prove to be one thing for a gent like him to read their weekly gazette, mebbe with white gloves on, and another thing to actually sometime be in the same room with such suspect darkly countenanced persons. In America in general, and most especially today, there seems to be a conspiracy to pay a lot of attention to problems of race and gender while ignoring the phenomena of class segregation, yet in a case like this it would seem that unless class is taken into account, one is unable to understand what is going down in the mind of a person such as the Reverend.

1833

➡ August: Dr. James Cowles Prichard pioneered “the term monomania, meaning madness affecting one train of thought ... adopted in late times instead of melancholia.” ([Herman Melville](#)’s father-in-law, Chief Justice [Lemuel Shaw](#), would utilize this concept “monomania” in a legal opinion in 1844, and Melville would deploy it in *MARDI AND A VOYAGE THITHER* in 1849, and then in *MOBY-DICK; OR, THE WHALE* in 1851 as the defining characteristic of the psychology of the maimed Captain Ahab.) As what in this year would have been considered to be a prime instance of such monomania, in this year there appeared [Lydia Maria Child](#)’s infamous *APPEAL IN FAVOR OF THAT CLASS OF AMERICANS CALLED AFRICANS*.



**(The author’s “madness affecting one train of thought” was immediately recognized, and in an attempt at a cure her library privileges at the Boston Atheneum were summarily revoked.)**

The Reverend [William Ellery Channing](#) walked down to Child’s cottage from his home on Beacon Hill, a mile and a half, to discuss the book with her for all of three hours, but not because he agreed with her — the Reverend Channing considered Child misguided and a zealot. Child later commented that she had “suffered many a shivering ague-fit in attempting to melt, or batter away the glaciers of his prejudices.” The window of

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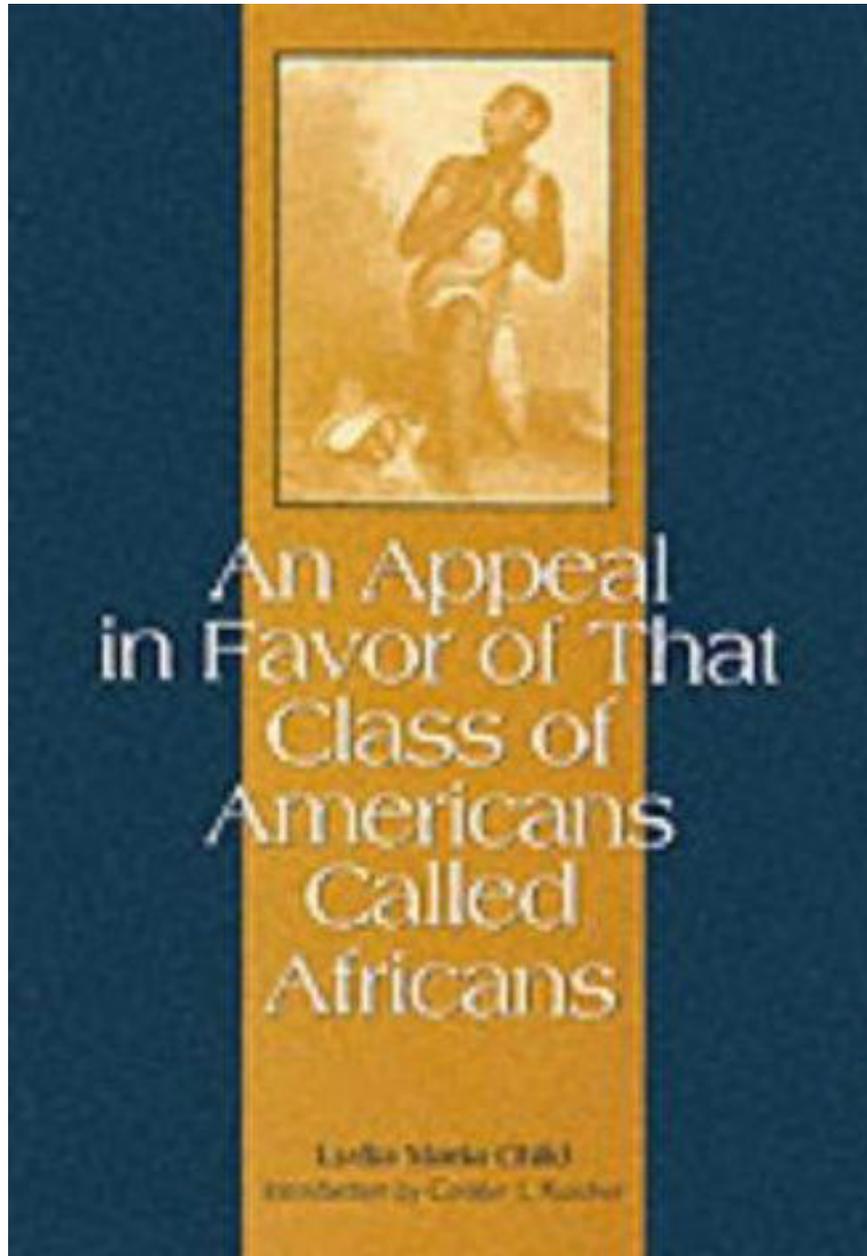
[William Davis Ticknor](#)'s Old Corner Bookstore was smashed because this APPEAL was on display. Having



overheard his parents discussing APPEAL (and perhaps having heard of that smashed window at the Old Corner Bookstore, which had been smashed by someone leaning against or being shoved against it), the 11-year-old [Edward Everett Hale](#) considered heaving a stone at it through the shop window. This is the book that a manager of the American Bible Society refused to read for fear it would make him an abolitionist, and in fact it would be what the 22-year-old Wendell Phillips would be reading just as he was abandoning the practice of law in order to devote his life to abolitionism.



Here is the cover of a modern edition of that offending treatise:



Outspoken in her condemnation of slavery, Mrs. Child pointed out its contradiction with Christian teachings, and described the moral and physical degradation it brought upon slaves and owners alike — not omitting to mention the issue of miscegenation, and not excepting the North from its share of responsibility for the system. “I am fully aware of the unpopularity of the task I have undertaken,” she wrote in the Introduction, “but though I expect ridicule and censure, it is not in my nature to fear them.” As a direct result of this, she would lose her editorial post with The Juvenile Miscellany (if you are so impolite and inconsiderate that you mention that we routinely molest our black servants, we certainly cannot allow you to have contact with our children).

1834

➡ [Mrs. Felicia Hemans](#)'s NATIONAL LYRICS AND SONGS FOR MUSIC; SCENES AND HYMNS OF LIFE WITH OTHER RELIGIOUS POEMS (dedicated to William Wordsworth); HYMNS FOR CHILDHOOD; paper on [Johann Wolfgang von Goethe](#)'s "*Torquato Tasso*" as it appeared in *New Monthly*.<sup>5</sup>

At some point prior to 1835 the Reverend [William Ellery Channing](#) visited this poet in her home near Windermere and commented that he had heard her hymn "The Landing of the Pilgrim Fathers in New England" sung by a large crowd, on the spot where allegedly the Pilgrims had landed.



But when she asked him about this "stern and rock-bound" coast this divine was forced to advise her that it was actually nothing more than a low strip of featureless sand — and the poet began to sob. One wonders what would have happened had the Reverend gone on to advise her that in addition this American town stood at the mouth of no River Plym.<sup>6</sup>



FELICIA DOROTHEA HEMANS

5. The play had been created in 1790 and would be translated into English in 1861.

6. And what would her reaction have been had she learned that the white Plymouth Rock is a strain of domestic poultry raised for broiler meat and brown eggs? (but that wouldn't begin until 1865 when the Dominic strain and the Black Cochon strain of chickens would be crossed to produce the 1st novelty version, the Barred Plymouth Rock).

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➡ During this period the Reverend [Orestes Augustus Brownson](#) was studying the French language and was making frequent trips into Boston to encounter leading intellectuals. Soon he would be contributing articles to Unitarian journals such as [The Unitarian](#), [The Christian Register](#), [The Christian Examiner](#), and –while it existed– the [Boston Observer and Religious Intelligencer](#).



His articles were taking the Unitarian clergy to task on account of the dryness of their preaching, the obsessiveness of their intellectualism, the lifelessness of their theological rationalism, and the indifference with which they greeted the struggle of working people. During this period he was freely adapting the ideas of the philosophers he was reading in French. In particular he saw Claude Henri de Saint-Simon’s “New Christianity,” which de-emphasized worship and dogma in favor of the morality and social equality demanded by the Christian law of brotherly love, as the antidote for Unitarianism’s social conservatism. This rising tide of Christian democracy was going to inundate the vessel of Unitarianism unless it would cut its moorings to wealth and power. Brownson picked up Henry-Benjamin Constant’s attitude that religion and morality were grounded, not in intellectual capabilities which were present in some but unavailable to others, but in a “sentiment” internal to every human being. It was this internal sentiment which led toward religion, and was the source of spiritual intuition and neighborly love, and it was this sentiment –although it had become embodied in different historical forms– which was truly universal. Brownson identified [Victor Cousin](#)’s Universal or Absolute Reason with God and declared that it was this which was independent of person yet



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present within each person. It was study of Constant and Cousin which began to make him receptive to the romanticism of the New England Transcendentalists:

So far as Transcendentalism is understood to be the recognition in man of the capacity of knowing truth intuitively, or of attaining to a scientific knowledge of an order of existence transcending the reach of the senses, and of which we can have no sensible experience, we are Transcendentalists.

He was coming, at least temporarily, to regard [Transcendentalism](#) as a necessary alternative to the overly objective, historical, and rational approach to religion advocated by the scholarly types, such as Professor Andrews Norton, whom he was encountering at the home of the Reverend [William Ellery Channing](#). Still, he was wary of the subjective tendencies of Transcendentalism, which he suspected of substituting a “lawless fancy for an enlightened understanding.” He felt the meditations of [Waldo Emerson](#) to be particularly egregious and dangerous. We become moral, he declaimed, not by pleasing ourselves to satisfy the needs of our inner nature, but by submitting to the requirements of a power independent of these desires, a power transcending ourselves.



Fall: The Reverend Samuel Joseph May visited the Reverend [William Ellery Channing](#) at his home (did he use the servants’ entrance or come to the front door?), to plead with him to break his silence about slavery. When Channing responded that he feared that antislavery advocacy was alienating the moderates of the South, May burst out with an accusation.<sup>7</sup>

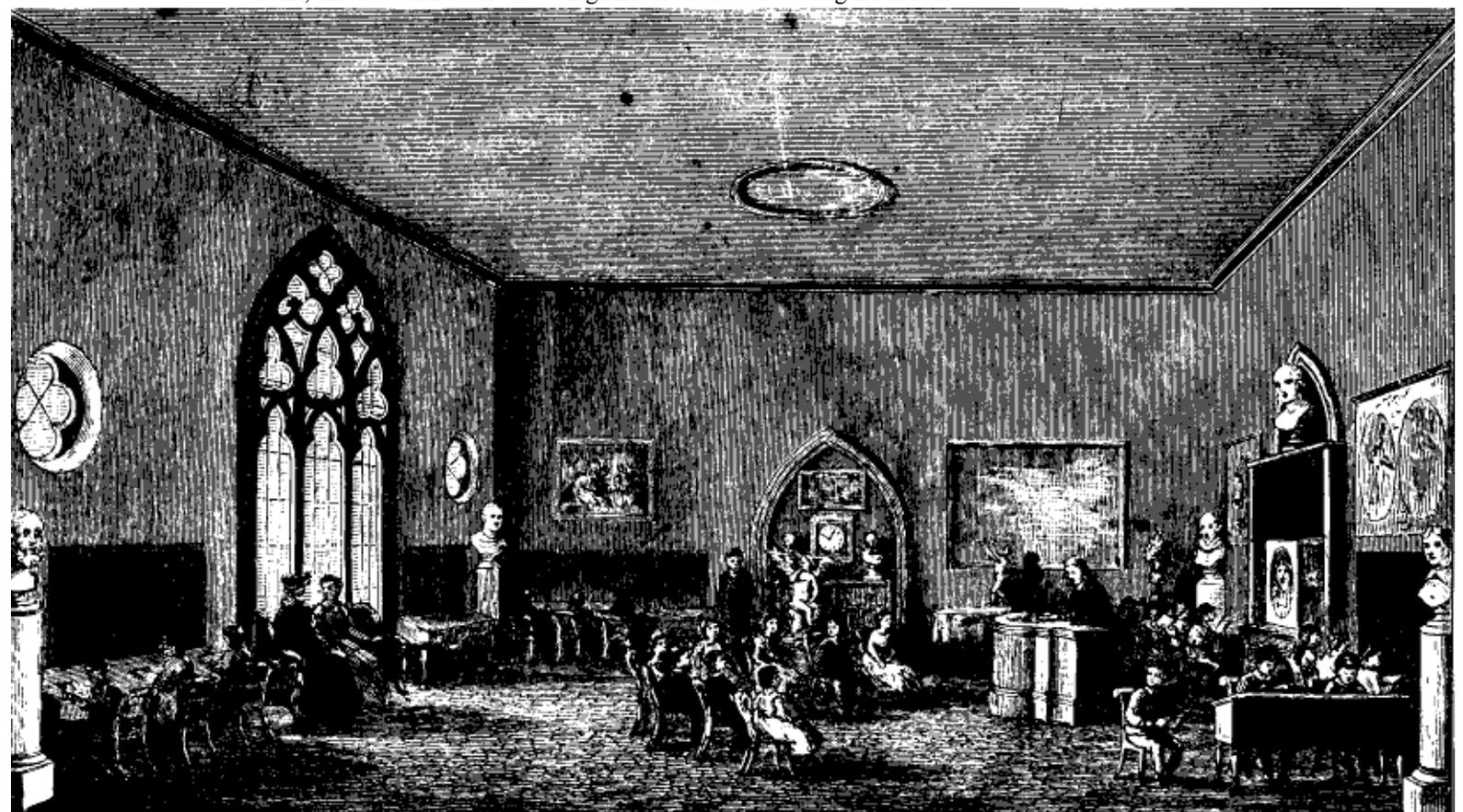
**Dr. Channing! It is not our fault that those who might have managed this great reform more prudently have left it to us to manage as we may be able!**

7. Was this a reference to the joke about the French Revolution that has a *sans-culotte* saying “You should have taught us good manners” to an aristocrat waiting in line at the guillotine?

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 September 22, Monday: At 10AM, the School of Human Culture opened its doors for business in the Masonic Temple on Tremont Street directly across from the Tremont House and the Boston Common. The school occupied two rooms on the fourth floor, the top floor, at a rent of \$300.<sup>00</sup> per year. The furnishings, for which [Bronson Alcott](#) went further into debt, included not only a larger-than-life “bass-relievo” of [Jesus](#) Christ over a bookcase behind the schoolmaster’s enormous desk, and busts of Plato, [William Shakespeare](#), [Socrates](#), and [Sir Walter Scott](#) in the four corners of the classroom, but also a portrait of the Reverend [William Ellery Channing](#) (father of one of the pupils) and two geranium plants. Alcott had heard [Waldo Emerson](#) preach in 1828, and now Emerson was doing him the honor of visiting his school.



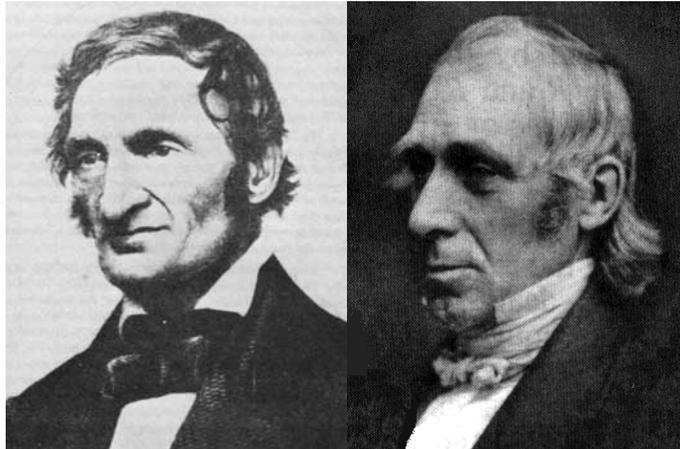
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[Elizabeth Palmer Peabody](#) became Bronson Alcott's assistant at this Temple School, and began boarding with the Alcott family. There were, initially, 30 pupils.

