



1993

Theodore Parker's Man-Making Strategy: A Study of His Professional Ministry in Selected Sermons

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**Theodore Parker's Man-Making Strategy:
A Study of His Professional Ministry in Selected Sermons**

by

John Patrick Fitzgibbons, S.J.

A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate School
of Loyola University of Chicago
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Chicago, Illinois
May, 1993

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PREFACE

Theodore Parker (1810-1860) fashioned a strategy of "man-making" and an ideology of manhood in response to the marginalization of the professional ministry in general and his own ministry in particular. Much has been written about Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882) and his abandonment of the professional ministry for a literary career after 1832. Little, however, has been written about Parker's deliberate choice to remain in the ministry despite formidable opposition from within the ranks of Boston's liberal clergy. With Emerson, Parker advocated a "manly" Christianity in terms of expressive individualism. That is, they championed the Romantic ideals of individualism and genius. Both developed compensatory strategies of manhood to counter the dominant entrepreneurial ideology of manhood at work which marginalized them.

This dissertation concentrates on Parker's sermons dealing with education, the status of women, and class structure in the United States. Parker believed that the professional ministry must educate persons of all strata of society to a practical and radical care for other persons. The reason for my concentration is straightforward: Parker's man-making strategy can still inform us today because oppression and marginalization, especially of the poor and

women, remains embedded in the social fabric of our culture. Moreover, the professional ministry in this country continues to re-fashion itself in response to the structural evils of sexism and racism in order to educate persons beyond oppression. While African slavery is no longer a publicly sanctioned and legally protected structure in our society as it was in the time of Theodore Parker, the Anita Hill -- Clarence Thomas controversy and the Rodney King trial are poignant reminders of unfinished business. For Parker, slavery, the marginalization of women, and the oppression of minorities were evils to be overcome in time. In a democracy, as well as in Christianity (considered as absolute religion), there is no place for laws, mores, customs, or beliefs that oppress people, then or now.

My interest in this topic developed while researching and writing my master's thesis in moral theology at the Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley. That thesis is entitled "The Emergence of Ethics in American Transcendentalism: A Study in the Sacramentality of Human Action in the Early Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau's *Walden* and 'Civil Disobedience.'" In the last two years, because of the paucity of primary source materials, my research has taken me to the libraries at Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts, as well as the Boston Public Library, and the archives of the Massachusetts Historical Society in Boston, Massachusetts. This area holds the largest concentration of Parker materials.

I wish to thank profoundly Dr. James E. Rocks for his professional guidance, encouragement, and his gracious care. Such qualities are rare enough when encountered singly yet Dr. Rocks embodies them all. I am also grateful to Dr. Paul R. Messbarger whose professional acumen, articulate faith, and stimulating conversation were enormously encouraging. Dr. Gerald W. McCulloh guided me firmly yet gently through the complexities of nineteenth-century Christian intellectual history with a clarity and compassion which modelled scholarship in the professional ministry. I hope to embody their professionalism and personal care. In addition, I wish to thank Sr. Rita Stalzer, C.S.J., reference librarian at the Cudahy Library of Loyola University of Chicago, for her wonderful assistance in tracking down rare materials and manuscripts. Also, thanks belong to Dr. Alan Seaburg, Curator of Manuscripts at the Andover-Harvard Theological Library, and Dr. Laura V. Monti, Keeper of Rare Books and Manuscripts at the Boston Public Library.

To the Jesuit community of Chicago, I owe an incalculable debt. To all my brother Jesuits, I give my deepest thanks but especially to Richard W. Anderson, S.J., Philip J. Chmielewski, S.J., Francis J. Daly, S.J., Keith J. Esenther, S.J., Robert F. Harvanek, S.J., William H. Hogan, S.J., James D. Holub, S.J., Edward J. Mattimoe, S.J., James M. McCann, S.J., and Lawrence Reuter, S.J. I would like to thank the whole staff of University Ministry at Loyola University of Chicago for unflagging support, especially

Angela Cesar, Brenda Eagan, I.B.V.M., Maureen Fuechtmann, Joanne G. Nicgorski, O.S.F., Shannon M. Queenan, and Annette Spiezio.

Finally, my most profound thanks go to the finest friends a person could ever call one's own: Stephen Campbell, S.J., Heidi Cerneka, Thomas F. Fitzgibbons, Anne Marie and Raymond Hood, Tammy Dee Jones, Rudy Marcozzi, Lori and Michael Meehan, T. Jerome Overbeck, S.J., and William Rehg, S.J.

AD MAJOREM DEI GLORIAM

To My Parents
John Francis Fitzgibbons
and
Rosemary Brady Fitzgibbons

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CHAPTER ONE

AN OVERVIEW OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY IN NEW ENGLAND WITH PARTICULAR ATTENTION TO THE BOSTON AREA, FROM THE EIGHTEENTH INTO THE NINETEENTH CENTURY: THE CAREER OF THE PROFESSTIONAL MINISTER

In Church ministry of every age, there is a dynamic tension between theory and praxis, the theologian and the pastor. Questions about the relationship of theology and ministry, how theological positions generate a certain type or types of ministry, as well as how ministerial style shapes the development of theology, present themselves to ministers and theologians in every era. Clearly, the relationship of theology and ministry is reciprocal: "Theology intends an understanding of faith that is ultimately practical. Its insights are meant to shape ministry. Ministry, on the other hand, is both shaped by theology and critiques the adequacy of theological formulations to the life of the Church."¹

Antebellum professional ministry of the liberal caste provides no exception. Indeed the predominant task of the early nineteenth-century liberals was to shape ministry to the pastoral needs of a population whose cultural identity was going through profound change. As economic prosperity grew and a strong urban middle class emerged, so did growth in literacy and culture. The merging of careers, especially ministerial and literary careers, was very common. The "typical" New England author was a male born between 1800 and 1820 whose work appeared between 1820 and 1865. His parents were better educated and more affluent than the average New Englander. He was born in northeastern Massachusetts and reared in the same locality. He matriculated at Harvard and after college tried his hand at law, medicine, or very likely, the professional ministry.² "Divinity and law were each pursued, for varying lengths of time, by about one-quarter of the male writers [a total of 112 out of a total of 276]. Those who chose divinity were far less likely to give it up, perhaps because the ministry, seen as the less lucrative and prestigious career by most genteel young men, . . . tended to attract a more self-selected and committed group of novices than did the law" (Buell 1986, 379).

For Theodore Parker, the interplay between theology and ministry, the intellectual life and the practical realities of pastoral care forged his career in as manifest a manner as it did of that of Emerson. Both Parker and Emerson

chose a career in ministry in an era of decline in the profession's prestige and both were among the most famous literary figures of their day. While much has been written about Emerson's change in career after 1832, relatively little has been said about Parker's perseverance as a minister or the reasons for his immense popularity. While Emerson was in great demand as a lecturer, Parker was arguably the most controversial preacher in Boston from 1843 onward and certainly the most popular preacher in Boston from 1852 until his departure for Europe in 1859 and premature death in 1860. In both careers, the new theology of Transcendentalism shaped the respective ministries. Yet, in Parker's career, the prophetic call to "self-reliance" and expressive individualism through literary endeavor remained, whatever else it was, a primarily religious enterprise. In this sense, Parker's was a more traditional ministry than that of Emerson. Emerson stressed the need for radical reform of the ministry largely because of his own anxiety about the marginalization of his own profession and patrician social class. Parker felt the same anxiety about the marginalization of professional ministry but because he came from yeoman stock he was less rigidly class-conscious and more inclusive of women and other alienated populations while attacking the new middle-class sensibility.

The curious comparison and contrast of the careers chosen by Parker and Emerson require an examination of the typical ministerial training and career from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. To ask for the profile of

a typical minister in antebellum New England will shed light on Parker's successful career in an age of decline in popularity for the ministry and the concomitant rise in popularity of the professions of business, law, journalism, and literary careers.

Like the other learned professions, professional ministry in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century New England required of its practitioners a higher level of education than most persons received and more profound resources (financial and familial) than most were capable of. Protestant clergy in general and Unitarian ministry in particular stressed the intellectual side of faith in both the training of clergy and pastoral practice.

In Europe, the reformed church's commitment to preaching a "purified" Gospel mandated careful, intricate study of the Christian and Hebrew scriptures; Luther's maxim *sola scriptura* and Calvin's mistrust of prelatial abuses shaped ministerial education profoundly. What was true of seminary training in England and protestant Europe applies equally to America, perhaps with more vigor because of a prevailing sense of dissociation from Europe's religious wars and a sense of security from Catholic powers. Harvard, William and Mary, Yale, and Princeton were church-related in an explicit and forthright way and considered an essential part of their educational mission the education of reformed clergy well into the nineteenth century. For the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century student of ministry, there was no professional degree

available and so the proper relationship between general and professional education within the college or university setting grew as the urban middle class differentiated itself. Each college was founded to train the ministers and magistrates, civil servants and merchants of a "godly Commonwealth." All college-bound students submitted to the same classical discipline and aimed at graduation with a bachelor's degree at the end of four years. Yet for those destined for the learned professions of ministry, law, and medicine further professional training was required. A student who desired a ministerial career had two options. First, he could live with or near a settled clergyman and under his tutelage read divinity, prepare sermons for his mentor's criticism, and learn pastoral skills by observation. Second, the minister-in-training could move to Cambridge or New Haven, hope for a tutorship in some field of the liberal arts at the local college or take up teaching in a local academy. In either case, he would very likely have access to the college library and could pursue an informal course of study with professors of divinity. Yet as Conrad Wright points out, "whichever choice he made, his training was likely to be hasty and superficial. . . . At the colleges, the first responsibility of the faculty was for undergraduate education" while the apprenticeship to an established minister was most often unsystematic and always subject to pastoral exigencies.³

The professionalization of theology presented a greater hazard to the urban middle class than did the professionalization of law and medicine,

especially in the Boston area but also in New England generally. This is because in the godly Commonwealths, especially the Massachusetts Bay Colony, the theologian/pastor could "never entirely forget the historic responsibility of theology for integration and inspiration in holding the university as a whole to its universal and comprehensive task," that is, the enhancement of a literate and religious laity and a well educated clergy.

In the early nineteenth century, two related but long latent conflicts emerged. The first conflict had to do with the proper relationship between reason and revelation, or free investigation and religious commitment; a particular concern of a school which trains ministers but also for a school which does not differentiate between divinity students and so-called regular undergraduates. The second conflict concerns the proper relationship of the college or university to the state or commonwealth; a problem made more acute when the university in question is supported by tax revenues from the state.⁴

At Harvard the emergence of these three related conflicts (a general liberal arts education versus a professional education, religion based on reason alone versus religion from revelation, and the end of state funds for private education) and the slow development of acceptable solutions went on well into the nineteenth century. Indeed, professionally undifferentiated undergraduate education based on the reading of classics in the medieval manner survived until the separation of the Divinity School between the years 1811 and 1819.

Parker and Emerson trained at Harvard, where the institution's stress was still on breadth of instruction and where students felt the need for specialized training. At first glance, they appear to be cut out of the same block of stone: both men came from strong, long-established Yankee stock; both lived the vast majority of their lives in and around Boston; both were Harvard educated and were official representatives of the liberal wing of the Protestant Church; finally, both men saw their careers as "ministry" and both took advantage of the burgeoning publishing industry of the early nineteenth century. Indeed, their literary activity is both conspicuous for personal commitments and representative of the issues in the liberal ministry in antebellum New England.

Yet it is clear that there are significant contrasts in their careers which may be partially accounted for by their backgrounds and the choices they made with regard to these questions concerning the nature of professional ministry. Parker and Emerson are untypical of New England's liberal ministry in the sense that both fought to articulate an ideology of manhood which was not nostalgic. Emerson's background, however, made it imperative that he dissociate himself from feminine influence because his patrician class, from which so many ministers came, was gradually being marginalized and replaced by a new middle class of entrepreneurial businessmen. Parker, on the other hand, came from yeoman-farmer stock. In their man-making strategies, this

background would prove to be crucial because Emerson was caught between his overt rejection of the contemporary ministry (as it had come down to him) which made him appear to be a radical and his search for the elite patrician class to be supplanted by the class of genius. Parker, on the other hand, would not settle for the nostalgia of bygone days when ministers were a part of the genteel patrician class. As one of his editors said, somewhat overstating the case, he desired a ministry with the intellectual sophistication of Socrates and the hands of a day laborer. Both men were liberal ministers in the contemporary understanding of the term yet Emerson's proposed cure for the ministry was far more radical because he harkens back to an ideology albeit in a wholly new language. Parker's proposed a more traditional ministry with far more radical social implications.

Neither Emerson nor Parker were typical of the liberal wing of Unitarianism because neither would submit to what was perceived as the marginalization of ministry. In *The Feminization of American Culture* Ann Douglas points out that by picking thirty liberal ministers who were among the leading literary figures of the day and examining their careers, one can perceive the growing marginalization of ministers because of a "sentimentalization" of the ministry and the culture as a whole. The privileging of the so-called "passive" virtues (e.g., patience, long-suffering, moral superiority through "influence" as opposed to authority) with the concomitant "feminization" of the

theological and literary cultures was a complex phenomenon.

Sentimentalization "asserts that the values of a society's activity denies are precisely the ones it cherishes; it attempts to deal with the phenomenon of cultural bifurcation by the manipulation of nostalgia."⁵ In other words, sentimentalization provides an access to power through a protest against the loss of power or prestige already capitulated. More perceptive than the majority of his ministerial contemporaries, Emerson began his literary career after 1832 as a form of resistance to marginalization and as an attempt to avoid being "feminized." Parker avoids feminization but is far more secure in his manhood and develops an ideology of "manly christianity" which does not completely alienate the so-called feminine virtues nor succumb to the rising tide of nostalgia.

Traditionally, for Western Christianity, three sources of information have been understood as relevant to theological reflection and practical decision-making in ministry: the Christian tradition (in Scripture and dogma), personal experience, and cultural information. Thus, "theological reflection in ministry is the process of bringing to bear in the practical decisions of ministry the resources of the Christian faith" (Whitehead and Whitehead, 1). This reciprocity between theology and ministry is mediated in all eras by an implicit or explicit theological reflection. An explicit theological reflectivity situated midway on the theology-ministry continuum (midway between abstract

theological discourse and immediate pastoral concerns) slowly grew in the Protestant churches of Europe after the Reformation and continued to flourish in New England Calvinism. As America drew toward the Civil War, and with the metamorphoses of some elements of Puritanism into Unitarianism (Park Street Church and Andover Theological Seminary notwithstanding) and the liberal wing of Unitarianism into Transcendentalism, this theological reflection grew ever more explicit. Moreover, the mediating quality of theological reflection and the conscious development of new "methods" for ministry increased in importance.⁶ In theological reflection today, for example, "this pattern of operations is understood by many as an ongoing correlation of the Christian Tradition and human experience" (Whitehead and Whitehead, 11). Yet it is crucial to note that this pattern of theological reflection in contemporary times began in the early nineteenth century with the rise of historicism and the concomitant realization that theological formulations of truth in one era need to be reformulated and re-articulated in another era. Specifically, with a rapid rise in disposable wealth and "disposable" labor forces, liberal ministers became concerned with questions of social justice, the alienation and marginalization of immigrants, and the place of women just at the same time they themselves were experiencing marginalization. Theological reflection in the area of social morality was, in part, born of the experience of exclusion.

In order to shed some light on the man-making strategies of Emerson and Parker in their literary endeavors, it is instructive to map the theological shifts and ministerial adaptations which took place in and around Boston. In a little over a hundred years in New England, the professional ministry developed from an exclusive, elevated locus of advanced learning and relative sophistication to a still revered but far less prestigious profession standing among others which were almost always more lucrative. From about 1735 to 1836 in New England, the rapid changes in theology and ministry can be traced in broad outlines as a shift from growing divisions within Calvinism which generated a liberal wing eventually given the name Unitarianism, and then from a defection of liberal elements of Unitarianism to Transcendentalism. For all three expressions of religion, theological reflection on ministry was deemed essential. Yet these different groups emphasized the sources of information (tradition, experience, and culture) in manifestly different ways. New England Calvinism, as a reform movement transplanted from Great Britain, stressed the ancient tradition perceived in *Act of the Apostles* and the Pauline letters with its congregational polity, apostolic simplicity, interior affectivity, and external practicality in living the moral life enjoined by these Christian Scriptures. Unitarianism, as the offspring of the American Revolution and deeply influenced by the new biblical criticism as well as the Enlightenment stress on anthropology, emphasized a rational approach to theology, especially with

regard to Christology. Thus, the contemporary European intellectual cultures (especially the British and German) moved the Unitarians to a theological restraint or reticence, bordering at times on skepticism. The Transcendentalists, finally, emphasized personal experience, self-reliance and a God-consciousness radically privatized.

It would be a grave mistake to depict the lineage of American Transcendentalism as the result of a simple declension in the rigor of the Reformed tradition. As Sydney Ahlstrom points out in *A Religious History of the American People*, the "New England Theology," as it developed over two centuries, had always had parties "each claiming with obvious justice to be orthodox," each party insisting it was the bearer of the authentic New England tradition.⁷

Perhaps more than any other American institution of higher education, Harvard was the beneficiary of English and German critical thought in philosophy and biblical studies. Yet the beginnings of change in ministerial training at Harvard date from 1805, when Henry Ware, Sr. was appointed Hollis Professor of Divinity. The choice of Ware was not lost on the conservative wing of the Congregational Church. The appointment of Ware, a liberal suspected of Unitarian convictions, precipitated the founding of Andover Theological Seminary in 1808, the first school for the professional training of ministers in New England. A year after his election in 1810 as its fourteenth

president, the Reverend John Thornton Kirkland inaugurated the great reform of ministerial training at Harvard. In 1811, Kirkland gave some "systematic guidance" to ministry students at Harvard by taking personal responsibility for directing the study of natural and revealed religion. Sidney Willard, the Hancock Professor, instructed students of divinity in Hebrew and other oriental languages. Henry Ware, Sr. continued as the Hollis Professor giving instruction in divinity and especially the critical interpretation of the Christian Scriptures. Yet Kirkland, Willard, and Ware all had their primary duties in the College. Divinity students were still an unofficial group within the university.

By 1816, Kirkland had secured funds to aid students of divinity at Harvard College and had formed the Society for the Promotion of Theological Education in Harvard University, whose aim was to further guide and strengthen ministerial education at the university since the burden of identity and training of liberals for local pulpits fell to them. Andover Theological Seminary was thriving as a bastion of orthodoxy and supplying well-trained Trinitarians to New England pulpits. In 1819, the informal theological seminary at Harvard became a separate department or administrative unit comprised of the president of the university and four professors: the Hollis Professor of Divinity, the Hancock Professor of Hebrew and Oriental Languages, the Dexter Professor of Sacred Literature, and a professor of pastoral theology responsible for the supervision of sermon composition and

delivery as well as ecclesiastical history. In 1826, Divinity Hall was erected to provide housing and separate worship services for divinity students. Finally by 1830, a dean was appointed to preside over the daily affairs of the school which only then came to be called the Harvard Divinity School with any regularity.

Between 1819 and 1840, the faculty at Harvard Divinity School was strongly Unitarian in orientation. Moreover, in the same years, there were five fields of study prescribed for the divinity students: natural religion, Hebrew, ecclesiastical history, pastoral theology, and most importantly, biblical criticism. The school still required a three-year course of study after a bachelor's degree or its equivalent. Over a twenty-seven year period (1815-1842) Harvard College supplied seven-tenths of the students to the school and fewer than one-tenth of the all students did not hold a bachelor's degree before entering the school. It was not until 1870 that the first Bachelor of Divinity degree was granted at the Divinity School.⁸ Thus, for all of its identifiable influences and tendencies, the American Puritan tradition created a complex, even confusing legacy of professional ministry. The changing career of the professional minister, the changing social expectations and changing social status, even the rise of literary professionalism as part of the ministry, can be traced, in part, to important shifts in theology. The Great Awakening (circa 1740) as a cultural event had its roots in the Calvinistic theology of Jonathan Edwards, who recorded his method of ministry in detail. In the broadest sense,

Unitarian ministry was an adaptation to the critical "new" theology which left behind the orthodox Protestant formulations of Trinity, Incarnation, and human depravity. The landmark dates of Unitarian Christianity, which betray its slow development, are 1699, when the Brattle Street Church of Boston, Massachusetts, was formed, and 1787, when King's Chapel in Boston became officially Unitarian. As theology and theological reflection changed, so did the ministry, which in turn affected the forms of worship and the understanding of the roles of men and women and the emergence of a dominant gender ideology, as well as the relation of the Church to political life. Finally, with the Transcendentalist "heresy," Christian tradition and theology were once again subjected to a radical critique, resulting in a complex development in professional ministry.

On the one hand, Transcendentalist ministers like Ralph Waldo Emerson and Theodore Parker made a concerted effort to revive the "corpse cold" worship in Unitarianism by rehearsing the affective content of religion, the religion of the heart reminiscent of the great Puritan Jonathan Edwards as well as the more contemporary religious thought of Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher. Yet, on the other hand, Emerson's and Parker's theological reflection was done in a new key, a significant modulation in theological rhetoric, because of a new philosophical, social, and political context. The liberal ministries of Unitarians and Transcendentalists alike have

been called "feminized" by Ann Douglas yet it is the purpose of this study to argue that Transcendentalist ministry, especially that of Parker, struggled with the emerging and virulent "marketplace" ideology of manhood and developed a new sense of "manly christianity" (more properly, "manly theism"), a religiosity which emphasized a more integrated, more responsive, and more flexible ideology of manhood. Parker, moreover, modelled this ideology through his inscription of it in sermons, theological treatises, letters, indeed in all aspects of his ministry.

Crucial to an understanding of the changing career of the minister in the nineteenth century is an overview of the Christian ministry in New England from the high tide of Calvinism with Jonathan Edwards to the prophetic preaching of Theodore Parker. As Sydney Ahlstrom has pointed out in his *A Religious History of the American People*, these shifts in theology and ministry were not the only developments at work in the American culture during this century, but the shifts are crucial because they reach back into the Reformation and stretch into our time. Moreover, the task of giving an overview, albeit limited, is important because so many of the canonical writers in American literature write in direct response to the rapid revolutions which shook theology and ministry in antebellum America. While Emerson left the professional ministry to begin his literary career and Parker presented himself as a professional minister throughout his relatively short adult life, in the early

nineteenth century the boundary between professional ministry and professional authorship becomes blurred, as Lawrence Buell, Ann Douglas, and David Leverenz all point out.

For our purposes, the starting point for such an overview begins in the seventeenth century. By the mid-seventeenth century, the "Holy Commonwealths" (Massachusetts, Connecticut, and New Haven) and the Massachusetts Bay Colony in particular took their political and spiritual bearings from the Puritan spirit generated in Great Britain under the leadership of reformed Protestant divines and radicalized lay preachers like John Bunyan (1628-1688). "From the outset, these reformers were determined to achieve a three-fold program for purifying the visible church: through a purging of popish remnants and the establishment of 'apostolic' principles of worship and order, through the implantation and teaching of Reformed doctrine, and through a revival of discipline and evangelical piety in clergy and laity alike." (Ahlstrom 125). Thus, along these three axes of Reformed theology, the ministry of the Puritan Church in New England developed. From the beginning, an enormous stress was placed on the ministry of the Word, the "authentic" preaching of the Gospel. Moreover, ministry and worship were shaped by a spirituality emphasizing apostolic simplicity as opposed to episcopal magnificence; an Augustinian strain of piety stressing inwardness, reflection, "confession," and conversion; a worldly practicality and pragmatism; and a

propensity for Platonic mysticism which stressed the intimacy of God with the individual. Also from the beginning, the Reformed Church in America was bedeviled with earnest theological debate which, at its worst, degenerated into party spirit. As early as 1662, Samuel Stoddard (1643-1729) tried to stop declension in church membership by instituting what came to be known as the "Half-Way Covenant" in his parish in Northampton, Massachusetts. "He called for the abandonment of church covenants, demanded more effective preaching, redefined the Lord's Supper as a 'converting ordinance' which was open to all morally responsible 'professors,' and advocated a 'presbyterial' organization to prevent local churches from wandering into doctrinal errors" (Ahlstrom 162). Stoddard's pastoral and theological innovations were acceptable to a large number of strict Calvinists because he was not perceived as a liberal of the "broad and catholic" party. Ironically, his grandson, assistant minister, and successor in the Northampton parish was Jonathan Edwards, who sought to establish church membership along stricter lines of evidence of regeneration. A generation later, the "New Divinity" men, especially Samuel Hopkins (1721-1803), Joseph Bellamy (1719-1790), Jonathan Edwards, Jr. (1745-1801), and Nathaniel Emmons (1745-1840) followed the senior Edwards in seeking stricter criteria for church membership. In the wake of the Great Awakening, these New Divinity ministers defended revivals, focused their much of their energy

on doctrinal controversy, and articulated new and more sharply defined standards of doctrinal orthodoxy (Ahlstrom 404-5).

Professional ministry emerging from the Calvinistic theological tradition emphasized frequent, impassioned, albeit aesthetically spare worship, moral and political righteousness, and an instinct for shepherding individual souls so that the commonwealth would be a nation of the elect. The Puritans had come to the new "Eden" and believed themselves mandated to forge a nation of the elect. For such a commission from God, "a learned ministry and an literate laity were prime necessities" (Ahlstrom 130). At the heart of the Puritan theology was the concept of "Covenant." This notion of covenant was primarily personal but it was also "national." "Federal" theology (*foedus*, covenant) insisted "that God's predestinating decrees were not part of a vast impersonal and mechanical scheme, but that, under the Gospel dispensation, God had established a covenant of grace with the seed of Abraham" and made a great nation of them (Ahlstrom 130-1). Moreover and really essential was the fact that this covenant could only be appropriated by an individual in faith and, thus, was "irreducibly personal." God elected and worked with individual souls and forged out of this aggregate a holy remnant. Clearly, the ancient Augustinian doctrine of double predestination (some souls are elected and saved, all others are abandoned to perdition) gave special impetus to spiritual direction and other ministerial consultations. The Puritan ministry strove to

articulate "a special and continual revelation to the chosen" and proclaim the Scriptures as "the source of moral law for everyone," the elect as well as the reprobate.⁹ Puritan ministers functioned as "midwives" for the elects' rebirth and as expositors of universal moral law to all. Covenantal theology, then, had an enormous impact on ministry in New England Puritan congregations. The covenant process involved an intense personal journey which had as its hallmarks (1) an awakening to the conviction of sin or depravity; (2) a long and sometimes agonizing attempt to find justification or righteousness through one's own moral behavior -- always doomed to failure; (3) the gradual education of the convert through Bible-study, prayer, and spiritual conversation with good Christians -- especially the minister; and, finally (4) the arrival of sure knowledge that one has been saved because of the grace and election of God. The covenant theology and personal and public appropriation of that covenant with God shaped the Puritan ministry:

True faith involved inward, overt, and obedient preparation, appropriation, humility, dedication, gratitude -- and a commitment to walk in God's way according to his Law. A specific conversion experience was at first rarely regarded as normative or necessary, though for many it was by this means that assurance of election was received. Gradually, as Puritan pastors and theologians examined themselves and counseled their more earnest and troubled parishioners, a consensus as to the morphology of true Christian experience began to be formulated. (Ahlstrom 132)

The Puritan minister, then, was expected to be a man of enormous spiritual prowess, one of the elect, a learned and skilled preacher, as well as a

spiritual director or conversationalist of great skill. As such, the minister commanded enormous power in the pre-Revolutionary New England commonwealths, yet, as Ahlstrom points out, to call these commonwealths theocracies is absurd. The most prosperous and most famous of the colonies, the Massachusetts Bay Colony, governed itself by the bicameral system without essential modification for sixty years. "Its franchise was wider than England's, and 'of all the governments in the Western world at the time, that of early Massachusetts gave the clergy least authority.'" To be sure, "the clergy's influence was large," but "it was both informal, depending on the Puritan's reluctance to ignore the ministerial counsel, and indirect, resting largely on the minister's important role in determining church membership" (Ahlstrom 147-8). These political realities, including the scope of lay enfranchisement, the representative government of the colonies, and the relatively high literacy rate and level of education emphasize the limit and type of power that ministers wielded.

Still, there is no denying that the church and the minister were at the geographical, social, spiritual, and affective foci of town life. The town church was erected as early as possible by the "covenanting of the town's visible saints." Immediately after, "the lay officers were elected and a minister called, who in due course would be ordained, in all probability for a lifetime ministry in the same town." Moreover, "on the Sabbath there were morning and

afternoon services -- each with lengthy free prayers, discordantly sung psalms, and a very long sermon. Their sermons, delivered in plain style on a wide range of subjects, offered solid biblical exposition, stated the doctrine explicitly, and gave particular attention to its practical 'use'" (Ahlstrom 148). In the spirit of congregational polity, democratic principles, and extravagantly earnest lay religiosity, the role and career of the Puritan minister was that of leadership through moral suasion, exposition of the Scriptures, the preaching of sound doctrine based on those Scriptures, and spiritual counsel.

As a Puritan, Edwards maintained and taught the total depravity of the human race, unconditional election of the saints, limited atonement, irresistible grace, and the final perseverance of the elect. His theology of God took for granted the doctrines of Trinity and Incarnation. His anthropology and doctrine of God stress the absolute sovereignty of God as well as radical dependence of humanity. Nowhere is the connection between the sovereignty of God and the dependence of humanity clearer than in Edwards' moral theology, the bridge between abstract dogma and practical pastoral application in ministry.

Written in 1755, *The Nature of True Virtue* reveals a mature reflection on moral theology made three years before Edwards' death. Together with the posthumously published *Dissertation concerning the End for Which God Created the World* (1765), Edwards presents an ultimate foundation, a "metaethics," for eighteenth-century Calvinist theological reflection. Edwards

argues that the foundation of truly moral behavior is found in "the beauty of a personal response to God, the convergence of duty and enjoyment in a pattern which is based upon the comprehensive paradigm of God's own agency in creation."¹⁰ For Edwards, the love of God forms the necessary context for all truly moral action and that morality finds its proper ground and fulfillment in authentic, orthodox religion. In other words, God's grace inspires the elect person to perceive the beauty, the "fittedness," and appropriateness of morally correct behavior because it is a finite imitation of God's own infinite benevolence. True virtue then requires active theological reflection both on the part of the elect soul and the minister, as well as active support, mentoring, and counsel from the minister.

Besides the exposition, explanation, and practical application of doctrines in the sermons, Puritan ministry in the age of Edwards involved a great deal of private spiritual conversation, similar to what is often called today spiritual direction. The Puritan divines mediated the abstract formulations of dogmatic theology through practical ministerial skills of preaching and spiritual direction.