The students used desks having individual shelves and a hinged blackboard that could swing forward or back. Evidently, this desk had been developed by Bronson's cousin, [Dr. William Andrus Alcott](#).



While calling on his uncle the Reverend [William Ellery Channing](#), William Ellery Channing II, the young poet, declined to seat himself. "Why, Sir," he explained, "I'm not fit company for you; you are a great man, Sir, and I'm a small one; good morning, Sir."

1835

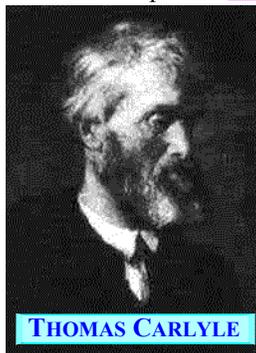
➡ [Hosea Hildreth](#) died (after being expelled by Congregationalists during the previous year from ministering over their First Parish Church of Gloucester, Massachusetts, he had been serving as minister for a [Unitarian](#) congregation in Westboro, Massachusetts).

Dr. [Charles Follen](#) was no longer to be the Professor of Germanic Literature at [Harvard College](#), new funding having failed to appear perhaps on account of his often-proclaimed abolitionist sympathies but more likely because he had been such an outspoken opponent of the disciplinarian President of Harvard, Josiah Quincy, Sr. His widow and his friend Samuel May would be convinced he had been dropped for being indiscreetly vocal about antislavery, but the attitude taken by Harvard's Dr. Reginald H. Phelps toward this has been that there is nothing whatever in the record which might substantiate such an accusation: outside funds for his professorship, which initially had been being supplied by his wife's relatives, had run out with the Corporation simply neglecting to endow a more permanent professorship in German. Phelps points out that Follen might have elected to continue on at an instructor's status and salary, a point which seems to have been neglected by those who hold that he had been dismissed. The maximum case that might be made for persecution on account of antislavery activities would be, not that he had been sluffed off, but that the powers that be in the academic world had failed to prefer him.

He had an alternative, because the friendship of the Reverend [William Ellery Channing](#) had drawn him into the [Unitarian Church](#). In this year he was ordained as a minister and called to the pulpit of the 2d Congregational Society at East Lexington, Massachusetts (in 1839 he would build himself an octagonal church, that is now the Follen Church Society-Unitarian Universalist). Instead of continuing at Harvard, but on an instructor's salary and with an instructor's status, this energetic gentleman had simply opted for a different sort of career.

In this year efforts to break down the barriers –social, educational, and theological– between [Unitarians](#) and Restorationist Universalists ended, with the death of the Reverend Bernard Whitman. After this untimely death, although [Adin Ballou](#) would remain a Restorationist, he would take little part in apologetic and ecclesiastical affairs. Instead, already won to the [temperance](#) cause, he would devote his energies to social reform.

➡ February or March: In this month or the next, the Reverend [William Ellery Channing](#) asked the Reverend [Waldo Emerson](#) to lend him one of the copies of [SARTOR RESARTUS](#) to read.



THOMAS CARLYLE

STUDY THIS STRANGENESS



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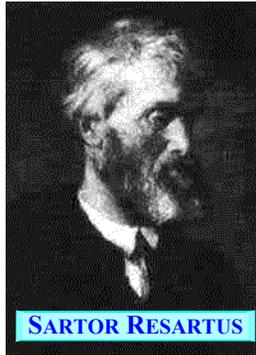
 October: The Reverend [William Ellery Channing](#)'s THOUGHTS ON [SLAVERY](#) was rushed into print because of all the mobbing that was going on (he had been persuaded to the antislavery cause by [Lydia Maria Child](#)'s 1833 AN APPEAL IN FAVOR OF THAT CLASS OF AMERICANS CALLED AFRICANS). The book rejected immediatism and racial equality and has been described as "the most gracefully written of both the anti-abolition and abolition books of this period" (David Grimsted, page 41). It was attacked by William Lloyd Garrison but defended by the Reverend Samuel Joseph May:

In short, Channing condemned the abolitionists for their extremity on the basis of a publicly discredited lie [that the Reverend George Thompson had urged that the slaves ought to take "cruel vengeance," a fanciful secondhand accusation which had been repeated incautiously and journalistically in the Journal of Commerce] and without reading their readily available writings.

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October 6, Tuesday: [Waldo Emerson](#) received the second set of four offprints of [SARTOR RESARTUS](#) from the Boston Custom Shed, which [Thomas Carlyle](#) had dispatched to him in June, and set out quite as enthusiastically to disseminate these as he had the previous set of four.



STUDY THIS STRANGENESS

One he would dispatch to the [Reverend Convers Francis](#) in Watertown. We can be pretty sure that Francis’s sister [Lydia Maria Child](#) perused that copy, for she was departing for a tour of England and asked Emerson for a letter of introduction to its author. Francis would pass this copy on to [Theodore Parker](#), then a student at the Theological School in Cambridge, and Parker would then loan it to his “most intimate friend,” another student, William Silsbee.

Another copy Emerson would dispatch to the Reverend [William Ellery Channing](#) in [Newport, Rhode Island](#). With the Reverend when that copy arrived was Harriet Martineau.

Meanwhile a long anonymous review (written by Alexander H. Everett and made possible by the copy that Emerson had made available to the editor during the late summer) was appearing in the [North American Review](#).<sup>8</sup>

[Sam Houston](#) purchased a general’s uniform in New Orleans after being named Commander-in-Chief by the Nacogdoches “Committee of Vigilance.”



TEXAS

8. “Thomas Carlyle,” [North American Review](#) 41: 454-482



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1836

James Walker having translated some of the work of Théodore Simon Jouffroy (1796-1842), the Reverend [William Ellery Channing](#) read this translation while writing SLAVERY and eventually would provide a complete translation of *COURS DE DROIT NATUREL* titled INTRODUCTION TO ETHICS (Boston, 1840). (Jouffroy was in the tradition of the Scotch intuitionists Thomas Reid and Dugald Stewart.)

 [Asher Benjamin](#) designed a monument for “Harvard Hill” in the Mount Auburn Cemetery.<sup>9</sup>

9. The monument is known as the “Dr. George Cheyne Shattuck Monument” but was not a monument to the wealthy Dr. Shattuck’s own memory as this donor would not himself die until March 18, 1854. Dr. Shattuck was a frequent donor for various local causes and had donated some burial plots in the new Mount Auburn Cemetery to Harvard College for any students who because they would die far from their homes would need to be interred in Massachusetts. Ten other benefactors had contributed smaller amounts, the result being a “Harvard Hill” which is still accepting interments. The first corpses to be interred there were of a couple of Harvard students who had drowned in the Charles River.

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He designed “Forest Home,” the F.O.J. Smith House of Westbrook, Maine (since demolished). He designed a house at 83 Mount Vernon Street in [Boston](#) in which the Reverend [William Ellery Channing](#) would reside for the remainder of his life.



 April: The 2nd part of a long review in the [Biblical Repertory](#) (theological voice of [Princeton University](#)), of the Reverend [William Ellery Channing](#)'s recent book SLAVERY:

No man can refuse assent to these principles. The great question, therefore, in relation to [slavery](#) is, what is right?



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What are the moral principles which should control our opinions and conduct in regard to it? Before attempting an answer to this question, it is proper to remark, that we recognise no authoritative rule of truth and duty but the word of God. Plausible as may be the arguments deduced from general principles to prove a thing to be true or false, right and wrong, there is almost always room for doubt and honest diversity of opinion. Clear as we may think the arguments against despotism, there ever have been thousands of enlightened and good men, who honestly believe it to be of all forms of government the best and most acceptable to God. Unless we can approach the consciences of men, clothed with some more imposing authority than that of our own opinions and arguments, we shall gain little permanent influence. Men are too nearly upon a par as to their powers of reasoning, and ability to discover truth, to make the conclusions of one mind an authoritative rule for others. It is our object, therefore, not to discuss the subject of slavery upon abstract principles, but to ascertain the scriptural rule of judgment and conduct in relation to it. We do not intend to enter upon any minute or extended examination of scriptural passages, because all that we wish to assume, as to the meaning of the word of God, is so generally admitted as to render the laboured proof of it unnecessary. It is on all hands acknowledged that, at the time of the advent of Jesus Christ, slavery in its worst forms prevailed over the whole world. The Saviour found it around him in Judea; the apostles met with it in Asia, Greece and Italy. How did they treat it? Not by the denunciation of slaveholding as necessarily and universally sinful. Not by declaring that all slaveholders were men-stealers and robbers, and consequently to be excluded from the church and the kingdom of heaven. Not by insisting on immediate emancipation. Not by appeals to the passions of men on the evils of slavery, or by the adoption of a system of universal agitation. On the contrary, it was by teaching the true nature, dignity, equality and destiny of men; by inculcating the principles of justice and love; and by leaving these principles to produce their legitimate effects in ameliorating the condition of all classes of society. We need not stop to prove that such was the course pursued by our Saviour and his apostles, because the fact is in general acknowledged, and various reasons are assigned, by the abolitionists and others, to account for it. The subject is hardly alluded to by Christ in any of his personal instructions. The apostles refer to it, not to pronounce upon it as a question of morals, but to prescribe the relative duties of masters and slaves. They caution those slaves who have believing or Christian masters, not to despise them because they were on a perfect religious equality with them, but to consider the fact that their masters were their brethren, as an additional reason for obedience. It is remarkable that there is not even an exhortation to masters to liberate their slaves, much less is it urged as an imperative and immediate duty. They are commanded to be kind, merciful and just; and to remember that they have a Master in heaven. Paul represents this relation as of comparatively little account, 'Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was



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called. Art thou called being a servant (or slave), care not for it; though, should the opportunity of freedom be presented, embrace it. These external relations, however, are of little importance, for every Christian is a freeman in the highest and best sense of the word, and at the same time is under the strongest bonds to Christ,' 1 Corinthians vii. 20-22. It is not worth while to shut our eyes to these facts. They will remain, whether we refuse to see them and be instructed by them or not. If we are wiser, better, more courageous than Christ and his apostles, let us say so; but it will do no good, under a paroxysm of benevolence, to attempt to tear the BIBLE to pieces, or to extort, by violent exegesis, a meaning foreign to its obvious sense. Whatever inferences may be fairly deducible from the fact, the fact itself cannot be denied that Christ and his inspired followers did treat the subject of slavery in the manner stated above. This being the case, we ought carefully to consider their conduct in this respect, and inquire what lessons that conduct should teach us. We think no one will deny that the plan adopted by the Saviour and his immediate followers must be the correct plan, and therefore obligatory upon us, unless it can be shown that their circumstances were so different from ours, as to make the rule of duty different in the two cases. The obligation to point out and establish this difference, rests of course upon those who have adopted a course diametrically the reverse of that which Christ pursued. They have not acquitted themselves of this obligation. They do not seem to have felt it necessary to reconcile their conduct with his; nor does it appear to have occurred to them, that their violent denunciations of slaveholding and of slaveholders is an indirect reflection on his wisdom, virtue, or courage. If the present course of the abolitionists is right, then the course of Christ and the apostles was wrong. For the circumstances of the two cases are, as far as we can see, in all essential particulars, the same. They appeared as teachers of morality and religion, not as politicians. The same is the fact with our abolitionists. They found slavery authorized by the laws of the land. So do we. They were called upon to receive into the communion of the Christian Church, both slaveowners and slaves. So are we. They instructed these different classes of persons as to their respective duties. So do we. Where then is the difference between the two cases? If we are right in insisting that slaveholding is one of the greatest of all sins; that it should be immediately and universally abandoned as a condition of church communion, or admission into heaven, how comes it that Christ and his apostles did not pursue the same course? We see no way of escape from the conclusion that the conduct of the modern abolitionists, being directly opposed to that of the authors of our religion, must be wrong and ought to be modified or abandoned. An equally obvious deduction from the fact above referred to, is that slaveholding is not necessarily sinful. The assumption of the contrary is the great reason why the modern abolitionists have adopted their peculiar course. They argue thus: slaveholding is under all circumstances sinful, it must, therefore, under all circumstances, and at all hazards, be immediately abandoned.



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This reasoning is perfectly conclusive. If there is error any where, it is in the premises, and not in the deduction. It requires no argument to show that sin ought to be at once abandoned. Every thing, therefore, is conceded which the abolitionists need require, when it is granted that slaveholding is in itself a crime. But how can this assumption be reconciled with the conduct of Christ and the apostles? Did they shut their eyes to the enormities of a great offence against God and man? Did they temporise with a heinous evil, because it was common and popular? Did they abstain from even exhorting masters to emancipate their slaves, though an imperative duty, from fear of consequences? Did they admit the perpetrators of the greatest crimes to the Christian communion? Who will undertake to charge the blessed Redeemer and his inspired followers with such connivance at sin, and such fellowship with iniquity? Were drunkards, murderers, liars, and adulterers thus treated? Were they passed over without even an exhortation to forsake their sins? Were they recognised as Christians? It cannot be that slaveholding belongs to the same category with these crimes; and to assert the contrary, is to assert that Christ is the minister of sin. This is a point of so much importance, lying as it does at the very foundation of the whole subject, that it deserves to be attentively considered. The grand mistake, as we apprehend, of those who maintain that slaveholding is itself a crime, is, that they do not discriminate between slaveholding in itself considered, and its accessories at any particular time or place. Because masters may treat their slaves unjustly, or governments make oppressive laws in relation to them, is no more a valid argument against the lawfulness of slaveholding, than the abuse of parental authority, or the unjust political laws of certain states, is an argument against the lawfulness of the parental relation, or of civil government. This confusion of points so widely distinct, appears to us to run through almost all the popular publications on slavery, and to vitiate their arguments. Mr. Jay, for example, quotes the second article of the constitution of the American Anti-Slavery Society, which declares that "slaveholding is a heinous crime in the sight of God," and then, to justify this declaration, makes large citations from the laws of the several southern states, to show what the system of slavery is in this country, and concludes by saying, "This is the system which the American Anti-Slavery Society declares to be sinful, and ought therefore to be immediately abolished." There is, however, no necessary connexion between his premises and conclusion. We may admit all those laws which forbid the instruction of slaves; which interfere with their marital or parental rights; which subject them to the insults and oppression of the whites, to be in the highest degree unjust, without at all admitting that slaveholding itself is a crime. Slavery may exist without any one of these concomitants. In pronouncing on the moral character of an act, it is obviously necessary to have a clear idea of what it is; yet how few of those who denounce slavery, have any well defined conception of its nature. They have a confused idea of chains and whips, of degradation and misery, of ignorance and vice, and to this complex



conception they apply the name slavery, and denounce it as the aggregate of all moral and physical evil. Do such persons suppose that slavery, as it existed in the family of Abraham, was such as their imaginations thus picture to themselves? Might not that patriarch have had men purchased with his silver, who were well clothed, well instructed, well compensated for their labour, and in all respects treated with parental kindness? Neither inadequate remuneration, physical discomfort, intellectual ignorance, moral degradation, is essential to the condition of a slave. Yet if all these ideas are removed from the commonly received notion of slavery, and how little will remain. All the ideas which necessarily enter into the definition of slavery are deprivation of personal liberty, obligation of service at the discretion of another, and the transferable character of the authority and claim of service of the master.

FOOTNOTE



The manner in which men are brought into this condition; its continuance, and the means adopted for securing the authority and claim of masters, are all incidental and variable. They may be reasonable or unreasonable, just or unjust, at different times and places. The question, therefore, which the abolitionists have undertaken to decide, is not whether the laws enacted in the slaveholding states in relation to this subject are just or not, but whether slaveholding, in itself considered, is a crime. The confusion of these two points, has not only brought the abolitionists into conflict with the scriptures, but it has, as a necessary consequence, prevented their gaining the confidence of the north, or power over the conscience of the south. When southern Christians are told that they are guilty of a heinous crime, worse than piracy, robbery or murder, because they hold slaves, when they know that Christ and his apostles never denounced slaveholding as a crime, never called upon men to renounce it as a condition of admission into the church, they are shocked and offended, without being convinced. They are sure that their accusers cannot be wiser or better than their divine Master, and their consciences are untouched by denunciations which they know, if well founded, must effect not them only, but the authors of the religion of the BIBLE. The argument from the conduct of Christ and his immediate followers seems to us decisive on the point, that slaveholding, in itself considered, is not a crime. Let us see how this argument has been answered. In the able "Address to the Presbyterians of Kentucky, proposing a plan for the instruction and emancipation of their slaves, by a committee of the synod of Kentucky," there is a strong and extended argument to prove the sinfulness of slavery as it exists among us, to which we have little to object. When, however, the distinguished drafter of that address comes to answer the objection, "God's word sanctions slavery, and it cannot therefore be sinful," he forgets the essential limitation of the proposition which he had undertaken to establish, and proceeds to prove that the BIBLE condemns slaveholding, and not merely the kind or system of slavery which prevails in this country.