In *The Art of Prophecy*, Teresa Toulouse points out that the seeds of a problem in Puritan ministry may be seen in the style of preaching and thus in spiritual direction and Puritan ministry in general. If the aim of the ministry of preaching for the Puritan divine is to blend art and prophecy, rhetoric and Spirit, figure, metaphor, and conceit with Truth, then the problem is finding a

theory of rhetoric and developing a practice or style which allows the hearers to develop spiritually. This perennial problem of saying what needs to be said in a way that the hearers may hear is intensified because of the Puritan suspicion of high rhetoric. "Puritan sermons, written in a 'plain' style, differ from. . . Anglican efforts 'not because they are plain in the sense of having no conceits... but because in their steady movement from doctrine to reason to uses back to another. . . , a sense of the concrete behind the word emerges, [not] a sense that the words themselves are artificial vehicles but that the truth they are intended to carry is absolute and independent of them" (Toulouse 6). The Puritan preacher, in short, does not concentrate on the meanings of individual words, but on attempting to impart the divine message imperfectly manifested through them. His sermon form, moreover, is never relative; all the members of any audience are directed towards the same elusive truths in the same manner" (Toulouse 6-7). Sermon form and content then are straightforward, earnest, and "masculine," allowing little room for "feminine" fullness, amelioration, or diplomatic suppleness. Spiritual direction for the Puritans, while a far more intimate ministry and closely resembling but distinguished from the Roman Catholic practice of Confession (the Sacrament of Reconciliation), did not in theory allow for adaptation or amelioration of doctrine and practice. The minister could offer only encouragement and a call

to continued examination of the ways of the Lord and the pattern of gracious affections.

Between the Great Awakening (circa 1740-1743) and the Second Great Awakening (circa late 1790s-1802), outbreaks of fervent revivalism continued to occur. Puritan ecclesiastical bodies continued to be seriously divided. While there was tacit acknowledgment of a "standing order" and tolerance of moderate variations within the status quo, it was clear that by the mid-1760s three increasingly distinct bodies had emerged. Ahlstrom names the "Moderates," the "Arminians," and the "New Divinity" men as the three parties which grew out of the "Old Light" versus "New Light" controversy a generation or two earlier. Old Light Calvinists tended to be "anti-revivalist," situated along the Massachusetts and Connecticut seaboard, and sympathetic to the "broad and catholic" tendencies which gradually adjusted Calvinism to continually developing American circumstances. Both Yale and Harvard were their spiritual homes and they tended to prefer a congregational church structure as opposed to a presbyterian structure. The Old Light ministers were resentful of what they saw as the excessive quality of revivalism because of the "unrest" it seemed to cause.

New Light Calvinists championed earnest revivalism, populated the interior of New England, took their theology from the Edwardseans (especially Hopkins and Bellamy), and were generally more strict concerning evidence of

regeneration for church membership than their Old Light contemporaries.

Moreover, Yale and, later, Princeton were the schools from which the majority of these men came.

In naming three factions within New England Congregationalism, Ahlstrom prepares the way for understanding the split within what he calls the "Moderate" branch of Puritanism and the amalgamation of some of these elements with elements of the "Arminian" or liberal branch to form what eventually became known as Unitarianism.

Puritan sermon rhetoric and spiritual counsel, whether Old Light or New Light, set up expectations of ministers and ministry. Moreover, the audience for such sermons and direction is self-selected in the extreme, for who would listen to such lengthy sermons or perform such personal scrutiny without the hope of salvation except for some perverse self-immolation? As such, the Puritan ministry shaped and connected personal religious and social assumptions.

The legacy of Puritan preaching ministry and spiritual direction may be seen in the Unitarian preaching ministry. In terms of theological development, it is clear that as the doctrines of God and the anthropology changed so did preaching and ministry in general. Unitarian ministers developed a different sense of audience from their Puritan forebears. Without question, the theological shifts which gave rise to the shifts in preaching and other

ministrations is the change from the varieties of Calvinist views of human nature to a far more Arminian view of human nature as "improvable." Unitarian preachers understood their audiences to be cosmopolitan (at least for an American audience), shrewd about marketplace procedures, and equipped with a certain level of aesthetic sophistication. In general, it was true that the more liberal or Arminian the minister, the less revivalistic the preaching. Gone was the Puritan suspicion of art and rhetoric. Just why this is so for the Unitarians cannot easily be explained, but as Lawrence Buell has stated, "the sense of a bond between religion and art became an important theme in Unitarian thought during the two decades before Emerson's emergence as a writer and finally reached its culmination in his idea of the poet-priest" and, one should add, in Parker's pulpit rhetoric.¹¹

Another shift, more clearly aesthetic, developed in the rhetoric of the sermons of the early nineteenth century. After nearly a century of increasingly sophisticated Calvinist sermonizing which had been heavily influenced by Neoclassical aesthetics, the study of classical rhetoric, and even Anglican preaching, the *style periodique* was gradually supplanted by the *style coupé* "in which the 'sense is formed into short independent propositions'" (Buell 1986, 142).

The ultra-rationalist Unitarians developed a discipline of preaching which was plain and pointed yet fluent because of its own internal logic. "Arminian

ministers took the lead, around the turn of the nineteenth century, in converting the highly formalized Congregational sermon into a freer form, doing away with the traditional three-part structure that involved the disciplined pursuit of Bible-based doctrine through a series of logical steps backed up by proof texts. Unitarian sermons thus became inspirational essays following no prescribed form" (Buell 1986, 143). Unitarian ministers like William Ellery Channing, Ralph Waldo Emerson in his early career, and Theodore Parker strove to articulate the "permanent" and unchanging core of the Gospel of Christ freed from Calvinist encrustation. That "purification in doctrine was related to purification of utterance," as Buell puts the point, demonstrates how the preaching ministry changed from Calvinism to Unitarianism. Another way to put the point is to say that the Unitarian preoccupation with anthropology coupled with a disinterest in the dogmas of Trinity and Incarnation and a simplified theology generated a more open and less defensive ministry, and shifted the weight of pastoral concern from personal salvation to social improvement. Unitarianism's liberal theology, due in large measure to its Enlightenment heritage, found itself in firm opposition to evangelical "revivalism and the whole pietistic emphasis on a religion of the heart."

Indeed, the liberal sermon

became a well-styled lecture, in which the truths of religion and the moral duties of man were expounded in as reasonable a manner as possible. Sermons thus became a species of polite

literature, to whose perfection the prose tradition of Addison and Steele was more important than the homiletical corpus of Puritanism... Social stratification began to emerge as a side effect as unlettered people with little or no appreciation for Augustan periods drifted away from liberal churches and found their way into the more popular societies of Baptists, Methodists, Universalists, and revivalistic Congregationalists. (Ahlstrom 391)

The liberals moved away from a strong conception of Original Sin, the need for baptism, and the image of God as wrathful to one of benevolence. Moreover, the focused theological reflection took place with regard to humanity's inner structures rather than with regard to the doctrine of God. Concomitant with these developments grew a conviction of the perfectibility of humankind and the possibility of universal salvation. Each person worked out his or her own salvation. What the Unitarians retained from the Puritan tradition included a strong democratic sense of congregational polity, a fervent biblicism, a stress on social responsibility and "moral fervor" coupled with the conviction that religion is primarily a personal matter. Even among Unitarians, however, there was precious little agreement concerning Christ's precise nature and the meaning of his atoning work. Moreover, belief in universal salvation waxed while belief in double predestination waned (Ahlstrom 401).

The impact of these shifts in theology on Unitarian ministry cannot be stressed too much. Especially in the urban maritime areas of New England where Unitarianism was strongest, the ministrations of Unitarian preachers

brought about a congruence of liberal theology and liberal practice. Ministers were only partially handicapped by the elitist strain in Unitarian thought and practice. In an age which was growing tired of a patrician elitism and assumptions of privilege, there developed what David Leverenz has called an entrepreneurial ideology of manhood. The Unitarian gospel suited a new and growing caste of maritime Yankee merchants. Despite their rejection of traditional Calvinist dogmatics, no other group of ministers met the needs of their constituency better than the Unitarian ministers did. They merited the respect which the Puritan tradition assigned to the clergy because they were genuine moral and spiritual leaders. As Ahlstrom points out, the liberal Unitarian ministers had an enormous "influence" on the laity which became the force in the sweeping social changes in that were to take place in the country (Ahlstrom 400).

The Unitarian minister maintained a fine balance between appeals to the reason and to the affections. Essentially, religion was the progress of the soul, so preaching had to be practical yet appeal more to the intellect than the affections. It had to appeal to the moral sentiment and yield moral action. Preachers who appealed to doctrines of human depravity and God's wrath doomed their efforts among the new elite to failure. No longer motivated by a suspicion of belles-lettres and the "principle of negative restraint," Unitarian tastes edged ever more closely to "the positive principle of moral idealism."¹²

The question for preachers as well as authors changed from, "Does this book [or sermon] make vice attractive?" to "Does it make virtue beautiful?" Insofar as art and rhetoric opened the soul, fostered religious affections, and thus found practical utility in developing the religious and moral sensibility, it was deemed a perfectly appropriate tool for the minister. Such a utilitarian or pragmatic approach to the art of preaching was merely a hallmark betokening the next great shift in theology and ministry, that from Unitarianism to Transcendentalism.

On the one hand, Transcendentalism is quite clearly an outgrowth of Unitarianism: the fundamental suspicion of dogmatic formulations (especially concerning human depravity, Trinity, and Incarnation), the congregational polity, the stress on personal and social righteousness all remain the same. On the other hand, Emerson, Parker, and other like-minded ministers were not satisfied with a mere softening of traditional doctrines but strove for "a complete refashioning of religious life and thought" (Ahlstrom 599). Emerson and especially Parker could not be anything but theologians. The very social and political fabric in which they lived was rife with religious and theological implications. Parker, in particular, attempted to reunite the roles of pastor and theologian in a career which swam against the tide of contemporary theological reflection, even among his liberal Unitarian brethren. His pastoral practicality and vigorous apologetics in the pulpit and lecture hall were intimately linked to

his scholarly research and his theoretical commitments. Unlike Emerson, who withdrew from direct pastoral ministry while remaining a theologian/sage, Parker remained in the ministry, holding in tension "Transcendental fervor, Enlightenment absolutism, the positivistic interest in fact, and the humanitarian reformism that warred for supremacy of his soul" (Ahlstrom 607).

The three phases of the Unitarian-Transcendentalist controversy center initially on Emerson and then on Parker. The first phase started in 1836 when Andrews Norton took strong exception to Harvard professor George Ripley's approval of "new" and more liberal views of biblical interpretation, especially those which tended to minimize miracles as proof of scriptural authority -- the so-called miracle controversy. Emerson, having studied in Germany and having gravitated toward Romantic religion, wrote the core of *Nature* while in Europe and published the monograph in 1836, just at the height of the Norton-Ripley controversy. In 1838, with his delivery and publication of the "Divinity School Address," Emerson's Transcendentalist commitments were on display irrevocably. He resigned his pulpit at Boston's Second Church in 1832 and then withdrew completely from pastoral ministry by 1837. He lived in Concord, and left the "trench warfare" to others.

The second phase of the controversy commenced with Theodore Parker's 1840 "Levi Blodgett Letter" (*The Previous Question between Mr. Andrews Norton and His Alumni, Moved and Handled in a Letter to All Those*

Gentlemen). In the letter Parker put the Transcendentalist case against miracles and "proof text" theology in a way which was accessible to the public.

Blodgett argued that unsophisticated and unlearned persons, like himself, certainly see that faith in Christ precedes and does not depend upon faith in miracles.¹³ Cleverly, Blodgett maintained that the miracles were only confirmations of the belief already present intuitively. Thus without outright denial of miracles recorded in the Christian scriptures, which would be offensive to many Unitarian Christians, he placed emphasis on what he considered the more solid theological ground of intuition. Andrews Norton and the other members of the Unitarian establishment saw through his rhetorical ploy.

Parker soon reinforced his position in a more theologically argued sermon delivered on the occasion of Charles Shackford's ordination in May, 1841. "The Transient and Permanent in Christianity" became a founding document of Transcendentalist theology, stressing the romantic despair of permanence in form and the exaltation of intuition and personal God-consciousness through the moral and religious sensibilities.

Parker followed up this more "pastoral" delineation of Transcendental commitments with a far more theological and systematic treatise, *A Discourse of Matters Pertaining to Religion* in 1842. Through the next ten years, Parker was at the center of the ongoing theological shift from "classical" Unitarianism

to the new "heresy" of Transcendentalism. By 1852-53, a decisive break occurred between the "Christian" Unitarians and the "theistic" Transcendentalists. The executive committee of the American Unitarian Association separated official Unitarianism from the errors of Transcendentalism, embracing "'the Divine origin, the Divine authority, [and] the Divine sanctions of the religion of Jesus Christ'" (Ahlstrom 607). It is important to note that this third phase of the controversy saw the stillbirth of the executive committee's declaration. Unitarianism eventually adopted Parker's theistic theological position.

Absolute Religion as the Foundation of

Parker's Conception of Ministry

Absolute religion is perfect obedience to the law of God; the service of God by normal use, development, and discipline of every limb of the body, every faculty of the spirit; perfect love towards God and man, exhibited in a life allowing and demanding a harmonious action of all man's faculties, so far as they act at all.

Either Christianity -- considered as the absolute religion -- is false and utterly detestable, or else modern society, in its basis and details, is wrong, very wrong. There is no third conclusion possible.

-- Theodore Parker, *A Discourse of Matters Pertaining to Religion*

It has long been known that Ralph Waldo Emerson and the members of his circle were advocates of reform in American society. Yet, the exact nature of Emerson's reformist stance is still debated. The fact that Emerson left his pulpit and ministry in the Church altogether has been one of the foci of the ongoing discussion of Emerson's career as a reformer. Theodore Parker, in distinction to Emerson, articulated a vision of reform which began with theological method, moved to reform of Church structure, and finally to reform of society. This discussion will examine the roots of Parker's understanding of ministry as it develops out of his understanding of absolute religion which he defined as "perfect obedience to the law of God." Ministry in the service of absolute religion, for Parker, is itself a reformist stand, critical not only of Church structures but the structures of society as well.

A concept integral to the theology of American Transcendentalism is a rudimentary understanding of "sacrament." The notion of sacrament or the "real presence of God" under the appearance of another reality exists for the Transcendentalists in general and for Theodore Parker in particular. While, at first, this may seem quite foreign to any discussion of American Transcendentalism in particular and Unitarian thought in general, it is central to Parker's understanding of moral action as the "real presence" of God. The Transcendentalists' fascination with the "real presence" of God is a "*latent* sacramentality" because of their explicit rejection of the doctrine of the

Incarnation (and also, therefore, the Trinity). Without these doctrines as articulations of fundamental reality a fully developed understanding of the nature of a sacramental principle is impeded because the realm of nature is collapsed with the realm of grace. Parker, Emerson, and others, such as Orestes Brownson, searched for ways to articulate their undoubted intuition that the Spirit makes Its presence felt in a kind of "mediated immediacy" in human self-consciousness.¹⁴ Nature or all created existents also play a role in mediating the real presence of God to the human being. For the American Transcendentalists, as Catherine Albanese points out, "a sacrament can be any piece of the material world which points beyond itself to a larger and more powerful reality and at the same time contains the power and reality of the thing which is signified."¹⁵

Background: William Ellery Channing's Unitarianism

During the first half of the nineteenth century in the United States, there occurred a remarkable outbreak of productivity and idealism in American letters known in theological and philosophical circles as American Transcendentalism. Developing out of the Unitarianism of William Ellery Channing (1780-1842), American Transcendentalism eschewed the doctrines of Trinity and Incarnation. Spearheaded by the writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882) and the "Transcendentalist Club,"¹⁶ the transcendentalists developed a theological,

literary, and political climate which can correctly be called liberal and radically focused on anthropology and humanity's relationship to God. Channing and the Unitarians as well as Emerson and his circle viewed life as an essentially moral endeavor in an ordered if benign and impersonal universe. For Emerson and his intellectual companions, faith in humanity and its progress more than faith in a transcendent and personal God became the basis for religion and the source of ecclesiastical and political reform.

Channing's contribution to the identity of Unitarian Christianity and, ultimately, the transcendentalism of Emerson and Parker cannot be overestimated. With his sermon "Unitarian Christianity," often called the "Baltimore Sermon," Channing provided the liberal wing of New England congregationalism with a name and the public acknowledgment of a distinctive theological identity. In Baltimore, Maryland, on May 5, 1819, Channing delivered what Conrad Wright has called a "manifesto" at the ordination of the Reverend Jared Sparks.¹⁷ The sermon was neatly divided into two parts. In the first section, Channing articulates the principles "Unitarians" use for the interpretation of the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures while, in the second section, he articulates five doctrines which the Scriptures contain, if interpreted according to "reason." Precisely here was the difficulty, for Channing was responding to charges of elevating reason over the revelation found in the Scriptures. He held, along with most of his liberal contemporaries, that while

"the unassisted reason can establish the doctrines of natural religion," these very "doctrines must be supplemented by a special revelation, which is to be found in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments" (Wright 1961). The doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation were thoroughly unscriptural and defied human reason. Channing built his sermon on the foundation of two generations of American liberal theological reflection which was increasingly influenced by the emerging biblical criticism of Europe and especially Germany (Wright 1961, 15, 16). Channing's leading principle in interpreting the Scriptures is "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."¹⁸ He goes on to say that "all books, and all conversation, require in the reader or hearer the constant exercise of reason; [f]or their true import is only to be obtained by continual comparison and inference" (3:61). The interpretation of any text, especially one so important as the Bible, must take into account the "purposes, feelings, circumstances, and principles of the writer" (3:61). Biblical texts, like all other human texts, are not absolutely free-standing. The texts themselves do not provide the only "keys" to their interpretation because no text can be understood in "isolation from the historical circumstances that produced it" (Wright 1961, 15). In other words, Channing and many of his fellow liberals believed "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 of providence" (3:64). Quite clearly, then, Channing and the Unitarians for whom he spoke distrusted any interpretation of Scripture which, after due deliberation, seemed to contradict established truth based on Enlightenment criteria as expressed by the "common-sense" philosophy taught at Harvard in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.¹⁹

The second part of Channing's "Baltimore Sermon" goes on to name five doctrines the Unitarians assert as established by the Scriptures. First, they believed in "the doctrine of God's UNITY," arguing that trinitarian theology subverts the unity of God and is a thoroughly unfounded post-Apostolic accretion to biblical faith (3:70-4). Second, Channing asserted that Unitarians "believe in the unity of Jesus Christ"; that he is of one nature, not two; that he is truly distinct from God (3:75-6). Third, he asserted that they "believe in the moral perfection of God," meaning that God's justice, goodness, and holiness are not infinitely "different" from the human embodiments of these qualities but that they are simply "infinite" in God. Moreover, clearly taking aim at the Calvinism taught at Andover Theological Seminary, Channing states that God's goodness, kindness, and benevolence do not reveal the wrathful God of so-called orthodoxy but a God "good in disposition, as well as in act; good, not to a few, but to all; good to every individual" (3:83). Fourth, while acknowledging no real consensus within the liberal ranks with regard to

Christ's mediation and "the precise influence of his death on our forgiveness," Channing states that Unitarians believe Jesus was sent by God to "effect a moral, or spiritual deliverance of mankind; . . . to rescue men from sin and its consequences and to bring them to a state of everlasting purity and happiness" (3:88). Jesus effects this mediation between God and humanity by shedding light on the path of human duty to worship God alone and care for fellow human beings, by "his own spotless example," and by "his glorious discoveries of immortality," as well as by "his sufferings and death," and by "that signal event, the resurrection" (3:88). Finally, Channing argues that "Christian virtue, or true holiness" is natural to humanity and not a matter of irresistible grace or imposed influence of the Deity. The moral faculties of conscience and a sense of duty are the grounds of true holiness (3:93). Humanity's moral and religious nature betoken the "Fatherhood" of God.

Expanding on this last point in his sermon "Likeness to God" (1828), Channing states "that true religion consists in proposing, as our great end, a growing likeness to the Supreme Being. . . . that the likeness to God. . . belongs to man's higher or spiritual nature" and "has its foundation in the original and essential capacities of the mind."²⁰ Insofar as the human being knows God and the universe, just so far is the human being "like" God or possessed of a "sympathy" or in possession of "kindred attributes." "God

becomes a real being to us, in proportion as his own nature is unfolded within us" (3:229).

In describing the phenomenon of coming to awareness of human "likeness" to God, Channing suggests one consider how humans obtain their ideas of God:

Whence do we derive our knowledge of the attributes and perfections which constitute the Supreme Being? I answer, we derive them from our own souls. The divine attributes are first developed in ourselves, and thence transferred to our Creator. The idea of God, sublime and awful as it is, is the idea of our own spiritual nature, purified and enlarged to infinity. In ourselves are the elements of the Divinity. God, then, does not sustain a figurative resemblance to man. It is the resemblance of a parent to a child, the likeness of a kindred nature. (3:233)

In short, all human moral and spiritual attributes find their fullest possible expression in the reality of God. Thus, by knowing human nature, one can know much about God. Keenly aware that many of his more traditional brethren in the ministry would object that human beings receive their idea of God more from the effects of God's work (i.e., creation, nature, and the observation of causality) and not exclusively from the attributes of the human soul, Channing implies their thinking is circular, for such observation relies on the "kindred mind, which interprets the universe by itself." In other words, "we see God around us, because he dwells within us" (3:235).

Two years earlier, in 1826, at the dedication of the new Divinity Hall at Harvard, Channing preached a sermon entitled "The Christian Ministry."²¹

Asking his hearers "To what end do we devote this building?" he answered for them that the new edifice of the Divinity School should be dedicated to teaching ministers "whose word, like their Master's shall be '*with power*'" (3:258). By "power" Channing meant the ability to act on both intellect and the affect of the ministers-in-training. Channing saw the new Divinity School as the best bulwark against conservative theology. He desired the school to "act on the intellect of free beings, by means proportioned to their nature"; to call into healthy exertion the intellect, conscience, affections and moral will of the hearer" or minister-in-training. Yet Channing states that this school must teach ministerial skills intended to act on the affections of the people; that students must be trained to "exhibit religion in its loveliness and venerableness," calling forth from the students "awe, attachment, trust, and joy" (3:266). To train the student of divinity to this kind of "power," Channing claimed he must be left to and even "encouraged to free investigation" unencumbered by the orthodoxies of the past (3:274). In order to form "a manly intellect, or a manly character" a spirit of theological enterprise, a spirit of reform and independence, moral courage and self-surrender must be cultivated. "He who would reform society, must not be anxious to keep its level. Dread of [public and traditional] opinion effeminates preaching, and takes from truth its pungency" (3:281-2).

Channing touches on slow-burning issues which will flare to controversy decades later during the careers of Emerson and Parker. Issues such as the

dominant ideology of manhood in the culture as well as in the ministry, the role of the minister in forming public opinion, and the relationship between personal power or spiritual freedom built on "free investigation" to civil and political liberty are revealed in his preaching.

For Channing, moral agency or "spiritual freedom" is both the foundation and goal of civil and political liberty. In a sermon entitled "Spiritual Freedom" preached on Election Day on May 26, 1830, he defines spiritual liberty as "an attribute of the mind, in which reason and conscience have begun to act, and which is free through its own energy, through fidelity to the truth, through resistance of temptation."²² A moral agent is defined, therefore, as one whose intellect, conscience, and will have been challenged and strengthened through "self-conflict." This moral self-conflict is precisely the challenge ministers are to offer their people. Civil liberty (which Channing defines as "the removal of all restraint, but such as the public weal demands" so that people may use their powers, 4:74) is enhanced insofar as there are greater numbers of true moral agents available. He goes so far as to say that "individuality, or moral self-subsistence, is the surest foundation of an all-comprehending love" because "no man so multiplies his bonds with the community as he who watches most jealously over his own perfection" (4:78).

As a foundation for spiritual freedom, liberal religion is unparalleled, according to Channing. "Religion gives life, strength, [and] elevation to the

mind by connecting it with the Infinite Mind" (4:80). Channing noted that nowhere on earth has liberal religion taken root as it has in the United States. Yet the various forces of spiritual slavery at work in this country offer grave challenges. The "passion for property," the "prominence [given] to the distinction of wealth," unchecked "ambition," and the "epicurean, self-indulgent habits" which peace and prosperity foster moral flaccidity in any age, but "this peril is increased by the spirit of our times," according to Channing, "which is a spirit of commerce, industry, internal improvements, mechanical invention, political economy, and peace" (4:84).

Admitting that the politics of government does not always promote spiritual freedom, Channing argues that inspired by liberal and free religion, government can become a powerful force in the promotion of such moral agency:

[Government] is to serve the cause of spiritual freedom not by teaching or persuasion, but by action; that is, by rigidly conforming itself, in all its measures, to the moral or Christian law; by the most public and solemn manifestations of reverence for right, for justice, for the general weal, for the principles of virtue. (4:92)

In terms of articulating the role the professional ministry plays in shaping the moral and political agendas for the United States, Channing's Unitarianism set up the questions with which ministers after him had to grapple. Emerson and Parker developed related but different ideologies of manhood and

ministerial styles responding, in part, to Channing's ideal of professional ministry.

Schleiermacher's Influence on Parker

If, as Claude Welch suggests, early and mid-nineteenth-century Protestant theology was particularly concerned with Christology, then it would seem that the "heretical" transcendentalists of New England were stranded in a remote backwater, far from the rage and flow of Tübingen and Berlin.²³ Despite its relative isolation, American Transcendentalism, like liberal Christianity in much of Europe, rejected the orthodox articulations of Trinity and Incarnation. Yet, as Conrad Wright points out, "it is something of an accident of history that these liberal Christians eventually came to be known as Unitarians." They were anti-trinitarian, to be sure, but "their basic disagreement with orthodoxy was over the nature of man and the doctrines of grace, rather than over the doctrine of the Trinity" (Wright 1961, 7). Human nature and the distinction between the creator and creation, grace and nature, became the battlefield on which the Transcendentalists and Unitarians fought.

The lineage of American Transcendentalism is wonderfully heterogeneous. While it is clear that Emerson, Thoreau, and Theodore Parker breathed the same post-Kantian air as Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher (1768-1834) and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831), the heritage of

American Transcendentalism includes much from British rationalism and romanticism as well as British evangelical reaction to the empiricist drift of rationalism. Yet it was the German pietist tradition and German Romanticism which most influenced the Transcendentalist vision and the absolute religion of Theodore Parker.

Recent scholarship has argued convincingly that American Protestant theology and, in particular, Parker's notion of absolute religion developed from the more general turn to anthropology or self-consciousness as the starting point for philosophical and theological discourse in the post-Kantian era.²⁴ Indeed, by the time of Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758), a sophisticated orthodox examination of the religious affections was already growing, revealing the tendency of theological reflection to begin with human self-consciousness within the framework of Lockean epistemology.²⁵

In both British America and Germany, "the religion of the heart stood in contrast both to the intellectualism of orthodox polemics, which seemed irrelevant to the practical issue in faith and love, and to the intellectualism of an arid rationalism" (Welch I:27). Yet the work of Schleiermacher and Hegel gave the German movement a firm philosophical foundation while also laying the foundation for the secularization of religion. Schleiermacher and Hegel sought to refound and make respectable the language of belief and theology which eighteenth-century rationalism had vitiated. With Schleiermacher and

Hegel, following the critiques of David Hume (1711-1776) and Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), the theologians of the nineteenth century began "demythologizing" theology. Thus, the pietist movement, the pragmatic turn of American philosophical development, Romanticism's secularization of religion, and the Enlightenment's turn to the self-consciousness as the locus of revelation and morality all come together in the critical theology of Theodore Parker.

Of all the influences on Parker's theology, two stand out as crucial: first Romanticism's secularization of religion and, second, the move to ground religion in consciousness, a move that privatized revelation. Schleiermacher followed Kant's transcendental turn from positive knowledge of external objects "as they really are" and to a concentration on the human subject as a receiver of revelation, a "hearer of the word." For Schleiermacher, one immediately apprehends God in the feeling of utter dependence. Religion or piety, then, is a sense or taste for the infinite because the finite consciousness yearns for the infinite. The human being, for Schleiermacher, apprehends the infinite in the finite. In reaction to part of the eighteenth-century legacy of theological reflection, Schleiermacher developed the notion of the "historicity of religion," that "particular historical process is an essential ingredient in religion" and that the "quest for rationality in religion is not to be given up, but neither is the involvement of belief in historical particularity to be rejected" (Welch I:50-1).

In terms of the practical piety of religion, Schleiermacher argues that repugnance to the multiplicity of traditions or sects or communions in religion misses the point of the religious impulse. Schleiermacher distinguishes between "natural" religion and "positive" religion by claiming that the former is merely the universal human propensity to gather in fellowship to worship, while the latter is described as natural manifestations of the religious impulse made present within a given culture and time. For Schleiermacher, true religion or "absolute" religion may be found at the heart of all positive religions, while no single expression of positive religion may be privileged over others. The argument is slippery and develops rapidly through the "Fifth Speech" but what is important to note here (because Parker develops the point) is that the substance of religion may be embodied in many forms. Historical or positive religion, according to Schleiermacher, is a developmental process based in the progress and growth of human self-consciousness. He does not argue that the multiplicity of religious families is a good in and of itself. Rather, Schleiermacher asserts that all articulations of faith participate in the "one religion:"

I therefore find that multiplicity of the religions is based on the nature of religion. . . We must assume and we must search for an endless mass of distinct forms. . . The whole of religion is nothing but the sum of all relations of man to God, apprehended in all the possible ways in which any man can be immediately conscious in his life. In this sense there is but one religion, for it would be but a poverty-stricken and halting life, if all these

relations did not exist wherever religion ought to be. Yet all men will not by any means apprehend them in the same way, but quite differently.²⁶

Yet, it is also clear that the so-called natural religion of Schleiermacher's adversaries cannot be the absolute religion of which he writes. Deism and other forms of cultured disdain of "true" religion emerge when religion relies exclusively on natural evidences. Rather, Schleiermacher argues for the radically personal nature of religion:

You are wrong, therefore, with your universal religion that is natural to all, for no one will have his own true and right religion, if it is the same for all. As long as we occupy a place there must be in these relations of man to the whole a nearer and a farther, which will necessarily determine each feeling differently in each life. . . . No single relation can accord to every feeling its due. . . . Hence, the whole of religion can be present only when all those different views of every relation are actually given. (*On Religion*, 217-18)

Clearly, Schleiermacher sets the stage for the emergence of radically privatized religion. While this privatization is not new to the Protestant impulse, the tendency toward privatization takes on new momentum in his work. Before him, Jonathan Edwards and the orthodox Puritans maintained the primacy of individual enlightenment and conversion through "gracious affections." In Theodore Parker's theological reflection, Schleiermacher's Romantic impulse and the Puritan stress on privatization come together. According to Schleiermacher, in any positive religious confession, the human being apprehends that he or she is not self-caused. The essence of absolute

religion, then, is the awareness that one is dependent in an absolute way on a mysterious "other" which has caused one's being. By locating the essence of religion in the quintessentially private act of self-consciousness, an act in which the human being is aware of the self and aware of the mysterious and infinite other in the same act, Schleiermacher secularized and privatized revelation. Revelation could no longer be seen as essentially a word spoken to a people or nation. Rather, religious awareness is self-awareness and insofar as one is self-conscious, one is capable of hearing the word addressed personally and privately. Communal or national considerations are negotiated; morality is decided in a more obviously political manner.