The argument drawn from the scriptures, he says, needs no elaborate reply. If the BIBLE sanctions slavery, it sanctions the



kind of slavery which then prevailed; the atrocious system which authorized masters to starve their slaves, to torture them, to beat them, to put them to death, and to throw them into their fish ponds. And he justly asks, whether a man could insult the God of heaven worse than by saying he does not disapprove of such a system? Dr. Channing presents strongly the same view, and says, that an infidel would be labouring in his vocation in asserting that the BIBLE does not condemn slavery. These gentlemen, however, are far too clear-sighted not to discover, on a moments reflection, that they have allowed their benevolent feelings to blind them to the real point at issue. No one denies that the BIBLE condemns all injustice, cruelty oppression, and violence. And just so far as the laws then existing, authorized these crimes, the BIBLE condemned them. But what stronger argument can be presented to prove that the sacred writers did not regard slaveholding as in itself sinful, than that while they condemn all unjust or unkind treatment (even threatening) on the part of masters towards their slaves, they did not condemn slavery itself? While they required the master to treat his slave according to the law of love, they did not command him to set him free. The very atrocity, therefore, of the system which then prevailed, instead of weakening the argument, gives it tenfold strength. Then, if ever, when the institution was so fearfully abused, we might expect to hear the interpreters of the divine will, saying that a system which leads to such results is the concentrated essence of all crimes, and must be instantly abandoned on pain of eternal condemnation. This, however, they did not say, and we cannot now force them to say it. They treated the subject precisely as they did the cruel despotism of the Roman emperors. The licentiousness, the injustice, the rapine and murders of those wicked men, they condemned with the full force of divine authority; but the mere extent of their power, though so liable to abuse, they left unnoticed. Another answer to the argument in question is, that "The New Testament does condemn slaveholding, as practised among us, in the most explicit terms furnished by the language in which the sacred penman wrote." This assertion is supported by saying that God has condemned slavery, because he has specified the parts which compose it and condemned them, one by one, in the most ample and unequivocal form.

FOOTNOTE



It is to be remarked that the saving clause "slaveholding as it exists among us," is introduced into the statement, though it seems to be lost sight of in the illustration and confirmation of it which follow. We readily admit, that if God does condemn all the parts of which slavery consists, he condemns slavery itself. But the drafter of the address has made no attempt to prove that this is actually done in the sacred scriptures. That many of the attributes of the system as established by law in this country, are condemned, is indeed very plain; but that slaveholding in itself is condemned, has not been and cannot be proved.

The writer, indeed, says, "The Greek language had a word corresponding exactly, in signification, with our word servant, but it had none which answered precisely to our term slave. How then was an apostle writing in Greek, to condemn our slavery?"



How can we expect to find in scripture, the words 'slavery is sinful,' when the language in which it is written contained no term which expressed the meaning of our word slavery?" Does the gentleman mean to say the Greek language could not express the idea that slaveholding is sinful? Could not the apostles have communicated the thought that it was the duty of masters to set their slaves free? Were they obliged from paucity of words to admit slaveholders into the Church? We have no doubt the writer himself could, with all ease, pen a declaration in the Greek language void of all ambiguity, proclaiming freedom to every slave upon earth, and denouncing the vengeance of heaven upon every man who dared to hold a fellow creature in bondage. It is not words we care for. We want evidence that the sacred writers taught that it was incumbent on every slaveholder, as a matter of duty, to emancipate his slaves (which no Roman or Greek law forbade), and that his refusing to do so was a heinous crime in the sight of God. The Greek language must be poor indeed if it cannot convey such ideas. Another answer is given by Dr. Channing. "Slavery," he says, "in the age of the apostle, had so penetrated society, was so intimately interwoven with it, and the materials of servile war were so abundant, that a religion, preaching freedom to its victims, would have armed against itself the whole power of the State. Of consequence Paul did not assail it. He satisfied himself with spreading principles, which, however slowly, could not but work its destruction." To the same effect, Dr. Wayland says, "The gospel was designed, not for one race or one time, but for all men and for all times. It looked not at the abolition of this form of evil for that age alone, but for its universal abolition. Hence the important object of its author was to gain it a lodgement in every part of the known world; so that, by its universal diffusion among all classes of society, it might quietly and peacefully modify and subdue the evil passions of men; and thus, without violence, work a revolution in the whole mass of mankind. In this manner alone could its object, a universal moral revolution, be accomplished. For if it had forbidden the evil without subduing the principle, if it had proclaimed the unlawfulness of slavery, and taught slaves to resist the oppression of their masters, it would instantly have arrayed the two parties in deadly hostility throughout the civilized world; its announcement would have been the signal of a servile war; and the very name of the Christian religion would have been forgotten amidst the agitations of universal bloodshed. The fact, under these circumstances, that the gospel does not forbid slavery, affords no reason to suppose that it does not mean to prohibit it, much less does it afford ground for belief that Jesus Christ intended to authorize it."

FOOTNOTE



Before considering the force of this reasoning, it may be well to notice one or two important admissions contained in these extracts. First, then, it is admitted by these distinguished moralists, that the apostles did not preach a religion proclaiming freedom to slaves; that Paul did not assail slavery; that the gospel did not proclaim the unlawfulness of slaveholding; it did not forbid it. This is going the whole length that we have gone in our statement of the conduct of Christ and his apostles. Secondly, these writers admit that the



course adopted by the authors of our religion was the only wise and proper one. Paul satisfied himself, says Dr. Channing, with spreading principles, which, however slowly, could not but work its destruction. Dr. Wayland says, that if the apostles had pursued the opposite plan of denouncing slavery as a crime, the Christian religion would have been ruined; its very name would have been forgotten. Then how can the course of the modern abolitionists, under circumstances so nearly similar, or even that of these reverend gentlemen themselves be right? Why do not they content themselves with doing what Christ and his apostles did? Why must they proclaim the unlawfulness of slavery? Is human nature so much altered, that a course, which would have produced universal bloodshed, and led to the very destruction of the Christian religion, in one age, is wise and Christian in another? Let us, however, consider the force of the argument as stated above. It amounts to this. Christ and his apostles thought slaveholding a great crime, but they abstained from saying so for fear of the consequences. The very statement of the argument, in its naked form, is its refutation. These holy men did not refrain from condemning sin from a regard to consequences. They did not hesitate to array against the religion which they taught, the strongest passions of men. Nor did they content themselves with denouncing the general principles of evil; they condemned its special manifestations. They did not simply forbid intemperate sensual indulgence, and leave it to their hearers to decide what did or what did not come under that name. They declared that no fornicator, no adulterer, no drunkard could be admitted into the kingdom of heaven. They did not hesitate, even when a little band, a hundred and twenty souls, to place themselves in direct and irreconcilable opposition to the whole polity, civil and religious, of the Jewish state. It will hardly be maintained that slavery was, at that time, more intimately interwoven with the institutions of society, than idolatry was. It entered into the arrangements of every family; of every city and province, and of the whole Roman empire. The emperor was the Pontifex Maximus; every department of the state, civil and military, was pervaded by it. It was so united with the fabric of the government that it could not be removed without effecting a revolution in all its parts. The apostles knew this. They knew that to denounce polytheism was to array against them the whole power of the state. Their divine Master had distinctly apprized them of the result. He told them that it would set the father against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother, and that a man's enemies should be those of his own household. He said that he came not to bring peace but a sword, and that such would be the opposition to his followers, that whosoever killed them, would think he did God service. Yet in view of these certain consequences the apostles did denounce idolatry, not merely in principle, but by name. The result was precisely what Christ had foretold. The Romans, tolerant of every other religion, bent the whole force of their wisdom and arms to extirpate Christianity. The scenes of bloodshed which century after century followed the introduction of gospel, did not



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induce the followers of Christ to keep back or modify the truth. They adhered to their declaration that idolatry was a heinous crime. And they were right. We expect similar conduct of our missionaries. We do not expect them to refrain from denouncing the institutions of the heathen, as sinful, because they are popular, or intimately interwoven with society. The Jesuits, who adopted this plan, forfeited the confidence of Christendom, without making converts of the heathen. It is, therefore, perfectly evident that the authors of our religion were not withheld by these considerations, from declaring slavery to be unlawful. If they did abstain from this declaration, as is admitted, it must have been because they did not consider it as in itself a crime. No other solution of their conduct is consistent with their truth or fidelity.

1837

→ [Thomas Carlyle](#)'s THE LIFE OF FRIEDRICH SCHILLER. COMPREHENDING AN EXAMINATION OF HIS WORKS. ... FROM THE LONDON EDITION. (New York: George Dearborn & Co.). A copy of this would be in [Henry Thoreau](#)'s personal library.

## THE LIFE OF SCHILLER

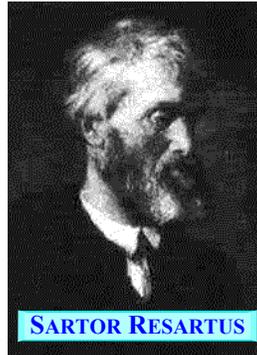
From this year into 1840 [Carlyle](#) would be offering four courses of lectures in London, on German Literature and on Heroes.

The argument for the almost magical growth of the Scottish author's reputation was first made by the peripatetic English reformer, Harriet Martineau, in her controversial travelogue SOCIETY IN AMERICA:

No living writer exercises so enviable a sway, so far as it goes, as Mr. Carlyle ... [whose] remarkable work [SARTOR RESARTUS](#), issued piecemeal through Fraser's Magazine, has been republished in America and is exerting an influence proportioned to the genuineness of the admiration it has excited. Perhaps this is the first instance of the Americans having taken to their hearts an English work that came to them anonymous, unsanctioned by any recommendation and even absolutely neglected at home. It has regenerated the preaching of more than one of the clergy.



This English author’s published account of the situation, above, is of course entirely disingenuous, is a deliberate act of mystification of her audience. She had herself already become part of the American movement for this book by Carlyle before she had returned to England.



In April 1835 she had been had been “[fed] with the SARTOR” by the Reverend William Henry Furness in Philadelphia out of the copy he had just received from [Waldo Emerson](#) in [Boston](#). In May 1835 while vacationing with [Mrs. Sophia Dana Ripley](#) and the [Reverend George Ripley](#) she had “made the SARTOR her constant companion.” In June 1835 while visiting the Reverend James Freeman Clarke in Lexington, Kentucky she had told him that what she was up to was “preparing the people for Carlyleism.” In August 1835 while visiting the Reverend Clarke’s cousin [Margaret Fuller](#) they had had “some talk about Carlyleism.” During Fall 1835 she had met with Emerson himself several times as he exercised himself in behalf of [Thomas Carlyle](#). She had visited several times with Sarah Alden Bradford Ripley in Waltham, and in October 1835 she had been staying with the Reverend [William Ellery Channing](#) in [Newport, Rhode Island](#) when Emerson had sent the Reverend Channing a copy of [SARTOR RESARTUS](#).

1838

The Reverend [William Ellery Channing](#) declared, in his essay “Self-Culture,” that the primary focus of our energies should be upon our own rectification rather than on the rectification of society in general, which was an end in itself rather than merely a means to a greater end. In reaction to this, the Reverend [Orestes Augustus Brownson](#) would declare, in his essay “The Laboring Classes” in the [Boston Quarterly Review](#) for July 1840, that “Self-culture is a good thing, but it cannot abolish inequality, nor restore men to their rights.”<sup>10</sup>

- 1ST QUARTER, 1838
- 2D QUARTER, 1838
- 3D QUARTER, 1838
- 4TH QUARTER, 1838

10. Refer to Robinson, David. APOSTLE OF CULTURE: EMERSON AS PREACHER AND LECTURER. Philadelphia PA: U of Pennsylvania P, 1982.

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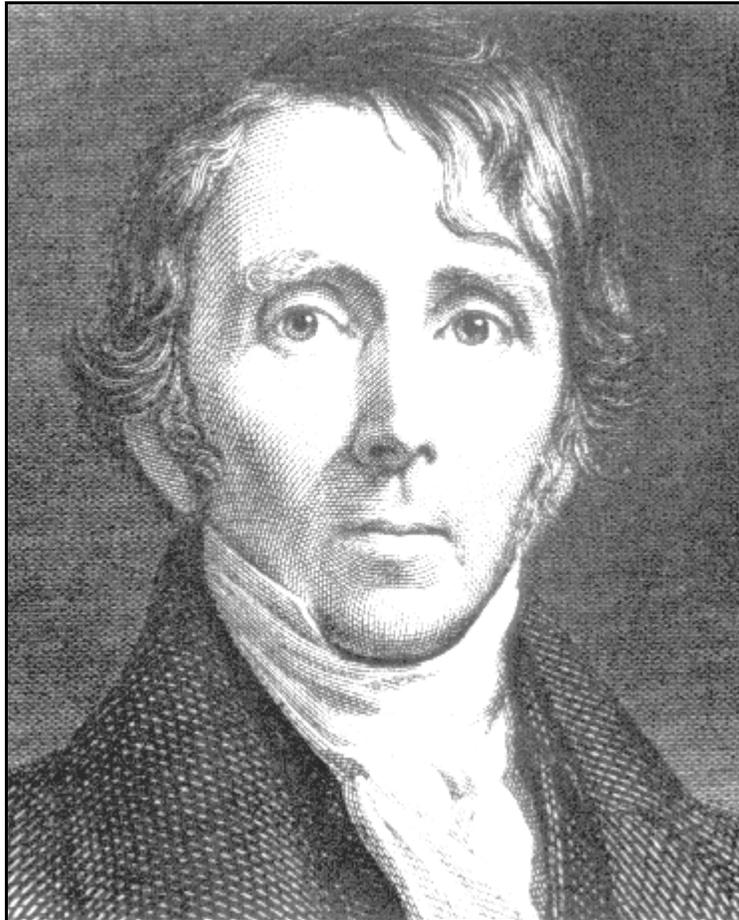
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In this year Spiridione Gambardella painted the portrait of the Reverend Channing which is now, thanks to Mary Channing Eustis, on display at the Andover-Harvard Theological Library of the [Harvard Divinity School](#), 45 Francis Avenue in Cambridge. It may be that this frequently reproduced engraving has been created on the basis of this portrait:



→ June 18, Monday: Representative John Quincy Adams of Massachusetts continued his speech before the US House of Representatives, on the expansive topic of [Texas](#), for a 4th day.

Having undergone a total of four blasphemy trials, and Massachusetts Chief Justice Lemuel Shaw having come to the opinion that the Commonwealth was obligated to protect its citizens against “an intended design to calumniate and disparage the Supreme Being, and to destroy the veneration due to him,” the convicted atheist and blasphemer Abner Kneeland was consigned to 60 days in the [Boston](#) lockup. (Presumably while there he was of incredible benefit to other prisoners, by instructing them in the tenets of Universalist doctrine.) Presumably it was while he was there that he prepared A REVIEW OF THE TRIAL, CONVICTION, AND FINAL IMPRISONMENT IN THE COMMON JAIL OF THE COUNTY OF SUFFOLK OF ABNER KNEELAND FOR THE ALLEGED CHARGE OF BLASPHEMY. The Reverend [William Ellery Channing](#) put together a petition for his pardon based



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upon the principles of freedom of speech and press, which was signed by many prominent people, including Ralph Waldo Emerson, Theodore Parker, George Ripley, William Lloyd Garrison, and Bronson Alcott. The Reverend Hosea Ballou, who did not sign the petition, did visit his old friend in jail. When the jail doors opened, Kneeland relocated to Iowa to initiate a small utopian community that was to be known as Salubria (it was near what is now Farmington).