Still, Schleiermacher's analysis of self-consciousness and his concept of utter dependence upon the mysterious other concern us here, for this system had a profound influence upon Theodore Parker. Leon Chai points out that

Schleiermacher's mature system differs from that of his early years not in its renunciation of the attempt to define religion in terms of the nature of consciousness, but in the analysis of that consciousness. For the later Schleiermacher -- in contrast to the author of *Über die Religion* [*On Religion*] and especially the *Monologen* -- the individual consciousness no longer contains God within itself. Instead, there is only the mind's awareness of its dependence upon something external to it. (Chai 175)

The dilemma for Schleiermacher can be expressed as the need to choose between, on the one hand, a hopeless confusion of the objective with the subjective and, on the other hand, a God who is absolute impenetrable mystery,

a God of which no concept can be made. This is the dilemma which lies at the core of the theological anthropology Schleiermacher generates. Moreover, it is the problem of philosophical idealism in any epoch.

The starting point for Schleiermacher's anthropology assumes a one-to-one relationship between the self and all the individual existents within the external world. Individual objects are apprehended neither "as something objectively independent of the self" nor simply as a "subjective idealization of the individual mind. It represents, rather," as Chai states, "the mind's perception (*Anschauung*) of an external world, where the seeing itself gives form to that world, pervades it as a subjective element, and imparts life to it" (Chai 169-70). Thus, human cognition recognizes individual existents against a virtually infinite horizon of being. Consciousness, for Schleiermacher, is therefore receptive; impressions are received as external to the self while radically part of the subject. Clearly, the sense of another object is part of consciousness, yet consciousness does not in fact apprehend anything other than the *impression* of something external:

Hence the whole content of the apprehension of the noumena, differs nevertheless from Kant in assuming that the subjective nature must somehow pervade the external world formed through the mind's seeing, as an element of that world. The mind thereby perceives the subjective (its own nature) as something objective (external to the self) and yet not different in nature from the subjective. The identification of subjective and objective is possible only because the seeing (*Anschauung*) is itself conditioned

by an inner vital affirmation that is also the element assimilated into the external world. (Chai 170)

Schleiermacher defines revelation as a process in which finite human consciousness comes to understand the operations of consciousness itself.

Against the infinite horizon of pure consciousness, finite beings emerge and express themselves in the perceptions of the receptive consciousness. Thus for Schleiermacher, "revelation means witnessing the producing of life, the creation of new forms and essences by the life force," that is infinite consciousness (Chai 170). Revelation or the finitization of consciousness occurs as finite conscious existents emanate from pure consciousness and, as a result of the separation, become aware of the process of consciousness:

The individual or finite mind, seeing the producing of new forms of life or consciousness in the universe, reexperiences its own coming into existence through apprehension of what it perceives as external to itself and yet simultaneously one with itself. Consciousness sees, in other words, how it becomes consciousness: the disclosure of the nature of consciousness yields the content of revelation. (Chai 170).

Clearly, if the universe (the collection of all finite existents) is the externalization of pure infinite consciousness, then the new and original seeing of this universe must consist of perceiving the nature of consciousness itself. In other words, human beings are aware that they perceive individual existents in the world as that very process of consciousness. For Schleiermacher, only when finite consciousness experiences itself in the external world by perceiving

other finite beings emanate and differentiate themselves from pure consciousness, does the "new and original" perception or revelation take place. In this subjective act by the human being, the new and original "*Anschauung* of the universe justifies its description in subjective terms, as a new experience of the nature of the individual mind, seen now as objective rather than subjective" (Chai 171).

Several points must be noted as corollaries of Schleiermacher's anthropology because they mark parallel structures within Parker's anthropology. First, Schleiermacher avoided the disclosure of any specific revelation or message in his analysis of human consciousness. Revelation is radically personalized, finitized, and thus secularized. The content of revelation came to be understood as the content of human consciousness in a progressive, supratemporal, universal process, while the forms of religion or the partial revelations are necessarily wedded to specific historical moments. Second, the secularization of revelation results in the secularization of religion as well. For the early Schleiermacher, religion, like revelation, "consists of a relation between subjective and objective, in which the objective contains the subjective element" (Chai 172). As the human being becomes conscious of his or her own separation from infinite consciousness by the observation of other finite existents emanating from it, a feeling (*Gefühl*) of the infinite, a sense of piety overwhelms an attentive person. This relation to infinite consciousness within

finite consciousness and the attendant sense or taste for the infinite is the definition of true or absolute religion. Parker calls this interior place the sense of absolute dependence. Like Schleiermacher before him, Parker maintains that this "sense" or intuition of human dependence on God is not so much a specific feeling but an awareness which is attendant in every act of consciousness.

In addition, it is crucial to note the latent sacramentality in Schleiermacher's thought because Parker develops this line of thinking for transcendentalist Unitarianism. Clearly, the secularization of religion in this latent sacramentality means that the sacred is not encountered in any one specific time-bound revelation within a "privileged" religious family. For Schleiermacher and subsequently for Parker, there are not seven sacraments as the Catholics maintain, nor are there two sacraments as most of the Protestant denominations hold. Rather, because the infinite is not understood as simply transcending the finite, but as asserting itself as pure consciousness within the finite consciousness, all events, all beings, and especially all human beings offer a representation (*Darstellung*) of the infinite. All beings participate in a kind of natural sacramentality; they are by their act of existence symbols of the infinite.

By 1830, Schleiermacher refined his anthropology of consciousness and in *Der christliche Glaube* [*The Christian Faith*] argues that the finite human consciousness does not comprehend God or the infinite consciousness by

assimilating it like any other observation made by consciousness. Rather, Schleiermacher contents himself with the recognition that the finite consciousness cannot fully grasp that from which it emanates, namely, infinite consciousness.

In Schleiermacher's transcendental turn to the subject or finite consciousness as the receiver of revelation and religion, the distinction between nature and grace, God and creation, becomes blurred. For Schleiermacher, God is apprehended (though not comprehended) immediately in the feeling of utter dependence. Religion or piety is a sense or a taste for the infinite. Yet care must be taken to recognize that Schleiermacher did not mean that religion is a particular kind of feeling but that feeling, *Gefühl*, "designates the place where religion is to be sought" (Welch I:66).

Clearly, Schleiermacher demonstrates a debt to Romanticism and idealist philosophy by concluding that religion is not, primarily, a matter of knowledge or willing, metaphysics or ethics. Rather, religion is a matter of immediate self-consciousness. The immediate intuition of the self as utterly dependent upon God takes place on the highest level of consciousness.

Schleiermacher's legacy in the work of Theodore Parker may be traced to this theological anthropology and the considerations of human consciousness as well as to what I have called the latent sacramentality or "real presence" of God in every finite existent. This last point is crucial, for it is largely on this

notion of real presence or sacramentality that Parker develops his notion of religious and social reform.

As the scion of New England Congregationalism, Parker brought to his ministry intense respect for broad and deep learning, not only in the liberal arts but in the professional theological training through the study of biblical languages, ecclesiastical history, and homiletics. Moreover, he imbibed the Romantic shift of focus in anthropology as well as Schleiermacher's notions of absolute religion and the latent sacramental principle at work in Schleiermacher's absolute religion. As a critical middle-class American male, Parker sensed the need to fit into the society and professional ministry of his time which was largely dominated by an entrepreneurial ideology of manhood.

Parker and Emerson encountered professional ministerial challenges stemming from their conflicts with the dominant ideology of manhood which focused on individualism and isolation of deviance. They articulate related but different strategies for "manly" Christian ministry. Parker's ministry developed in a way which pointed to an ideology of manhood which was more consciously inclusive of the marginalized of society. Emerson's strategy was more radical in the sense that he left the ministry to be a minister to ministers. Yet his strategy also harkened back to a patrician and elitist understanding of the profession, which is the topic of the next chapter.

NOTES

1. James D. Whitehead and Evelyn Eaton Whitehead, *Method in Ministry: Theological Reflection and Christian Ministry* (New York: Seabury Press, 1981) 2.
2. Lawrence Buell, "Vital Statistics: A Quantitative Analysis of Authorship as a Profession in New England" in *New England Literary Culture* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986) 375-397.
3. Conrad Wright, "The Early Period, 1810-40" in *The Harvard Divinity School: Its Place in Harvard University and American Culture*, ed., George Huntston Williams (Boston: Beacon, 1954), 22.
4. See George Huntston Williams, *The Harvard Divinity School: Its Place in Harvard University and American Culture* (Boston: Beacon, 1954).
5. Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture* (New York: Knopf, 1977) 12.
6. "Method" is used here in the sense used by Bernard Lonergan, namely, "a normative pattern of recurrent and related operations yielding cumulative and progressive results." See *Method in Theology*, 4.
7. Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972) 288.
8. For a detailed account of the development of education for the ministry at Harvard in the early decades of the nineteenth century see Williams, *The Harvard Divinity School*, 21-147.
9. Teresa Toulouse, *The Art of Prophesying: New England Sermons and the Shaping of Belief* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1987) 3.
10. William C. Spohn, "Sovereign Beauty: Jonathan Edwards and the Nature of True Virtue" *Theological Studies* 42, 3 (1982), 396.

11. Lawrence Buell, "Unitarian Aesthetics and Emerson's Poet-priest," *American Quarterly* 20 (1968), 3.
12. Lawrence Buell, *Literary Transcendentalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1973), 28.
13. William R. Hutchison, *The Transcendentalist Ministers: Church Reform in the New England Renaissance* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1965), 86.
14. See R.W.B. Lewis, *The American Adam: Innocence, Tragedy, and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955) 179, 188.
15. See Catherine L. Albanese, *Corresponding Motion: Transcendental Religion in the New America* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1977) 96.
16. See Hutchison, *The Transcendentalist Ministers* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1965). Hutchison points out that while membership was somewhat fluid, "twenty-six persons became closely associated with the Club and its activities." Seventeen of these were Unitarian ministers and five were women. As an issue, church reform centered around seven of them: Ralph Waldo Emerson, George Ripley, Theodore Parker, Frederic Henry Hedge, James Freeman Clarke, Orestes Brownson, and William Henry Channing. The remaining members of the association were: Convers Francis, William H. Furness, Cyrus Bartol, Charles Brooks, Christopher Cranch, John Dwight, Sylvester Judd, Samuel Osgood, Caleb Stetson, Jones Very, Bronson Alcott, William Ellery Channing, Margaret Fuller, Ellen Hooper, Elizabeth Peabody, Sophia Ripley, Caroline Sturgis Tappan, Henry David Thoreau, and Charles Wheeler.
17. Conrad Wright, *Three Prophets of Religious Liberalism: Channing-Emerson-Parker* (Boston: Beacon, 1961). 3, 6.
18. William Ellery Channing, "Unitarian Christianity" (1819) reprinted in vol. 3 of *The Works of William Ellery Channing, D.D.* (Boston: 1849) 61.
19. See Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972) 354-6, 401. Also see Claude Welch, *Protestant Thought in the Nineteenth Century*, vol. 1 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972) 128, 135.
20. William Ellery Channing, "Likeness to God" (1828) reprinted in vol. 3 of *The Works of William Ellery Channing, D.D.* (Boston: 1849) 228.
21. William Ellery Channing, "The Christian Ministry" (1826) reprinted in vol. 3 of *The Works of William Ellery Channing, D.D.* (Boston, 1849).

22. William Ellery Channing, "Spiritual Freedom" (1830) reprinted in vol. 4 of *The Works of William Ellery Channing, D.D.* (Boston, 1849) 70.
23. Claude Welch, *Protestant Thought in the Nineteenth Century*, vol. 1 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972) 6.
24. See Leon Chai, *The Romantic Foundations of the American Renaissance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987) all of chapter 8. See also Welch I:22-55.
25. See Jonathan Edwards, *Religious Affections*, ed. John E. Smith (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959) and *Freedom of the Will*, ed. Paul Ramsey (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957) and *The Nature of True Virtue* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1969).
26. Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers*, trans. by John Oman (New York: Harper and Row, 1958) 212-18.

CHAPTER TWO

THE ROLE OF THE MINISTER IN NEW ENGLAND IN THE EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY AS ARTICULATED BY RALPH WALDO EMERSON

Not only does democracy make every man forget his ancestors, but it hides his descendants, and separates his contemporaries from him; it throws him back forever upon himself alone, and threatens in the end to confine him entirely within the solitude of his own heart.

-- Alexis de Tocqueville,
Democracy in America

Democracy breeds individualism, maintained Alexis de Tocqueville.

"Expressive individualism" within the Transcendentalist movement challenged the dominant "utilitarian individualism" of the middle class yet isolated ministers, scholars, and other intellectuals. The danger of isolation from one's society, the fear of being perceived as deviant or "less than typical," long has been strong in democratic America. Especially for male Americans, as David Leverenz points out in *Manhood and the American Renaissance*, manhood issues and self-refashioning strategies in oral performance and literature have

been an aspect of the call to societal conversion and the refashioning of American society.¹

The reciprocal relationship between one's self-concept and one's concept of an ideal society makes the boundary difficult to discern. For American authors in general, and the Transcendentalists in particular, to refashion one's self-image was to challenge the dominant ideology of manhood and thus attempt to refashion the nation. One need only trace the anxiety found in James Fenimore Cooper's *Leather-Stocking Tales*, and especially the anxiety found within the Natty Bumppo character, or Washington Irving's *Rip Van Winkle*, to see a pair of remarkably different strategies for "man-making" at work in the fiction which reveal two related but different anxieties: Cooper's ambivalence about the lack of American sophistication on the world stage and Irving's fear of domestication and feminine dominance. As an American male author, Cooper feared rivalry and experienced the dominance of British male authors. Irving, sensing the same anxiety, articulated a widespread ambivalence Americans felt with regard to the industrial revolution and the changing roles of men and women in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

One powerful strategy, developed by Ralph Waldo Emerson and Theodore Parker for dealing with this potentially devastating isolation due to the changing ideology of manhood in the nineteenth century, came to be known as "self-reliance." The social position of the New England minister at the

beginning of the nineteenth century enabled Emerson and, in an even more forthright manner, Parker to strategize from the podium and the pulpit about contemporary manliness. At times, Transcendentalism's strategies of self-reliance appear to verge on the mean egotism and the utilitarian individualism of the unbridled entrepreneurial businessman it was ostensibly battling. Thus, to suggest that Transcendentalism's method of self-reliant individualism uncritically accepts and develops what David Leverenz calls antebellum America's emergent "entrepreneurial ideology of manhood" may at first appear a reasonable assertion and an uncomplicated truth. After all, Emerson's "man-making" words in *Nature*, "The American Scholar," and the "Divinity School Address" stress the fundamental themes of Transcendental religion: that religion should be "manly"; that it is a matter of the upright individual heart, not rehearsed dogmas; that self-reliance is the only legitimate form of God-reliance; and that revelation continues unabated through an individual's self-consciousness. Indeed, Emerson's friend and close associate, Theodore Parker, insists upon these "manly" qualities of independent thinking, a highly critical personal relationship with ecclesiastical structures, and the role of the minister as poet-priest or, as Parker specifies it, as the prophet of social reform. In different ways, Parker and Emerson set up the independent middle-class entrepreneurial businessman as the straw man with whom they must battle so they may strategize and convert antebellum America. Emerson feigns to

fashion a broad audience yet his true audience consists of the intellectual elite. Parker speaks to all and aims his message to persons of all levels of society. Emerson was thought to be the cool, distant sage of Concord; Parker, the passionate firebrand preaching to all who would listen at the Boston Music Hall.

Yet, for Parker and Emerson, like de Tocqueville, individualism must be distinguished from egotism. Alexis de Tocqueville stated in 1840 that democracy breeds individualists but this individualism is experienced as quite different from egotism.² If egotism is a passionate and exaggerated love of self, which leads one to connect everything with one's own person and prefer the self to everything in the world, then individualism is a mature and calm feeling which disposes each member of the community to sever himself or herself from the mass of fellow-creatures, perhaps with family and friends, and willingly leave society at large to itself. As Donald Gelpi points out, though de Tocqueville recognized the moral affinity between egotism and individualism, the distinction is crucial, especially when discussing the ministries of Emerson and Parker.³ Egotism is blind selfish instinct while individualism, de Tocqueville says, "proceeds from erroneous judgment more than depraved feelings. . . . egotism blights the germ of all virtue; individualism, at first, only saps the virtues of public life.... Egotism is a vice as old as the world, which does not belong to one form of society more than to another;

individualism is of democratic origin, and it threatens to spread in the same ratio as the equality of conditions" (de Tocqueville 118-9). One important distinction between the oratory of Emerson and Parker is that Emerson's prophetic call to conversion ultimately degenerates into egotism while Parker's constantly fights the tendency of individualism to emasculate public leadership and yet remains firmly rooted in individualism. Emerson is actually elitist, Parker is far more egalitarian.

For self-consciously independent and democratic Americans, Emerson needed to develop a rhetoric for a "new" ideology of manhood which would seem egalitarian but was actually an elitist project with ties to the fading patrician class. Parker's call to conversion is far more straightforward, egalitarian, and dedicated to social reform. Emerson presumes an aristocracy of talent and self-consciousness which he calls "Genius." He is the scion of aristocratic Boston society as well as a long line of distinguished ministers. He knows the anxiety of a household without a breadwinner father since William Emerson died when Ralph was only eight years old. While finances were strained in Emerson's youth, social position and family connections assured him of an education and a career. Parker, while assenting to the reality of genius and the necessity of self-reliant individualism, argues that morality is far more social than private. Grandson of Captain John Parker who led the Minutemen on Lexington Green on April 19, 1775, Theodore Parker was of sturdy yet

humble stock. His family had been farmers for all of the 220 years they had lived in America.

Both Emerson and Parker fit de Tocqueville's description of the individualist in democratic America. Emerson and Parker were both "expressive individualists" as Gelpi uses the term. They ran the risk of isolation within their society and felt the alienation from peers in ministry because of their strong commitment to individualism and self-reliance. Yet only Emerson can be suspected of being absorbed, at length, into egotism. Emerson verges on egotism because his revolt is more radical; he is not ultimately out to convert the pusillanimous businessman in the marketplace but is desirous of developing an intellectual elite conceived in his own image and likeness. Emerson's "Man Thinking," the poet-priest, the scholar (all synonyms for an elite class of men) constitutes a defensive, narcissistic approach to man-making strategy.

Emerson disliked pastoral duties in the end because they were not enough; they did not afford enough opportunity for him to have a profound prophetic influence on society. Temperamentally private and reserved, Emerson retreated from open hostility. Yet he confuses his own idealized self-image with his concept of the ideal society. In Emerson's ideal society, men of genius speak truth and interpret reality for all others. Some men interpret truth for all, others of less talent build on what the sages of society inscript. For

Emerson, insofar as a man partakes in genius, just so far is he separated from the rest of humanity. Given such a developed sense of self and personal mission, the drift toward egoism or solipsism can be discerned.

Parker avoided the downfall because he was unwilling to sever pulpit performance from activism in social reform. He found the pastoral duties of public preaching and private conversation exactly where he could have the most influence because it was there, in the individual pew dweller's consciousness and heart, that real change took place. His temperament was, by turns, pugnacious and compassionate. His ultimate audience, the assembly at the Boston Music Hall, was far more open to the oscillation between the combative side of his nature and the pastoral side than were his intellectual peers at Harvard and the Boston Association of Ministers. He insisted on the unity of theory and practice, theology and ministry and was perceived as a terror in the pulpit while compassionate and generous in conversation. Parker's audience was broad and included men of genius as well as people of more modest capacity. There is very little tendency toward "gnosticism" or a privileged class of wise men in his pulpit oratory.

Implicitly, Parker makes a similar distinction between egotism and individualism but goes farther than Emerson and de Tocqueville by insisting that Transcendental religion in general and ministry in particular cannot sever relations with the community. Rather, ministers and the faithful must labor for

social reform; ministers must speak to all levels of society. More of these differences between Parker and Emerson will be developed in the next chapter, but it is important to note here that Emerson's reluctance to enter the political fray, his dilatory manner in going forward and speaking prophetically on the social issues of his day, say much about his man-making strategies.

Moreover, Emerson's personal history with its patrician background, his education at Harvard College, his reserved and polished manner, as well as his initial choice of a career in the ministry, all mark him as typical of the fading New England gentry class -- a class at war with the new and dominant marketplace ideology of manhood. Parker, coming from yeoman stock, with his hard-won education at Harvard (passing all the examinations but unable to acquire a degree because of finances), as well as his less typical choice to be a theologian and minister, deals with gender issues and man-making strategies in a different way. For him, the professional ministry provides a platform which legitimizes social criticism and the call for conversion on a societal scale. Parker's was an extraordinarily learned ministry but one which continually aimed the message to middle-class business people, laborers, as well as the wealthy, the uneducated and the educated. He moves beyond Emerson's particular "expressive individualism" with its demand for creative expression and desire for protection against encroachments of other individuals and social institutions in favor of transforming not just the individual "genius," but the

social institutions. Unlike Emerson, who desired to reform the ministry by ending the ministry as it was known, Parker continued to use the pulpit as his preferred medium. He was able to forge a strategy of man-making within the ministry for himself and for society which Emerson was unable to do. In this sense then, Emerson was far more radical in his vision of ministry. His was a vision of a ministry of reform from on high. Parker's was far more traditional, a vision of ministry from below and ascending through the social classes. Yet that is only part of the story, for Emerson was actually a social elitist arguing that true betterment for society starts at the top with the "genius class," while Parker recognized that all levels of social class, no matter what distinctions are at work, must work together for social reform.

Emerson's anxiety about being a minister stems in part from his sense of the loss of a viable ideology of manhood in the early nineteenth century. His self-reliant expressive individualism becomes the strategy which dominates Transcendentalist thought in general and influences Parker's ministry in particular. David Leverenz's most basic thesis in *Manhood and the American Renaissance* bears out this line of thought. Leverenz states "that any intensified ideology of manhood is a compensatory response to fears of humiliation," and, one might add, of isolation (Leverenz 4). Emerson set an alternative and countervailing tone for the liberal ministry before the Civil War by indicting the Unitarian clergy of his time. His indictment takes two forms: first, Emerson

charges the clergy with succumbing to and aiding the feminization of the ministry, "making ample use of maternal scapegoating"; and second, he charges the utilitarian possessive individualists, the new middle-class businessmen, of pusillanimity, of wallowing in "secondary considerations" such as the single-minded pursuit of wealth, and of aggressive marginalization of other men they see as rivals.

While Parker levels similar charges, his call to conversion of the middle class is both more traditional and more radical than Emerson's. Parker's rhetorical strategy follows Emerson's expressive individualism in the form of the American jeremiad. His position vis-a-vis the worshipping assembly is that of the religious prophet who says what people do not wish to hear concerning social issues such as slavery. While this is clearly a traditional strategy, the manhood he imagines and the manhood to which he challenges his hearers is far more egalitarian and far more activist than Emerson's patriarchal, elitist, and genteel ideology of manhood.

In *The Feminization of American Culture*, Ann Douglas identifies the same phenomenon of alienation and compensatory response in early and mid-nineteenth-century ministers as narcissism -- a term and concept she borrows from Sigmund Freud and Heinz Kohut.⁴ Perhaps more clearly than anyone else, Douglas has articulated the precarious position liberal ministers occupied in antebellum American society. She points out that with the completion of

Church disestablishment in 1833, ministers saw themselves as those who "influence" rather than lead by civil force or political authority. "The conscious force of church authority had given way to the unconscious influence of domestic affection; adult politics have succumbed to infantile piety, *Ecclesia* to a nursery" (Douglas 19).

Between 1820 and 1875, northeastern clergymen and middle-class women were increasingly marginalized within the American culture. Interestingly, middle-class female authors carried the day in the literary marketplace and were becoming the prime consumers of American culture; these same women comprised the majority of churchgoers and clergymen relied on them for financial as well as moral support.⁵ Douglas argues that while middle-class literary women lacked political power and were careful not to claim it, they chose to exert "influence" which they spiritualized as a moral and religious force, ambiguously setting themselves up both as allies and a potentially rival moral force to the clergy.

Douglas's main point is that the root of male ministerial anxiety and middle-class women's sentimentalization of American culture through fiction and periodical literature is a kind of culturally reinforced narcissism:

While Protestant ministers had been a part of an elite group, they were increasingly joining middle-class women and becoming part of a subculture. Such subculture groups, past and present, evince certain patterns. Most simply, one might say that society forces members of a subculture at any moment of intersection with the

larger culture into a constant, simplified, and often demeaning process of self-identification. The minister between 1820 and 1875 was beginning to experience the enforced self-simplification women had long known. (Douglas 347, n. 11).

As ministers were made much more dependent on keeping the good will of their congregation because of disestablishment, they joined a subculture largely made up of women who already held the high moral ground of "influence" rather than sordid but efficacious "power." Those belonging to such a subculture are themselves preoccupied with anxiety over their identification. Society's lowered estimation of ministers and women, its oversimplification of their functions, and its distortion of their identities produce a version of narcissism which is not merely a psychological process but is sociological and political as well. The narcissism produced by this social alienation, Douglas argues, "is best defined not as exaggerated self-esteem but as a refusal to judge the self by alien, objective means, a willed inability to allow the world to play its customary role in the business of self-evaluation" (Douglas 347, n. 11). It is a defensive strategy, a kind of "pulling the wagons into a circle" for the sake of survival. Douglas and Leverenz agree that clergy and women were justifiably insecure about their positions in society at large and sought compensatory control (Douglas 10; Leverenz 4).

For the liberal clergymen of New England, such compensatory control developed frequently as emasculated religion. For women, compensatory

control developed as sentimentalism, often tinged with more than a little subversive undertow.

Whatever their strategies, liberal clergymen (Emerson and Parker present special cases) and women in antebellum America collaborated on what they perceived as a genuinely redemptive mission to society at large: "to propagate the potentially matriarchal virtues of nurture, generosity, and acceptance; to create the 'culture of feelings' that John Stuart Mill was to find during the same period in Wordsworth" (Douglas 10-11).

Emerson and Parker, however, strategized by means of what Andrews Norton once called the "latest form of infidelity," that is, transcendental religion. For them, self-reliance and "man-making" words from the podium or the pulpit were the strategies for manhood that worked. As indicated, however, their man-making strategies were quite different. Emerson's tendency was to withdraw from the fray and speak paternalistically to the herd; Parker's was to engage people and give battle to social sins. In elaborating on the differences, the place to start, of course, is Emerson's articulation of anxiety in his journals and his public call to conversion to ministers-to-be in the Divinity School at Harvard in July, 1838.

On February 23, 1829, shortly before his own ordination and when he was only twenty-five years old, Emerson asked in his journal, "What is the

office of the Christian minister?"⁶ His answer reveals much about the young preacher's elitist thinking:

'Tis to show the beauty of the moral laws of the Universe; to explain the theory of a perfect life; to watch the Divinity in his world. . . . It is the office of the priest. It is his to see the creation with a new eye, to behold what he thought unorganized, crystallize into form, to see the stupendous temple uplift its awful form. . . . I please myself with fashioning in my retired thoughts the Idea of the Christian Minister: a man who is separated from men in all the rough courses where defilement can hardly be escaped; & mixes with men only for purposes that make himself & them better; aloof from the storm of passion, from political hatred, from the jealousy & intrigue of gain, from the contracting influences of low company & little arts. (*JMN* 3:152)

Emerson stresses the "perfection" called for in the minister's office as one which walks between God and humanity; that the minister must mediate between God and humanity by embodying the beauty of the moral laws of the universe so that his life may "explain the theory of the perfect life." Still young and orthodox in the Unitarian manner, Emerson pleases himself with "fashioning" the idea of the minister in his own image and likeness. The minister must conform to the patriarchal standards of New England's patrician class. Such a man must be "separated" from all other men (and women) and not engage in the common person's "rough courses" which necessarily lead to "defilement." The minister's sole purpose, accordingly, is the betterment of his fellows. He mixes with them not that learning and moral improvement may be mutual but that he may make himself better through the practice of virtue and

may make others better through his example of moral beauty, a beauty which borders on aloofness. The minister cannot become overly concerned with "secondary considerations" or be distracted by the storms of passion, political hatred, and party spirit. Moreover, the distractions of wealth and "intrigue of gain," indeed all the entrepreneurial pursuits of the middle-class American man of the early nineteenth century are beneath him. The pusillanimity which grows out of social commerce with the ignorant and the marginalized is the antithesis of the minister's call to a God-like magnanimity. Ministers are teachers who hand on to others what they have been given but out of a sense of noblesse oblige. The poor and the marginalized must be cared for, paternalistically, but never encountered as equals or peers.

Crucial to remember, however, is that only by 1832, following the death of his first wife Ellen Tucker and the controversy over the Lord's Supper at Boston's Second Church, did Emerson consider the ministry incapable of serious reform. He finally came to the conclusion that he must leave the ministry in order to embody his own brand of self-reliance and expressive individualism. He purports to speak as a knowledgeable outsider, believing that reform of the ministry can only come from the clearer Olympian heights, uncorrupted by involvement with the herd or within the ministry itself. In other words, for Emerson after 1832, true expressive reform of the ministry, true prophetic challenge to society can happen only by a "minister" to ministers

whose office lies beyond that corrupted by middle-class concerns. On January 10, 1832 he states that "it is the best part of a man, I sometimes think, that revolts most against his being a minister. His good revolts against official goodness" (*JMN* 3:318). The "official goodness" to which Emerson refers is the emasculated, marginalized, and feminized ministry of "influence" of the liberal clergy.

By 1832, Emerson had long felt that the language of the pulpit was "laborious and extravagant" for pew dwellers, and that pulpit rhetoric did not and perhaps could not convey true religion. On the one hand, pulpit ministry was to raise the common man's thoughts above the sordid and dirty world of commerce and the marketplace reductionism which makes for pusillanimity yet, on the other hand, the very language of the contemporary pulpit alienated common people because it partook of cool, classical rhetoric too restrained and refined for efficacy. In a journal entry dated January 1, 1826, when he was only twenty-three years old, Emerson puts the ministerial dilemma clearly. "The Sabbath," he states, "is a respite from the importunacy of passion, from the dangerous empire of human anxieties, a pious armistice in the warfare of the world." Yet, "the language of the pulpit. . . is too strong for the ideas it is designed to convey and appealing to emotions with which they [the worshipping assembly] have no sympathy" (*JMN* 3:9). This early journal entry sets the tone of Emerson's ministerial dilemma for the next several decades of his life. Here

the "manly" world of ambition, rivalry, and commerce is pitted against the isolated, questionable, and "feminized" world of the intellectual life. The analogy he makes in an attempt to reconcile the desires of the hearers to the rhetoric of the preacher betrays his elitist mentality:

For the same reason the man of intellectual pursuits finds it hard to control his disgust at conversation turned wholly on the details of commerce foreign to his accustomed disposition, foreign to his understanding -- the man whom an unhappy education or unpropitious circumstances have formed into an indifference towards those supreme relations that connect him to his maker will sometimes hear with great distrust or with coldness bordering on contempt the expostulations of preachers or the descriptions in which they attempt to clothe ideas beneath which language sinks and is unequal & vain. (*JMN* 3:9)

In short, Emerson appears eager *not* to seem to patronize his hearers, yet he must if he is to be faithful to his gospel. The man of social position or financial security who has been afforded an intellectual (read Harvard or at least a "college") education disdains conversation concerning commercial endeavors and the marketplace rivalry. Commerce represents the "dangerous empire of human anxieties" for Emerson. It is the battlefield, the site of warfare in his world and, as such, must be avoided or overcome. "The minister & the hearer," likewise, "are in two different moods of thought[;] one has sent out his thoughts to explore & investigate the mysteries that besiege the birth & dissolution of human nature, the good & evil that are coupled in our fortunes, . . . the other warm from the sedulous selfishness that has gathered

round him all the comforts of luxury is in a calm climate and his blood rolls comfortably in its channel; he cannot see beyond his gay circumference of which his appetites are the centre of all the existence he covets" (*JMN* 3:9-10). Emerson tries to turn the tables on the middle-class entrepreneurs by indicting "sedulous selfishness" and luxury which softens and feminizes a man. He does not indict all his hearers, just those who are capable of a more powerful intellectual life, that is, ministers and other intellectuals.

Clearly, there are two levels of living for Emerson: on the one hand, that level of life determined by the commercial marketplace where the herd of humanity dwells and the dominant ideology of manhood is entrepreneurial and, on the other hand, that level he sought both in his ministry and later in his literary career, the level of the elite or the privileged class of genius. Emerson was acutely aware that his predilection for intellectual pursuits was afforded him because of his family and professional relationships. As R. Jackson Wilson points out,

This intricate and dense network of family and professional relationships was the defining context of Waldo Emerson's youth. It limited the choices he could consider, perhaps; but it sanctioned the choices he did make. It took him through Harvard College. It guided him gently toward the Divinity School and the ministry. . . . It made his ordination more than the formal ratification of a contract between him and the Second Church -- made it into a public ritual of acknowledgment of the claims and privileges of family and history.⁷

Thus, even in the early days of his ministerial career, during which Emerson believed the ministry to be a manly profession and accepted the privileges a patrician family and a Harvard education had given him, he betrays his anxiety about the rhetoric of pulpit leadership, the gulf between the assembly and the minister and, therefore, his own ideology of manhood. Emerson was embarrassed and anxious because of the leisure for study and privilege of education his background had given him.

Emerson rarely attacks the worshipping assembly. Rather, he saves his indictments for the elite, the ministers and other intellectuals who are supposed to carry the burden of leadership. In the late summer of 1832, soon after his decision to leave the ministry, Emerson excuses the common herd but indicts clergymen like Edward Everett (1794-1865), an American Unitarian minister and orator and politicians like George Canning (1770-1827), the British statesman, foreign secretary (1822-1827) and prime minister (1827):

I would gladly preach to the demigods of this age (& why not to the simple people?) concerning the reality of truth & the greatness of believing in it & seeking after it. It does not shock us when ordinary persons discover no craving for truth & are content to exist for years exclusively occupied with the secondary objects of house & land & food & company & never cast up their eyes to inquire whence it comes & what it is for, wholly occupied with the play & never ask after the design. But we cannot forgive the Everetts & Cannings that they who have souls to comprehend the magnificent secret should utterly neglect it & seek only huzzas & champagne. (*JMN* 4:42)

Emerson declares that his desired audience consists of the "demigods" of ministry and politics, not "simple people." This imagined audience of "vulgar great men" has become "feminized" or domesticated: they are concerned "whether it is likely they will dine nicely & sleep warm" and so they slyly cast about their "sheep's eyes" in order "to see what way the wind" of public opinion "blows & where this boat will land them." He would teach the popular preachers who have been seduced by "secondary objects" or an overriding concern for their own material well-being a "manly" enthusiasm in "man's moral nature," a kind of spiritual rigor and self-reliance, a "magnificent secret" knowledge. Emerson wants to see that those who aspire to teach such masculine virtue are the real power, the leaders of a society.

From roughly August of 1835, Emerson had been planning a sermon to literary men or scholars (*JMN* 5:XV), the ministerial and political demigods he desired for his audience. The "sermon" finally took form as an address delivered to the Phi Beta Kappa Society at Harvard on August 31, 1837. "The American Scholar," as the address came to be known, sets forth a "code" for the professional man of letters -- which, for Emerson, includes the minister, the politician, and the orator as well as the poet and writer of fiction. The American scholar must be a disciple of nature as it is mediated through his own consciousness; knowledgeable yet independent of the past, especially the scholarship or wisdom of precursors; and, finally, the scholar must be an

ascetic, one withdrawn from the fray of commerce and mundane toil so that he may pass judgment on the lives of others and lead them to more abundant life. The image Emerson conjures is a masculine image of the teacher, a sower of seed called wisdom in the fertile ground of other intellectuals' minds. Emerson calls this teacher "Man Thinking" and urges his hearers to take pride in their call.

In a journal entry dated May 30, 1836, Emerson articulates both the difficulty of laboring at his new literary profession and the difficulty of generating self-respect:

In that Sermon to Literary Men which I propose to make, be sure to admonish them not to be ashamed of their gospel. The mason, the carpenter hold up their trowel & saw with honest pride; the Scholar thrusts his book into his pocket, drops the nose gay he has gathered in his walk into the fields, & in conversation with the grocer & farmer affects to talk of business & farms. Faint heart never won [a fair lady]. Other professions thrive because they who drive them do that one thing with a single & entire mind.
(*JMN* 5:164-5)

"Honest pride" is precisely what contemporary men of letters lack. Here the image of the honest farmer sowing his seed in fertile soil takes on a complex set of meanings. The fruit of the farmer's sowing and the commerce of the grocer who markets the produce afford the farmer and grocer honest manly pride. Even the mason and the carpenter have their niches in the market. But the fruit of the scholar's labor, the words sown into books and the productions Emerson calls "nose gays," find little or no share of the market. Simple minds

or minds filled with secondary considerations cannot grasp these thoughts.

Emerson laments the absence of a place in the market and the sterile soil and, in a particularly masculine image within the same entry, he quotes the maxim "a teacher of the Veda should rather die with his learning than sow it in sterile soil, even though he be in grievous distress for subsistence'" (*JMN* 5:165).

For Emerson, God is God of the literary man as well as the farmer or the grocer; the gospel (literally "good news" or good word incarnated in time and space) of the literary man should be a source of masculine pride as much as the gospel of the laborer -- even more so for the literary man; the teacher or scholar must sow the seed in fertile soil -- or, more likely, *create* fertile soil through cultivation and *then* plant the seed. Such manly pursuits win the "fair lady" of Emerson's desire, a successful literary career. Literary men must be admonished not to hang their heads in shame but to hold their heads erect and offer what they have to say without fear or disappointment. Fertile ground must be found and cultivated not primarily in the common person, the day laborer, or the uneducated but in the "demigods," the intellectual elite. Here one encounters Emerson's rhetoric at its best for he does not alienate the common person because he accentuates the nobility of the farmer and the laborer, as if to say, "these too have their 'genius,' their little share of nobility." Still, he fashions an audience of highly educated and capable men who understand that the intellectual life requires "leisure."

The feminized clergy is the special target of Emerson's wrath and his caustic man-making words. It is "the pale young men diffident & complaisant who ride & walk into town in search of a place to fix themselves" (*JMN* 5:349), the young scholars who seek to be demigods, the sycophants who denature the manly profession of ministry that Emerson refashions, creates as "fertile soil," and attempts to win over. The new professionalism of scholarship to which he wants this class of men to aspire takes women for granted, indeed makes women disappear from the process of man-making. In his effort to refashion the ideology of manhood, Emerson erases the presence of womanhood. The emerging American scholar must grow out of intellectual infancy and move through puberty to manhood without the obvious nurture of woman because professional men of letters are already too feminized:

God has armed youth & puberty and manhood with its own piquancy & charm & made it enviable & gracious and its claims not to be put by if it will stand by itself. The nonchalance of boys who are sure of a dinner & would disdain as much as a lord to do or say aught to conciliate one[,] is the healthy attitude of human nature[,] and the good youth & the good man though their pockets were empty would not bate one jot of assurance that bread was their due (*JMN* 5:349).

On the surface, Emerson argues that the laborer is worth his wages. Yet beneath the surface anxiety pulses, not a debonair lack of concern. Male rivalry, as well as fear of the feminine, characterize the anxiety found in this journal passage. Emerson naturalizes the aristocratic arrogance, the

nonchalance of young men who are sure of domestic service. The refashioning of his audience becomes an audacious gambit here. "Emerson especially reaches out to his real cultural constituency, the feminized clergy in the middle," those caught between the fading patriarchy of the past and the rising class of businessmen (Leverenz 52). He imagines an audience of "new" ministers, capable of professional, spiritual, and intellectual leadership, or more accurately, capable of wielding power without seeming to do so.

Women drop out of the process of man-making completely. The attitudes of the young men called to ministry should be the nonchalance of young nobles or "lords" who are sure to be fed by hidden domestic hands, the hands of women neither heard from nor seen. In a journal entry written a scant three months before he delivered the "Divinity School Address," Emerson restates his desperate need for a new breed of ministers. Invited to talk with some of the divinity students concerning theism, the conversation turned in a direction he found encouraging. He records that he told the students that the "minister nowadays is plainest prose, the prose of prose. He is a Warming-pan, a Night-chair at sick beds & rheumatic souls; and the fire of the minstrel's eye & vivacity of his word is exchanged for intense grumbling enunciation of the Cambridge sort, & for scripture phraseology" (*JMN* 5:471). Contemporary ministry, then, was "women's work." The masculine passion for poetry as well

as the creative vitality he desired for the ministry were lost and, for Emerson at least, unrecoverable.

Emerson's anxiety over the feminization of the clergy leading to the obliteration of feminine presence and his attempt to refashion this constituency surface in such domestic reductions and marginalizations of the feminine. His emerging ideology of manhood savors of narcissism. All the duties of the contemporary liberal clergyman are articulated in domestic terms. "Prosaic" tendencies in the clergy smack of femininity; prose is supportive, domesticated, not really creative or daring. Creativity, earnestness, originality are the manly qualities Emerson seeks in himself and fellow intellectuals.

Emerson did not have to range far from the image of the scholar, "Man Thinking," of the journals and the "The American Scholar" to develop the image of the "poet-priest" in the "Divinity School Address." Indeed, both images are part of the same self-refashioning strategy which creates a middle ground or, better, a third option for manliness between or above the feminized liberal clergy and the entrepreneurial businessman. Such an ideology of manliness for Emerson must include a "nurturing" quality with the luxury or leisure to think "great thoughts." Yet, this ideology cannot be marginalized or domesticated, for then society will not value it. The twin challenges offered publicly in the "The American Scholar" and the "Divinity School Address" to the academic and ecclesiastical establishments are, at root, the same strategy for

self-refashioning and conversion of antebellum America to a less rabid and more refined (albeit narcissistic) sense of manhood. Both addresses call for the intellectual man to take note of and live the "doctrine of correspondence," to live out of the moral sentiment of the universe as it comes to consciousness within one's own mind.

These early journals and both major addresses retain the creative energy and prophetic call to conversion coupled with an optimism which would be tempered in the decades to come. Yet the dark side of Emerson's journals and these early addresses can be seen in the subtle elitism and defensiveness born of anxiety and rivalry within the marketplace of American society in the early nineteenth century.

In the "Divinity School Address," Emerson again uses the image of manhood as a developmental career, an organic growth process which has as its core the "intuition of moral sentiment." All growth, all genius ripens out of this consciousness: "all things proceed out of the same spirit, and all things conspire with it. Whilst a man seeks good ends, he is strong by the whole strength of nature. In so far as he roves from these ends, he bereaves himself of power, of auxiliaries; his being shrinks out of all remote channels, he becomes less and less, a mote, a point, until absolute badness is absolute death."⁸ This sentiment is also the religious consciousness of humanity and corrects the capital mistake of the "infant" or immature man who attempts to be

a leader by following and distilling wisdom from precursors. Insofar as a man is a follower, making use of derived wisdom, just so far is he part of the herd and abandons his vocation of leadership.

Here in the religious consciousness Emerson finds the source of self-reliance, the fountain of moral action and prophetic refashioning of society. This sentiment "lies at the foundation of society, and successively creates all forms of worship" (*CW* 1:79). True inspiration and leadership by "Men Thinking" are in crisis because manly self-reliance has given way to "the base doctrine of the majority of voices. Unitarian Christianity, like all other "majorities," has become prosaic, shutting down "miracles, prophecy, poetry, the ideal life, the holy life" (*CW* 1:80). True inspiration and manliness have given way to routinization of the Spirit, the domestication of charismatic prophecy. For Emerson, the prophet is a member of a truly elite class of men.

In the "Divinity School Address," Emerson has at last selected his audience -- men who search as he does for an alternative ideology of manhood, men he would refashion in his own image, contemporary ministers and ministers-in-training at his alma mater. He renders his audience benevolent by speaking of the "refulgent summer" and the "luxury" they share not only to draw breath in this hallowed hall but also to reflect on the luxury of study, to be afforded the opportunity to perceive the correspondence between the mystery of material nature surrounding them and the moral sentiment of the universe.

He addresses his "young friends" who are setting forth to *teach* in a new way, not preach in the old Unitarian dispensation. He forces the audience to presume what he presumes, namely that Unitarian Christianity "has great historical interest" for the intellectual man, but is now superseded by a more radically individualized religious consciousness. He goes to great pains to mollify his audience and then, when he has them lulled, "discharges his duty" by pointing out two errors plaguing the "cultus" the new ministers will serve. These are an exaggeration of the role of Jesus and the belief that revelation has come to an end. Emerson separates the young ministers in the audience from the old by claiming that the twin errors of Unitarian Christianity are more "errors in its administration" rather than content. All gathered to hear Emerson were aware that theology is embodied in practice and ritual. The Unitarian controversy, continuing to simmer, would boil over on this point.

For the Unitarian Christians of Emerson's day to preach an "exaggerated" Christology and claim that revelation has come to an end "unmans" men. It is "to be defrauded of his manly right in coming into nature"; it is to be "'a pagan suckled in a creed outworn'" (CW 1:82). Ministers should preach a new definition of manliness, one in which genius is rewarded and intellectual men should "own the world" by daring to "live after the infinite Law that is in [them]" (CW 1:82). Instead, ministers preach as if revelation were over and common men "speak of the revelation as somewhat

long ago and given, as if God were dead." Thus, "the injury to faith throttles the preacher; and the goodliest of institutions becomes an uncertain and inarticulate voice" (*CW* 1:84).

Clearly, the dialectic between theology and ministry, mentioned in the first chapter of this study, comes into focus once again. If middle-class secondary considerations dull the manly passion for truth, self-reliance, and the sentiment of virtue, and the professional ministry is seduced and therefore reduced to pusillanimity, or worse, "prostituted," then the hermeneutical circle is complete: poor theology leads to emasculated ministry which, in turn, reinforces and domesticates poor theology. The preacher should speak of the revelation which continues to burgeon forth from the individual soul; instead revelation is spoken of as finished and past; historical revelation is a comfort and a refuge. Faith is injured because it is truncated and made sterile, safe from change in its lived expressions. Thus the preacher is choked or "throttled" because he must preach to a society which settles for less, a culture of followers not leaders. Yet Emerson is quite aware that the leadership he seeks will not come from the herd but only from the gifted elite. To his dismay, the voice of the Church becomes "uncertain and inarticulate," prostituting itself for the past instead of prophesying the future.

Emerson's poet-priest is an artist. The true preacher partakes in genius and finds that, like Jeremiah the prophet, he must speak God's word as the Spirit bids him. His medium in ministry, of course, is the word:

Always, the seer is a sayer. Somehow his dream is told. Somehow he publishes it with solemn joy. Sometimes with pencil on canvas; sometimes with chisel on stone; sometimes in towers and aisles of granite, his soul's worship is builded; sometimes in anthems of indefinite music; but clearest and most permanent, in words. (*CW* 1:84)

For Emerson, such an artist or "man of letters" cannot be profane, sensual, or a liar; he can be a slave neither to current pulpit fashion nor a political party. Only if a minister speaks with "courage, piety, love, [and] wisdom" is his preaching the expression of the moral sentiment of the universe. The "capital secret of his profession" is "to turn life into truth," that he speak of the fire and poetry of his heart (*CW* 1:86).

If the entrepreneurial, utilitarian "possessive individualist" was the figure for the dominant ideology of manhood through the early nineteenth century, then the "self-reliant" critical individualist is Emerson's ideal of manhood. Another way to put the distinction is that the nineteenth-century American business community developed an ideology of manhood which was rabidly "utilitarian" and Emerson countered with an ideology of "expressive individualism." Utilitarian individualists expected the rules of the marketplace with its masculine rivalry, marginalization of the feminine, and lure of personal

wealth for the dominant to secure their position in society and, in the long run, make prosperity or at least functional living possible on all strata of society.

The revolt of American Transcendentalism expressed in the early addresses of Emerson offered an alternative ideology of manhood which had hallmarks of the fading patrician ideology of manhood as well as a new prophetic call to refashion society. The expressive individualism of Emerson, driven by the power of the romantic turn to the self, expected that true religion and an ongoing revelation lie at the core of each person. Such personal intuitions of the moral sentiment of the universe demand expression and require for their existence protection from the threats of the marketplace.

Yet Emerson divides humanity into the herd and the scholars. The only true protection against the encroachment of other individuals and social institutions (i.e., government and the Church) is self-reliant genius. Few persons are capable of expressing, or have the opportunity to express adequately such leadership but ministers and academics are types of the chosen few. The source of Emerson's anger at ministers, indeed, one way to view his abandonment of the ministry, is his revulsion at what he considered to be the domestication or feminization of the clergy. The loss of personal identity, personal creative power, and leadership within the society was the loss of manhood for Emerson. If the patrician and ministerial classes lost this identity, so did Emerson the individual. His commitment to the romantic ethos and his

patrician background would not allow Emerson to rest content with marginalization and emasculation. Rather, he develops a strategy of man-making words and in the early years of his literary career aims his self-refashioning words at liberal ministers.

For his part, Theodore Parker sensed the same marginalization of the professional ministry. Yet his strategy of religious and social reform, grounded it was in his anthropology and understanding of absolute religion, articulated an ideology of manhood which did not marginalize the feminine and advocated the fullest possible development of all persons. Parker's understanding of the ministry and the necessary connection between the reform of religion and the reform of society through the articulation of absolute religion is the subject of the next chapter.

NOTES

1. David Leverenz, *Manhood in the American Renaissance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989).
2. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. Henry Reeve, 2 vols. (New York: Schocken, 1961) 2:120.
3. Donald Gelpi, S.J., "Conversion: Beyond the Impasse of Individualism" in *Beyond Individualism: Toward a Retrieval of Moral Discourse in America*, ed. Donald Gelpi, S.J. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), 1.
4. Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture* (New York: Knopf, 1977).
5. David Leverenz points out that Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* sold 305,000 copies in its first year of publication. Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, far and away the most popular of the books now considered great literature, sold only 10,000 copies in its first five years. Douglas maintains that Stowe's novel sold so well because it panders to her readers' sentimentalism and self-indulgence, their need for tenderness due to narcissism.
6. Ralph Waldo Emerson, *The Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, vol. 3-5 (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1964) 152. Hereafter cited in the text as *JMN*.
7. R. Jackson Wilson, *Figures of Speech: American Writers and the Literary Marketplace, from Benjamin Franklin to Emily Dickinson* (New York: Knopf, 1989) 164.
8. Ralph Waldo Emerson, "The Divinity School Address" in *The Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971) 79. Hereafter cited as *CW* within the text.

CHAPTER THREE

PARKER'S UNDERSTANDING OF MINISTRY, HIS SENSE OF AN AUDIENCE AND HIS MAN-MAKING STRATEGIES

On the Transient and Permanent

On May 19, 1841, Theodore Parker publicly entered the Unitarian controversy for the first time.¹ Setting himself against what he called the "popular religion" and the "religion of the pulpit," Parker preached "The Transient and Permanent in Christianity" as the ordination sermon for Charles C. Shackford at Hawes Place Church in Boston.²

In this sermon, Parker makes three remarkable moves: first, he develops the Romantic concept of the separation of "form" and "content" in his definition of absolute religion; second, Parker begins to articulate a Christology of Consciousness based on Schleiermacher's theological anthropology; and third, Parker emphasizes the connection between religious or ecclesiastical reform and the reform of society in the United States.

For Parker, historical Christianity has corrupted and perverted the religion of Jesus of Nazareth. Parker argues that Jesus' way of teaching was to affect the hearts of his hearers, not "perpetuate his thoughts" by the development of a canon of scripture; to free people from the tyranny of outmoded ritual, not found a rival "institution as a monument to his words" (*Works* IV:2). Parker makes the assumption that religion is "natural" to human beings but then goes on to argue that it is made unnatural when fetishized, when a person or a scriptural canon is idolized:

Looking at the word of Jesus, at real Christianity, the pure religion he taught, nothing appears more fixed and certain. Its influence widens as light extends; it deepens as the nations grow wise. But looking at the history of what men call Christianity, nothing seems more uncertain and perishable. While true religion is always the same thing, in each century and every land, in each man that feels it, the Christianity of the pulpit, which is the religion taught, the Christianity of the people, which is the religion that is accepted and lived out, has never been the same thing in any two centuries or land except only in name. (*Works* IV:5)

Parker voices an historical concern: the religion of Jesus of Nazareth is not historical Christianity. Rather, the religion Jesus taught, with all attendant historical limitations, was "true" or absolute religion. Insofar as historical sects of Christians have made idols of scripture or Jesus, they are transient and corrupt.

Parker acknowledges to his audience that "religious forms may be useful and beautiful," perhaps even "necessary" in the present time, but "they are only

the accident of Christianity, not its substance." Parker has in mind particularly two transient "forms" or sacraments in historical Christianity, Baptism and the Lord's Supper (Communion), when he states that "in our calculating nation, in our rationalizing sect [Unitarianism], we have retained but two of the rites so numerous in the early Christian Church, and even these we have attenuated to the last degree, leaving them little more than a specter of the ancient form" (*Works* IV:6). For Parker, the only criterion for the efficacy of such forms, the litmus test of whether they convey absolute religion, is quite pragmatic: "So long as they satisfy or help the pious heart, so long as they are good."

Doctrines, like forms or rites connected with historical Christianity, are quite as changeable, according to Parker, and such change or development in doctrine is unavoidable. As human reflection and philosophy develop, so there is a concomitant development in the "theology" or rational articulation of truth. Parker draws the analogy between nature and natural philosophy on the one hand, and religion and theology on the other:

There is but one system of nature, which exists in fact, though many theories about nature, which exist in our imperfect notions of system, and by which we may approximate and at length reach it. Now there can be but one religion which is absolutely true, existing in the facts of human nature and the ideas of Infinite God. That, whether acknowledged or not, is always the same thing, and never changes. (*Works* IV:8)

The permanence Parker alludes to is found in the very structure of human nature. The great truths of human existence, according to Parker, are

"morality, religion, and the deep sentiment of love to man and love to God." In the wake of Kant's epistemological revolution and Schleiermacher's grounding of religion in consciousness and the sense of utter dependence on God, the method of religion is secularized into human intuition and inspiration. No longer can an inspired leader, an infallible hierarchy, or a canon of literature (with all the attendant structures of ecclesiastical polity) remain the basis for the sentiment of religion and morality. Only the individual consciousness which intuits truth can be the foundation of individual and, by extension, communal religion and morality. Revelation is not communal but individual; ecclesiastical bodies are not privileged or "chosen" as ancient Israel believed, but are voluntary organizations made up of consenting adults.

Moreover, articulations of truth change but truth itself does not; doctrines, dogmas, and creeds move in and out of fashion but morality, true religion, and God-consciousness do not. The human being, then, is to be faithful to the method of intuition and inspiration; that is, self-reliance in the Emersonian mode. The two doctrines Parker sees as exemplary of the transitory in the popular pulpit theology of his day are "the origin and authority of the Old and New Testaments" and "the nature and authority of Christ." For Parker, both are idols and both require demythologizing. Christology and scriptural theology form the battle lines of the Transcendentalist call for absolute religion in the work of Parker. Here, in "The Transient and Permanent," Parker

separates theology from religion, form from content, in a definitive way. Jesus is "divine" in the sense that he was more "God-conscious," sensitive to truth, and more radically human than anyone else before or since in history. Yet, Jesus is *merely* human, and "the authority of Jesus, as of all teachers, one would naturally think, must rest on the truth of his words, and not their truth on his authority" (*Works IV: 18*). As for the Old and New Testaments, "modern criticism is fast breaking to pieces this idol which men have made out of the scriptures."

It has been shown that here are the most different works thrown together; that their authors, wise as they sometimes were, pious as we feel often their spirit to have been, had only that inspiration which is common to other men equally pious and wise; that they were by no means infallible, but were mistaken in facts or in reasoning -- uttered predictions which time has not fulfilled; men who in some measure partook of the darkness and limited notions of their age, and were not always above its mistakes and corruptions. (*Works IV:15*)

Clearly, then, for Parker these transient theological concerns have little to do with true and absolute religion. Absolute religion is true, not because of "a living inspired Head, an infallible Church, [or] an authoritative Book," but because an individual consciousness perceives its truth as it does the axioms of geometry.³

The *end* of true Christianity or absolute religion as it is articulated in "The Transient and Permanent" "seems to be to make all men one with God as Christ was one with him; to bring them to such a state of obedience and

goodness that we shall think divine thoughts and feel divine sentiments, and so keep the law of God by living a life of truth and love." The *means* of absolute religion "are purity and prayer; getting strength from God, and using it for our fellow-men as well as ourselves" (*Works* IV:29). In other words, Parker argues for the primacy of the individual intuition. Parker does not elaborate on the nature of human consciousness and intuition in "The Transient and Permanent" but argues instead for the sacred quality of individuality and self-reliance:

Christianity lays no rude hand on the sacred particularity of the individual genius and character... But Christianity gives us the largest liberty of the sons of God; and were all men Christians after the fashion of Jesus, this variety would be a thousand times greater than now: for Christianity is not a system of doctrines, but rather a method of attaining oneness with God. (*Works* IV:30)

Clearly, this "method" of attaining oneness with God is the habit of introspection and the acknowledgment of dependence on God perceived but not comprehended as the infinite horizon against which all finite beings, including the human self, are comprehended.

In summary fashion, Parker establishes his "Christology of Consciousness." While owing its foundations to the Unitarian denial of the dogma of the Trinity (and, thus, the Incarnation), Parker's Christology reaches beyond that of his Unitarian forebears. As Leon Chai points out, Parker begins with the Unitarian adoptionist Christology, stressing the purely human quality of Jesus of Nazareth. Yet Parker reaches beyond his Unitarian forebears by

leaving behind Lockean empiricist epistemology and adopting the post-Kantian epistemology of Schleiermacher. Parker's move stresses a union of consciousness with God and not a hypostatic union as the source of real presence; Jesus' divinity is based on his overwhelming God-consciousness and not on a primordial "oneness of being" realist philosophers and theologians have called hypostatic union. Chai puts the point concisely when he says:

This radical Christology, made possible by the Unitarian interpretation of Christ as a human rather than divine figure, undergoes with Parker and his contemporary Emerson a transformation impossible to account for solely by the theology of Unitarianism itself, the sermons of William Ellery Channing or the professions of the Wares. By defining religion as a form of consciousness in a fashion similar to the early Schleiermacher, Parker can ascribe to Jesus a divinity based not upon his nature or essence but upon the mind's capacity for a clear and pure apprehension of the divine. (179-80)

In other words, the "divinity" of Jesus, the presence of God in Christ, is precisely that which is open to all human beings. The only difference in Jesus of Nazareth and the rest of humanity is the capacity of God-consciousness present; Jesus was possessed of greater capacity than anyone yet known in the history of humankind. Jesus was able to be with God in an immediate manner because of his acknowledgment of his utter dependence on the "Father." In other words, Jesus was fully attuned to the real presence of God in an unprecedented degree. Yet Parker maintains the same dynamic is at work in all persons:

As the result of this virgin purity of soul and perfect obedience, the light of God shone down into the very depths of his soul, bringing all of the Godhead which flesh can receive. He would have us do the same; worship with nothing between us and God; act, think, feel, live, in perfect obedience to him; and we never are *Christians* as he was the *Christ*, until we worship, as Jesus did, with no mediator, with nothing between us and the Father of all. He felt God's word was in him; that he was one with God. (*Works IV:30*)

Thus, Parker states that "the *Christianity holy men feel in the heart*, the Christ that is born within us, is always the same thing to each soul that feels it. This differs only in degree, and not in kind, from age to age, and man to man" (*Works IV:31*). Moreover, this God-consciousness for Parker (like Schleiermacher before him) makes possible the continuing redemptive activity among people, the reform of ecclesiastical bodies, and the reconstitution of society, in a radically individualized and naturalized manner (Welch 81). All persons are endowed with immediate access to the mind and will of God. It is the role of the minister of absolute religion to develop this God-consciousness in all persons, using whatever transient "forms" are efficacious.

Clearly, Parker betrays his radical optimism here. As Irving Howe has argued, the Transcendentalists (particularly Emerson and Parker) stake everything on intuitions of divinity found in human consciousness (Howe 8). For Parker more than for Emerson, however, the justification and efficacy for absolute religion can only be found in the reform of society, not merely the individual. Typical of Transcendentalist writers and, ironically, Puritan divines

of an earlier age,⁴ Parker catalogues eight functions of absolute religion which necessarily lead to social reform:

Real Christianity [absolute religion] gives men new life. It is the growth and perfect action of the holy spirit God puts into the sons of men. [1] It makes us outgrow any form or any system of doctrines we have devised, and approach still closer to the truth. [2] It would lead us to take what help we can find. [3] It would make the Bible our servant, not our master. [4] It would teach us to profit by the wisdom and piety of David and Solomon, but not to sin their sins, nor bow to their idols. [5] It would make us revere the holy words spoken by 'godly men of old,' but revere still more the word of God spoken through conscience, reason, and faith, as the holiest of all. [6] It would not make Christ the despot of the soul, but the brother of all men. [7] It would not tell us that even he had exhausted the fulness of God, so that he could create none greater; for with him 'all things are possible,' and neither the Old Testament nor the New Testament ever hints that creation exhausts the creator. [8] Still less would it tell us the wisdom, the piety, the love, the manly excellence of Jesus was the result of miraculous agency alone, but that it was won, like the excellence of humbler men, by faithful obedience to him who gave his son such ample heritage. It would point to him as our brother, who went before, like the good shepherd, to charm us with the music of his words, and the beauty of his life to tempt us up the steps of mortal toil, within the gate of heaven. (*Works* IV:32)

The final flourish of rhetoric in Parker's "Transient and Permanent" is spent in trumpeting the kingdom of God on earth, the social renovation of American society. It is more of a clarion call than a programmatic outline for social reform, yet the final point of the sermon makes it clear that "it is not so much by the Christ who lives so blameless and beautiful eighteen centuries ago that we are saved directly, but by the Christ we form in our hearts and live out in our daily life, that we save ourselves, God working with us both to will and

to do" (*Works* IV:33). The test for salvation, then, becomes the morality of the nation, not merely the morality of the self-reliant individual in the Emersonian mode.