During his childhood in Alton, Illinois, [John Stetson Barry](#) had determined to prepare himself for the ministry. In this year he returned to Massachusetts to study under the Reverend Hosea Ballou in [Boston](#) (there was no Universalist College). After his ordination he would initially serve the Universalist congregation of West Amesbury MA (has become Merrimac), but would begin to serve instead Weymouth in 1839, West Scituate in 1841, [Pawtucket, Rhode Island](#) in 1844, and finally Needham beginning in 1855.

October 19: [Waldo Emerson](#) to his journal:

*The feminine vehemence with which the Andrews Norton of the Daily Advertiser beseeches the dear people to whip that naughty heretic is the natural feeling in the mind whose religion is external... The aim of a true teacher now would be ... to teach the doctrine of the perpetual revelation.*

Here is the message of the Reverend Doctor Andrews Norton, on Transcendentalism and the influence of Emerson: he suggested that the danger was that what high minds would hold as high ideas, of individuality and self-reliance, ordinary minds would establish as low ideas, enabling a boundless self-conceit. Not that this sentiment was unique to the Reverend Norton — but seldom has the issue been paraphrased so politely.

A student fable of record, from this period, is that a number of [Unitarian](#) divines went to Heaven in a group. Perhaps they were all in the same train accident? The Reverend Doctor Henry Ware, Sr., who held the Hollis Chair of Divinity at the [Harvard Divinity School](#), is characterized in this fable as going “*It is better than we deserve.*” The Reverend [William Ellery Channing](#) of the Federal Street Church in Boston goes “*This is another proof of the dignity of human nature.*” The Reverend Ezra Stiles Gannett goes “*There must be some mistake,*” and hurries away. The Reverend Doctor Andrews Norton goes “*It is a very miscellaneous crowd.*”



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November: Miss [Elizabeth Palmer Peabody](#) persuaded [George Bancroft](#) to offer [Nathaniel Hawthorne](#) a job.

During this period [Jones Very](#) was in the habit of sending offprints of his poems from the Salem Observer to friends and acquaintances. For at time [Bronson Alcott](#) was receiving such clippings each week, and was pasting or copying them into his journal. [Henry Thoreau](#) received at least three such clippings of at least six sonnets and during this month copied a couple of them into his “Miscellaneous Extracts” notebook. Unannounced, Very appeared at the home of [Hawthorne](#) and performed his ceremony of laying on of hands — Hawthorne meekly bowed his head for this and afterward commented that Very had managed to attain the “entire subjectiveness” which he had attempted to depict in 1833 in his “The Story Teller” in the figure of the minister (refer to the story “The Seven Vagabonds” which Hawthorne would insert into the December 1851 edition of TWICE-TOLD TALES). Hawthorne also suggested that as long as Very could author good sonnets, he might remain as he was. Edwin Gittleman comments that “It is almost as if Very were an invention of Hawthorne’s own Gothic imagination, a character whom he felt he understood completely, and for whom he was in a sense morally responsible.” However, for years Hawthorne would avoid Jones, although the fellow kept turning up at his doorstep: “Night before last came Mr. Jones Very; and you know he is somewhat unconscionable as to the length of his calls.”

During this and the following month, [Jones Very](#) would be coming gradually to the recognition that his function was being entirely fulfilled in the teaching of the message he was receiving, with no obligation to seek the assent of his victims. He was becoming, if unpleasant, at least tolerable. Also, he was coming to an appreciation of the fact that his orders to chop down the tree of self could not be implemented, because the recipients of this advice could not imagine what acceptable small step, which they understood how to take, could come first, and because they were wary of beginning a journey in which they might lose themselves and be unable to retrace their steps. He began to attempt to identify specifically what it was, for each person, that that person was clutching in the place of God, and demand of that person that he or she let go of their attachment to that specific thing. Because, of course, that was what sin was: attachment to something other than or in place of God, however innocent the thing might be in itself. When people began to receive the reward of the Holy Spirit for their sacrifice of their most precious clutching, then of their own free will they would accept Very as their Savior. Of course, this psychodrama of confrontation has always worked well at the level of story. (The story is, Buddha was able to pull off such a confrontation, on occasion. The story is, Jesus was able to pull off such a confrontation, on occasion. There aren’t many stories in which Jesus or Buddha went “Follow me!” and somebody went “Oh, get a life, will you?” Nevertheless, the reaction to Very was such at to make one wonder whether these confrontations ever actually worked, except at the indirect level, the level at which they are a story being recounted of some alleged prior confrontation rather than an actual face-to-face contemporary confrontation. It may well be that we have a category mistake here, a category mistake which keeps recurring due to our presumption that we can’t pay attention to such a story unless the event “actually happened.”) Anyhoo, here is the cast and the sins of which they were guilty:

- The Reverend [William Ellery Channing](#) was clutching “Rectitude” instead of God.
- [Elizabeth Palmer Peabody](#) was clutching “Truth” instead of God.
- [Waldo Emerson](#) was clutching “Thought” instead of God.
- [Bronson Alcott](#) was clutching “Spiritual Curiosity” instead of God.
- [Sophia Amelia Peabody](#) was clutching “Imagination” and “Resignation to Pain” instead of God.

Of course, an immediate *riposte* would be to accuse [Jones Very](#) himself of clutching “Obedience” instead of God, and ask him to pry his damn fingers off it. As inversion-advice goes that wouldn’t have been half bad, but of course Very was no more capable of letting go of “Obedience” than [Waldo](#) would have been of letting go of “Thought.” One is reminded of the Sufi poet who went (I paraphrase) “When one renounces all things, the final item one must renounce is Renunciation.”

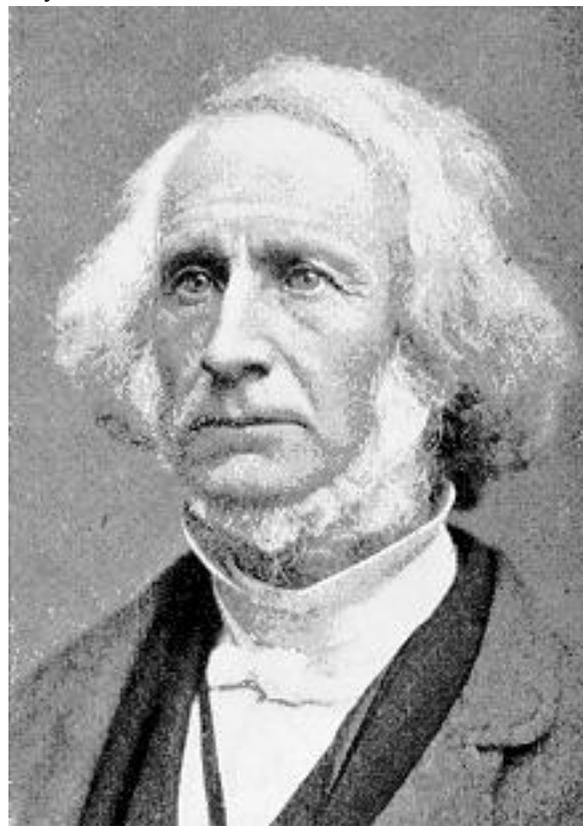
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December 5, Wednesday: [Waldo Emerson](#) lectured in Boston.



This was lecture Number 1 of a series of ten on “Human Life,” and was entitled “The Doctrine of the Soul.”<sup>11</sup> He had sent [Jones Very](#) a freebie ticket and had invited him to come along afterwards from the Masonic Temple to the Reverend Cyrus Bartol’s home for a session of the Transcendental Club.



Coming into Boston from Salem, Very arrived early and went first to the home of the Reverend [William Ellery Channing](#), finding Wendell Phillips and the Reverend James Freeman Clarke there and proceeding to expound for three hours with the elderly Reverend Channing listened patiently and carefully and sympathetically. Channing’s conclusion was that those who had presumed [Very](#) to have lost his Reason were mistaken, as what he had lost was merely his Senses. The relationship between Unitarian ministers and anti-slavery advocates

[THE LIST OF LECTURES](#)

cannot be understood unless one takes class differences into account:

They were gentlemen; they occupied a high position in the community; they belonged to a privileged order.... With the solitary exception of Wendell Phillips, who was regarded as an aristocratic demagogue, the Abolitionists were poor, humble, despised people, of no influence; men one could not ask to

11. Summaries of the lectures are in Cabot, Volume II, pages 733-737. The net receipts for the series would be \$461.<sup>22</sup>

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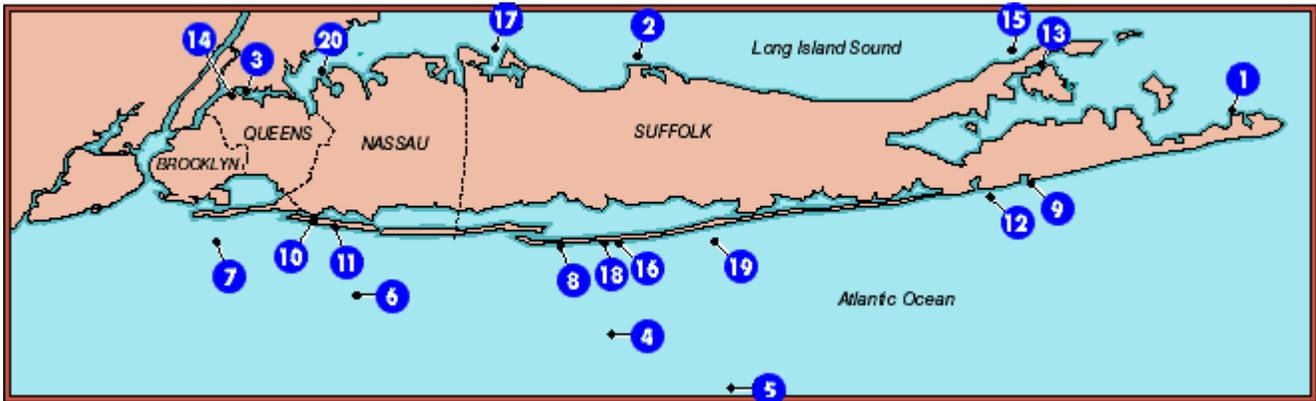
dine.<sup>12</sup>

In fact, the class segregation was so manifest that there is only one occasion on which the Reverend [William Ellery Channing](#) and William Lloyd Garrison were in the same room at the same time, and that was when they encountered one another quite by accident at the meeting of a legislative committee. One of the biographers of Channing, John W. Chadwick, has referred to his persistent refusal to have anything to do with such people as “the most inexplicable feature of his antislavery career, and the most unfortunate.”

1840

“By a mysterious ordination of Providence,” as a puzzled Reverend [William Ellery Channing](#) put it, during this year the paradigmatic good man of Boston, the Reverend Joseph Tuckerman, was dying horribly from what may have been cancer of the throat.

January 13/14, Midnight: The steamer *Lexington* was running up Long Island Sound from the harbor of New-York to Stonington, Connecticut, where passengers would be able to catch a train to Boston. The fire crew stoked the firepot under the boiler so hot that some wood they had stacked against the metal of the smokestack ignited. When the captain attempted to steer toward the Long Island shoreline, the tiller ropes charred through and the ship became unmanageable. The engines failed while the steamer was still a couple of miles out into the icy waters (wreck #2 on the map below). 123 persons burned or drowned at their election, by one account, or 139 by another account, although the reports do agree that 4 people would survive to tell the tale by such means as straddling bales of cotton that had been in the cargo.



The Reverend [Charles Follen](#) had broken off a lecture tour in New York in order to attend the dedication of his new octagonal [Unitarian](#) church structure in East Lexington, and was aboard this steamer. The lay directors of the Reverend [William Ellery Channing](#)'s church would refuse to permit a memorial service for their minister's

12. Octavius Brooks Frothingham's BOSTON UNITARIANISM, 1820-1850. NY, 1890, pages 196-7.



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close friend, and this would provoke Channing to terminate the stipend which, in semiretirement and poor health, he had been receiving.<sup>13</sup> The fact that the anti-slavery activist Follen died young, in this accident, and that then his friends would be unable to find any church in Boston willing to hold a memorial service on his behalf,<sup>14</sup> would enable the creation of a useful legend, that he had been one of the “abolitionist martyrs.”

### TIMELINE OF ACCIDENTS

The inquest into the tragedy would be promptly published by H.H. Brown and A.H. Stillwell as A FULL AND PARTICULAR ACCOUNT OF ALL THE CIRCUMSTANCES ATTENDING THE LOSS OF THE STEAMBOAT LEXINGTON, IN LONG ISLAND SOUND, ON THE NIGHT OF JANUARY 13, 1840. According to this document, the inquiry concluded as follows, with a censure of one of the four survivors, the vessel’s pilot, Captain Stephen Manchester:

From the testimony adduced before the Court of inquiry by the Coroner’s inquest to investigate the causes which led to the destruction by fire of the steamboat Lexington, the inquest are of opinion, that the fire was communicated to the promenade deck by the intense heat of the smoke pipe, or from sparks from the space between the smoke pipe and steam chimney, as the fire was first seen near the casing of the steam chimney, on the promenade deck. They are further of opinion, that the Lexington was a first rate boat, with an excellent steam engine and a boiler suitable for burning wood, but not coal, with the blowers attached. Furthermore, it is our opinion, that had the buckets been manned at the commencement of the fire, it would have been immediately extinguished. Also, that inasmuch as the engine could not be stopped, from the rapid progress of the fire, – with presence of mind of the officers and a strict discipline of the crew, the boats could have been launched, and a large portion of the passengers and crew if not the whole, might have been saved.

It is the opinion of this Jury that the present Inspectors of Steamboats, either from ignorance or neglect, have suffered the Steamboat Lexington to navigate the Sound at the imminent risk of the lives and property of the passengers, giving a certificate stating a full compliance with the laws of the United States, while in our opinion such was not the case.

That the system as adapted on board of the Lexington of using blowers on board of boats, is dangerous, which has been proved to this Jury by competent witnesses.

And that the conduct of the officers of the Steamboat Lexington on the night of the 13th of January, when said steamboat was on fire, deserves the severest censure of this community; from the facts proved before this Jury that the Captain and Pilot, in the greatest hour of danger, left the steamboat to her own guidance, and sought their own safety, regardless of the fate of the passengers. Instead of the Captain or Pilot retreating to the tiller, aft, when there being at that time a communication to the same tiller, there appeared to be no other thought but self preservation. And it further appears to this Jury that the

13. With great inherited wealth, the reverend had no need for such a stipend.

14. It is entirely unclear, and an astounding detail, why they failed to simply hold this memorial service in the octagonal church in East Lexington that he had designed, since that venue was now standing complete, and since he is now held there in such high honor; the Reverend Samuel Joseph May would, during March, stage this memorial service at the Marlborough Chapel. (I am personally of the suspicion that there must be portions of this incomplete tale –portions dissonant with the chosen “abolitionist martyr” spin– that persons unknown have deliberately declined to make available to the historical record.)



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odious practice of carrying cotton, in any quantities, on board of passenger boats, in a manner in which it shall be liable to take fire, from sparks, or heat, from any smoke pipe or other means, deserves public censure.

One of the four survivors, Captain Chester Hillard, testified that:

I went on board the Lexington at 3 o'clock, P.M. I don't know the number of passengers she had on board; I estimated from the number at the table, that there were 150 passengers; but I have since been induced to believe, that the estimate was too large. I paid no particular attention to the landing of the freight consisted of cotton; it was stowed under the promenade deck. There might have been boxes of goods on board, but I did not notice. Between the wheel-house and engine, there was sufficient space for a person to pass; whether more than sufficient for one person or not, I cannot say. There was a tier of cotton bales stowed in the passage - I think on the side next to the wheel-house. I went into the forecabin. I think there were over the forecabin three or four baggage cars. The life-boat was on the starboard side of the promenade deck, forward of the wheel-house. I took no notice of the boat, until I saw persons endeavoring to clear her away. She was covered with canvass. I also saw the two quarter boats lowered away, after the fire broke out, but did not notice them before.

We took supper about 6 o'clock. There were two tables set, I should think more than one half the length of the cabin. These tables were filled, and some of the passengers were compelled to wait for the second table. The boat ran perhaps 12 to 14 knots per hour. I think that we must have taken supper somewhat before 6 o'clock. I think that the supper occupied from half to three quarters of an hour. I don't know Captain Child, and cannot say whether he was at the table or not.

It was about an hour after supper that I heard the alarm of fire. I was then on the point of turning in. I had my coat and boots off. I think my berth was No. 45 or 49, the third length aft from the companion way and very near it on the starboard side. I did not at the time apprehend any thing serious. I slipped on my coat and boots and went on deck. I put on my hat and took my overcoat on my arm. When I got on deck I discovered the casing of the smoke pipe on fire, and I think a part of the promenade deck was also on fire. There was a great rush of the passengers, and much confusion, so that I could not notice particularly. The after part of the casing was burning, and the fire was making aft. I thought at the time that the fire might be subdued. I saw the fire below the promenade deck. I did not notice whether there was any fire below the main deck. I was aft at the time, and could not, therefore, see distinctly. I was never before on board the Lexington, and know nothing of the construction of the smoke pipe.

I saw nothing of the commander, but from what I could hear of the crew forward, I supposed they were at work trying to rig the fire engine; I saw no buckets used, and think they were not made use of; I saw fire buckets on board, but can't say how many; I think the fire engine was not got to work, as I saw nothing of it. I shortly after went on the promenade deck; previously my



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attention had been directed to the passengers who were rushing into the quarter boats, and when I went on the quarter deck the boats were both filled. They seemed to be stupidly determined to destroy themselves, as well as the boats which were their only means of safety. I went to the starboard boat, which they were lowering away; they lowered it until she took the water, and then I saw some one cut away the forward tackle fall; it was at all events disengaged, and no one at the time could have unhooked the fall; the boat instantly filled with water, there being at the time some twenty persons in her; the boat passed immediately astern, entirely clear. I then went to the other side; the other boat was cleared away and lowered in the same manner as the other, full of passengers. This boat fell astern entirely disengaged, as the other had done; she fell away before she had entirely filled with water.

By this time the fire had got to going so that I pretty much made my mind up "it was a case." I thought that the best thing that could be done was to run the boat ashore, and for this purpose went to the wheel-house to look for Capt. Child, expecting to find him there. I found Capt. Child there. I advised him to run for the shore. The Captain replied that she was already headed for the land. The fire by this time began to come up around the promenade deck, and the wheel-house was completely filled with smoke. There were two or three on the promenade deck near the wheel-house, and their attention was turned to the life boat. I was at this time apprehensive that the promenade deck would fall through. The life boat was cleared away. I assisted stripping off the canvass, but I had no notion of going in her, as I made my mind up that if they got her down on to the main deck, they would serve her as they had done the others. The steamer was then under head way. They cleared her away and I think launched her over the side. Before I left the promenade deck I thought it was time for us to leave; however, as the fire was bursting up through the deck, I then went aft and down on to the main deck. They were then at work with the hose, but whether by the aid of the engine, or not, I cannot say. I did not know at the time that there was a force pump on board.

The smoke was so dense that I could not see distinctly what they were about. I think that the communication with the fore part of the boat was by that time cut off. Up to this time, from the first hearing of the alarm, perhaps 20 minutes had elapsed. The engine had now been stopped about 6 minutes. I then recommended to the few deck hands and passengers who remained, to throw the cotton overboard. This was done, myself lending my aid. I told the passengers that they must do something for themselves, and the best thing they could do was to take to the cotton. - There were perhaps ten or a dozen bales thrown overboard, which was pretty much all there was on the larboard side which had not taken fire. I then cut off a piece of line, perhaps four or five fathoms, and with it spanned a bale of cotton, which I believe was the last one not on fire. It was a very snug square bale. It was about four feet long and three feet wide, and a foot and a half thick. Aided by one of the firemen, I put the bale up on the rail, round which we took a turn, slipped the bale down below the guard, when we both got on to it. We got on to the bale



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before we lowered it. The boat then lay broad side to the wind and we were under the lee of the boat, on the larboard side. We placed ourselves one on each end of the bale, facing each other. With our weight on the bale it remained about one third out of the water. The wind was pretty fresh, and we drifted at the rate of about a knot and a half. We did not lash ourselves to the bale, but coiled the rope up and laid it on the bale. My companion did not like the idea of leaving the boat immediately, but wished to hold on to the guards. I determined to get out of the way, believing that to remain there much longer it would become pretty hot quarters. We accordingly shoved the bale round the stern. The moment we had reached the stern, we left the boat and drifted away about a knot and a half. This was just 8 o'clock by my watch, which I took out and looked at.

As we left the wreck I picked up a piece of board, which I used as a paddle or rudder, with which to keep the bale "end to the sea."

At the time we left the boat there were but few persons remaining on board. I saw one lady. The ladies' cabin was then all on fire. The reason why I noticed the lady was, that her child had got overboard and was then about two rods from her. We passed by the child so near that I could put my hand on to it as it lay on its back. The lady saw us approaching the child and cried out for us to save it. We then drifted away from the boat, and in ten minutes more we could see no persons on board except those on the forecastle. I should think the child was a female from its dress. I think it had on a bonnet. The child was dead when we passed it. I don't recollect how the lady was dressed, or what she said. I did not see any other child with the lady; I could not notice particulars, as it was at the time pretty rough, I had as much as I could do to manage my bale of cotton, we were sitting astride of the bale with our feet in the water; I was wet up to my middle from the water which at times washed over the bale; we were in sight of the boat all the time till she went down, when we were about a mile distant; when we left the wreck it was cloudy, but about nine o'clock it cleared off, and we had a fine night of it until the moon went down; I looked at my watch as often as every half hour, through the night, the boat went down at three o'clock; it was so cold as to make it necessary for me to exert myself to keep warm, which I did by whipping my hands and arms around my body; about 4 o'clock the bale capsized with us; a heavy sea came and carried the bale over end ways; my companion was at this time with me, and we managed to get to the bale on its opposite side; we at this time lost our piece of board, afterwards the bale was ungovernable and went as it liked; my companion had complained a good deal of the cold from our first setting out; he didn't seem to have that spirit about him that he ought to have had; he was continually fretting himself about things which he had no business to. He said his name was Cox, and that his wife lived in this city, at No. 11 Cherry street. He appeared to have given up all hope of our being saved. On our first starting from the boat, I gave him my vest as he had on his chest only a flannel shirt. He had on pantaloons, boots and cap. He said he was a fireman on board the boat.



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Cox remained on the bale after it had upset about 2 or 2 1/2 hours, until it was about day light. For the last half hour that he remained on the bale, he had been speechless and seemed to have lost all use of his hands as he did not try to hold on. I rubbed him and beat his flesh, and used otherwise every effort I could to keep his blood in circulation. It was still very rough, and I was obliged to exert myself to hold on. The bale coming broad side to the sea it gave a lurch and Cox slipped off and I saw him no more. He went down without a struggle. I then got more into the middle of the bale, to make it ride as it should, and in that way continued until at least for about an hour. I got my feet on the bale and so remained until the sloop picked me up. The sea had by this time become quite smooth. On seeing the sloop I waved my hat, to attract the attention of those on board; I was not frozen in any part.

The name of the sloop was the "Merchant," Capt. Meeker, of Southport. I think Captain M. and those on board the sloop are entitled to a great deal of credit, as they did more on the occasion than any one else. It appears that they tried during the night to get out to the aid of those on board the Lexington, but in coming out the sloop grounded on the bar, and they were compelled before they could get her off to lighten her of part of her cargo. It was 11 o'clock when I was picked up. The sloop had, previous to reaching me, spoken the light boat to make enquiries relative to the direction of the fire. On going on board of the sloop, I had every possible attention paid me; they took me into the cabin and then cruised in search of others. They picked up two other living men and the bodies of two others. The living men were Captain Manchester, pilot of the Lexington, and the other Charles Smith, a hand on board.

One of the persons was picked up on a bale of cotton, and the other on the wheel-house. I supposed Captain Manchester was on the bale, but from what Captain Comstock said yesterday, it could not be the case. Captain Manchester was picked up, but I was in the cabin at the time - was below when the other was picked up. They were both picked up within half an hour. When they were brought on board, Captain Manchester was pretty much exhausted; Smith seemed better. They put them both in bed. Smith was a fireman and belongs to Norwich, Connecticut.

According to this document, the surviving pilot, Captain Stephen Manchester, who was censured for seeking his own safety rather than attempting to save the vessel, testified as follows:

The main deck now fell in as far as the capstan; the people had by this time got overboard, some of them drowned, and others hurrying on to the baggage cars, the raft and other things. What was left of the main deck was now on fire, and got us cornered up in so small a space that we could do nothing more by throwing water. There were then only eight or ten persons astern on the steamboat, and about 30 on the forecastle. They were asking me what they should do, and I told them I saw no chance for any of us; that if we stayed there, we should be burned to death, and if we went overboard we should probably perish. Among those who were there was Mr. Hoyt and Van Cott, another person named Harnden, who had charge of the express line. I did not know any one else. I then took a piece of spun yarn and made it fast to



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my coat, and also to the rail, and so eased myself down upon the raft. There were two or three others on it already and my weight sank it. I held on to the rope until it came up again – and when it did, I sprang up and caught a piece of railing which was in the water, and from thence got on a bale of cotton where there was a man sitting; found the bale was made fast to the railing; I took out my knife and cut it off. About the time I cut this rope off, I saw some person standing on the piece of railing – asked me if there was room for another; I made no answer, and he jumped and knocked off the man that was with me; and I hauled him on again. I caught a piece of board which was floating past me and shoved the bale clean off from the raft; and used the board to endeavor to get in shore at Crane Neck Point, but I could not succeed; but I used the board as long as I could, for exercise. When I left the wreck, I looked at my watch and it was just twelve o'clock. I think the man who was on the bale with me said his name was McKenny, and lived at New York; he died about three o'clock. – When I hauled him on the bale I encouraged him and told him to thrash his hands, which he did for a spell, but soon gave up pretty much. When he died he fell back on the bale and the first sea that came pushed him off it: My hands were then so frozen that I could not use them at all; while I was on the cotton I looked at my watch; two o'clock and three miles from the wreck when she sunk; the last thing I recollect was seeing the sloop, and I raised my handkerchief between my fingers, hoping they would see me; I believe they did. I was then sitting on the cotton, with my feet in the water. The cotton never rolled at all, although there were some heavy seas; the man who was on the bale spoke of his wife and children, that he had kissed them the morning he left home, that he was never before through the Sound, and said he feared he would die of the cold.



 Our national birthday, the 4th of July: This was [Nathaniel Hawthorne](#)'s 36th birthday.

William Johnson of Natchez, a free black man who was himself a slavemaster (!) as well as being a barber and a successful businessman, kept a diary of short entries, hardly missing a day between 1836 and 1851. This diary has seen publication as *William Johnson's NATCHEZ, THE ANTE-BELLUM DIARY OF A FREE NEGRO*, ed. William Ransom Hogan and Edwin Adams Davis (1951, 1979, and a Louisiana State UP paperback in 1993). Here is one of a series of Johnson's 4th-of-July entries: "Business was Quite Dull, this being the 4th of July. I did not Keep open more than half of the Day but walked out into the Pasture to see How the Citizens were Engaging themselves and I found them all in find Humor and in good order."

At Cherry Valley, New York, on the centennial anniversary of that town's settlement, William H. Seward delivered an oration.

In the US House of Representatives, Congressman Levi Lincoln of Massachusetts presented a proposal that the House decide on claims by Revolutionary soldiers for their relief.

In Portsmouth, New Hampshire, where a large amphitheater-shaped pavilion collapsed, nearly 1,000 people



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were thrown down but God allowed no fatalities.

In [Providence](#) (*Moshasuck*), [Rhode Island](#), a “Clam Bake” was held at which 220 bushes of clams were consumed as evidence of patriotic citizenry.

[Orestes Augustus Brownson](#)'s provocative essay “The Laboring Classes” was in the current issue of the [Boston Quarterly Review](#) to promote the re-election of President Martin Van Buren and to aid the cause of the Democrats against the Whigs and their candidate, William Henry Harrison. The author rang in memories of the economic crisis of 1837, declaring that “No one can observe the signs of the times with much care without perceiving that a crisis as to the relation of wealth and labor is approaching.” The struggle between wealth and labor was inherent in all of America’s social structures, particularly the wage system, and could not be resolved except by a revolutionary alteration of such structures. First among the institutions to be reformed would have to be the Christian church, as symbolized by the attitudes of its clergy. Contrary to Christ’s gospel, which called us to establish justice and God’s kingdom on earth, preaching was turning people’s eyes toward heaven with an elusive promise of eternal happiness. Government needed to limit its own powers, and to virtually eliminate the banking system, in order to protect the workers from the wealthy. Finally, the author called for the abolition of all monopoly and of all privilege, especially the inheritance of property: “as we have abolished hereditary monarchy and hereditary nobility, we must complete the work by abolishing hereditary property.” What the Reverend was responding to, in this manner, was the essay “Self-Culture,” published by the Reverend [William Ellery Channing](#) in 1838, in which it had been presumed that the primary focus of our energies should be upon our own rectification rather than on the rectification of society in general — which was an end in itself rather than merely a means to a greater end. Brownson declared that “Self-culture is a good thing, but it cannot abolish inequality, nor restore men to their rights.”<sup>15</sup>

To Brownson’s dismay, in this balloting the voters went with the Whigs. With the loss of power by the Democrats, he would suddenly be deprived of his politically sponsored stewardship of the United States Marine Hospital in Chelsea MA. Deeply disappointed, he would begin to sift through the socio-political fragments of his shattered religious vision. The election had demonstrated that individual and social reform, he would decide, could not spring from imperfect human nature and inadequate human effort, but only from a power higher than the electorate and the vote. Politically, this would necessitate a constitutional republic rooted in the divine will, but one which in order to protect the rights of minorities would favor states’ rights. Philosophically, this would necessitate his adoption of Plato’s doctrine of ideas and his adjustment of Pierre Leroux’s “doctrine of communion,” which held that humans lived by communion through the medium of institutions with a reality other than their individual selves, “the Not-Me”: individuals communed with nature by way of the institution of property, individuals communed with other individuals by way of the institutions of the family and of government, and individuals communed with God through the institution of the church. Theologically, [Brownson](#) would come to believe, as Christ’s organic extension in space and time, the institution of the church constituted the sole medium of God’s saving grace. Human nature could institute nothing higher than itself; hence only a divine power mediated through Christ’s church would be capable of effecting the progress of humankind.

1,200 people came into [Concord](#) from Lowell for the big day of the national political campaign. The other two roads into Concord were also jammed with visitors from the surrounding towns of Middlesex County. A log cabin on wheels was drawn into town by a team of 23 horses, while 150 celebrants sat in this rolling cabin chugging hard cider. The delegates from Boston and the eastern vicinity formed a queue that was all of two miles long, with “bands by the dozen.” The main spectacle of the day, however, was an enormous wooden ball, 12 to 13 feet in diameter and painted red, white, and blue, that was being rolled out to Concord from Cambridge on this leg of its journey toward Washington DC. The Tippecanoe Club was sponsoring this ball and the slogans painted on it had to do with the Whig candidates, nominee William Henry Harrison for the President and John Tyler for the Vice-President. On the Lexington Road, [Waldo Emerson](#) and his group watched this ball roll past, and some of the group helped to push the ball along.<sup>16</sup> The main speeches took

15. Refer to Robinson, David. APOSTLE OF CULTURE: [EMERSON](#) AS PREACHER AND LECTURER. Philadelphia PA: U of Pennsylvania P, 1982.

place, of course, near the [Battle Monument](#) on the south bank of the Concord River. The speeches began only after arrival of a barge from Billerica which, loaded with ladies, had encountered some difficulties in getting over a mud bank below Ball’s Hill. Then there was free barbecue and cider in the largest tent ever set up in Middlesex County, seating 6,000, with 4,000 more being forced to wait outside the tent.<sup>17</sup>

Horace Rice Hosmer would recollect much later that “The political campaign of 1840 Harrison & Tyler was a [drunken](#) one, because all drank rum from habit and custom and they drank **hard cider** to emphasize their political principles, and the result was terrific.” He was “the only Loco Foco” among the students and staff (that is, the only Democrat, everyone else having Whig sympathies). He remembered John Thoreau as “an ardent Whig and his political war-cry was Tippecanoe and Tyler too.”

At that time the great wooden red, white, and blue ball that was the symbol of the party, some 12 feet high, was being kept in the front yard of David Loring’s house on Main Street just to the north of the Concord Academy. When [Emerson](#) first delivered his “The Poet” lecture, in Boston in 1841, the Whigs had just used this as a political stunt of the 1840 campaign to demonstrate growing support for their candidate. Little Horace later remembered some of the graffiti on this ball, which must have been most fascinating:

O’er ever ridge we’ll roll the Ball,  
From Concord Bridge to Faneuil Hall.