A Discourse of Matters Pertaining to Religion

If "The Transient and Permanent in Christianity" can be called a first entrance into the fray between Unitarians and Transcendentalists, Parker's *A Discourse of Matters Pertaining to Religion* may be called his *Summa Theologiae*. Written in five books, the work takes up in a systematic way the anthropology, theological method, Christology, scriptural theology, and ecclesiology Parker worked out in defense against charges of heresy and atheism levelled at him by his Unitarian ministerial brethren.

Unlike "The Transient and Permanent," *Discourse of Religion* was not a surprise. Parker weighed in to the Unitarian-Transcendentalist debate fully on the side of the Transcendentalists with his South-Boston sermon. Reaction to his stand in the sermon was swift and vitriolic.⁵ In June 1841, Parker had "declined an invitation" from several prominent Boston Unitarian clergymen to explain his views. The invitation to deliver lectures before the public was renewed and accepted by Parker several months later. The *Discourse of Religion* began as a series of five lectures delivered at the Old Masonic Temple on Tremont Street in Boston. Thomas Wentworth Higginson points out each

lecture lasted approximately two hours, and, they were received enthusiastically.⁶ Later, these lectures of 1841-1842 were heavily annotated and expanded to their present form.

Over 450 pages in length, *A Discourse of Religion*⁷ restates the three major tenets of "Transient and Permanent" but also supplies a systematic foundation for the separation of form from content in absolute religion, the anthropology and subsequent Christology of Consciousness, and, finally, the reform of the church which leads to the reform of society.

By far the longest of the five books in *A Discourse* is the first, dealing with the theological anthropology. Beginning with a bold claim that "this institution of religion, like society, friendship, and marriage, comes out of a principle, deep and permanent in the constitution of man," Parker goes on to argue that the religious element in the human being is demonstrable in several ways (*Works* I:4). The two demonstrations Parker undertakes are, first, from the human experience of cognition and, second, from a philosophical-theological analysis of the faculties of human existence.

Parker notes that the "phenomenon of worship" or religious observance, in a wide variety of forms, is a universal of human existence. Moreover, this phenomenon is rooted in human cognition, not in some power or force outside of the human being.

We see the phenomena of worship and religious observances; of religious wants and actions to supply those wants. Work implies a hand that did, and a head that planned it. A sound induction from these facts, carries us back to a religious principle in man, though the induction does not determine the nature of this principle, except that it is the cause of these phenomena. (*Works* I:4-5)

For Parker, whether the "form" of worship is "gross or refined, in act, or word, or thought, or life," it is natural and quite indispensable from the definition of the human being. Moreover, in a rare move for a transcendentalist, Parker makes an "induction" (or a conclusion based on a method more suited to scientific investigation than intuition) from these facts that God exists. The very fact of experienced existents "implies a hand that did, and a head that planned it." In other words, based on the "notorious and universal nature" of the phenomenon of worship, it is reasonable and necessary to conclude that God exists. The induction, based on the data collected by observation of the phenomenon of worship, conveys precious little about God. Indeed Parker, like the early Schleiermacher, is caught within the bounds of human cognition alone and cannot claim any attributes of God beyond God's existence, God's absolute goodness, and God's immanence in creation. In language very close to that of Emerson, Parker articulates the powerful paradox found in human cognition, namely the apprehension of the infinite and the concomitant realization of the self as finite:

We find our circumference very near the center, everywhere. An exceedingly short radius measures all our strength. We can know

little of material things; nothing but their phenomena. As the circle of our knowledge widens its ring, we feel our ignorance on more numerous points, and the unknown seems greater than before. At the end of a toilsome life, we confess, with a great man of modern times, that we have wandered on the shore, and gathered here a bright pebble, and there a shining shell -- but an ocean of truth, boundless and unfathomed, lies before us, and all unknown. . . We feel an irresistible tendency to refer all outward things and ourselves with them, to a Power beyond us, sublime and mysterious, which we cannot measure, nor even comprehend. (*Works* I:5-6)

Clearly, for Parker, the "necessary induction" is a demand of human reason or cognition. Were one to resist making the induction and thereby deny the permanent religious element in the human being, then permanent and universal phenomena remain without an explanation and are unaccountable.

The second demonstration of the existence of God Parker undertakes is actually a discussion of the nature of the human being and is not restricted to an examination of human cognition alone. In vintage transcendentalist fashion, Parker traces the nature of the human being in from its observable "circumference," to the transcendent inner core.

Still further, we arrive at the same result from a philosophical analysis of man's nature. We set aside the body with its senses as the man's house, having doors and windows; we examine the understanding, which is his handmaid; we separate the affections which unite man with man; we discover the moral sense, by which we can discern between right and wrong as by the body's eye between black and white, or night and day; and behind all these, and deeper down, beneath all the shifting phenomena of life, we discover the RELIGIOUS ELEMENT OF MAN. (*Works* I:6-7)

This brief philosophical analysis of the faculties of the human being provides an anthropology in five parts. The "lowest" powers of the human being are those shared with other finite beings, namely embodiment. The five physical senses and the knowledge provided through these senses provide the "house, having doors and windows" to the interiority of the person. The "understanding," or faculty of analysis, coordinates, structures, and unifies sensory input for the human being.⁸ Moving further into the interior, the "affections" Parker sees as the faculty which unites one person to another. Moving still closer to the core, Parker asserts that a "moral sense" facilitates the discernment of right from wrong and is bound up with but distinct from the core of the human being, the "religious element" or faculty. This element is discovered as a "sense of dependence, of need, and of want" in every act of human cognition.

Taken together, the induction of God from the universality of worship and religious observance as well as the delineation of the philosophical anthropology, Parker forges a theological anthropology which is "naturalized" and "secularized." For Parker, the spiritual or religious faculty functions as the bodily or sensual faculties do: reason or intuition spontaneously "grasps" or apprehends (however imperfectly) that mysterious other on which the human being utterly depends. The senses reveal, grasp, and apprehend external things, independent of the self while consciousness reveals the absolute ground of the self and all beings.

Moreover, while outward, historical circumstances furnish the occasion in which the human being discovers his or her absolute ground, it is the intuition or power of consciousness which discovers the existence of God. "The knowledge of God's existence, therefore, may be called in the language of philosophy, an intuition of REASON; or in the mythological language of the elder theology, a REVELATION FROM GOD."

If the above statement be correct, then our belief in God's existence does not depend on the *a posteriori* argument, on considerations drawn from the order, fitness, and beauty discovered by observations made in the material world; nor yet on the *a priori* argument, on considerations drawn from the eternal nature of things, and observations made in the spiritual world. It depends primarily on no *argument* whatever; not on *reasoning* but *reason*. The fact is given outright, as it were, and comes to the man, as soon and as naturally, as the consciousness of his own existence, and is indeed logically inseparable from it, for we cannot be conscious of ourselves except as *dependent* beings. (*Works* I:11).

Parker notes that neither the recognition of the universality of religious worship nor the religious element at the core of human existence discloses the character, nature, or essence of the object on which the human being depends. Instead, the human conception of God, even under ideal circumstances, must fall short of the reality. Absolute and infinite mystery, after all, cannot be comprehended, only apprehended. "All conceptions of the human mind are conceived under the limitation of time and space; of dependence on a cause exterior to itself; while the Infinite is necessarily free from these limitations. . . ."

There is no conceivable ratio between the finite and infinite" (*Works* I:15).

Indeed, according to Parker, it is the limited capability of the human mind which gives rise to the variety of "revelations," theologies, and religious forms throughout history. "Our human personality gives a false modification to all our conceptions of the Infinite" (*Works* I:15-16).

If Parker is unwilling to define absolute religion within the limits of the partial revelations of Christian sects and transient dogmas of historical religions, he is also unwilling to concede that faith is unreasonable or purely sentimental:

But if, not resting in a merely sentimental consciousness of God, which is vague, and alone leads rather to pantheistic mysticism than to a *reasonable* faith, we take the fact given in our nature -- the primitive idea of God, as a being of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness involves no contradiction. This is, perhaps, the most faithful expression of the idea that words can convey. This language does not define the nature of God, but distinguishes our idea of him, from all other ideas and conceptions whatever. . . . The idea is the substance; the conception a transient phenomenon, which at best only imperfectly represents the substance. (*Works* I:16-17)

For Parker, the religious and moral elements of the human being mutually involve each other in practice; "neither can attain a perfect development without the other; but they are yet as distinct from one another as the faculties of sight and hearing, or memory and imagination" (*Works* I:7 note). The religious faculty impels the human being to relate to God and implicitly to worship in some form. The "moral sense" or faculty impels the

human being to respect the human "other" as one possessed of the same faculty of God-consciousness. Without "a moral faculty, we could have no duties in respect to men; without a religious faculty, no duties in respect of God. The foundation of each is in man, not out of him" (*Works* I:18). In other words, it is clearly irrational or unreasonable to suppress or radically separate the religious faculty from the moral faculty. The only legitimate response the human being can make after the "discovery" of the religious element is "reverence." In the same manner, the only legitimate response a person can make with regard to the moral sense in reverence for a fellow human being. With regard to the infinite, mysterious God, "this reverence may ascend into trust, hope, and love, which is according to its nature; or descend into doubt, fear, and hate, which is against its nature: it thus rises or falls, as it coexists in the individual, with wisdom and goodness, or with ignorance and vice" (*Works* I:32). Thus, in the very definition of absolute religion, Parker implies a great deal about morality and human interaction. Here one finds the foundation of Parker's drive to social reform. For Parker, God-consciousness and the moral law must be embodied (better: "incarnated") in the daily practical activities as well as the social structures created by human beings in order for them to live lives of integrity. Parker's connection of the ethical impulse and the religious element in the human being is more radical than that of Emerson or other American Transcendentalists.

Parker defines absolute religion in *A Discourse* as "VOLUNTARY OBEDIENCE TO THE LAW OF GOD, INWARD AND OUTWARD OBEDIENCE to that law he has written on our nature, revealed in various ways through instinct, reason, conscience, and the religious emotions" (*Works* I:33). It is important to note that true religion requires *voluntary* (meaning self-conscious and free) obedience. Moreover, the obedience to the law of God is both an inward obedience to the laws of human nature set out in the anthropology, as well as an outward obedience in the behavior one has with regard to other creatures, especially other human beings. Clearly for Parker, the call to inward and outward obedience to the laws of God result in two tendencies or "impulses" in absolute religion, one theological and the other moral:

Now there are two tendencies connected with religion, one is speculative: here the man is intellectually employed in matters pertaining to religion, to God, to man's religious nature, and his relation and connection with God. The result of this tendency is theology. This is not religion itself. It is men's thought about religion; the philosophy of divine things; the science of religion. . . . The other tendency is practical; here the man is employed in acts of obedience to religion. The result of this tendency is morality. This alone is not religion itself, but one part of the life religion demands. . . . Morality is the harmony between man's action and the natural law of God. It is a part of religion which includes it 'as the sea her waves.' In its highest form morality doubtless implies religious emotions, but not necessarily the self-consciousness thereof. (*Works* I:34-36)

Clearly, theological reflection on the human being's innate God-consciousness as well as service of God and humanity are the two hallmarks of Parker's absolute religion. While these hallmarks do not define religion, they are necessarily implied by the existence of the religious faculty. Curiously, while Parker distrusts dogmatic theology, the theology of popular religion, and the contemporary theology of the pulpit, he sees such theological reflection as a necessary dynamic in true religion. Moreover, in distinction to many of his Protestant forebears, Parker lays enormous emphasis on the "acts of righteousness" and lived morality as a necessary component of true religion. And, unlike Emerson, Parker was not content only to play the role of the isolated sage or prophet who remains safe at a distance. If religion did not issue change and "newness" and justice in history, then it was merely idolatry.

In the second book of *A Discourse*, Parker traces a theological method appropriate for his definition of absolute religion. The irony of a theologian who radically distrusts dogmatic formulations and theological systems and who at the same time develops a method of theological reflection, no matter how intuitive, is apparent in the career of Theodore Parker. Yet Parker succeeds, more than any other American theological reformer of his age, in changing the starting point for theological reflection and perhaps even the religious practice of nineteenth-century American Unitarians by laying the foundation of religion within the human being. Absolute religion or the consciousness of God cannot

be grounded in *a posteriori* arguments drawn from the order, fitness, and beauty of the universe as the medieval Schoolmen and eighteenth-century realists argued. Neither can efficacious *a priori* deductive arguments be mounted for the existence of God. Rather, for Parker, knowledge of God's existence and true religion must always come through the intuition or self-consciousness which perceives itself as limited consciousness as distinguished from infinite consciousness. As absolute preconditions for true religion, Parker states that there must be "a religious faculty in man, and God out of man as the object of that religious faculty" (*Works* I:141). For Parker, all theological and moral reflection stems from the awareness of these preconditions.

For Parker, method in theological reflection necessarily implies the anthropology discussed above. Religion is not a matter of accepting as true certain dogmas but of examining and interpreting human experience in the correct way. In order to determine what the human being should predicate of God and how the human being should act in the world, and so relate to God and God's creation, Parker develops an analogy modelled on the immanence of God in human consciousness. "From the idea of him [God intuited as Infinite Power, Wisdom, Justice, Love and Holiness] it follows that he is immanent in the world, however much he also transcends the world" (*Works* I:152). Just as God is the infinite horizon and mystery against which the human consciousness perceives himself or herself and all other existents and is therefore the ground

of human consciousness or human-being-in-the-world, so God is the ground of nature:

There is no spot the foot of hoary time has trod on but it is instinct with God's activity. He is the ground of nature; what is permanent in the passing; what is real in the apparent. All nature then is but an exhibition of God to the senses; the veil of smoke on which his shadow falls; the dew-drop in which the heaven of his magnificence is poorly imaged. . . . Endless and without beginning flows forth the stream of divine influence that encircles and possesses the all of things. (*Works* I:152-53)

"Newness" and change are constantly encountered in the material world because God continues to emerge through creation. All existents, then, are perpetually active because the divine influence is immanent within each and, thus, creation as a whole. For Parker, creatures are "fitted" to receive and to express God's ongoing influence. Creation is made in the image and likeness of God insofar as it expresses and reveals the divine infinitude in a finite, limited manner:

He is immanent therein [in matter, creation] and perpetually active. Now, to go further, if this be true, it would seem that the various objects and things in nature were fitted to express and reveal different degrees and measures of the divine influence, so to say; that this degree of manifestation in each depends on the capacity which God has primarily bestowed upon it; that the material but inorganic, the vegetable but inanimate, and the animal but irrational world, received each as high a mode of divine influence as its several natures would allow. (*Works* I:154)

Parker makes two important points here. First, he assumes a "hierarchy of beings" ranging from the "material but inorganic" creatures such as

molecules and crystals, to the embodied self-consciousness of human existence. With varying degrees of capacity, each finite creature both receives the "influence" of God and reveals or manifests this divine influence. Each creature, then, is a symbol of the infinite according to its capacity. Second, and more important for explaining Parker's latent sacramentality as well as the importance of justice and moral behavior, God's immanence in the world is concretized and made manifest in the symbol that each creature is for the attentive, God-conscious human being. This is the essence and foundation of Parker's notion of "real presence." Finite creatures both conceal and reveal the divine influence. If the human being, the most divinely "influenced" creature, symbolizes or imitates the infinite God according to its limited self-consciousness in an imperfect manner, then all creatures of less capacity reveal God in some manifest, albeit less clear, manner. Moreover, in their acts of being, finite creatures are both present and, in the language of a twentieth-century transcendentalist, self-present, possessing a luminosity of being.⁹ In a gesture of Kantian epistemological restraint, Parker states that "I will not say there is not, in the abstract, as much of divine influence in a *wheat-straw* as in a *world*. But in reference to ourselves there *appear* to be *various degrees* of it" (*Works* I:154, note 2).

Clearly, Parker understands the human being as the only creature known to be self-conscious and aware of this divine influence. "Other creatures have

no consciousness, so far as we know, at least, nothing which is the same with our self-consciousness" (*Works* I:156). This fact has several important ramifications for Parker's theological method. First, because creatures which do not possess self-consciousness are not free but compelled by instinct and natural drives, it is clear that they possess no moral faculty:

They have no moral will; no power in general to do otherwise than as they do. Their action is not the result of forethought, reflection, judgment, voluntary obedience to an acknowledged law. No one supposes the bison, the rosebush, and the moon, reflect in themselves; make up their mind and say, 'Go to, now, let us bring up our young, or put forth our blossoms, or give light at nightfall, because it is right to do so, and God's law.' Their obedience is unavoidable. They do what they cannot help doing. Their obedience is not their merit, but their necessity. It is power they passively yield to; not a duty they voluntarily and consciously perform. (*Works* I:156)

Second, if there is no moral faculty in such creatures, it is equally clear that no religious faculty exists in them. Only the human being is capable of truly spiritual acts and this is because of the religious faculty or self-consciousness. Finite self-conscious beings possess the moral faculty and the religious faculty and thus reveal the Creator in every act of willing and thinking. Yet finite non-self-conscious beings reveal the immanence of God, not to themselves but to human beings. Reversing the direction of the analogy, Parker states that "if God be present in matter, the analogy is that he is also present in man. . . . As in nature his influence was modified only by the capacities of material things, so here must it be modified only by the capacities

of spiritual things" (*Works* I:161). It is only the human being which knows and feels dependence on the infinite and, thus, only the human being can consciously imitate God by freely choosing to act morally. Though Parker never states it, the implication is clear: the human being is the "real presence" of God and human acts of justice are "sacraments" of the divine presence.

Parker makes this "theological method of dependence" analogous to the way humans work with each other and other creatures:

By the religious consciousness we feel the want of some assured support to depend on, who has infinite wisdom to provide for us, infinite goodness to cherish us; as we must know the will of him on whom we depend, and thus determine what is religious truth, and religious duty, in order that we may do that duty, receive that truth, obey that will, and thus obtain rest for the soul. (*Works* I:168-69)

In other words human beings attentive to their dependence upon God perceive that dependence of all other creatures and should act in a reverent and beneficent manner toward them.

Finally, Parker takes up the issue of inspiration or "prophetic vision." Parker argues for a universal, infallible, but radically individualized method of ongoing revelation through inspiration in this second book of *A Discourse*. In his definition of theological method (better: the method of true religion), Parker's concern with the "naturalness" of the method is manifest. Just as human sensual and material desires find fulfillment, so spiritual drives and desires imply satisfaction:

Now the force of the analogy is this -- it leads us to expect such a natural satisfaction for spiritual wants, as we have for the humbler wants. The very wants themselves imply the satisfaction; soon as we begin to act, there awakes by nature a sentiment of God. Reason gives us a distinct idea of him, and from this idea also it follows that he must supply these wants. (*Works* I:170)

Parker calls this theory "spiritualism," distinguishing it from "the rationalistic view or naturalism" on the one hand and the "anti-rationalistic view or supernaturalism" on the other, the former referring to the Protestant tradition culminating in Unitarianism and the latter referring to the Catholic tradition.¹⁰ In the final analysis, for Parker, the faulty foundations of naturalism and supernaturalism are the same: both deny "that by natural action there can be any thing in man which was not first in the senses; whatever transcends the senses can come to him only by a miracle" (*Works* I:183). Clearly, the tendency of rationalistic Protestantism is skepticism and the denial of miraculous events while that of supernaturalistic Catholicism is emphasis on God's miraculous intervention in history.

The natural-religious view or spiritualism "teaches that the world is not nearer to our bodies than God is to the soul," that inspiration is no miracle "but a regular mode of God's action on conscious spirit, as gravitation on unconscious matter" (*Works* I:190-91). Here again, immanence is the issue for Parker. The immanence of God is known internally through reflection on

human self-consciousness and known by others through inspired and humane action.

Expanding upon a previous point, Parker argues that all creatures imitate God the creator according to their capacities. Human self-consciousness, as the apex of creation, is open to a privileged form of divine influence which Parker calls "inspiration," which is what more traditional theologians mean by revelation. In humanity, just as in the rest of creation, divine influence is limited by capacity. "Man cannot, more than matter, exist without God"; inspiration, like divine influence in general, must be everywhere the same thing in kind. However, Parker asserts that inspiration "differs in degree, from race to race, from man to man."

The degree of inspiration must depend on two things; first, on the natural ability, the particular intellectual, moral, and religious endowment, or genius, wherewith each man is furnished by God; and next, on the use each man makes of this endowment. In one word, it depends on the man's quantity of being, and his quantity of obedience. (*Works* I:194)

It is doubtful whether Parker was aware of any latent racism or colonialist tendencies in his assessment of inspiration. What cannot be doubted, however, is Parker's abhorrence of slavery as well as the institutionalized repression of women and immigrants. For Parker, absolute religion is the faithful use of one's natural powers; obedience to one's nature as a spiritual being embodied in the world. In his view, some cultures and races have

exceeded others in the development of their capacity for inspiration. The same holds true for individuals within a given culture. For Parker, each human being is potentially a prophet of this absolute religion. Parker stresses the *use* or "quality of obedience" to one's nature more than natural ability or "quantity of being." "The man of humble gifts at first, by faithful obedience may attain a greater degree than one of larger outfit, who neglects his talent. . . Inspiration, then, is the consequence of a faithful use of our faculties" (*Works* I:194).

Parker stresses as well that while inspiration is universal and infallible in the abstract, it is limited by its presence in particular human beings. "Now universal infallible inspiration can of course only be the attendant and result of a perfect fulfilment of all the laws of mind, of the moral, affectional and religious nature; and as each man's faculties are limited, it is not possible to men" (*Works* I:195). Inspiration, like religion, reveals itself in various forms, "modified by the country, character, education, [and] peculiarity of him who receives it." Clearly, Parker sees Jesus of Nazareth in this light, that is, as a prophet of absolute religion without pretensions to universal infallible inspiration.

This method in theological reflection is radically dependent upon the anthropology laid out in the first book. In turn, the third book of *A Discourse*, "The Relation of the Religious Element to Jesus of Nazareth, or a Discourse on Christianity," forms the reflection on Christology of Parker's critical theology

and is based on this final point in book two, that all inspiration, all revelation is partial and overcome in the progress of human consciousness toward absolute consciousness.

Early in book three, Parker reviews the method of theological reflection he has developed in the second book. Clearly, for him, method in theology is fundamentally the anthropology and the key to the anthropology is human self-consciousness which, in turn, he identifies with the religious faculty. For Parker, the method of acquiring knowledge of absolute religion is straightforward and infinitely more trustworthy than more traditional methods of theological reflection:

The method of acquiring a knowledge of absolute religion is plain and easy, but to get a knowledge of the doctrine taught by any teacher of ancient times is more difficult. This, however, may be said in general, that there are three sources of knowledge accessible to men, two of these are direct, and one indirect. First, perception through the senses; by this we only get an acquaintance with material things and their properties. Second, intuition through intellect, conscience, the religious faculty, by which we get an acquaintance with spiritual things, which are not objects of sense. Third, reflection, a mental process, by which we unfold what is contained or implied or suggested in perceptions or intuitions. Then as a secondary, but not ultimate source, there is testimony, by which we learn what others have found out through perception, intuition, or reflection. (*Works* I:219)

The burden of the third book is an examination of the life and teaching of Jesus of Nazareth in order to answer two questions: "Is Christianity the absolute religion?" and "Did Jesus of Nazareth teach absolute religion?" (*Works*

I:214). True to form, Parker asserts that "absolute religion is independent of all circumstances" and if historical Christianity is to be identified as absolute religion, it must likewise supersede all time-bound and cultural limitations. Clearly, historical Christianity fails the test; historical Christianity cannot be identified with absolute religion. Yet, Parker is much more cautious in answering the second question.

In his assessment of Jesus, Parker's task is twofold: "to avoid traditional prejudice" or the reverence and idolatry of Jesus, and "to get at the facts" (*Works* I:264). His aim in answering the question of whether Jesus taught absolute religion is to separate historical Christianity from the self-consciousness and character of Jesus. Parker notes four major limitations of Jesus' character. First, Jesus "shared the erroneous notions of the times respecting devils, possessions, and demonology in general; respecting the character of God, and the eternal punishment he prepares for the devil and his angels, and for a large part of mankind." Second, Jesus "was mistaken in his interpretation of the Old Testament" with respect to the facts and the veracity of the various literatures contained in the Hebrew national story. Third, Jesus is "said to be an enthusiast, who hoped to found a visible kingdom in Judea, by miraculous aid." And, finally, Jesus "denounces his opponents in no measured terms; calls Pharisees 'hypocrites' and 'children of the devil'" (*Works* I:264-66). Clearly, the point Parker makes is that Jesus was a man of his times, with

all the attendant limitations, living out a prophetic life in a "nation above all others distinguished for their superstition, for national pride, exaltation of themselves and contempt for all others" (*Works* I:268).

Yet, the "Excellences of Jesus," the positive side of his character, furnishes a picture of the religion of Jesus which approximates absolute religion. The religion of Jesus, while only a partial revelation of absolute religion, illustrates three essential qualities of absolute religion. First, the religious teachings of Jesus "allow men to advance indefinitely beyond him. He does not foreclose human consciousness against the income of new truth, nor make any one fact of human history a bar to the development of human nature" (*Works* I:258). In other words, the religion Jesus practiced did not limit revelation to the Law and the Prophets of the Old Testament. Rather, Parker understands Jesus' challenge to the Law and his assumption of the mantle of prophecy as "consistent with reason, conscience and the religious faculty" (*Works* I:259). Revelation or inspiration was found for Jesus in the self-consciousness despite his Jewish piety. Second, Jesus' teaching "is not a system of theological or moral doctrines, but a method of religion and life. It lays down no positive creed to be believed in; commands no ceremonial action to be done; it would make the man perfectly obedient to God, leaving his thoughts and actions for reason and conscience to govern" (*Works* I:260). Here again, it is clear that Parker understands the method of theological reflection to be that

of self-consciousness, not dogmatic theology. Finally, the religion of Jesus points to absolute religion because "it differs from others in its eminently practical character. It counts a manly life better than saying 'Lord, Lord;' puts mercy before sacrifice, and pronounces a gift to man better than a gift to God" (*Works* I:261). Jesus reached out to public sinners, outcasts, and foreigners, thus annihilating national and family boundaries.

In sum, although Parker understands Jesus as merely human, it is clear that Jesus of Nazareth fulfilled the fundamental requirements of absolute religion (love of God and love of humanity) despite his cultural limitations. For Jesus, "love of God was no abstraction. It implied love of wisdom, justice, purity, goodness, holiness, charity. To love these is to love God, to *love* them is to *live* them. It implies abhorrence of evil for its own sake; a desire and effort to be as perfect as God" (*Works* I:233). Moreover, love of humanity is essentially practical and fundamentally oriented toward social change:

The other doctrine, love of man, is love of all as yourself, not because they have no faults, but in spite thereof. To feel no enmity towards enemies; to labor for them with love; pray for them with pitying affections, remembering the less they deserve, the more they need; this was the doctrine of love. It demands that the rich, the wise, the holy, help the poor, the foolish, the sinful; that the strong bear the burdens of the weak, not bind them on anew. It tells a man that his excellence and ability are not for himself alone, but for all mankind, of which he is but one, beginning first with the most needy. It makes the strong the guardians, not tyrants of the weak. It said: Go to the publicans and sinners, and call them to repentance; go to men trodden down by the hoof of the oppressor, rebuke him lovingly, but snatch the

spoil from his bloody teeth; go to men sick with desolation, covered all over with the leprosy of sin, bowed together and squalid with their inveterate disease, bid them live and sin no more. . . It would improve men's circumstances. It does not say alone, with piteous whine -- God save the wicked and the weak, but puts its own shoulder to work; divides its raiment and shares its loaf. (*Works* I:233-34)

The fourth and fifth books of *A Discourse* take up topics in biblical theology and church structure or ecclesiology respectively. While these books elaborate and expand upon the positions already taken by Parker, it is in "The Conclusion" that Parker articulates the connection between religion, morality and social reform.

In the conclusion, Parker argues three points. First, he reiterates that the theological method of popular or historical Christianity is false "for it does not prove its facts historically, or verify its conclusions philosophically" (*Works* I:440). Instead, the method of popular theology is to make idols of the Bible and the person of Jesus; it assumes but does not prove that the Church is divinely instituted and that the Bible is privileged with a special inspiration; and finally it employs "several important aphorisms" as if they were established truths.¹¹ Second, he argues that while the process of the Reformation remains incomplete, it remains a most important endeavor. According to Parker, the Reformation began the process of democratizing religion by disestablishing institutional control over the doctrines and the practice of faith. It located the

power of interpretation and the development of meaning within the individual human consciousness. He laments:

We have freedom in civil affairs, can revise our statutes, change the administration, or amend the constitution. Have we freedom in theological affairs, to revise, change, amend a vicious theology? We have always been doing it, but only by halves, not looking at the foundation of the matter. (*Works* I:441)

For Parker, this second point is most important. "Good sense" has been employed in a wide variety of human endeavors, including "agriculture, commerce, manufactures, and with distinguished success; but not in theology" (*Works* I:441). The underlying assumptions in his argument are two: (1) he assumes that individual consciousness, though finite, cannot yield great error over time; improvement of the human condition is inevitable with the transcendental method; and (2) he assumes absolute truth as a goal demands a democratic approach to human life in general and religion in particular. Ironically for this transcendentalist, the verification of truth is a method modelled after the scientific method:

We make improvements in science and art every year. Men survey the clouds, note the variations of the magnetic needle, analyze rocks, waters, soils, and do not fear truth shall hurt them though it make Hipparchus and Cardan unreadable. Our method of theology is false no less than these assumptions. . . . The popular theology does not aim to prove absolute religion, but a system of doctrines made chiefly of words. (*Works* I:441-42)

For Parker, true democracy and absolute religion are not contradictory notions.

Absolute truth, absolute religion guarantee an absolute standard of conduct, of verification, and of theological assertions.

Finally, Parker urges a change in focus away from the popular theology and its method to a concentration on public virtue as it is revealed in the political, commercial, and social aspects of life. If religion is the love of God and man, then Parker asks if religion is "the basis of action within us:"

Coming away from the theology of our time, and looking at the public virtue, as revealed in our life, political, commercial, and social, and seeing things as they are, we must come to this conclusion; either Christianity -- considered as the absolute religion -- is false and utterly detestable, or else modern society, in its basis and details, is wrong, very wrong. There is no third conclusion possible. Religion demands a divine life; society one mean and earthy. Religion says -- its great practical maxim -- [']We that are strong ought to bear the burdens of the weak[']; society [says], [']We that are strong must make the weak bear our burdens, and do this daily.['] The strong do not always compel the weak as heretofore, with a sword, nor violently bind them mainly in fetters of iron; they compel with an idea, and chain with manacles unseen, but felt. Men most eminent in defense of the popular theology are loudest in support of American slavery. Hell and slavery are their favorite dogmas! (*Works* I:443-44)

Clearly, the indictment Parker levels at popular theology and the religious practice it produces is hypocrisy. For Parker, to leave authority and righteousness to Church or government institutions, to abandon a "divine manliness" or self-reliance based on the intuitions of self-consciousness is to sew the seeds of destruction in human life in political, commercial, and social

endeavors. After *A Discourse*, Parker placed more and more emphasis on the institution of slavery, education, women's rights and other issues of social reform in his lectures and sermons. In 1847, Parker reaches the height of this rhetorical crescendo with regard to slavery in *A Letter to the People of the United States*. In this open letter, Parker establishes himself as one self-reliant American thinker among others, a minister who holds up a choice to his peers (*Works* XI). Slavery became the great social sin of America and in his critique, Parker indicates the American loss of true religion and abandonment to vicious idols of commercial gain and easy, flaccid faith.

Parker was first a theological radical who, like Emerson, rejected the foundational orthodox doctrines of Christianity. Yet he was a ministerial "moderate" who, unlike Emerson, saw the need to preach to the burgeoning middle-class entrepreneurs in order to win them to the cause of social reform. His social and political radicalism stems from his commitment to absolute religion and is of a nineteenth-century, middle-class variety. Still, Parker's voice was able to be heard by a wider audience than those of Wendell Phillips or William Lloyd Garrison. This may be due not so much to superior scholarship (although Parker was in fact notorious as a formidable scholar) as to the fact that Parker's rhetoric combines the images and ideals of early nineteenth-century America with the all-consuming but democratizing tendencies of the Puritan ethic. The American jeremiad was Parker's rhetorical

strategy and while it put him in considerable personal danger, he goaded the collective conscience of the United States as only a minister or prophet can.¹²

Parker consciously took the mantle of the prophet in his preaching. His sermons reveal a religion of the heart as much as what he chose to call a religion of reasonableness. Moreover, Parker held that true religion should and necessarily would affect the actions human beings undertake. While qualifications are necessary, it is remarkable to note that Parker found a sacramentality latent within the world much like that of Jonathan Edwards. Both Edwards and Parker (as well as many other American Transcendentalists) searched for the real presence of God in the mundane and the commonplace. As Perry Miller states, "What is persistent from the covenant theology to Edwards and to Emerson [and Emerson's contemporaries] is the Puritan's effort to confront, face to face, the image of a blinding divinity in the physical universe without the immediacy of ritual ceremony, of the Mass and the confessional."¹³

Although Emerson left the pulpit, Parker continued to use the sermon as his medium. With Parker, rhetoric becomes a "sacramental" ritual in the jeremiad. Critical as he was of contemporary pulpit ministry, Parker maintained that sermons have an efficacious, salutary effect on listeners.

Clearly, however, Parker's message was not merely to "build up" the reign of God on earth but, first, to tear down and destroy idol worship and the

false morality such worship generates. In *The American Jeremiad*, Sacvan

Bercovitch points out that

the American Puritan jeremiad was the ritual of a culture on an errand -- which is to say, a culture based on a faith in process. Substituting teleology for hierarchy, it discarded the Old World ideal of stasis for a New World vision of the future. Its function was to create a climate of anxiety that helped release the restless 'progressivist' energies required for the success of the venture. . . . It made anxiety its end as well as its means. Crisis was the social norm it sought to inculcate. The very concept of errand, after all, implied a state of *unfulfillment*. The future, though divinely assured, was never quite there, and New England's Jeremiahs set out to provide the sense of insecurity that would assure the outcome. Denouncing and affirming, their vision fed on the distance between promise and fact. (23)

Parker's sermons move to the core issues of social injustice in nineteenth-century America. Slavery, intemperance, the marginalization of the poor (especially the immigrant poor), the paucity of free and compulsory education, and political corruption are the topics reserved for Parker's most withering attacks. He created a climate of anxiety and provoked a sense of responsibility in all who would listen while at the same time he pointed to a future Church and United States of America which he called "manly" and "free" or, to use the Emersonian expression, self-reliant.

NOTES

1. In 1840, under the pseudonym "Levi Blodgett," Parker had written a humorous and stirring defense of the Transcendentalist break with Andrews Norton's Unitarianism. But circumstances and the pseudonymous nature of the open letter precluded a public uproar.
2. Theodore Parker, "The Transient and Permanent in Christianity" in *The Works of Theodore Parker, Centenary Edition* Vol. IV, ed. George Willis Cooke (Boston: American Unitarian Association, 1908). Hereafter cited as *Works IV*.
3. See Frances Power Cobbe, "Preface by the Editor" in *A Discourse of Matters Pertaining to Religion* in *The Collected Works of Theodore Parker* (London: N. Trübner & Co., 1866) I:xvi.
4. See Lawrence Buell, *Literary Transcendentalism: Style and Vision in the American Renaissance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1973) 126. Buell points out that while Parker's arguments are much tighter than Emerson's, he still uses a "catalogue" rhetoric, piling up "multiple and far-ranging examples" to prove his points. The irony is, of course, that for a thinker who professes to rely on intuition and consciousness as the incontrovertible ground for his assertions, Parker betrays a "farm-boy's trust in the power of knowledge" (61) in "evidence" and logical argumentation.
5. For a detailed description of the controversy, see William R. Hutchison, *The Transcendentalist Ministers: Church Reform in the New England Renaissance* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1959) 108-120. See also John Weiss, *Life and Correspondence of Theodore Parker* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1864) I:176-77.
6. Thomas Wentworth Higginson, "Editor's Preface" in *A Discourse of Matters Pertaining to Religion*, Vol. I of *The Works of Theodore Parker, Centenary Edition* (Boston: American Unitarian Association, 1907).

7. Theodore Parker, *A Discourse of Matters Pertaining to Religion* in *The Works of Theodore Parker, Centenary Edition*, Vol. I, ed. Thomas Wentworth Higginson (Boston: American Unitarian Association, 1907). Hereafter cited as *Works I*.
8. See Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, 2 vols., *The Collected Work of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. James Engell and W. Jackson Bate, Bollingen Series LXXV (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983) and Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Nature* in vol. I and "The Poet" in vol. III in *The Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, intro. Robert E. Spiller, 3 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971-1983). Both Coleridge and Emerson anticipate Parker's transcendental turn to the self and make the distinction between "understanding" or analysis on the one hand and "reason" or intuition on the other hand. Coleridge argues the point in terms of primary and secondary imagination in the thirteenth chapter of the *Biographia Literaria*, while Emerson argues the point throughout *Nature* and "The Poet."
9. See Karl Rahner, *Hearers of the Word*, trans. Michael Richards (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969). See especially chapter 3. It is important to note that while Rahner develops his transcendentalism through a synthesis of Thomistic realism and Heideggerian phenomenology, Parker develops his transcendentalism under the influence of German Idealism and American pragmatic thought.
10. It should be noted that this distinction is not ironclad. Parker is aware that the Protestant tradition has had its share of mystics. He gives John Huss (1369?-1415) and Martin Luther (1483-1546) as two examples (*Works I*:196, 199). Radically reductionistic naturalism results, for Parker, in the skepticism of Hume and a vapid Deism. On the other hand, Parker sees that such skepticism was a necessary antidote to the mysticism and supernaturalism of the Catholic tradition. The anti-rationalistic view, or "supernaturalism," distances God from creation, resulting in human despair of substantive change and development. Yet, supernaturalism's strength as a method in theology is that it admits a qualified immanence of God in nature, a sacramental presence.
11. Parker names nine dubious aphorisms which have become the foundation of dogmatic theology in the popular pulpit Christianity of his day: "Man under the light of nature is not capable of discovering the moral and religious truth needed for his moral and religious welfare; there must be a personal and miraculous mediator between each man and God; a life of blameless obedience to the law of man's nature will not render us acceptable to God, and insure our well-being in the next life; we need a superhuman being to bear our sins, through whom alone we are saved; Jesus of Nazareth is that superhuman, and miraculous, and sin-reconciling mediator; the doctrine he taught is revealed religion; an external and contingent miracle is the only proof of an eternal and necessary truth in morals or religion; God formerly

transcended the laws of nature and made a miraculous revelation of some truth; he does not now inspire men as formerly."

12. See Sacvan Bercovitch, *The American Jeremiad* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978). Bercovitch argues convincingly that the purpose of this type of sermon from colonial times forward was "to direct an imperiled people of God toward the fulfillment of their destiny, to guide them individually toward salvation, and collectively toward the American city of God." Like the ancient Hebrew prophets, these ministers created a climate of anxiety in order to release "the restless energies required for the success of the venture," namely, the continuation of the American Revolution after colonial times (9, 23).

13. Perry Miller, *Errand into the Wilderness* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1956) 185.

CHAPTER FOUR

PROPHETIC UTTERANCES ON THE REFASHIONING OF SOCIETY IN SELECTED SERMONS AND ADDRESSES

"In many and various ways," states the author of the Letter to the Hebrews, "God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets" (Hebrews 1:1). For that anonymous author as well as for Theodore Parker the prophetic office, most poignantly exemplified by the "high priesthood" of Jesus of Nazareth, outshines any cultic or levitical priesthood because true prophetic office challenges the dominant social ideology imbedded in the currently reigning articulations of religion and society. Receiving and then putting on the mantle of prophecy is not a duty lightly undertaken. For Parker, "manly christianity" meant refashioning the dominant entrepreneurial ideology of manhood and thus challenging the political status quo. As stated already, the source of Parker's ideology of manhood and the source of his strength in the promotion of his ideology was his commitment to absolute religion.

For Parker, absolute religion's most salient characteristics include (1) an anthropology which is radically God-conscious; (2) a sense of utter dependence on God; (3) the acknowledgment, development, use, and enjoyment of all human faculties; and (4) piety (love of God) and the moral life (the practical love of humanity). Moreover, his foundational principles of ministry are two in number: to tell all the truth, especially in preaching, and to promote goodness or social morality in practical ways.

Parker's commitment to absolute religion and his ministerial principles are best seen in his own articulations of the nature of ministry and in the practical applications of these principles he made with regard to the great social issues of his day. What follows in this chapter, after a brief examination of his understanding of the nature of professional ministry, is an extended discussion of Parker's application of absolute religion and his foundational ministerial principles in sermons and addresses concerning public education, the role of women in American society, and the social classes within the American Republic.

Two Emblematic Sermons on the Nature of Ministry

The proper place to begin a discussion of Parker's sermons is, appropriately enough, with the fifth lamentation or jeremiad of the prophet Jeremiah. Like the Hebrew prophet, Parker's mission or errand is to "pluck up

and to break down, to destroy and overthrow, to build up and to plant" (Jeremiah 1:10). The fifth lamentation signals the prophet's most violent and dramatic internal crisis. Yet, it should be noted that this internal crisis replicates the political crisis of Judah, the southern kingdom, which (unlike Israel, the northern kingdom) has remained free from foreign domination and has been recently purged of apostasy and idol worship. Commissioned by God for an errand to Judah, Jeremiah finds himself despised and under threat of ignominious death for his support of Yahwism and its political implications for Judah. Jeremiah finally cries to God:

O LORD, thou hast seduced me,
 and I was seduced;
 thou art stronger than I,
 and thou hast prevailed.
 I have become a laughingstock all the day;
 everyone mocks me.
 For whenever I speak, I cry out,
 I shout 'Violence and destruction!'
 For the word of the LORD has become for me
 a reproach and derision all day long.
 If I say, 'I will not mention him,
 or speak any more in his name,'
 there is in my heart as it were a burning fire
 shut up in my bones,
 and I am weary holding it in, and I cannot.¹

Threatened by those to whom he is sent and "seduced" by God into this errand of religious and political reform (an errand into the political wilderness as Judah is caught in a political vice by Egypt and Babylon), the prophet

justifiably feels trapped.² Clearly, the prophet laments not only his personal danger but also the efficacy of the errand to what is left of the Chosen People, the remnant of Judah.

Parker carries on the jeremiad tradition in his preaching by continually recalling to the minds of his hearers the "present nadir of iniquity, seeing the spiritual golden age both as prior and as prospective."³ Though Parker's emphasis remains on the future prospects "guaranteed" by eschatological fulfillment, he is aware of and uses typological parallels of the biblical past, particularly those represented by the prophets in crisis situations. Many of Parker's sermons are essentially political in nature, though clearly his aims are two: to make his hearers aware that absolute religion is available to them and offer practical challenge to the status quo of both ecclesiastical and governmental establishments. Like the Puritans before him, Parker understood that "theology was wedded to politics and politics to the progress of the kingdom of God" (Bercovitch, xiv). Moreover, though "absolute religion" is a term contemporary with his time, Parker believed the permanent in religion, the very core of religion, to be the substance of the preaching of the true prophets in every age. Preaching, for Parker, was a political act and is fraught with danger. In his preaching, then, Parker not only articulates the apostasy made manifest through the social sins of the people in the unworthy present, he

places himself in harm's way, choosing to take the public role of rejected yet compelling prophet.

The range of Parker's topics for his sermons is so broad that it is perhaps somewhat presumptive to argue for representative examples of his jeremiads.⁴ Yet two sermons stand out as emblematic of Parker's understanding of Christian ministry in the service of absolute religion: "A Sermon of My own Stewardship" delivered sometime in late summer of 1843 to Parker's first congregation at the Second Church of West Roxbury, Massachusetts, and "The Idea of a Christian Church and of Its Minister" delivered on January 4, 1846.

The context for "A Sermon of My Own Stewardship"⁵ is crucial for a rhetorical placement and an appreciation of the work as a definition of ministry as well as ministry's relationship to the politics of reform. This sermon was delivered to Parker's congregation at the Second Church of West Roxbury almost six years after Parker was ordained to serve their needs. Moreover, the sermon was preached a little more than two years after Parker delivered "The Transient and Permanent in Religion" at a South Boston Church. Exhausted by his labors to publish his translation of DeWette's *Introduction to the Old Testament* and depressed by his poor relations with the Boston Association of Ministers, which had called for his resignation on January 23, 1843, Parker prepared and delivered this sermon shortly before his departure for Europe. In

this account of his ministerial aims midway through his career, Parker defines his concept of ministry in general and discusses in detail the kinds of problems ministers of absolute religion encounter. This sermon marks the shift Parker makes in choosing his audience. Rejected by the professional theologians at Harvard and spurned by most of his liberal colleagues in pastoral ministry, he chooses to address a broad audience made up of people from every social rank in Boston; indeed, anyone who would listen.

For Parker, the office of minister demands two responsibilities: that "the man is to teach truth," that he "promote religion" (MS. 338:2). As Parker stated a year earlier in *A Discourse of Matters Pertaining Religion*, teaching "truth" embraces practical morality or keeping the laws of piety and love of God and love of humanity as outlined in the definition of absolute religion. Yet Parker takes up the speculative side of theological investigation in this sermon as well, stating that "theology comes in for its place, and is the intellectual side of religion, the philosophy thereof" (MS. 338:2). The function of a minister, for Parker, is both an intellectual and a serviceable or practical activity. Love of God (piety) and love of humanity (service) share equal status for him.

Clearly for Parker and most ministers in the Unitarian confederation in and around Boston, "teaching truth" and the "practical promotion of goodness" were extremely problematic. Parker's own conflicts with the Boston Association of Ministers over his defense of fellow transcendentalist, the Reverend John

Pierpont, as well as the controversy caused by "The Transient and Permanent" and *A Discourse* give ample witness to the internecine conflicts of the Unitarians.⁶

Parker raises and answers two questions with regard to ministry in this sermon. Concerning the theological or speculative and intellectual side of ministry, he asks: "Shall the minister teach only the truth that everybody believes or that also which everybody does not believe?" (MS. 338:3). His sardonic response reveals the antipathy he feels for "popular" theology and contemporary theological reflection as it impacts pulpit ministry:

This is a plain question[;] one would think it required but a plain answer[,] a very obvious answer[;] that he was to teach all the truth he could get relative to piety and religion, the conduct of life; that he should not ask whether men would accept it at first or reject [it] whether they would praise or throw stones. Yet strange as it may seem, there are differences of opinion on this matter. Some men have *conscientious* scruples about it. They say, 'You *must not teach all the truth you know about religion, for men can't bear it*; a little delusion helps the world on wonderfully.' Now it seems to me that a minister has to teach all the truth he has. . . . to get all he could. (MS. 338:3-4)

As in *A Discourse*, Parker rails against intellectual hypocrisy, which goes by the name "conscientiousness" and which he finds in so many members of his profession. Reform of the society starts with the reform of the ministry. Such ministerial reform can only take place when ministers themselves become "manly" or speak the truth as they are given to see it.

Secondly, Parker asks a question with regard to the practical side of the ministerial function: "Shall the minister labor to promote goodness only so far as goodness is popular, or shall he promote goodness itself, without regard to what is popular?" (MS. 338:4). Again, Parker cannot conceal his contempt for those ministers who mislead others in practical morality:

Here too then is a difference of opinion; I should scarcely dare say, a conscientious difference, but it may rate a *practical* difference. Now an eminent man, loving goodness, it seems to me, would count it his duty to promote all goodness, popular or not. Now if a man answers this question so that he is only to teach truth already accepted, and goodness only so far as popular in his place[, then] he has a quite easy time of it. His praise is in all the churches, is called a '*sound man*,' a good member of Society; reckoned orthodox, has not an enemy anywhere. He lives in quiet, keeps out of trouble, he hurts no body's feelings; offends no prejudices. To be sure, he has nothing to say, and says it. To be sure, no man asks his help or wishes to hear him, for it is quickly seen that he has no help to offer, and no truth to tell. As things go now, a bounty is set on just such men[;] the existing machinery of the sects, is devised so as to turn out such ministers, made after the pattern. The public of every sect demands ministers of this stamp, '*safe men*' they are called; the public has what it calls for. (MS. 338:4-5)

Here, then, is the essential difference between true and false ministry for Parker. The true minister promotes and teaches absolute truth and absolute religion to the best of his abilities to all who will listen and even to those who resist. Such a minister also "promotes all goodness to the extent of [his] powers," and "will leave no popular vice, no public immorality without rebuke" (MS. 338:5). Structural change must be addressed as an alternative to social

evils like slavery, wage slavery, repression due to lack of education, and the repression of women. The image of the true minister for Parker is that of a man with the intellect of a scholar and the hands of a day laborer; a "manly man," a prophet in the form of Jeremiah who does not wring his hands over his popularity yet is fully aware of the price for such manhood. Unlike Emerson, a minister in Parker's idiom cannot withdraw from the fray and retreat to an intellectual ivory tower existence when he is rejected by intellectual peers.

Parker sees two sorts of dangers that confront a minister in his day: hubris and hypocrisy. "There is the danger lest he be capricious, opinionated, over-confident, and teach men [opinions?], specters of his own brain, instead of everlasting truths" (MS. 338:7). The other, infinitely more dangerous and problematic for Parker, is the attitude of the minister who would "succumb to things as they are, . . . take the opinion of his sect, or the public for truth, the practice of his neighbor, or the public for goodness, and sit down contented to echo the echoes of [honored?] time and place. Then the man becomes a mere thing, with no independence, no self respect, no power, a mockery set up in a place designed for better men. . . a prophet of lies" (MS 338:7-8).

In general, then, the duties of a minister include the confrontation of falsehood and sin as well as the demonstration of practical, social morality that absolute religion enjoins. Parker specified this general vocation with specific tasks in his own ministry. Curiously, as he is about to leave for Europe, Parker

grows somewhat defensive about his six years of ministry in West Roxbury.

Speaking to the congregation in direct address, Parker insists:

I have endeavored to call your attention to the subject of education: intellectual, moral, religious education; to show the necessity thereof; its advantages; the method to be pursued; the means which are at hand. I have dwelt more on this than on any other theme. I have not [shirked ?] what are sometimes called '*exciting topics*.' (MS. 338:9-10)

Parker understands education, taken in the broadest sense, to be the essence of the ministerial function and if the minister functions as the prophet of absolute religion, social and political reform are the result of the manly self-refashioning afforded by absolute religion. For the minister to teach the ways of God through exposition and examination of the laws of human nature is to be about both the intellectual and practical aspects of ministry. The "exciting topics" to which Parker refers here include the temperance movement, the pacifist movement with regard to United States involvement with the Texas independence movement, but most especially "the two prominent political sins of our day, our murdering the Indians, [and] our negro slavery" (MS. 338:10). Here, Parker links religion and politics in an unmistakable manner. As in *A Discourse*, this link between religion and politics is made possible by Parker's definition of absolute religion, his anthropology, and his grounding of a universal morality within each individual human being. "This religion consists of morality, love of man and piety, love of God, service, truth, faith in him. . .

This I called *absolute religion*. Thus I [worked ?] at Christianity etc. To set these truths as they gradually came upon me, has been the work of my ministry" (MS. 338:13).

In perhaps his clearest articulation of the latent sacramental principle at work in his thought, Parker speaks of the real or "perpetual presence" and activity of God in the world:

I have attempted to show what would be the result of its [that is, absolute religion's] application to life. In doing this, some doctrines have been set forth with particular prominence; such as the *perpetual presence* and *activity of God*, his *active presence* in the world of matter, and the world of the Spirit, the laws whereof are but *modes of his existence* or manifestations[;] from this results the doctrine, that He is *ready to inspire all*, that He does inspire each, just in proportion to his natural ability and faithful use of that ability, that this inspiration is. . . the same thing in kind, but differs in degree. (MS. 338:13-14)

Thus, in attempting "to humanize religion and get at a rational theology,"

Parker admits that he has "aimed to separate religion from theology," content from form (MS. 338:17).

Reflecting on his harrowing experience with the Boston Association of Ministers from 1841 to 1843, Parker admits his own fears about how the West Roxbury congregation would respond to his ministry and the controversy it brought about. Parker recalls the low point:

Suffice it to say, that by the seventh of August [1843] I found less than ten Unitarian clergymen willing to exchange [pulpits] with me. . . I did not know what you would do, my friends. Fear in the church, like fire in the woods, runs quick and far, leaving few

spots unburned. I thought you might do as others did. There are times that try me, there are men that can't be tried, without losing a good deal of their material. I feared that you also would be disaffected[;] others had proved more, but preferred nothing; fled at the first fire. What should I do in case you joined the cry?
(MS. 338:22)

Yet, like his model Jeremiah or a latter-day Paul, Parker refused to remain silent about reform of the church or of the state. He felt an internal, God-inspired mandate to preach, and if New England pulpits could not accommodate absolute religion, then perhaps stages and conventions would. Clearly, this was the most profound ministerial crisis for Parker. Rejection by his own congregation, following rejection by his first chosen audience of liberal theologians at Harvard, would mean leaving the ministry. But accommodation to popular theology and the politics of acquisitive aggression, repression and marginalization of the "perishing classes," and slavery would be apostasy and idol worship, something he could not do. He states his resolution firmly near the end of sermon:

I would not be silent[;] the fact that a truth was unpopular was reason why I should speak it with a 1000 tongues. If it could not be spoken in a pulpit, there was reason it should be spoken, so that the pulpit itself should hear. In case you refused to hear my voice, this was my plan[:] to betake myself to any kind of work for six or eight months, in the year, and the rest of the time, go forth as Paul, and preach the word, which [was like a log ?] on fire in my bosom, to preach, if not in church, then in a hall, a school house, a barn, under the open sky, wherever a word would be heard, or could be said. (MS. 338:22-23)

In sum, Parker's "Sermon of My Own Stewardship" not only reiterates his commitment to absolute religion but articulates the prophetic function and significance of the minister of religion. The self-refashioning endeavor of this relatively integrated ideology of manhood challenged both the dominant entrepreneurial ideology of manhood and the patrician ideology embraced by Emerson. The same themes he stressed in "The Transient and Permanent" and *A Discourse* are present in this sermon, that is (1) a definition of absolute religion; (2) the notion of a latent sacramentality found in the actions of human beings who are loci of an ongoing revelation; and (3) a strong link between social morality and the religious element in each individual consciousness. What Parker begins to stress in this sermon is the explicit and necessary link between religion and the politics of social change. The dominant image of the minister developed here is the angry, provocative, yet compassionate prophet. For him, prophecy in the United States during the 1840's means to challenge social structures and social sins such as genocide, slavery, and intemperance, and the marginalization of minority groups (e.g., the economically poor, Irish immigrants, women, as well as free blacks in the North) by challenging the popular theology of the pulpit. Education in the broad sense, dissemination of "manly" self-reliant Christianity (by the modelling of the minister) devoid of useless forms and rituals, provides the key to such change, according to Parker.

On January 4, 1846, nearly three years after his "Sermon of My Own Stewardship," Parker delivered "The Idea of a Christian Church and of Its Minister."⁷ Again, an historical context is most important for understanding this sermon. Parker delivered it on the day he was installed as the minister of the Twenty-Eighth Congregational Society of Boston, at the Melodeon Theater, almost a year after he began serving the congregation. As Rufus Leighton, a contemporary and friend of Parker, states, "the circumstances under which this society has been formed and its progress hitherto are familiar" (*Works* XIII:450). Branded as a heretic and excluded from nearly all of the pulpits of the city, Parker had a reputation as a preacher that continued to grow despite the relatively rural location of his pulpit in West Roxbury. As he grew more outspoken about the social evils confronting Boston, the conservative party of the Unitarians retrenched. On January 22, 1845, a representative gathering of Unitarian laymen passed the following brief resolution: "*Resolved*, that the Reverend Theodore Parker shall have a chance to be heard in Boston" (*Works* XIII:450). The Melodeon Theater was reserved for one year, explicitly for that purpose. Parker continued to preach at his parish in West Roxbury while ministering to the nascent congregation in Boston.

While the sermon articulates the vision of a Christian Church in the light of Parker's notion of absolute religion, it stresses the notions of "manliness" and political reform in the civil as well as the religious arenas. Moreover,

Parker continues to use the rhetoric of the American jeremiad, taking as his departure text the whole of the thirteenth chapter of the Gospel of Mark. Appended to the top of the first page of the sermon manuscript is the note "Read Mark XIII." The significance of Parker's note can hardly be overemphasized. The thirteenth chapter of the Gospel of Mark is called the Eschatological Discourse and consists of a series of seven apocalyptic prophecies. Mark casts Jesus in the role of the eschatological prophet who describes the final days of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple. In this section of gospel, the evangelist "is concerned with Jesus' self-revelation in Jerusalem and ends with Jesus passing judgment on Pharisaic Judaism."⁸

Leaving aside the traditional orthodox reading of the discourse as indicative of Jesus' divine origin and identity as the Messiah, Parker focuses his attention on the prophetic role of Jesus. The Jesus that Parker sees is one who destroys in order to build; an iconoclast who is intolerant of the "idol" worship connected with observance of the Mosaic Law; a Jesus impatient to refashion the forms of the Hebrew religion. For Parker, Jesus is the model of manliness and reform.

In this thirteenth chapter of Mark, Jesus speaks to the disciples of the persecution of true believers as well as the conspiracy of civil and religious institutions to end the "reform" he has inaugurated. Clearly, Parker uses the thirteenth chapter as the symbolic backdrop for his development of the role of

the minister and the role of the Church in contemporary politics in the United States. He sees the Christian minister as a prophet preaching apocalypse -- a new Jeremiah, hated and persecuted yet compelled to preach. Moreover, Parker develops the role of the Church in this sermon as an agency of change for both the members of the Church and for nations as a whole.

In defining the Christian Church, Parker reiterates his definition of absolute religion and reveals the depth of his commitment to plurality of historical forms which express, with varying degrees of efficacy, the dimensions of absolute religion:

A Christian Church[,] as I understand it, is a body of men and women united together in a common desire for religious growth and with a common regard for Jesus Christ, regarding him as the highest man, the noblest example of moral and religious excellence! That Church may have *many rites*, as our Catholic brothers, or *a few rites*, as our Protestant brothers, or *no rites* at all as our brothers the Friends, and yet be none the less a *Christian Church*. For the essential of substance is what makes it a religious church, the union for the purpose of cultivating morality and religion. The *essential of forms*, which makes it a Christian Church, the common regard of Jesus Christ as the model man, the highest representative of God we know! It is not the *form* but the *spirit* which constitutes a *Christian Church*. (MS. 408:2-3)

For Parker, the "essential of substance," the spirit at the heart of the Church of absolute religion is the spirit of manhood modelled by Jesus of Nazareth. That manhood (and, implicitly, womanhood), as argued above, consists of a profound God-consciousness resulting in religion and morality, as well as a

freedom from the tyranny of dogmatic formulations which are "partial" or historically limited.

Rhetorically placing himself with sympathetic hearers, Parker argues that absolute religion or true Christianity "demands. . . a complete manliness; a development of mind, heart, soul, or that of the whole of man" (MS. 408:3). This development begins as an individual and solitary project in Parker's understanding, yet leavens the whole society. "It does not aim to destroy the sacred peculiarities of individual character" but "cherishes and develops them, in their perfections," demanding "the bravest abandonment of mind, heart, and soul, that a man is capable of reaching" for the sake of the whole society (MS. 408:3-4). Like middle-class American nineteenth-century democracy, such religion "should have unity of purpose, but with the most entire *individual freedom*" (MS. 408:4). Here, Parker displays a characteristic quality in his homiletic rhetoric: he undermines the middle-class entrepreneurial ideology of manhood by appealing to some of the most cherished motifs of this class. He aims at lauding democracy and the sacrosanct character of individualism while implicitly arguing that true expressive individualism possesses a "unity of purpose" for the whole society. In other words, true expressive individualism cannot withdraw from or abandon the community; cannot arrogantly step outside the political wars but must face rejection by taking public positions on contemporary issues.

Parker develops the notion of the manliness appropriate to absolute religion throughout the sermon but relates it explicitly to Jesus of Nazareth. In describing the Christianity and manliness which absolute religion develops, Parker reasserts the Unitarian adoptionist Christology and once again reinforces the link between religion and social justice:

But Christianity is not only the perfect religion, it has also the *Ideal man*, the *model* in many aspects, viz., Jesus of Nazareth. It is a great thing to have the *perfect Ideal of Religion and Manhood*; to have also that ideal made real, satisfactory of the wants in any age, in a yet further step, a Christian Church should aim *to make men Christians as Jesus was the Christ*; i.e., *sons of God* as well as he; *sons of Man* as well as he. To be that, it is not necessary to observe all *forms* he complied with, only such forms as help you to have every thought that he had; only the *true* thoughts that he had. If Jesus were ever mistaken, as the gospel writers make it appear, then it is a part of Christianity [to] avoid their mistakes, as much as to accept his truths. It is the part of a Christian Church to *teach* men so; to prize no word so high as *truth*; no man so dear as *God!* He came to free not fetter us, etc. Christ is the model man in this: that he stands in a *true relation to men*, that of *forgiveness* for their ill treatment; of *service* for their needs; of *trust* in their nature; of *constant love* towards even the wicked and hypocritical. (MS. 408:5)

In short, the Christian Church, according to Parker, "ought to aim to make all its members have the same *relation to Man*; *the same relation to God*, that *Christ had*; in short to be one with Him; incarnations of God just as he was one with God and what the world calls an *incarnation*" (MS. 408:6). This relationship with God and other human beings is summed up by Parker's understanding of God-consciousness and his definition of manliness. For him,

manliness is the full development of human nature; the normal development, use, and discipline of the body and the spirit; the perfect love of God and humanity; in other words, the integrated moral life. It means individuality, self-reliance, freedom of conscience, freedom from coercion by ecclesiastical and governmental powers, as well as a spirit of devotion and an ordination to reveal the truth.