Farewell poor Van, To guide our Ship,  
We’ll try Old Tip.

This Ball must roll, it cannot halt,  
Benton can’t save himself with salt.

By another account, the graffiti included:

Farewell poor Van,  
You’r [*sic*] not the man  
To guide our Ship.  
We’ll try Old Tip.

16. In 1844, in his essay “The Poet,” published in ESSAYS, 2D SERIES, [Emerson](#) would use an allusion to this political gimmick used by the campaign supporters of William Henry Harrison, “Keep the ball a-rolling!”



See the great ball which they roll from Baltimore to  
Bunker hill!

17. This was the election year in which people began singing campaign songs, and in which politics became popular entertainment. For an extended period in the 19th Century in the USA, in fact until the campaign of 1888, voter turnouts of 85% to 95% were not at all unusual. At a political rally, one could count on thousands of people being willing to stand and listen to hour-long political speech after hour-long political speech, in the rain. Voters supported the political association of their choice exactly as sports fans now support the team of their choice. Were we, today, to go back from our present 50% turnout for presidential elections to that sort of political involvement, the result would be a rebirth of our democracy, or its death.

In his “autobiography,” [John Shepard Keyes](#) would later reminisce about the events of the celebration in [Concord](#) this year, and would mention having been present at a wedding reception for Reuben Nathan “R.N.” Rice and his bride Mary Harriet Hurd (daughter of Colonel Isaac Hurd, Jr. and granddaughter of Dr. Isaac Hurd), who had gotten married on July 1st:



Interestingly, this reception had been hosted at the Thoreau house (we may well note how characteristic it is, that Henry made no mention of such matters as the hosting of a wedding reception, in his journal):

This excitement was soon followed by the celebration of the Fourth of July by the greatest political gathering ever held in Concord, of the Harrison and Tyler campaign. The tippecanoe clubs from every town came with banners and flags with log cabins and hard cider, and in teams on horseback in canal boats and on foot filled the streets to overflowing. The preparations were on a grand scale, a speakers stand, and booth of immense proportions was set up on the lot southwest of the present Sleepy Hollow Cemetery and a procession formed in the square that extended to the monument at the battleground, around which they marched with bands and escort flags and devices including the big ball, a huge affair a dozen feet in diameter made of a frame covered with cloth and inscribed with mottoes of all the political bye words songs and phrases in letters that could be read as it rolled on drawn by ropes in the hands of earnest sturdy yeomen. The charm of such an occasion drew me home days before, and I was busier in its work than in my studies, cutting for it recitations and exercises, and even such examinations as we had then which amounted to next to nothing – The great day came and fine weather and entire success greeted it. The Democrats got up a rival affair at Lexington but it was so tame and poor that it only added zest to ours, and it went off with a wild hurrah. I witnessed the gathering and march of the four or five thousand men from the cupola of the Court House, where with a bevy of girls of my own selection, we enjoyed the grand pageant to the utmost. Then escorting them to the booth we listened to the stirring speeches partook of the crackers and hard cider so liberally provided for the multitude and saw many of the great leaders of the old Wig party and heard their eloquence for the first time. Especially I recall that several of the speakers were guests at our house and that one of them Hon Myron Lawrence

of Belchertown whose great size and powerful voice made him a prominent figure in that campaign had the night before a terrible attack of asthma, that frightened me out of my sleep by his horrible breathing and who I expected would certainly die of choking before morning, but who rallied, recovered his voice, and filled the whole audience and the entire valley with his stertorous tones at the dinner tables. Henry Wilson made his first appearance then, and excited much interest as the Natick cobbler. The day ended with R.N. Rices wedding ~~and~~ reception at the Thoreau house on the square opposite my fathers, where we had a jolly time winding up the festivities with a champagne super-

**J.S. KEYES AUTOBIOGRAPHY**



July 4, 1840: 4 o'clock A.M. The Townsend Light Infantry encamped last night in my neighbor's inclosure.

The night still breathes slumberously over field and wood, when a few soldiers gather about one tent in the twilight, and their band plays an old Scotch air, with bugle and drum and fife attempered to the season. It seems like the morning hymn of creation. The first sounds of the awakening camp, mingled with the chastened strains which so sweetly salute the dawn, impress me as the morning prayer of an army.<sup>18</sup>

And now the morning gun fires. The soldier awakening to creation and awakening it. I am sure none are cowards now. These strains are the roving dreams which steal from tent to tent, and break forth into distinct melody. They are the soldier's morning thought. Each man awakes himself with lofty emotions, and would do some heroic deed. You need preach no homily to him; he is the stuff they are made of.

The whole course of our lives should be analogous to one day of the soldier's. His Genius seems to whisper in his ear what demeanor is befitting, and in his bravery and his march he yields a blind and partial obedience.

The fresher breeze which accompanies the dawn rustles the oaks and birches, and the earth respire calmly with the creaking of crickets. Some hazel leaf stirs gently, as if anxious not to awake the day too abruptly, while the time is hastening to the distinct line between darkness and light. And soldiers issue from their dewy tents, and as if in answer to expectant nature, sing a sweet and far-echoing hymn.

We may well neglect many things, provided we overlook them.

When to-day I saw the "Great Ball" rolled majestically along, it seemed a shame that man could not move like it. All dignity and grandeur has something of the undulatoriness of the sphere. It is the secret of majesty in the rolling gait of the elephant, and of all grace in action and in art. The line of beauty is a curve. Each man seems striving to imitate its gait, and keep pace with it, but it moves on regardless and conquers the multitude with its majesty. What shame that our lives, which should be the source of planetary motion and sanction the order of the spheres, are full of abruptness and angularity, so as not to roll, nor move majestically.

18. Also, written in pencil on a fly-leaf of the journal, we find "I have heard a strain of music issuing from a soldiers' camp in the dawn, which sounded like the morning hymn of creation. The birches rustling in the breeze and the slumberous breathing of the crickets seemed to hush their murmuring to attend to it."

1841

The first five volumes of the works of the Reverend [William Ellery Channing](#) were published.



The Reverend [William Ellery Channing](#) delivered a sermon upon the topic “Means of Promoting Christianity” (THE WORKS OF WILLIAM ELLERY CHANNING, D.D. Boston MA: American Unitarian Association, 1890, pages 254-7).

READ IT AND WEEP

### Means Of Promoting Christianity

We live at a time when the obligation of extending Christianity is more felt than in many past ages. There is much stir, motion, and zeal around us in this good cause. Even those who seem not to be burdened by an excess of piety themselves are in earnest to give it to others. The activity of multitudes is taking strongly this direction; and as men are naturally restless, and want room for action, and will do mischief rather than do nothing, a philanthropist will rejoice that this new channel is opened for carrying off the superabundant energies of multitudes, even if no other good should result from it.

We hope however, much other good. We trust that, whilst many inferior motives and many fanatical impulses are giving birth and action to large associations in Christendom; whilst the love of sway in some, and the love of congregating in others, and the passion for doing something great and at a distance in all, are rearing mighty institutions among us, – still many sincere Christians are governed in these concerns by a supreme desire of spreading Christianity. They have found the gospel an



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infinite good, and would communicate it to their fellow-beings. They have drunk from the Fountain of Life and would send forth the stream to gladden every wilderness and solitary place, and to assuage the thirst of every anxious and afflicted mind. They turn with continual pleasure to the prophetic passages of Scripture, and, interpreting them by their wishes, hope a speedy change in the moral state of the world, and are impatient to bear a part in this stupendous renovation. That they are doing good we doubt not, though perhaps not in the way which they imagine or would prefer. The immediate and general success of their attempts would perhaps be ultimately injurious to Christianity. They are sending out, together with God's word, corrupt interpretations of some parts of it, which considerably neutralize its saving power, and occasionally make it a positive injury. They are perhaps to do good not by success so much as by failure. Almost all great enterprises are accomplished gradually, and by methods which have been learned from many unsuccessful trials, from a slow accumulation of experience. The first laborers often do little more than teach those who come after them what to avoid and how to labor more effectually than themselves. But be the issue what it may, sincere Christians who embark in this good work, not from party-spirit and self-conceit, as if they and their sect were depositaries of all truth and virtue, but from unaffected philanthropy and attachment to Jesus Christ, will have their reward. Even a degree of extravagance in such a cause may be forgiven. Men are willing that the imagination should be kindled on other subjects; that the judgment should sometimes slumber, and leave the affections to feed on hopes brighter than reality; that patriotism, and philanthropy, and the domestic affections, should sometimes break out in chivalrous enterprises, and should seek their ends by means on which the reason may look coldly. Why, then, shall we frown on every deviation from the strictest judiciousness in a concern which appeals so strongly to the heart as the extension of Christianity? Men may be too rational as well as too fervent; and the man whose pious wish of the speedy conversion of the world rises into a strong anticipation of the event, and who, taking his measure of duty from the primitive disciples, covets sacrifices in so good a cause, is an incomparably nobler spirit than he who, believing that the moral condition of the world is as invariable as the laws of material nature, and seeking pretexts for sloth in a heart chilling philosophy, has no concern for; the multitudes who are sitting in darkness, and does nothing to spread the religion which he believes to have come from heaven.

There is one danger, however, at a period like the present, when we are aiming to send Christianity to a distance, which demands attention. It is the danger of neglecting the best methods of propagating Christianity, of over-looking much plainer obligations than, that of converting heathens, of forgetting the claims of our religion at home and by our firesides. It happens that on this, as on almost every subject, our most important duties are quiet, retired, noiseless, attracting little notice, and administering little powerful excitement to the imagination. The surest efforts for extending



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Christianity are those which few observe, which are recorded in no magazine, blazoned at no anniversaries, immortalized by no eloquence. Such efforts, being enjoined only by conscience and God, and requiring steady, patient, unwearied toil, we are apt to overlook, and perhaps never more so than when the times furnish a popular substitute for them, and when we can discharge our consciences by labors which, demanding little self-denial, are yet talked of as the highest exploits of Christian charity. Hence it is that when most is said of labors to propagate Christianity, the least may be really and effectually done. We hear a torrent roaring, and imagine that the fields are plentifully watered, when the torrent owes its violence to a ruinous concentration of streams which before moved quietly in a thousand little channels, moistening the hidden roots, and publishing their course, not to the ear but to the eye, by the refreshing verdure which grew up around them. It is proper, then, when new methods are struck out for sending Christianity abroad, to remind men often of the old-fashioned methods of promoting it, to insist on the superiority of the means which are in almost every man's reach, which require no extensive associations, and which do not subject us to the temptations of exaggerated praise. We do not mean that any exertion which promises to extend our religion in any tolerable state of purity is to be declined. But the first rank is to be given to the efforts which God has made the plain duties of men in all ranks and conditions of life. Two of these methods will be briefly mentioned.

First, every individual should feel that, whilst his influence over other men's hearts and character is very bounded, his power over his own heart is great and constant, and that his zeal for extending Christianity is to appear chiefly in extending it through his own mind and life. Let him remember that he as truly enlarges God's kingdom by invigorating his own moral and religious principles, as by communicating them to others. Our first concern is at home, our chief work is in our own breasts. It is idle to talk of our anxiety for other men's souls if we neglect our own. Without personal virtue and religion we cannot, even if we would, do much for the cause of Christ. It is only by purifying our own conceptions of God and duty that we can give clear and useful views to others. We must first feel the power of religion, or we cannot recommend it with an unaffected and prevalent zeal. Would we, then, promote pure Christianity? Let us see that it be planted and take root in our own minds, and that no busy concern for others take us from the labor of self-inspection and the retired and silent offices of piety. The second method is intimately connected with the first. It is example. This is a means within the reach of all. Be our station in life what it may, it has duties in performing which faithfully we give important aid to the cause of morality and piety. The efficacy of this means of advancing Christianity cannot be easily calculated. Example has an insinuating power, transforming the observer without noise, attracting him without the appearance of effort. A truly Christian life is better than large contributions of wealth for the propagation of Christianity.



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The most prominent instruction of Jesus on this point is that we must let men "see our good works," if we would lead them to "glorify our Father in heaven." Let men see in us that religion is something real, something more than high-sounding and empty words, a restraint from sin, a bulwark against temptation, a spring of upright and useful action; let them see it not an idle form, nor a transient feeling, but our companion through life, infusing its purity into our common pursuits, following us to our homes, setting a guard round our integrity in the resorts of business, sweetening our tempers in seasons of provocation, disposing us habitually to sympathy with others, to patience and cheerfulness under our own afflictions, to candid judgment, and to sacrifices for others' good; and we may hope that our light will not shine uselessly, that some slumbering conscience will be roused by this testimony to the excellence and practicableness of religion, that some worldly professor of Christianity will learn his obligations and blush for his criminal inconsistency, and that some, in whom the common arguments for our religion may have failed to work a full belief, will be brought to the knowledge of the truth by this plain practical proof of the heavenly nature of Christianity. Every man is surrounded with beings who are moulded more or less by the principles of sympathy and imitation; and this social part of our nature he is bound to press into the service of Christianity.

It will not be supposed from these remarks on the duty of aiding Christianity by our example, that religion is to be worn ostentatiously, and that the Christian is studiously to exhibit himself and his good works for imitation. That same book which enjoins us to be patterns, tells us to avoid parade, and even to prefer entire secrecy in our charities and our prayers. Nothing destroys the weight of example so much as labor to make it striking and observed. Goodness, to be interesting, must be humble, modest, unassuming, not fond of show, not waiting for great and conspicuous occasions, but disclosing itself without labor and without design in pious and benevolent offices, so simple, so minute, so steady, so habitual, that they will carry a conviction of the singleness and purity of the heart from which they proceed. Such goodness is never lost. It glorifies itself by the very humility which encircles it, just as the lights of heaven often break with peculiar splendor through the cloud which threatened to obscure them.

A pure example, which is found to be more consistent in proportion as it is more known, is the best method of preaching and extending Christianity. Without it, zeal for converting men brings reproach on the cause. A bad man, or a man of only ordinary goodness, who puts himself forward in this work, throws a suspiciousness over the efforts of better men, and thus the world I come to set down all labor for spreading Christianity as mere pretence. Let not him who will not submit to the toil of making himself better, become a reformer at home or abroad. Let not him who is known to be mean, or dishonest, or intriguing, or censorious, or unkind in his neighborhood, talk of his concern for other men's souls. His life is an injury to religion, which his contributions of zeal, or even of wealth, cannot



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repair, and its injuriousness is aggravated by these vain attempts to expiate its guilt, to reconcile him to himself. It is well known that the greatest obstruction to Christianity in heathen countries is the palpable and undeniable depravity of Christian nations. They abhor our religion because we are such unhappy specimens of it. They are unable to read our books, but they can read our lives; and what wonder if they reject with scorn a system under which the vices seem to have flourished so luxuriantly. The Indian of both hemispheres has reason to set down the Christian as little better than himself. He associates with the name perfidy, fraud, rapacity, and slaughter. Can we wonder that he is unwilling to receive a religion from the hand which has chained or robbed him? Thus, bad example is the great obstruction to Christianity abroad as well as at home; and perhaps little good is to be done abroad until we become better at home, until real Christians understand and practise their religion more thoroughly, and by their example and influence spread it among their neighbors and through their country, so that the aspect of Christian nations shall be less shocking and repulsive to the Jew, Mahometan, and Pagan. Our first labor should be upon ourselves; and indeed if our religion be incapable of bearing more fruit among ourselves, it hardly seems to deserve a very burning zeal for its propagation. The question is an important one, – Would much be gained to heathen countries were we to make them precisely what nations called Christians now are? That the change would be beneficial, we grant; but how many dark stains would remain on their characters! They would continue to fight and shed blood as they now do, to resent injuries hotly, to worship present gain and distinction, and to pursue the common business of life on the principles of undisguised selfishness; and they would learn one lesson of iniquity which they have not yet acquired, and that is, to condemn and revile their brethren who should happen to view the most perplexed points of theology differently from themselves. The truth is, Christian nations want a genuine reformation, one worthy of the name. They need to have their zeal directed, not so much to the spreading of the gospel abroad, as to the application of its plain precepts to their daily business, to the education of their children, to the treatment of their domestics and dependants, and to their social and religious intercourse. They need to understand that a man's piety is to be estimated, not so much by his professions or direct religious exercises, as by a conscientious surrender of his will, passions, worldly interests, and prejudices, to the acknowledged duties of Christianity, and especially by a philanthropy resembling in its great features of mildness, activity, and endurance, that of Jesus Christ. They need to give up their severe inquisition into their neighbors' opinions, and to begin in earnest to seek for themselves, and to communicate to others, a nobler standard of temper and practice than they have yet derived from the Scriptures. In a word, they need to learn the real value and design of Christianity by the only thorough and effectual process; that is, by drinking deeply into its spirit of love to God and man. If, in this age of societies, we should think it wise to recommend another institution for the



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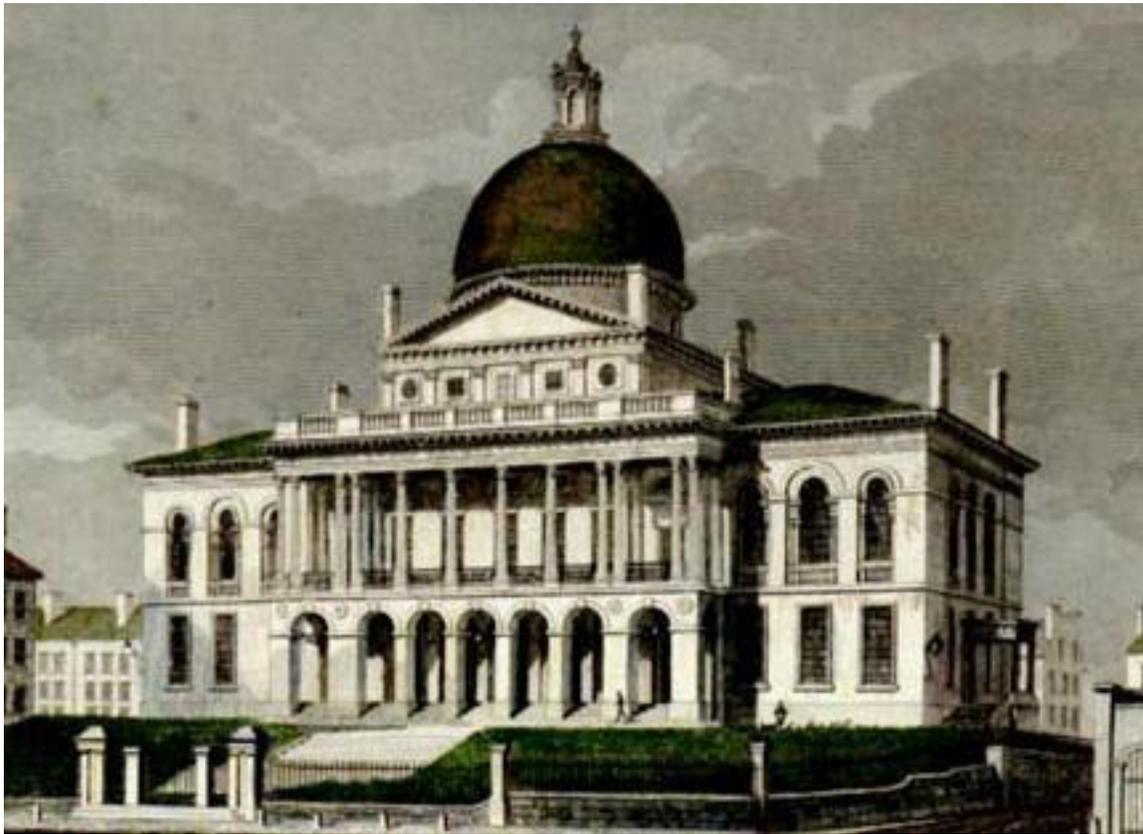
propagation of Christianity, it would be; one the members of which should be pledged to assist and animate one another in living according to the Sermon on the Mount. How far such a measure would be effectual we venture not to predict; but of one thing we are sure, that, should it prosper, it would do more for spreading the gospel than all other associations which are now receiving the patronage of the Christian world.

1842

January 26-28: Although some 5,000 people were in beautiful downtown [Boston](#), they were not primarily there to size up their diminutive visitor from merry old England, Charles Dickens, but rather to attend the annual meeting

ATTITUDES ON DICKENS

of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, held in the hall of the house of representatives in the State House



(another source says, at the Melodeon). [Abby Kelley](#) was being reprovod by this assembly for having portrayed the clergy as “thieves, robbers, adulterers, pirates and murderers.” The next day the Boston newspapers were full of descriptions of the appearance of this female orator, but they all stonewalled in regard to the contents of the speech she had made. A woman. **She opened her mouth in public.**<sup>19</sup>

19. Her speech had gone right off the dial of their pornograph. Too bad we’re so jaded — it cannot affect us the same way now.

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Another person who was opening his mouth in public in beautiful downtown [Boston](#) was [Frederick Douglass](#), who in a speech in Faneuil Hall on the 28th mimicked a Southern white preacher telling slaves that they must



be good Christians by being obedient their masters. Douglass was a master of regional and ethnic dialect and his oration was regarded at that time as a classic of the art of satire. Even in this age it might draw guffaws from a “Saturday Night Live” audience.<sup>20</sup> So how was it that a black man was getting away with mocking a white man, while a white woman was failing to get away with challenging the clergy? –Hey, smartie, figure that one out when you’ve a spare moment!



<sup>20</sup>. Hey, too bad the phonograph hadn’t yet been invented!

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As would eventually be minuted in The Dickens's AMERICAN NOTES, the Reverend [William Ellery Channing](#)'s health had improved to such an extent that he became able to preach, in beautiful downtown [Boston](#), for the first time in a very long interval, against that most hideous blot and foul disgrace, human Slavery:

Not being able, in the absence of any change of clothes, to go to church that day, we were compelled to decline the kindnesses, one and all; and I was reluctantly obliged to forego the delight of hearing Dr. Channing, who happened to preach that morning for the first time in a very long interval. I mention the name of this distinguished and accomplished man (with whom I soon afterwards had the pleasure of becoming personally acquainted), that I may have the gratification of recording my humble tribute of admiration and respect for his high abilities and character; and for the bold philanthropy with which he has ever opposed himself to that most hideous blot and foul disgrace – Slavery.

April 7: [Frederick Douglass](#) was in Upton, Massachusetts to speak for the Upton Female Anti-Slavery Society, and at an annual event called "State Fast Day," the Reverend [Adin Ballou](#), who had been fooled in his youth by the "libertarian" crowd of the 19th Century and had been led to side with the slavers against the abolitionists, heard this escaped slave for the first time, and came to recognize the horrible reality of what, in abstraction, he had been considering to be reasonable.



The Reverend [William Ellery Channing](#) delivered his last sermon in the Federal Street Church in Boston.

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June: The Reverend [Orestes Augustus Brownson](#), who was at this time attending the sermons of the Reverend William Henry Channing, composed his famous “open letter” to the Reverend [William Ellery Channing](#), entitled THE MEDIATORIAL LIFE OF JESUS, in which he alleges that [Jesus Christ](#) is the sole mediator between God and humankind. It was this which initiated Brownson’s institutionalism, his concern to discover and sponsor that institution which was perpetuating, in human history, Christ’s mediatorial activity.



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August 1: To celebrate the progress of the temperance cause and the [emancipation](#) of the slaves of the islands of the British West Indies, such as Jamaica, there was a black procession of 1,200 members of Philadelphia's Moyamensing Temperance Society under a banner containing the figure of an emancipated slave who pointed with one hand to the broken chains at his feet and with the other to the word "Liberty" in gold letters above his head. The banner contained a representation of the rising sun symbolizing the dawn of freedom and a representation of a sinking ship symbolizing the wreck of tyranny. White Philadelphians, believing or pretending to believe that this banner bore the motto "Liberty or Death" and that the scene being depicted was of *Santo Domingo* (presently known as the Dominican Republic, the Spanish eastern two-thirds of the Caribbean island generally known as Haiti) in flames with blacks massacring whites, attacked the procession with clubs and stones. The black assembly hall was burned, as was a Presbyterian church.

TEMPERANCE

The Reverend [William Ellery Channing](#), quite ill, delivered his last public speech, an address at Lenox MA on the anniversary of [emancipation](#) in the British West Indies.<sup>21</sup>

From the 1st of the month into the 3rd, [Frederick Douglass](#) would be speaking at the annual meeting of the Eastern Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society in Norristown, Pennsylvania.



21. Some two months later he would die in Bennington, Vermont.

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October 2: The [Reverend George Gilfillan](#) preached on the subject of “Hades, or the Unseen” (the Unseen State of the soul after separation from the body), and would soon publish that sermon, causing himself to come to be popularly known as “Gilfillan the Hades Minister.” This contained such novel thoughts before their time as to bring him under the scrutiny of his co-presbyters — and ultimately it would need to be withdrawn from circulation as having been somewhat too adventurous ([Thomas Carlyle](#) would comment “How he contrives to hold such notions, and be a Burgher Minister, one cannot well say”).



The Reverend [William Ellery Channing](#) died at sundown in Old Bennington, Vermont. When news of the event was circulated, the [Unitarian](#) churches of course all tolled their funeral bells, but every other Protestant church was very noticeably silent. On this occasion, in [Boston](#), only the bells of the [Catholic](#) cathedral chimed in with the bells of the Unitarians. Although his statue stands today at the Arlington Street and Boylston Street entrance to the Public Garden, the gravestone which bears his name is behind the Old First Church that fronts on the green in Old Bennington. It happens to be one of the few gravestones ever to refer to the hour of a person’s death:

**“In this Quiet Village  
Among the Hills  
William Ellery Channing  
Apostle of Faith and Freedom  
Died at Sunset  
October 2, 1842”**



1844

In the election of 1844, the hot issues were the annexations of Texas and of the Oregon Territory. Flemming created this map of Texas:



The Democrats, putting Tweedledee James K. Polk forward for the presidency, were calling for immediate annexation of both, whereas the Whigs, putting forward Tweedledum Henry Clay, also supporting westward expansion — but somewhat more cautiously. To the left, the Liberty Party was again backing James Gillespie Birney, who had obtained merely 7,069 votes in 1840, but in this election would obtain 62,263, enough to bring about the defeat of Henry Clay. (To the left even of the Liberty Party was the Free-Soiler party, the platform of which sought to circumscribe human enslavement along the lines laid down in the Wilmot Proviso — and then there were a few who wanted to achieve even more, such as Gerrit Smith and the unreconstructed political abolitionists, and the Garrisonian immediate abolitionists.)

The Reverend [Beriah Green](#) prepared SKETCHES OF THE LIFE AND WRITINGS OF JAMES GILLESPIE BIRNEY



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(Jackson & Chaplin).

### JAMES GILLESPIE BIRNEY

Foreseeing the danger of Texas annexation and feeling that the Whigs would be unable to deal constructively with the question of extension of slavery, [Waldo Emerson](#) opined that the Democrats would be too busy with “fancy politics,” when they voted with the Whigs, to actually “go ahead” and annex this northern district of Mexico. (Remember?—before his death several years before, the Reverend [William Ellery Channing](#) had “declared for disruption of the Union rather than annexation of Texas.”)

Date	Right of Search Treaty with Great Britain, made by	Arrangements for Joint Cruising with Great Britain, made by
1817	Portugal; Spain	
1818	Netherlands	
1824	Sweden	
1831-33	France	
1833-39	Denmark, Hanse Towns, etc.	
1841	Quintuple Treaty (Austria, Russia, Prussia)	
1842		United States
1844	Texas	
1845	Belgium	France
1862	United States	

To protect the Anglo Texians against Mexico pending Senate approval of a treaty of annexation, President Tyler deployed US forces. However, this treaty of annexation was then rejected. (The President would need to defend his premature action against a Senate resolution of inquiry.)

#### US MILITARY INTERVENTIONS

### 1848

The Reverend William Henry Channing’s 3-volume MEMOIR OF [WILLIAM ELLERY CHANNING](#), D.D. / WITH EXTRACTS FROM HIS CORRESPONDENCE AND MANUSCRIPTS ... / BY HIS NEPHEW WILLIAM HENRY CHANNING.

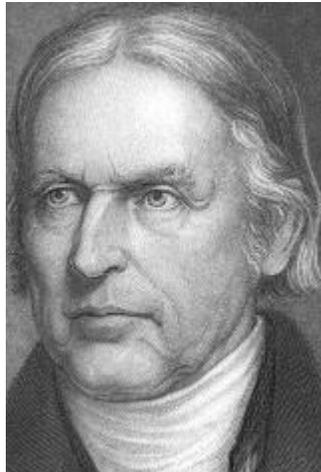
1854

The Reverend [Adin Ballou](#) wrote his main justification of the [Hopedale](#) Community, PRACTICAL CHRISTIAN SOCIALISM.



CHRISTIAN SOCIALISM

The first section of this treatise would be his only completed work of systematic theology. He asserted that God permeated an “infinitarium,” that is, an infinity of universes, and that both space and time were without center or limit. Every separate one of these universes, of this infinity of universes within this “infinitarium,” he asserted, was going through an unending sequence of “grand cycles,” each one of which could appropriately be characterized as “an eternity.” His Christology was not Unitarian, nor was it Trinitarian, but instead was rather similar to the ancient heresy known as “Sabellianism.” He asserted that Christ was a manifestation of God, proportioned in such manner as to be comprehensible by our finite minds, but he asserted also that Christianity might not be the sole religion to contain divine truth. Like the Reverend Hosea Ballou, the



Reverend [Adin Ballou](#) portrayed atonement as a form of demonstration by God, an appeal to human beings for a spiritual and moral response. He differed from this other Reverend Ballou in asserting that divine punishment in the afterlife was necessary, not only for the sake of justice but also as a mechanism for individual correction and progress. Our human spirits, as they were gradually regenerated, were eventually to become one with God.



This treatise laid out a plan for human society that was as simple and as obvious as the Lord's Prayer. To be perfect as God is perfect is a difficult thing for us human creatures. We all impinge on each other in one manner or another; we are all in life together, on this planet together, and should we fail to forgive "them" their trespasses, no way could our own trespasses be forgiven — for our own trespasses against "them" are in no way more privileged than "their" trespasses against us. When we manage to avoid seeking to retaliate for the harms that are done to us by others, we face only a further obligation. After accepting these harms with no spirit of retribution, no spirit of doing harm in response, we must go on and do more: we must ask that the people who did these things to us be forgiven. And we can ask for this only if we ourselves are ready to grant the prayer. "After this manner, therefore, pray ye.... Forgive us our debts, **as** we forgive our debtors." The word "as" in this prayer means "to the extent that." To the extent that we are able to forgive these other people for what they have done to us, to that extent and to that extent only, forgive us for what we ourselves have done against them, and, the inverse also, if there should be lurking in us any residual unwillingness to forgive, to that extent please do not forgive us for what we have ourselves done, but instead take retribution against us. There's no such thing as selective forgiveness, it only works if it is perfectly indiscriminate, and if it is perfectly applied across the board.<sup>22</sup>

If, while we sue for mercy, we exercise none; if, while we pray for forgiveness, we meditate vengeance; if, while we ask to be treated better than we deserve, we are trying to respond to others according to their deserts; then we at once display our own insincerity, and our worship is a fraud and God is mocked. Our spirit of partiality is in opposition to the Lord's spirit of indiscriminate acceptance (which seems while we are in this spirit to be mere blind and callous indifference); we stand self-excluded from his presence alike unforgiving and unforgiven. The idea, repeated over and over, is that it is a law of life that only the forgiving can be forgiven. This forgiving is what constitutes our proof of our sincerity. This, not something as trivial as passing the salt to others at the table if we wish others to have the politeness to pass the salt to us, is the meat of the golden rule of doing unto others as we would have done unto ourselves. Our spirits must be fit to receive forgiveness. Then God can commune with us, for we have erected no barrier, we have not held ourselves away from his perfect spirit. It is only in the spirit of human forgiveness that we can receive and enjoy the divine forgiveness.

Yet Christianity has been suborned to authorize, to aid, and to abet the whole catalog of penal injuries, and when they are not enough, capital punishment, and not only that, but also the just war. The Chaplain leads the troops in the Lord's Prayer, while Christians draw near their God with their lips, and hold their hearts far away in a safe place where there may yet be found vengeance.