Nothing short of commissioning to prophetic office, this ideal of manhood, in Parker's sense, possessed an inherent challenge to civil structures of his day. "Manly" Christianity meant that the strong are to help the weak. What happens to the weak and marginalized of society is the litmus test for the efficacy of religion, because "if the poor forsake the Church, be sure that God left it long before!" (MS. 408:10). Ministers and, therefore the Church, "should be a *means of reforming the world*," critical of "*the sentiment of the times*," "*the ideas of the times*," and the "*actions of the times*" (MS. 408:10). For the Church to be critical of society through the pulpit and the ministerial office was to court criticism and professional ostracism and to flirt with financial disaster and personal danger. Yet, one will also gain a new perspective for "there is something the Church may learn [from] the street, for it may teach much in this way[:] we expect the *sins of commerce* to be winked at in the street, the *sins of state* to be applauded on election days, and called *the righteousness of a nation* in the Fourth of July orations and in our Congress. . . . Here [in the Church]

they are to be measured by reason, conscience [and religion], looked at with reference to the laws of God, the everlasting idea[s] which make the welfare of man, examined as the thought of Christianity itself" (MS. 408:10-11).

Parker argues, moreover, that the Church "should be a society for the promotion of true sentiments and ideas" but also "it should be a society for the promotion of good works" (MS. 408:12). The "religion of the heart" developed in German pietism, the work of Schleiermacher, and even that of Emerson is not enough for Parker; true religion must begin with sentiment or feeling (*Gefühl*) but give birth to human moral action in the world; move from self-culture and expressive individualism to unity of purpose and society reform. Social progress is the one tangible measure of religious progress for Parker. Human imitation of God in the manner of Jesus makes tangible the "real presence" or the Spirit of God:

We are all sinners before God, yet he gives us the rain and the snow and the sun; it falls on me as much as on the field of my neighbor, a far juster man. How can we better put our sins behind us and make progress than by helping others to be [forgiven]? We are all brothers together before God, mutually needful, we *must* be; mutually helpful we *should* be. (MS. 408:12)

Specifying the kind of "help" he means, Parker goes back to some favorite themes: education, relief of the physical needs of the poor, intemperance, prostitution, war, and slavery:

Here are the *ignorant*, who ask our instruction, not with words, but in a more supplicating prayer than words can speak. I never

see an ignorant man younger than I without self-reproach, for I ask what I have been doing, to let him grow up in nakedness of mind! Here are the *needy*, who ask not so much for *gold*, your *bread* or your *clothes*, as for help, that you put them in a way to help themselves, to have gold by their own industry, not begged for out of your charity. Every *beggar*, every *pauper* is a reproach to us and condemns our *civilization*! Here too are the *wretched*, the *drunken*, the *criminal*, the *abandoned persons*, sometimes the *foe* of society, oftentimes the *victim* of society. . . And is there on earth a nation as greedy of *war* as we, the worst form of evil! One where the *war horse* so soon conducts his rider into fame and power! Is that all? Far from it. Did not Christ say, 'Whatsoever you would that men should do unto you,' etc? Did not he set the example by taking the part of the oppressed, by helping the lowest, and are there not 3,000,000 brothers of our in bondage here, the hopeless sufferers of a savage doom! *Slav[ery]* is from America! (MS. 408:12-14)

Clearly for Parker, the Church and the Church's minister cannot be a congregation of faith and piety only, but "a *church of works*; a *just church*, *living by its faith*, not a church *termagant*, but *militant* against sin, setting an example of Christianity in life" (MS. 408:14). In short, for Parker, "there is no *sacrament* like good works; no day too good to help our brothers, no Christianity like the practical love of God shown by a practical love of man" (MS. 408:14). Only in self-conscious moral activity made possible by the religious element in the human being may the presence of God be made tangible in such an explicit way. For Parker, the love of the neighbor is precisely the love of God.

It must be noted that while Parker stresses the "manliness" of true religion, and thereby the need for the minister of religion to be manly in

imitation of Jesus, he does not conceive of true religion devoid of feminine elements. Using the terms "man" and "manly" in accord with contemporary nineteenth-century usage, it is clear that Parker generally uses the terms inclusively. Yet, in this sermon, he goes to some lengths to stress what he sees as the "feminine" aspects of humanity in the person of Jesus. It is true that the concept of "womanliness" is largely confined to "passive" qualities such as piety, hopefulness, compassion and the quality of being long-suffering. Yet, it is interesting to note that these qualities are central to Parker's notion of the manliest of men, Jesus:

Christ the *Son of Man*, the manliest of men, humane as a woman; pious and hopeful as a prayer, but brave as man's most daring thought. He has led the world for 1800 years, only because [he was] the *manliest man in it*; the *humanest and bravest man in it*, and therefore, the *divinest*. (MS. 408:17)

The ministers of the Church must have "the womanliness that wept over Jerusalem," the words to speak "with authority to command, but with affection to persuade" (MS. 408:17, 9). Inheritors of the prophetic mantle, these ministers cannot settle for "feminized" influence but must challenge, destroy, and create. They must take the fire in the belly and cast that fire on the earth in imitation of the eschatological prophet, Jesus. At the same time, they must nourish, guard, and improve the lot of the marginalized.

Clearly, Parker found the pulpit an efficacious platform for his reformist agenda in both the Church and in society. It is difficult, perhaps impossible, to

determine exactly why Parker found the pulpit to be his medium when others, such as Emerson, found it necessary to leave the ministry. A partial explanation lies in the nineteenth-century's conflicted notions of manhood. As David Leverenz suggests, "the older ideologies of genteel patriarchy and artisan independence were being challenged by a new middle-class ideology of competitive individualism."⁹ Clearly, both Emerson and Parker had most ambivalent reactions to all three ideologies. For his part, Parker demonstrated a strongly reformist disposition which affected his theological reflection, ecclesiology, and political vision. His prophetic and reformist positions on the social issues of his day are grounded in his understanding of human consciousness and the sacramentality of moral action. While Emerson's notion of reform is characterized by withdrawal from corrupt institutions and a patrician sensibility, Parker's is characterized by aggressive political involvement, advocacy of the disenfranchised people from the pulpit, and (particularly important for these reflections) a reform of the ministry.

On Education in the United States

Even the casual reader of Parker's sermons will observe that the social-moral issue which dominated his attention was African slavery in the United States. Yet the examination of sermons and addresses (the latter of which are rhetorically indistinguishable from Parker's sermons) clustered around

education, women, and social classes in the antebellum United States appears more fruitful because they are less well known and therefore provide a "rounding out" of his interests and character by giving a more complete portrait of Parker's ministry. Moreover, the right to education, the rights of women to full development of their persons and potential, as well as the oppressive class structure of America which marginalizes minorities and the poor are painful, even explosive, topics where "sacramental sin" or structural evil remain evident. Oppression and marginalization, especially of the poor and women, are more subtle today than in pre-Civil War America. Yet Parker's sermons and addresses dealing with education, women, and class structure maintain more of their poignancy and sting simply because his prophetic challenge to these structural evils (that is, identifiable practices of injustice woven into the fabric of the society in laws, mores, customs, and beliefs) has not been realized to the extent mandated by absolute religion. Clearly, sexism and racism remain embedded in the American culture to some degree and are examples of the structural evil Parker fought.

Parker asserts that, in the broadest sense, the role of the minister of religion consists of teaching truth and promoting religion, which articulates that truth in real time, that is, in history. Education in this sense is a theme he returns to throughout his career. Parker argues that the oppression of the poor, women, African slaves, and those ravaged by the disease of alcoholism (those

whom Parker and his contemporaries called the "intemperate") reveals the locations of sacramental sins or structural evils in society. He goes on to argue that the education of these minorities (as well as the "re-education" of the dominant groups) fosters the fullest possible development and use of human nature and becomes an example of the opposite of sacramental sin. Education is one example of the "real presence" of God, the sacrament of God in the world.

Undergirding Parker's discussion of education lies the radical commitment to the full development of all human faculties -- the first tenet of absolute religion. For the first time in the history of the human race, Parker believed, the promise of full development of all persons was not an utopian dream. In a democracy, by definition, there are no aristocracies allowed. The "progress" of the human race or the evolutionary nature of human consciousness has brought humanity to a juncture where free public education of high quality from grammar school through university graduation has become a real possibility. Moreover, the duties and demands of republican democracy indicate the need for a literate, cultured electorate -- an electorate composed of all persons of sound mind. In turn, such a need for an educated electorate presumes a duty incumbent upon the already educated and the wealthy to insure workers with access to education as well as "leisure" to enjoy culture. Finally Parker insists that education in the United States grow less utilitarian and more

pragmatic; that the common attitude toward formal education resemble less of a "trade-school" mentality and more of culturally critical sophistication.

In an article entitled "Education of the People" written for the *Massachusetts Quarterly Review* (March 1848), Parker defines education in terms reminiscent of absolute religion:

Education, in the wide sense of the word, is the harmonious development of all the natural powers of man, -- of the body, of the mind, conscience, affections, will, and religious sentiments.¹⁰

The whole of Parker's theological anthropology as presented in *A Discourse of Matters Pertaining to Religion* (*Works* I:6-7) is present here in miniature. The taxonomy of the faculties of human nature and the direction that "education" takes moving from the exterior to the interior of a person remains the same. That is, Parker names the aspects of the human being to be educated and then asserts that the education of the human person moves from the body, to the mind or understanding, to the "moral sense" or conscience involving the affections and the will, and finally to the religious element in the human being.

But Parker considers education, like manhood itself, a life-long, developmental process which can be divided into foundational or rudimentary education of the child and the adult learning which takes place for the rest of one's life through encounters with politics, economics, the literary world, and the Church. Parker understands these four "educational forces" of adult learning

to be represented by the state, business, the press, and the churches. Moreover, in ministry, he is much more concerned with mature adult responses to these forces as well as the creative use of these forces for good, yet recognizes that a person can have a truly "manly" or "womanly" life if and only if he or she possesses the critical sophistication formal education provides. He holds that adult encounters with these four forces are mutually and reciprocally formative. That is, these forces shape and educate the individual but the individual, given an appropriate critical education, shapes these forces for other human beings. But this essay examines the character of and need for "subordinate institutions" of education, the common (grammar) schools, high schools, and colleges where students develop the foundational skills of reading, written communication, and mathematical calculation -- the building blocks for all critical intellectual endeavors.

While these four tremendously powerful educational forces (the state, business, the press, and the churches) must be engaged by the adult in his or her everyday living within a democracy, the person must have developed the capacity for and the habit of critical thinking. Parker's understanding of formal education, especially at the collegiate level, is shaped partially by the Enlightenment ideal of the pure pursuit of knowledge free from any overt political or denominational interference. Yet he is not naive or simplistic in his views. Education in a democracy should involve exposure to liberal culture; it

should be based on the humanities; and, finally, it should be value-centered or moral education in its method and its objectives. The emphasis of "education is on the action that results from knowledge" because knowledge cannot exist in a vacuum; it requires use, application, and eloquent expression for it to be actually and rhetorically persuasive.¹¹ Thus, all levels of formal education involve the shaping of talents, skills, morals, and personality which are the objectives Parker deems appropriate. In short, education in school is character-shaping for the larger, more dangerous school called adult living. It is the clear duty of the educator (as well as the minister of absolute religion) to understand the effects of these four educational institutions on oneself and then to teach the student how to assess the kinds of effects the state, business, the press, and church denominations can have in real human lives:

It is the duty of a wise educator to appreciate the kind and degree of influence which these forces actually exert on the young, and act with or against it, as the case may require. The State, by its actions, may teach men to reverence the eternal right, or only the power of armies and commerce. The business of the nation may teach respect for honesty and manly usefulness, or only the omnipotence of the dollar. The press may direct men to honor justice, truth, and manliness, may fill them with noble ideas and sentiments, or teach them to be mean and little, taking public opinion as their standard. The churches may instruct men to love God and love man, as the supreme objects of ideal or practical affection, or they may teach men to comply with public sins, to believe a lie, and for a pretence make long prayers, hypocritically affecting a belief in all manner of absurdities and contradictions. It is the duty of such as direct the public education of the people to understand the character and influence of all these. (*Works* IX:140-1)

The state's role in perpetuating a democracy primarily resides in affording "every child born in it a chance of obtaining the best education which the genius of the child is capable of receiving and the wealth of intelligence of society [is] capable of bestowing" (*Works IX:145*). Real structural change for society, for the "moral good," comes from personal, interior conversion to the moral right. Parker was convinced that such conversion comes about through value-centered, free public education where the student may learn to value liberal culture and hone skills which effectively employ his or her natural powers, especially those of moral intuition and religious sensibility.

Anticipating the patrician and entrepreneurial objections to the possibility of a liberal education for all people in this article, Parker asserts that "when the opportunity for obtaining even a liberal culture is afforded to all. . . there will always be five hundred good carpenters to one good philosopher or poet." Unlike his nervous entrepreneurial-minded interlocutors, he maintains that few people have an innate preference for the so-called learned professions of law, medicine, and ministry rather than vocations of farmers, shoemakers, and blacksmiths. Rather, "many are now in the professions solely because these offered a chance for some liberal culture which the trade did not afford, though otherwise far more attractive." In Parker's view, democracy and American individualism make liberal education of all persons (men and women) a necessity rather than a luxury, since all males (in his day) are potential voters

and thus potential office-holders. Were all honest and "productive" or useful callings equally honorable, and adequately compensated, the danger of professional incompetence would lessen. The drive for middle-class respectability and wealth on the part of laborers, farmers, and mechanics masks and co-opts the deeper and more important drive for a more adequate "manhood" or the development of personal potential.

Even while addressing the topic of free public education for all, Parker points out that the most disadvantaged are women, the immigrant poor, and, of course, African slaves. He ridicules the idea that women are generally inferior to men and therefore not deserving of superior culture and educational opportunities. "There is," Parker maintains, "no reason in the nature of things, or the duty of the State to its citizens, why superior education should be confined to the rough sex" (*Works IX:155*).

To Parker's mind, the numerous impediments to free public education for all people in the United States reduce to small-mindedness, a pusillanimity, on the part of defenders of the status quo. The state, he argues, has not been in the habit of demanding wide and deep culture from its citizens and has not used public wealth to secure public education. Here, Parker attacks at their roots the patriarchal and entrepreneurial ideologies of manhood. Free public education is a political and moral right to be expected, the "habits" of the state notwithstanding. Small-mindedness and narrow and traditional thinking all

inhibit the expansion of education. The most insidious impediment to access to education, however, comes from the "excessive demand of practical men" that education fit the vast majority of persons for the workshop:

We turn all things to some immediate and economic use; would put Homer to lead the singing in some village church; set Raphael to paint the faces of silly women and sillier men, or, that failing, to daub sign-boards and make arabesques for calicoes: Michael Angelo and Da Vinci we should employ on a railroad, or place them with the sappers [a military 'engineer,' usually a trench digger] and miners in the army, and put Newton at the head of some annuity office. High intellect, accomplished with high culture, goes to the Church, the forum, or the bar, and finds itself above the market. Superior ability, therefore, in America, finds its most fitting sphere in common business, where superior talent provokes no jealousy while it wins gold.

Such being the case, the general aim in education is not to get the most and the best, but the least one can get along with. It is counted the means, not the end, and is taken as a maid-servant, as help, its demands granted with a grudge; not taken as a wife, for itself. Education is valued, as it helps to make men able to serve as tools in the great workshop of society. (*Works IX:175*)

In Matthew Arnold's words, neglect of education consists of a repression by the "barbarous" patrician class and the "philistine" middle class of the "populist" laboring class. The repression is not so active as it is passive; stemming from a "mean view of life, of man and his possibility, thinking the future can never be made better than the past" (*Works IX:176*). Here, Parker attacks American individualism which appears ossified into a utilitarian pattern of small-mindedness and conservative thinking; the liberals of the American Revolution and Unitarian theology have stagnated, becoming the stumbling

block to progress in social reform. He challenges educators to teach a new manliness in the full development of each individual's powers so that wealth, fame, and social rank cannot be construed as the end of humanity but rather humane living and service of other persons. Rhetorically, Parker does not attack social rank itself; rather, he attacks the "conservatism" inherent in the middle-class liberalism of mercantile entrepreneurial manliness which would arrest cultural evolution. It must be noted that Parker had no real notion of cultural diversity as it is understood today. Like his contemporaries, he sees that American culture consists of an identifiable, expressible set of values and incarnations or appreciations of those values having to do with equality before the law, personal freedom, hard labor, and republican democracy. For Parker, culture, while evolving through history, advances in a linear manner. Culture progressively evolved from a military aristocracy, through a theocratic aristocracy, and then into an aristocracy of blood-lines, and finally to a democratic form. In this progress through history, culture forms itself around wealth and high achievement. For Parker the prophet the question becomes, "Should wealth be the foundation of fully developed manliness, or should manliness be the source of all forms of wealth?" In different ages, Parker argues, different constituencies have held the wealth (and the power it brings) as well as the preponderance of talent for achievement. "Aristocracies" of the military from ancient empires, of priests in the Roman Catholic Church, of

blood lines (feudal nobility) and finally of the whole people in a democracy develop in succession. Clearly, an "aristocracy" of the whole people in a democracy is a contradictory notion. But the paradox he aims at is salient. The unspoken irony is, of course, that in America there exists an "aristocracy" of wealth whose ideology of entrepreneurial manhood co-opts the middle class and represses the laboring classes. Education in the culture of any state is the responsibility of the wealthy and successful but, in a democracy, it belongs as a right to all, not a minority of the privileged.

On October 4, 1849, Parker delivered an address entitled "The Public Education of the People" to the Onondaga Teachers' Institute at Syracuse, New York. Stressing the same themes, he argues that education in a democracy must guarantee the development and furnishing of the faculties of individuals; that the state owes each person an education; and that the amount of education available to a person depends on the level of culture within the human race at that moment in history, on the wealth and tranquility of the state, and the natural abilities and industry of the particular individual. But Parker also focuses the tension between individual self and the community by discussing education in the American democracy. As distinguished from military, theocratic, and blood aristocracies, democracies maintain that the state is not for the few but for all the people.

[In a democracy,] the State, in theory, is not for the few, not even for the majority, but for all; classes are not recognized, and therefore not protected in any privilege. The government is a democracy[;] the government of all, by all, for all, and in the name of all. A man is born to all the rights of mankind; all are born to them, so all are equal. Therefore, what the State pays for, not only comes at the cost of all, but must be for the benefit of all. Accordingly, as a theocracy demands the education of priests, and an aristocracy that of the nobility and gentry, so a democracy demands the education of all. (*Works IX:99-100*)¹²

Clearly, then, it is to the advantage of both the individual and the state to secure the highest level of education for every person. The advantage to the community or state is fundamentally political because each person, as a potential voter, is entrusted with the accumulated wisdom of the culture in order to shape the present and future society. Democracy demands strong individuals who are qualified by education to assert wisdom in leadership roles without, at the same time, giving off an air of superiority. Moreover, the advantage to the individual is more philosophical. To be educated is to assert one's "manhood," or individuality within a community of political equals.

The man is a man, an integer, and the State is for him; as well as a fraction of the State, and he for it. He has a man's rights; and, however inferior in might to any other man, born of parentage how humble soever, to no wealth at all, with a body never so feeble, he is yet a man, and equal in rights to any other man born of a famous line, rich and able; of course he has a right to a chance for the best culture which the educational attainment of mankind, and the circumstances of the nation render possible to any man; to so much thereof as he has the inborn power and the voluntary industry to acquire. (*Works IX:101*)

The practical limits to an individual's education, then, should be determined pragmatically according to availability and personal initiative, not as the patrician and entrepreneurial ideologies of manhood would have it, which is according to elitist prejudice and privilege. Parker envisions a "merit-ocracy" for the United States rather than an aristocracy; moral authority and political power accruing to those who have more talent than the average person but use their talents for service of all persons, not merely to create or perpetuate a ruling class. Such a meritocracy aims to enfranchise and empower those of less talent.

Education in a democracy, then, aims at cultivating "grown men"; the total development of human person's intellect, moral life, and religious sensibilities. For both the individual's sake and the community's, Parker tells his listeners, "it is important to leave behind us men grown, men that are men; such are the seed of material wealth, -- not it of them. The highest use of material wealth is its educational function" (*Works IX:103*). Thus, there is a reciprocal relationship between individual development and communal progress.

In making the distinction between the education of the "boy" and that of the "man" once again, Parker names the "four modes of national activity" or educational forces: the state, business, the Church, and the press. Yet in so doing, he calls for substantial reform of the existing standards of public

education, stating that public schools, from grammar school through college, "do not afford the highest teaching which the people require to realize individually the idea of a man, and jointly that of a democracy" (*Works IX:121*). The state, the church, business, and the press "teach only the excellence already organized or incorporated in the laws, the theology, the customs, and the books of the land"; they are, in Emerson's words, "retrospective," providing no "poetry" or "philosophy of insight" (*Nature*, 1). Indeed, these forces are by their nature conservative, acting as guardians of the status quo. And because the state does not teach justice, and the Church teaches neither justice nor love of the truth, and because business fails to inspire morality, and because the press panders to the average vices of the public, teachers must be prophets, not merely priests. Ministers of absolute religion and teachers in public schools must be co-workers; they must possess "more aboriginal virtue" than the priests of the status quo. For Parker, these prophets need not be of the elite class Emerson called "genius," but they must teach the truth as it is given them by the Spirit:

So there will always be exceptional men, with more justice, truth, and love than is represented by the institutions of the time, who seem therefore hostile to these institutions, which they seek to improve, and not destroy. Contemporary with the priests of Judah and Israel were the prophets thereof, antithetic to one another as the centripetal and centrifugal forces, but like them both necessary to the rhythmic movement of the orbs in heaven, and the even poise of the world. (*Works IX:121*)

Harkening back to *A Discourse of Matters Pertaining to Religion*, Parker reasserts that either Christianity (considered as absolute religion) is false and utterly detestable, or else contemporary society in its basis and details (its foundations, structures, and publicly sanctioned enterprises such as the nascent educational system in Boston) and is vicious and sinful. For him, there can be no third conclusion possible.

Since the institutions of the land do not represent the idea of a democracy, and the average spirit of the people, which makes the institutions, represent it no more, if the children of the people are to become better than their fathers, it is plain their teachers must be prophets, and not priests merely; must animate them with a spirit higher, purer, and more holy than that which inspires the State, the Church, business, or the common literature of the times.
(*Works IX*: 122-3)

Parker does not argue for an elite, distant aristocracy of "genius" to lead the United States as does Emerson. Instead, he argues for prophets to arise from the midst of the people; men (and women) who carry in their bodies the trials of the whole people. To be sure, Parker knows that all persons are not born with the same intellectual, physical, and spiritual talents. But manhood and the process of "man-making" do not depend essentially upon a specialized class of leaders, a patrician ideology; rather, leadership for society and the teachers of the development of manhood come from all ranks of society. His own hard-scrabble life and dogged pursuit of a Harvard education provides ample proof. Parker asks,

Why does God sometimes endow a man with great intellectual power, making, now and then, a million-minded man? Is that superiority of gift solely for the man's own sake? Shame on such a thought! It is of little value to him unless he use[s] it for me; it is for your sake and my sake, more than for his own. He is a precious almoner of wisdom; one of the public guardians of mankind, to think for us, to help us think for ourselves; born to educate the world of feebler men. (*Works IX:136*)

In answer, Parker offers an alternative ideology of manhood which looks to the cultivation of all individuals through publicly supported education. Clearly, he takes aim at Emerson and his withdrawal to Concord, away from ministry, teaching, and public affairs. Emerson possesses genius but lacks some of the "aboriginal virtue" of other-centeredness, generosity, and the bravery to openly confront small-mindedness and pusillanimity needed to be a prophet in Parker's conception.

Parker's idea of reform for society and ministry comes from within and issues forth in a change in public education:

Then we need free colleges, conducted by public officers, and paid for by the public purse. Without these the scheme [of social reform] is not perfect. The idea which lies at the basis of the public education of a people in a democracy is this: every man, on condition of doing his duty, has a right to the means of education, as much a right, on the same condition, to the means of education, to the means of defense from a public enemy in time of war, or from starvation in time of plenty and peace. I say every man, I mean every woman also. (*Works IX:125*)

Education for all persons in a democracy, thus, is crucial to the development of absolute religion in his time. Education "must be bottomed on

religion" because "it is essential to the normal development of man, and all attempts at education, without this, must fail of the highest end" (*Works* IX:135).

On Women in American Society

As a minister, a man from the countryside, and a theological radical for his day, Parker understood alienation and exclusion viscerally in a way that Emerson and many other liberals simply could not. When his attention turns to women in American society, the dominant theme of his reflections becomes absolute religion's requirement that women be understood as moral agents, possessing the same nature, rights, and duties as men. Simply put, the moral life and absolute religion require an examination of the history of the subjugation of women by men and an amendatory restructuring of the ways society educates, incorporates, and empowers women.

Sometime in 1846 Theodore Parker wrote down some notes for a sermon on the status of women in the United States. These notes found their way to public reception in at least two sermons. The first, entitled simply "Woman," was preached sometime that year. The second, entitled "The Public Function of Woman," was preached on March 27, 1853.¹³ The notes are revealing for several reasons. First, they reveal the depth of Parker's commitment to a progressive and evolutionary understanding of history. In the notes, he lays out

a chronology of the growth in the status of women from classical antiquity through early modern and Reformed Christian culture. At every stage of his chronology, Parker lists the effects the culture has on women's status. There can be no question that Parker understands the status of women to move toward parity and equality with the status of men. As men move from savage, through "barbarous," imperial, medieval Catholic, and Reformed epochs with their corresponding ideals of manhood, so too women's self-understanding and status change. Second, the notes reveal that, unlike Emerson, he refuses to obliterate the feminine presence from "man-making" or from what he calls the development of "manly christianity." Finally, in these notes he argues that the alienation, objectification, and commodification of woman by man consists of a structural evil of society in need of significant reform.

While Parker gives a man's perspective on the status of women, his opening line in the notes indicts nineteenth-century American patriarchal ideology: "Woman is the first thing that man conquers -- the last thing he sets free etc. . . Her condition [is] an index[,] therefore[,] of his moral growth." Perceiving that men reduce women to objects and commodities, he sets about the task of examining the status of women through identifiable ages in human history -- always asking the question,

"What does the status of woman reveal about the morality of humankind?" He consistently puts his answers in terms of the effects on women in particular but also on humanity as a whole.

Parker divides his version of the evolution of the status of women into five stages, what he calls the "savage state," the "Hebrew notion," the "classical" conception of woman, the "Catholic Ideal," and, finally, the "Christian Ideal or rational ideal" of woman. Appropriately, he does not attempt to give a woman's perspective of this evolution. Rather, by stressing that his observation of woman's condition in the evolving human society, as both male and therefore partial (albeit in an attempt to be "objective"), Parker creates the condition for the possibility of men seeing women's perspectives as well as the structural evil of gender oppression. He gives the reader the impression that he has observed well and listened with an attentive ear.

"In the savage state woman is a *slave*, the drudge of man." Hers is the hardest work and her status is not that of a companion to man but a slave to "his indolence and his appetites." The "effect" of this is that she has no choice with regard to husband, life, or death. Parker does not write modern sociology but anticipates sociology's attempts at objectivism. Parker's is a thoroughly masculine, ministerial discourse attempting to name a public sin. The manner of writing, even in these sketches, is generally discursive. He makes this statement

about the "savage state" with confidence because he observes the remnants of the savagery in his day.¹⁴

Parker goes on to say that the Hebrew notion of woman is little better than that of the savage. "The O[ld] T[estament] has little good to say of woman." Indeed the image of God developed throughout the Hebrew Scriptures, he points out, is that of a man. Woman is "made out of man[,] not for her own sake but for *his*." And while the images of woman detailed in the lives of Deborah and Judith are exceptions, there is "no recognition of *women's rights*" in the bulk of the Hebrew Scriptures. The most dehumanizing social structures for women within the Hebrew culture, as Parker notes them, are polygamy, divorce, and the practice of "buying" wives. The "effect" is that woman is "the same as a slave."

About the status of women in classical cultures, Parker states that the situation does not improve greatly:

Classic -- About the same -- a little more cultivation among the men -- this [has] an effect on *woman* but not general[;] no pains with this culture for their [soul?]. Woman *no rights* as a person -- could hold property in Rome & Athens? Still at Rome the Husband [retains] power of life & Death over her -- contempt for woman in Lit[erature] from *Orpheus* to Geor[gics]. Two ideas of woman -- 1. a *housekeeper*. . . 2. a *plaything*. Still[, there were] artists & literary women -- but they were come-outers. Sappho an example. . . . Two types of women 1. the *popular* -- Venus, 2. the *philosophic* -- Minerva. . . [who is like] a man and a [shrewd?] man with no intuition.

Parker notes with interest that the rise in "culture" for men, the development of some sophistication, has meant a small but significant increase in respect for women. The effect of this tiny growth for men has been an important development in male concepts of woman: she does not remain merely the housekeeper-drudge and the sexual plaything of previous epochs but the "elevation" of woman to Venus and Minerva, the goddesses of love and wisdom respectively, indicates a growing complexity. To be sure, woman is still conceived of negatively (*not* male, *not* for herself) and this elevation still consists of an alienation but part of a pattern of evolution -- an alienation to be reconciled in the future, not a permanent state.

The Catholic notion of woman derives from St. Paul, argues Parker; Jesus, he says, "gives no opinion but you infer his opinions." Paul's image of God stems from the Hebrew Scriptures; God the Father and the "warrior God" are the images of God frequenting or standing behind the New Testament and are, obviously, male. Woman is "infirm[;] to be in subjection." She does not possess equality with man in terms of "reflection," "power," or creativity in the arts; yet she may not be considered a "plaything" for male appetites. Still, Parker maintains there is a vestige of the Venus-Minerva typology from the classical conception of woman: "She is converted, takes the veil and becomes the Magdalena[.] Woman [is] no longer a toy" but neither is she any longer Minerva, a wise but de-natured woman. Rather, she becomes the "V[irgin]

Mary -- a mother but not naturally a wife -- but only of the Holy Spirit. The "effect" of this cultural shift is a modest growth mixed with a loss in the stature of woman: she may still be the drudge but she cannot faithfully be imaged as a "plaything"; still the subservient one, she must not be dealt with as a sexual commodity. For Parker, the Catholic view of the world is necessarily hierarchical and therefore radically patriarchal. "Mental culture" or education is not available to the vast majority of people and, as a result, women suffer the greatest diminishment. The image of woman is dangerously mixed: she becomes the "virgin-whore," Mary the Mother of God and Mary the Magdalene. Fully-fledged, adult moral agency cannot be attributed to her in the Catholic Ideal, according to Parker, because she must be the handmaiden, not "naturally" a wife, and therefore not naturally woman-for-herself.