22. Also, "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matthew 6:12-15). "Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Till seven times?" Jesus said unto him, "I say not unto thee, until seven times, but until seventy times seven" (Matthew 18:21-22). "And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have aught against any, that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses; but if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses" (Mark 11:25-26). "Judge not, and ye shall not be judged; condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven" (Luke 6:37).

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This, then, would be the foundation of our economic life, that to the greatest extent possible we voluntarily refrain from gaining our bread in any manner that interferes one with another, recognizing that a certain minimal level of such interference is inevitable, and, since we know full well that these residual interferences are unavoidable, we merely be understanding of these residual interferences in a spirit of awareness that we are as likely ourselves to commit such blunders against others, as they are to commit such against us. – The remainder of any economic program, obviously, is just window dressing and agenda and special pleading.

By this point the Reverend John Murray Spear, Medium, of the [Hopedale](#) community, had come to be under the direction of a group of spirits that termed itself “The Association of the Beneficents.” His committee (in sequence according to how long they had been in the spirit realm) included:<sup>23</sup>



DIED	PERSONALITY
65CE	<a href="#">Lucius Annaeus Seneca</a>
1546	<a href="#">Martin Luther</a>
1683	<a href="#">Roger Williams</a>
1772	<a href="#">Emmanuel Swedenborg</a>
1790	<a href="#">Benjamin Franklin</a>
1790	<a href="#">John Howard</a>
1809	<a href="#">John Murray</a>
1813	<a href="#">Benjamin Rush</a>
1825	<a href="#">Thomas Jefferson</a>
1834	<a href="#">Lafayette</a>
1842	<a href="#">William Ellery Channing</a>



23. John Murray, 4th Earl of Dunmore (1732-1809), had been the appointed governor of the Virginia colony. After the battles of Lexington and Concord he had taken gunpowder stores from Williamsburg and moved his seat of government to a British man-of-war anchored off Yorktown. After he had burned Norfolk in 1776, the Americans had been able to drive him back to England from his station on Gwynn’s Island in Chesapeake Bay. It is not clear that John Murray Spear had been named after this earl, and it is not clear that this is the John Murray that he was intending to channel. An alternative hypothesis was that he was intending to channel the father of American Universalism, the Reverend John Murray ( -1815) and that somewhere somehow an error has crept in.

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What this spiritual committee decided was that voting would not be necessary. All decisions, it seemed, could in the future be made by “a single leading, sound, central mind,” indeed, by the mind of the Reverend John M. Spear, Medium. “The leading mind gathers up, focalizes, concentrates the whole.” (This of course is what we in the 20th Century are familiar with as the *Führerprinzip*.) Spear proceeded to set up a new community of spiritualists in a city to be called Harmonia, in western New York, and to experiment with the creation of a perpetual motion machine. The machine was to be constructed in the Lynn home of the Hutchinson Family Singers, and the spirit of [Benjamin Franklin](#) guaranteed that, when constructed, it would work.



(The community of Harmonia would soon be charged with free love, and would disintegrate.)

1864

[Lucy Aikin](#)'s MEMOIRS, MISCELLANIES AND LETTERS, edited by P.H. Le Breton, included a correspondence between 1826 and 1842 with the Reverend [William Ellery Channing](#), and if that sort of thing is your cup of tea, you can download the entire correspondence by way of Google Books.



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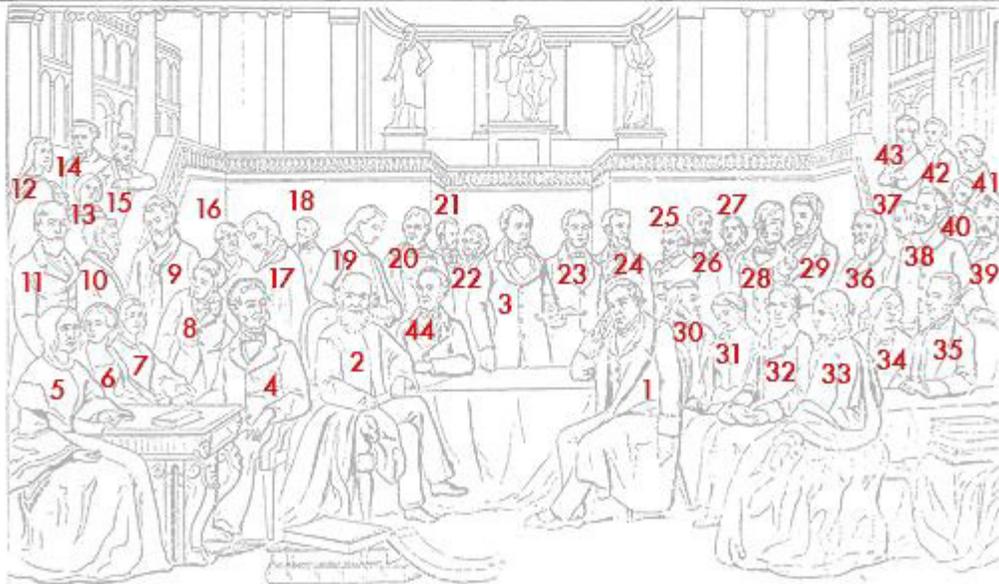
1866

Thomas Hicks painted his “Authors of the United States” as a name-dropping set piece to show off various of the portraits of prominent personages he had painted at his studio in New-York. We have no idea as to the present whereabouts of the original of this, but an engraving of it was made by A.H. Ritchie. We note that the statues on the upper balcony are of course of founding literary giants [Johann Wolfgang von Goethe](#), [William Shakespeare](#), and [Dante Alighieri](#). [Henry Thoreau](#) is of course as always not noticeably absent, since he would

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not emerge into his present renown until well into the 20th Century.



The personages depicted are 1=[Washington Irving](#) 2=[William Cullen Bryant](#) 3=[James Fenimore Cooper](#) 4=[Henry Wadsworth Longfellow](#) 5=Miss Sedgwick 6=Mrs. [Lydia Howard Huntley Sigourney](#) 7=Mrs. E.D.E.N. Southworth 8=Mitchell 9=Nathaniel Parker Willis 10=Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr. 11=Kennedy 12=Mrs. Mowatt Ritchie 13=Alice Carey 14=Prentice 15=G.W. Kendall 16=Morris 17=[Edgar Allan Poe](#) 18=Frederick Goddard Tuckerman 19=[Nathaniel Hawthorne](#) 20=Simms 21=P. Pendelton Cooke 22=Hoffman 23=William H.Prescott 24=[George Bancroft](#) 25=Parke Godwin 26=John Lothrop Motley 27=Reverend Henry Ward Beecher 28=[George William Curtis](#) 29=[Ralph Waldo Emerson](#) 30=[Richard Henry Dana, Jr.](#) 31=Margaret Fuller, *marchesa d'Ossoli* 32=Reverend [William Ellery Channing](#) 33=Harriet Beecher Stowe



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34=Mrs. Kirkland 35=Friend [John Greenleaf Whittier](#) 36=James Russell Lowell 37=Boker 38=Bayard Taylor 39=Saxe 40=Stoddard 41=Mrs. Amelia Welby 42=Gallagher 43=Cozzens 44=Halleck.

**1880**

[Elizabeth Palmer Peabody](#)'s REMINISCENCES OF REV. [WILLIAM ELLERY CHANNING](#), D.D. (Boston: Roberts Brothers).

April 7: On the centenary of the birth of the Reverend [William Ellery Channing](#), the [Unitarian](#) Reverend [Henry Whitney Bellows](#) delivered at [Newport, Rhode Island](#) a discourse "William Ellery Channing, His Opinions, Genius and Character." This would be printed and distributed by G.P. Putnam as WILLIAM ELLERY CHANNING, HIS OPINIONS, GENIUS AND CHARACTER: A DISCOURSE GIVEN AT NEWPORT, R.I., ON THE CELEBRATION OF THE CENTENARY OF HIS BIRTH, APRIL 7, 1880.

**1906**

August 12: Here is A. Goldenweiser's record of a conversation he had with [Lev Nikolævich Tolstòy](#) on this day:

... talking about an outstanding pleiad of American writers, Channing, Parker, Emerson, Garrison, Thoreau, Lev Nikolævich said: "By the way, it is generally assumed that England has great writers while America does not have any. I remember how Turgenev, who was a highly educated man, told me very seriously that there were no significant writers at all in America."

[WILLIAM ELLERY CHANNING](#)  
[THEODORE PARKER](#)  
[WALDO EMERSON](#)  
[WILLIAM LLOYD GARRISON](#)  
[HENRY DAVID THOREAU](#)



1915

Fredrick B. Wahr's EMERSON AND GOETHE (Ann Arbor: George Wahr).

**"A Review From Professor Ross's Seminar"**

**ROMANTICISM**

**Chapter One: "Phases of the Romantic Revolt"**

**I. "New England Transcendentalism"**

A good chapter, even if you are not interested in [Johann Wolfgang von Goethe](#), for background on European Romanticism and its influence on New England Transcendentalism. Wahr describes Transcendentalism as a religious, philosophical, and literary Renaissance. It is the revolt against Unitarianism and the sensualism of [John Locke](#). The Transcendentalists trusted intuition of the soul which is a part of divine nature. For them the immediate moment contained the meaning of all past and future experience. And they believed in the reality of spirit and the flexibility of sense. In Europe Romanticism was a reaction against the rational thought of the Enlightenment. Emotions became more important than the senses during the "Sturm und Drang" period; the philosophers of the time preferred to experience rather than analyze. The philosophy of Romanticism, reason is the basis of knowledge, was expressed in Kant's "Pure Reason."

The European revolt was mainly philosophical and literary while in New England, it was religious. The Unitarian movement, which started about 1785, was a reaction against Calvinism and prepared the way for Transcendentalism. Its philosophers were Locke and Hume; it was conservative and lacked fire, enthusiasm, emotional depth, and the spark of the divine. It was an analytic theology rather than an "intuition of eternal ideas." And there was little originality and much repetition.

[William Ellery Channing's](#) sermon, "Unitarian Christianity" (1819) marks the beginning of the Transcendental movement. With [Waldo Emerson's](#) "Divinity School Address," nineteen years later, Transcendentalism "had ceased to be a theological way of looking at things and had become more purely spiritual." The Transcendentalists found support and encouragement from Germany. Samuel Coleridge and Thomas Carlyle were largely responsible for introducing German idealism to England and America. Also German ideas became popular through scholars studying at Göttingen and other German universities and through translations of Madame de Stael's "De l'Allemagne" and other articles on German art and thought. However the orthodox party regarded Germany and German writers as "hot-beds of doubt and dissension, full of contamination, moral laxity, and godlessness." Aren't those orthodox people wonderful!

Wahr then discusses the differences between the Romantic movements in England, France, Germany, and America. The English and French Romantics were essentially literary; the Germans, critical and philosophical. American Romanticism or Transcendentalism started out as religious and became more philosophical under the influence of the "new views" from Europe. Yet it was always "Romanticism on Puritan ground."



**“A Review From Professor Ross’s Seminar”**

**II. “Goethe and German Romanticism”**

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe differed from the other German Romantics in that he remained largely independent of their philosophical movement, he was not given to metaphysical speculation, and he preferred study in the concrete to that in the abstract. He was objective and a realist, content to revere the realm of the unknown. He did not care to systemize his knowledge and stressed the syntheses not the analysis of ideas. His interest was nature and its processes, and through this he hoped to find a clue to the meaning of life. As an artist he was a hellenist and classicist.

In contrast, the Romantics were interested in Idealistic philosophy – in Kant and Fichte. According to the early Romanticists the solution of the fundamental questions of life could be arrived at only through the mastery of the Transcendental-ego. They sought to fit the empirical world into their metaphysical scheme, whereas Goethe sought to arrive at the principles and laws that govern all being through observation of the empirical world. They sought to realize the ideal, while Goethe sought to idealize the real.

The Romantics objected to Goethe’s stress on the practical details of life and his worldliness. Also they could not appreciate his resignation and self-denial. However they hailed him as the greatest literary genius of the age. Novelists’ criticism of Goethe is typically Romantic; he calls Goethe a practical author and accuses him of dealing only with material things while forgetting nature and mysticism in *WILHELM MEISTER*.

Thus Wahr concludes that Goethe is one of the leading figures of Romanticism but cannot be intimately associated with any one of its more distinctive phases. Likewise Waldo Emerson represents the noblest type of the American Transcendentalist; however he was of the movement but not always in it.

(Katherine A. O’Meara, May 25, 1989)



**“A Review From Professor Ross’s Seminar”**

**Chapter Three: “Emerson and Goethe”**  
**I: “Emerson’s Reading of Goethe”**

[Waldo Emerson](#)’s reading was wide and various at Harvard – his favorites were serious books – but on the whole little had an influence on his thoughts, according to Wahr. He was interested in the Bible, Shakespeare, Plato, Montaigne, and Plutarch. He was probably first introduced to German thought while in college; he attended the lectures of Tickner and Everett, both of whom had been students in Germany. And he made references in his Journals to Madame de Stael’s “Germany.” His brother, William, studied at Göttingen where he met [Johann Wolfgang von Goethe](#). Emerson read Carlyle in 1829-1830, and in 1830 Carlyle’s translation of Wilhelm Meister is the first of Goethe’s works to be mentioned in the Journals. During this time he also read Lessing, Schiller, Fichte, and Novalis; however none of these German authors impressed him more profoundly than did Goethe. The excerpts from Goethe in his Journals before 1833 bear directly upon Emerson’s own ideas concerning man’s spiritual dependence and Self-reliance. From 1834-1836, Emerson admired Goethe, the poet and writer but censured Goethe, the “man of the world” and egotist. He was the “wise but sensual, loved and hated Goethe.”

Emerson’s interest in Goethe began to fail in 1838 when he wrote in his Journal that “Goethe, Schleiermacher, lie at home unread.” And in 1840 he wrote to Carlyle that he had not looked into Goethe for a long time. A statement from “Experience” seems to express his opinion of Goethe after 1840: “Once I took such delight in Montaigne, that I thought I should not need any other book; before that in Shakespeare; then in Plutarch; then in Plotinus; at one time in Bacon; afterwards in Goethe; even in Bettine; but now I turn the pages of either of them languidly, whilst I still cherish their genies.” After 1840 there is less mention of Goethe in the Journals, but his criticism has lost its harshness. Emerson no longer actively wrestled with Goethe’s genius as he did from 1834 to 1839 when he struggled between his judgement of Goethe, the man and Goethe, the philosopher. Wahr observes that “As the years passed, however, his admiration for Goethe the constructive thinker, gradually gained precedence, and though he never could prevail upon himself to approve of Goethe the man, we feel that his aversion was steadily waning.”

Emerson continued to read Goethe after 1840, but his interest was primarily in the “wisdom” of Goethe. Goethe’s influence on Emerson was strongest during the years when Goethe was widely read and discussed in New England and Transcendentalism was at its peak. It was during this time that Emerson collected portraits and statuettes of the German author, and even his daughter’s cat was named Goethe.

(Katherine A. O’Meara, May 26, 1989)



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"It's all now you see. Yesterday won't be over until tomorrow and tomorrow began ten thousand years ago."

- Remark by character "Garin Stevens"  
in William Faulkner's INTRUDER IN THE DUST



Prepared: June 5, 2013

ARRGH AUTOMATED RESearch REPORT  
GENERATION HOTLINE



This stuff presumably looks to you as if it were generated by a human. Such is not the case. Instead, upon someone's request we have pulled it out of the hat of a pirate that has grown out of the shoulder of our pet parrot "Laura" (depicted above). What these chronological lists are: they are research reports compiled by ARRGH algorithms out of a database of data modules which we term the Kouroo Contexture. This is data mining. To respond to such a request for information, we merely push a button.



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Commonly, the first output of the program has obvious deficiencies and so we need to go back into the data modules stored in the contexture and do a minor amount of tweaking, and then we need to punch that button again and do a recompile of the chronology – but there is nothing here that remotely resembles the ordinary “writerly” process which you know and love. As the contents of this originating contexture improve, and as the programming improves, and as funding becomes available (to date no funding whatever has been needed in the creation of this facility, the entire operation being run out of pocket change) we expect a diminished need to do such tweaking and recompiling, and we fully expect to achieve a simulation of a generous and untiring robotic research librarian. Onward and upward in this brave new world.

First come first serve. There is no charge.  
Place your requests with <Kouroo@kouroo.info>.  
Arrgh.