Finally, Parker describes what he calls the "Christian Ideal" or "rational ideal" of woman. Obviously, the Christianity Parker envisions here is the absolute religion he preached, not the Christianity of the various denominations. Fundamentally, absolute religion understands woman to be "the equal of man, as a whole," but not his equal in "reflection, [physical] power" or creativity in the arts. Still, she is superior to man in spiritual openness and sensitivity, in religious faith, and in refinement of nature.

Whether these relative inequalities are due to nature or the result of environment, Parker does not say. He does not concern himself with

nineteenth-century versions of "political correctness" but attempts to argue the moral equivalency of woman with man. His measured, guarded rhetoric would not readily win the hearts of suffragettes, as Samuel B. Stewart points out (*Works IX:iii*). Yet the attentive hearer or reader perceives Parker's man-making strategy depends, in part, on a woman-making strategy, the detailed articulation of which is not his responsibility to assert. He can only point the way, as a prophet.

The effects of the Christian ideal of woman, if developed, would have profound impact on American society. For instance, the "renewal of society" would begin with a loss of the patriarchal "devotion of woman," and see a lessening in the "effects of her deprivation." Specifically, woman would find herself "developed not for *man*" but for herself, and only secondarily for humanity. Education and intellectual culture would benefit her first, and the whole of humanity second. A caution must be noted here, for Parker does not eschew the domestic function of woman. Indeed, he lauds that aspect of feminine presence in the world more than any other aspect -- perhaps because his own boyhood experience was so positive and his married life somewhat problematic. Still, he agitated for the public function of woman and regarded her personal and public development as "the greatest practical reformation of the people" (*Works IX:iii*).

On March 27, 1853, these free-flowing, unpolished and unguarded notes became enfolded in his sermon "The Public Function of Woman," preached at the Music Hall in Boston. The focus of the sermon is the need for public morality to change, to develop a more tolerant view of women in professional and public life by perceiving them as moral agents and holders of human and political rights on their own behalf.

Returning to a theme often stressed, Parker argues that the basic principles of a sound and healthy social structure are based in the individual's personal development in absolute religion. Society's conditions and needs develop endlessly and so cultural consciousness evolves. This means that "man-making" in the nineteenth century must necessarily imply "woman-making." As in other sermons, Parker turns the middle-class rhetoric of investment and return, cost and benefit against itself. His fundamental argument in this sermon concerning the public role of woman is that woman's personal development through formal education and encounter with the four educational forces (the state, business, the press, and the Church) yield a healthier society; developed individuals of both genders yield a more highly developed democracy.

Parker begins the sermon by subtly undermining the middle-class entrepreneurial ideology of manhood and its marginalization of woman. What at first appears to be a typical nineteenth-century rhetorical sop to a liberal

minister's constituency becomes, upon closer examination, a courageous recognition of structural injustice meted out to women and men:

The domestic function of woman, as housekeeper, wife, and mother, does not exhaust her powers. Woman's function, like charity, begins at home; then, like charity, goes everywhere. To make one-half of the human race consume all their energies in the functions of housekeeper, wife, and mother, is a waste of the most precious material that God ever made. (*Works IX:178*)

Here Parker does three things. First, he establishes the theme of the sermon by stating that a woman's "place" is not exclusively in the home. Exhausting as the roles of housekeeper, wife, and mother are, most women find themselves capable of overcoming the alienation from breadwinning labor imposed upon them; they are capable and desirous of public roles. Second, Parker assumes that marriage, individual homes, and nuclear families are the most "natural" and therefore that most women "naturally" prefer and are more "fitted" to domestic functions. While Parker takes for granted that, "in the present constitution of society," domestic functions fall to women, he does not take for granted that they must. Moreover, he thinks that marriage for men and women is "natural" and celibacy, for almost any conceivable reason, quite abnormal. He esteems the division of labor, or alienation from breadwinning, as efficient in the domestic household after the industrial revolution yet remains very aware of contemporary subjugation of women and the "waste" precious "material," as if to say that to beat the middle-class entrepreneurs at their own

game of manhood strategy building, one must use commercial language or the vernacular of commodification to undermine itself.

Lamenting that the number of unmarried women in all Christian countries is increasing, Parker points out that there are three groups of women who do not marry:

There may be three women in a thousand to whom marriage would be disagreeable under any possible circumstances; perhaps thirty more to whom it would be disagreeable under the actual circumstances -- in the present condition of the family and community. But there is a large number of women who continue unmarried for no reason in their nature, from no conscious dislike of the present domestic and social condition of mankind, and from no disinclination to marriage under existing circumstances. This is a deplorable evil, alike a misfortune to man and to woman.
(*Works IX:179*)

He notes that to many women marriage under the contemporary circumstances is quite disagreeable. These women and the increasing number of women "who continue unmarried for no reason in their nature" and no conscious dislike of the status quo in social relations with whom Parker concerns himself. This is not simply an endorsement of the status quo on Parker's part, rather it is an acknowledgement of what he perceives as the contemporary situation, the state to which society has evolved. Parker sees a waste of human potential in both the increase of unmarried women and the lack of opportunity for public roles for women:

In classic and in Christian civilization alone has there been a large class of women permanently unmarried -- not united or even

subordinated to a man in the normal marriage of one to one, or in the abnormal conjunction of one to many. This class of unmarried women is increasing in all Christian countries, especially in those that are old and rich.

Practically speaking, to this class of women the domestic function is very little; to some of them it is nothing at all. I do not think that this condition is to last. . . but it is a transition, it is a step forward. Womankind is advancing from that period when every woman was a slave, and marriage of some [kind] was guaranteed to every woman, because she was dependent on man; woman is advancing from that to a state of independence, where she shall not be subordinated to him, but the two co-ordinated together. (*Works IX:179*)

Parker perceives that any ability or capacity for a more humane life not exercised is a waste, a tragedy on some level. Clearly, he understands marriage to be just such an ability or capacity. Aware that not all women need men for fulfillment and that not all men need women for fulfillment, he maintains that marriage is the normal and "natural" state for humanity. Without political rights, however, many women choose to go against the social norm: a single life or unsanctioned union over domination by men within marriage.

Parker names three classes of women who marry: "drudges," "dolls," and "women." Drudges are "wholly taken up with the material details of their housekeeping, husband-keeping, child keeping." Their work is a "trade, and no more." They have little capacity or desire for anything else. Dolls are the special target of Parker, for they are "taken up with the vain show which delights the eye and the ear. They are ornaments of the estate"; mere "toys," disposable objects. "Similar toys," he says, "will one day be more chiefly

manufactured at Paris and Nuremberg, at Frankfort-on-the-Main, and other toy-shops of Europe, out of wax and *papier-mâché*, and sold in Boston at the haberdasher's by the dozen. These ask nothing beyond their function as dolls, and hate all attempts to elevate womankind" (*Works IX:180*). And then there are those he calls "women who order a house, and are not mere drudges, who adorn it, and are not mere dolls, but women." These "are not wholly taken up with their function as a housekeeper, wife, mother" (*Works IX:180*). Parker sees this as the fastest growing class of women in New England. And because "in the progress of mankind, and the application of masculine science to what was once only feminine work -- whereby so much time is saved from the wheel and the loom, the oven and the spit -- with the consequent increase of riches, the saving of time, and the intellectual education which comes in consequence thereof, this class of women is continually enlarging" (*Works IX:181*).

Parker partially misreads some of the cause and effect relationships of the industrial revolution and the resultant alienation of women from co-equal partnership in breadwinning prior to the nineteenth century. Yet, he is convinced that occupations, skills, and professions (domestic or public) do not exhaust a person's identity. People are human beings first, male or female second, and occupied with a life's work third.

Moreover, while alienation from "breadwinning" labor has happened to an increasingly large class of women, setting the stage for an increase in formal

intellectual education, Parker argues that Boston had steadfastly refused to provide formal higher education for women which was on a par with that available to men. Middle-class and wealthy young men, on the other hand, tend toward the "philistine" or mercantile mentality, receiving as little as they require for business.

Even in Boston, [in] spite of the attempts of the city government to prevent the higher public education of women -- diligently persisted in for many years -- the young women of wealthy families get a better education than the young men of wealthy families do; and that fact is going to report itself presently. The best-educated young men are commonly poor men's sons; but the best-educated young women are uniformly rich men's daughters. (*Works IX:181*)

Parker points out a cultural discrepancy here. Men still have nearly exclusive access to the educational institutions of higher learning in Boston and the United States as a whole. Yet he decries the "education for business" that middle-class and rich sons receive to the exclusion of higher culture and refinement. Their image after marriage, Parker states, is that of "'a great heap of a husband,' curled up on the sofa, and in the evening can only laugh at a play, and not understand the Italian words of the opera, which his wife knows by heart" (*Works IX:182*). In short, middle-class and wealthy women have the time for cultural, academic education due to alienation from breadwinning and yet find themselves barred because of their gender while middle-class and wealthy men shun the opportunities for education their gender guarantees them. Borrowing

terms from Ann Douglas, Parker does not argue for or desire a "feminization" or a "sentimentalization" of men. Rather, he argues for a more integrated development of the human person (both male and female) though, clearly, a new man-making strategy is part of the unstated agenda in this sermon.

Parker sings a litany of non-domestic occupations and professions which are (or, in the case of trade; the professions of law, medicine, and ministry; and politics, should be) available to his female contemporaries: volunteer charity work (philanthropy); domestic labor for hire; mechanical labor such as spinning, weaving, and type-setting; the mercantile trade; teaching; the professions of law, medicine, and ministry; and finally politics. He decries unequal pay for equal labor and states, for example, "I confess I mourn that where her work is as profitable as man's, her pay is not half so much. A woman who should teach a public school well would be paid four or six dollars a week; while a man who should teach no better would be paid two, three, four, or six times that sum. It is so in all departments of woman's work that I am acquainted with" (*Works* IX:189).

Parker goes on to point out that rich women, as well as those middle-class women who aspire to wealth, have no choices for careers outside the domestic realm. "Rich women do not engage in these callings," he states, because "for rich women there is no profession left except marriage."

After school time, woman has nothing to do till she is married: I mean almost nothing; nothing that is adequate. Accordingly she must choose betwixt a husband and nothing, and sometimes that is choosing between two nothings. There are spare energies which seek employment before marriage and after marriage. (*Works* IX:189)

The patriarchal and entrepreneurial ideologies of manhood so displace woman that they are not afforded the dignity of the choice of labor outside the home. Parker tries to undermine the current language of the patrician and especially the entrepreneurial ideologies of manhood by turning their expressed values of "rights," individualism, efficiency, worth, cost, and benefit into a critique of the social structure which excludes women from education and the vast majority of professional functions. Human nature, for Parker, is the condition for the possibility for absolute religion; it is the locus of God-consciousness and moral choice. From his perspective, this human nature must be asserted by individuals for there to be any hope of genuine community. Thus in discussing the oppression of woman, Parker begins by arguing for a more fundamental reality, that the fullness of human nature resides in women as much as in men.

She and man have the same human nature, and, of course, the same natural human rights. Woman's natural right for its rightfulness does not depend on the bodily or mental power to assert and to maintain it, on the great arm or the great head; it depends only on human nature itself, which God made the same in the frailest woman as in the biggest giant.

If woman is a human being, first, she has the nature of a human being; next she has the right of a human being; third, she

has the duty of a human being. The nature is the capacity to possess, to use, to develop, and to enjoy every human faculty; and the duty is to make use of the right, and make her human nature human history. She is here to develop her human nature, enjoy her human rights, perform her human duty. Womankind is to do this for herself, as much as mankind for himself. A woman has the same human nature that a man has, the same human rights -- to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness -- the same human duties; and they are as inalienable in a woman as in a man.
(*Works IX:190*)

In echoing the Declaration of Independence, Parker makes his fundamental argument concerning women, namely, that if they share the same nature with men, they must necessarily possess the same inalienable rights and the same duties to develop as individuals and contribute to the building of society that men possess. The underlying premise here, of course, is that the necessary connections which Parker sees between nature and rights and duties can be asserted most clearly in a democracy. He defines human "nature" here as the "capacity to possess, use, develop, and enjoy every human faculty." As already argued above, this definition develops out of Parker's commitment to absolute religion. While careful not to equate the genders in all respects, he asserts their fundamental equality in terms of moral agency, political status, and most importantly for this preacher, in capacity for religion.

What necessarily follows from this foundation for society, then, indicts the dominant ideology of manhood generating the political and cultural realities of the time. Woman has the same individual right to determine her goals and

occupations in society. Moreover, she must have authority and individual rights over her "body and spirit," "of mind and conscience, and heart and soul." The "same physical rights, the same intellectual, moral, affectional, and religious rights" accrue to her as to man. Importantly, Parker points out that the context for such expressive individualism for woman and man is community. Human living cannot remain a solitary, solipsistic preoccupation with self-culture -- the tendency of democratic, entrepreneurial manhood. Rather, authentic human living "must be concerted and joint action." This concerted and joint action to build human community in a society is a duty implied by inalienable rights. The theological anthropology behind Romanticism, especially that of Schleiermacher, develops an understanding of individuality which calls for the full development and use of all human faculties and abilities but, as Parker points out, a democracy mandates such development. Democracy in the United States grows toward such full development all too slowly for him. He goes on to stress the point more clearly by stating that

The rights of individualism are not to be possessed, developed, used, and enjoyed by a life in solitude, but by joint action. Accordingly, to complete and perfect the individual man or woman, and give an opportunity to possess, use, develop, and enjoy these rights, there must be concerted and joint action: else individuality is only a possibility, not a reality. So the individual rights of woman carry with them the same domestic, social ecclesiastical and political rights as those of man. (*Works IX:191*)

Parker, thus, argues not only for gender equity here but more importantly for a social dimension to life and ethics, grounded in expressive individualism to be sure, but distinct from the dominant, entrepreneurial individualism current in his day. Not born of "noblesse oblige" or social contract, this social dimension of human and religious living is of the very fabric of human nature. Gender equity, as "natural" and necessary, is grounded in the structure of the moral-social nature of humans. Individuals are not complete, not really individuated appropriately or part of society, unless they are as fully developed as their abilities and the society can afford. This notion is crucial to Parker's man-making rhetoric. It distinguishes him from Emerson by the degree of commitment to social responsibility. For Parker, expressive individualism aims the evolution of society in general and social reform in particular. Parker makes use of pragmatic, entrepreneurial language to undermine the ideology which spawns the language.

Making explicit what is implicit in this understanding of human nature and natural rights of individuals (male and female), Parker advocates women entering leadership roles in the learned professions of law, medicine, and ministry, as well as the literary profession (the periodical press as well as fiction and poetry). For Parker, medicine peculiarly belongs to women, for "she is a nurse and physician by nature." He lauds the fact that some few medical schools are opening their doors to women. Women, he maintains, have

the intellectual capacity for law but, to their credit, "no woman acts as a lawyer," meaning that for women the law is neither a game played by fops and dandies, nor an agonistic, merely competitive contest. Indeed, "most lawyers," he states, "are rather mechanics at law than attorneys or scholars at law; and in the mechanical part woman could do as well as man -- could be as good a conveyancer, could follow precedents as carefully, and copy forms as nicely" (*Works IX:195*). Here, Parker betrays his doubt about the creativity of woman in the professions as well as his disdain for lawyers; yet he is most aware that woman, to date, had not been given the education or opportunity to establish her own credentials in public functions. It is just this absence of data Parker hopes will be remedied by opening the professions to woman. He acknowledges that "there is some eloquence in woman's tongue which courts find it rather hard to resist. I think her presence would mend the manners of the court -- of the bench not less than the bar" (*Works IX:195*). His intuition of women's skills lead him to think their skills in the professions would be more nurturing, less aggressive, and less creative or synthetic. But observing that women's approaches to professional situations are quite different from men's, he challenges his listeners to become more open to that difference.

Understandably, he pays special attention to the professional ministry. Like Emerson, Parker sees the ministry in need of reform. Among other serious problems, the popular pulpit theology "leaves nothing of the feminine in the

character of God." "How could it be otherwise," he asks, "when so much of the popular theology is the work of men who thought woman was a 'pollution,' and barred her out of all the high places of the Church?" (*Works IX:197*). Here Parker not only indicts contemporary theology and ministry for its latent but increasingly obvious misogyny, he also implies that the time of worn-out creeds is gone, that there is a "newness" afforded by the development of human consciousness and the possibility of explicit choice for absolute religion by individuals. "If women had had their place in ecclesiastical teaching, I doubt that the 'Athanasian Creed' would ever have been thought a 'symbol' of Christianity" (*Works IX:197*).

Then there are what are called the professions -- medicine, law, and theology. . . . In the business of theology, I could never see why a woman, if she wished, should not preach as well as men. It would be hard, in the present condition of the pulpit, to say she had not intellect enough for that! I am glad to find, now and then, women preachers, and rejoice at their success.... If woman had been consulted, it seems to me theology would have been in a vastly better state than it is now. I do not think that any woman would ever have preached the damnation of babies newborn; and 'hell, paved with the skulls of infants not a span long,' would be a region yet to be discovered in theology. (*Works IX:195-6*)

Here once again, Parker uses the entrepreneurial language of "business" in order to undermine the ideology associated with it. For him, ministry is anything but a business and though he surely felt the necessity of earning a living by preaching, Parker never lost a certain amount of ambivalence and anxiety about it. When his career as a minister was threatened by fellow

Unitarian ministers, he stated to his congregation in West Roxbury that he feared expulsion as their minister, and that "in case you refused to hear my voice, this was my plan: to betake myself to any kind of work for six or eight months, in the year, [and] the rest of the time, go forth as Paul [and] preach the word, which [was burning?] as a fire in my bosom, to preach[;] if not in a church, then in a hall, a school house, a barn, under the open sky[;] wherever a word would be heard or could be said" (MS. Sermon 338:22-3; bMS 101/9, Vol. 8, 1843-4). The anxiety reflected here is not merely that of a man rejected by his peers, it is also the anxiety of one who fears losing his income.¹⁵

Turning to political rights, Parker states the obvious, namely, that "in America, in Christendom, woman has not political rights, is not a citizen in full." This case holds despite the "fact" that as matter of *human* rights and as a matter of political expediency, the society in the United States continues to wound itself by denying itself the benefit of women's voices.

Looking at it as a matter of pure right and pure science, I know no reason why woman should not be a voter, or hold office, or make and administer laws... Certainly, every woman has a natural right to have her property represented in the general representation of property, and her person represented in the general representations of persons. (*Works* IX:198)

"Looking at it as a matter of expediency," Parker argues that if there were as many "Alderwomen" as "Aldermen" in Boston, the city government would not have licensed "every two hundred and forty-fourth person of the city to sell

intoxicating drink"; that the city government would not have spent "ten thousand dollars in one year in a city frolic" nor "spend two or three thousand dollars every year, on the Fourth of July, for sky-rockets and fire-crackers" nor "spend four or five thousand dollars to get their Canadian guests drunk in Boston harbor, and then pretend that Boston had not money enough to establish a high school for girls, to teach the daughters of mechanics and grocers." He goes on to say that women in government would not waste "three or four thousand dollars to kidnap a poor man, and. . . carry him back to slavery," nor would they allow "the poorest and most unfortunate children in the town" to be herded into the most miserable part of Boston and deny them the right to an education because of color or religion (*Works IX:198-9*). Thus, Parker delivers his modified version of the traditional, patriarchal argument that women are more moral than men; that they provide the conscience of society, are satisfied with "influence" rather than active voice and political power. Yet Parker turns the argument inside out because women are not "higher" beings, somehow endowed by nature with more moral goodness; rather they are marginalized in society and so are sensitized to the marginalization of other groups. The waste of public money, the lack of educational opportunity, slavery and adherence to fugitive slave legislation, and racism with regard to African Americans and Irish immigrants focus women's energies so well because they know what lack of individual development means. Parker takes the middle-class view of woman

with its language of "rights" and "expediency" and pushes the view to its logical conclusion: that women, like men, are to determine their public functions.

Though he doubts "that women will ever, as a general thing, take the same interest as men in political affairs, or find therein the same abiding satisfaction," Parker knows "that is for women themselves to determine, not for men" (*Works IX:201*). Clearly, this is not a radicalized position but one which undermines the rhetoric of the entrepreneurial ideology of manhood by criticizing the lack of rights and the waste of purpose and energy rather than the expected expediency. Moreover, Parker's nascent ideology in absolute religion cannot be categorized easily as "feminized," to use Ann Douglas's term. Though he never developed the ethics of absolute religion in a systematic and full manner, Parker's notion of man-making gives ample indication that morality, conscience, compassion, as well as rights, duties, high standards of performance, and expediency, are not gender specific qualities.

In order to attain the end -- the development of man in body and spirit -- human institutions must represent all parts of human nature, both the masculine and the feminine element. For the well-being of the human race, we need the joint action of man and woman in the family, the community, the Church, and the State. A family without the presence of woman -- with no mother, no wife, no sister, no womankind -- is a sad thing. I think a community without woman's equal social action, a Church without her equal ecclesiastical action, and a State without her political action, is almost as bad -- is very much what a house would be without a mother, wife, sister or friend. (*Works IX:201*)

Woman must not be reduced to the "moral conscience" of humanity, making safe the domestic scene for the war-weary breadwinner. Rather, woman and man develop and mutually encourage the development of one another, in Parker's ideology. "We want the excellence of man and woman both untied; intellectual power, knowledge, great ideas -- in literature, philosophy, theology, ethics -- and practical skill; but we want something better, the moral affectional religious intuition, to put justice into ethics, love into theology, piety into science and letters" (*Works IX:205*). Starting from the family, but reaching out to the community, the Church, and the state, the masculine and feminine elements, good in themselves yet partial and in need of mutual enhancement, must cooperate and conjoin for true expressive individualism, healthy development of the individual and society. Parker ends this sermon with two statements in direct address. The first, aimed at women who know their marginalization in contemporary society, encourages self-esteem through expressive individualism:

To every woman let me say, respect your nature as a human being, your nature as a woman; then respect your rights; then remember your duty to possess, to use, to develop, and to enjoy every faculty which God has given you, each in its normal way. (*Works IX:206*)

The second, directed to the average middle-class male listener, encourages a development of a "new" manliness; the development of a more substantial, evolved moral fiber which sets women free:

And to men let me say -- Respect -- with the profoundest respect -
 - the mother that bore you, the sisters who bless you, the woman
 that you love, the woman that you marry. As you seek to possess
 your own manly rights, seek also by that great arm, by that
 powerful brain, seek to vindicate her rights as woman, as your
 own as man. (*Works IX:206*)

Clearly, "respect" means nothing less than seeing woman as a moral agent,
 capable of intellectual, spiritual, and political development.

Taking up the uncomfortable question of feminine "influence" in lieu of
 more active political power in the development of human beings or "man-
 making" in the general sense, Parker wrote a sermon entitled "Home
 Considered in Relation to Its Moral Influences" in 1843, the year of his major
 crisis as a minister with the Boston Association of Ministers.¹⁶ True to the
 beliefs discussed above, Parker describes the "narrowing" of the male self-
 concept as well as the narrowing of the female role in contemporary society.
 On the surface, his rhetoric seems to suggest that woman's role is to merely
 mollify, pacify, soothe, and comfort man when he comes home from the
 "wars" in the business world.

In manhood, we sit down in our home. It is for this, and such as
 nestle there, that the man strives in the striving of the weak. But
 here he forgets this strife, and all the hardness which the world
 demands of him, living quietly once more. His habitual restraint
 and self-concealment, acquired by sad intercourse with the selfish,
 are here laid aside. He can speak as he thinks, and think as he
 feels, not fearing to be misunderstood and censured. . . . The
 effect of common toil, of intercourse with the business of men, as
 both are now managed, taken by itself, tends often to harden the
 man and make him selfish. The sweet influence of home is just

the reverse. The hardness is softened; the selfishness is changed. Confidence awakens confidence, sympathy tempts out the inner feelings, and the more beautiful, as May mornings the birds of spring. Here too, the union of husband and wife has the finest effect on the character. (*Works IX:209*)

Clearly the mercantile world of aggression, marketplace values, and entrepreneurial subterfuge is contrasted with the domestic world likened to a nest where the man can speak his mind and heart, live without fear of loss, censure, or misunderstanding. But to discern the full role of woman, a closer look must be taken, for she is of the same nature as man but society (and, in part, biology) stresses her geographical location as the home and not the marketplace.

Parker starts undermining the Emersonian notion of "hidden" influence of woman on man by comparing modern statuary to ancient:

In the ancient statues of the gods, such as Jupiter and Apollo, there is great breadth of character. You do not see one particular trait made prominent; there is a general development of all human qualities, with only a slight emphasis given to any special trait, to mark the stations of each, yet the individuality of each is well preserved. In statues of men, ancient and modern, as in men themselves, almost every one has a great particular development, and little of the general qualities of a man; an intense narrowness has taken the place of the divine breadth in the statues of the gods. . . . Now the influence of home, if made as it should be arrests this evil. Its human or generalizing power may be seen in the character of woman, on whom most of its cares, duties and pleasures too, as things now are, seem to devolve, as her sphere is home. (*Works IX:214*)

The humanizing quality of woman, then, is not due to a different nature or an overly particularized, monstrous development. Rather, "you find in woman much more of this general expansion, and much less of this specialness of ability, this one-sidedness of culture" (*Works IX:214*). Clearly, it is not the case that woman could not over-emphasize entrepreneurial skills. Parker seems aware they can. Yet he is careful not to attribute woman's "general expansion" to moral superiority; rather he attributes them to the state to which society has evolved. "Almost every man," he states, "can understand one thing surprisingly well; besides that he knows little, cares for little, and obstinately refuses to listen or to look beyond it." Yet, with women, the reverse seems to be the stereotypical case. Women "seem to know little of any one thing; but will understand immediately many things out of the reach of men whose special culture is far superior to theirs" (*Works IX:214*). Hence, women tend to give a more honest and candid examination of an event or cultural movement. Indeed, "the great moral enterprises of this day so often find favor with women, when they are mocked at by men whom business trains to look only at the profitable side of old abuses" (*Works IX:215*).

While Parker falls into some standard nineteenth-century stereotyping of women and men into "natural" roles, he still offers a strong critique of the entrepreneurial ideology of manhood here. Men tend to utilitarian individualism; women tend to network and secure a broader view of reality.

Parker's implicit point is that all aspects of the human person must be developed -- those classically female and those classically male. Moreover, all facets of human living, domestic, business, ecclesiastical, and political, are equally the responsibility of both men and women.

Parker points out the dangers of the marketplace morality. If persons define themselves in terms of the radicalized competition and the individuality of the marketplace, then there is not a sense of home, rootedness, or belonging. In the entrepreneurial ideology of manhood, each self constitutes a moral universe in an agonistic clash with other such selves. Therefore, the criterion for judging right from wrong degenerates into deciding who has the greater prowess of combative wit, who is merely lucky, who has the most sly intelligence, and (of course) who is the hardest worker at the game. If this is all there is to morality, then there is no way of finally adjudicating conflicting claims of right. The society is cut off because of ego-centric competition. Though woman is subject to the same tendency, the evolution of society has alienated her from breadwinning and emphasized openness, nurture, and the building of society on a small scale. This juncture in the evolution of human society is, for Parker, not the final stage. Only when all women and men are able to develop their capacities to the fullest and see themselves as co-workers in the building of society can the evolution of society be said to have reached a finality.

Sermons on Social Classes in a Democratic Republic

If theology intends an understanding of faith that is ultimately practical, if its insights are meant to shape ministry, then the preached word, prophetic utterances, must be applications of theology; actions which foster, encourage, and shape other moral actions. If "real presence" or the latent sacramentality of transcendental theology is to have any active, dynamic, transformative, and compelling meaning, then the key term in this discussion is "application" of theology. For all Christian believers, but especially for transcendentalists like Parker, the sacramental presence of God in the world finds its most convincing expression in "doing the Word of God," rather than in the metaphysical notions of "being" and "hypostatic union."

In the case of Theodore Parker, the sermons, article, and essay examined here demonstrate his application of absolute religion to the problems of his day. Parker stings the public conscience and attempts to break up traditional prejudices and conventional habits of thought and conduct. His sermons and addresses examine conventional "comfort zones" of middle-class people in order to break down those hindrances to the total development of human beings. According to Parker, absolute religion calls for the total development of each person's gifts while the politics of democracy demand and intentionally foster such development.

In this section of the chapter, it can be seen that Parker does not simply indict the mercantile class but calls them to a metanoia. In his sermons on classes in American society, he points out the inconsistency of the tyranny of the "aristocracy of gold" and the spirit of equality idealized in the Declaration of Independence. Such inconsistency, he argues prophetically, will sunder the Union. Finally, returning to one of his two fundamental ministerial principles, he argues that in true religion the strong should always help the weak.

Two characteristic words dominate Parker's sermons and addresses on social classes in the United States. As Samuel A. Eliot points out in the "Editor's Preface" to volume ten of Parker's *Works*, "duty" and "confidence" are the bywords, the axiomatic terms shaping his prophetic challenges to society.¹⁷ Unlike his sermons on education and women in which he stresses the inalienable "rights" which belong to all human beings, Parker stresses the "duties" which are the burden of the dominant middle class. Moreover, the "confidence" Parker embodies in these sermons and addresses has to do with that in which his ethics of social duty are grounded. He is confident that God is the God of *all* men and women, not just the privileged few or economically secure. This seemingly simple statement, that is until the practical implications are worked out, must be seen as an aspect of his evolutionary understanding of human society. It is only with the expansion and greater implementation of democratic ideals in the nineteenth century, according to Parker, that the

condition for the possibility for individuality and the guarantee of human rights exists.

Parker believed and consistently argues that all genuine spiritual aspirations of human beings are necessarily allied to social reform. The human race, like the world as a whole, is caught up in an evolutionary process and so aspirations for a voice in the state or government, the Church, business and trade, as well as the burgeoning publication industry, are possible and are even timely in the United States.

In an article published in April, 1841 in *The Dial* and originally entitled "Thoughts on Labor" but later called "The Laboring Classes," Parker addresses the liberal, middle-class merchants and well-established persons in and around Boston. While the piece is indeed an article, it reads like a sermon; in fact, Parker punches home his theme initially by quoting St. Paul (2 Thessalonians 3:10): "If a man will not work, neither shall he eat" (*Works* X:42). He addresses neither the unemployed nor the under-employed but the genteel and those who aspire to gentility.

He argues that labor has taken a bad name in the present age. A complex reality, labor is both "fate and freedom," "duty and delight." It should yield every person financial gain and the spiritual gain he calls "dignity." Labor, in a "rational world," has a "reflective action, and gives the working man a blessing over and above the natural result which he looked for" (*Works* X:42-3).

Instead, however, in this less-than-rational world, the dominant middle class understands labor as a "curse and a disgrace," due to the "fall" of humankind. Setting the social standards and creating the dominant ethos of the United States, the middle class fosters gentility and respectability; labor appears antithetical to gentility, sophistication, and respectability. The "sacramental sin," the real presence of evil Parker names, is the middle-class aversion to labor: "this notion that it is a curse and a disgrace, this selfish desire to escape from the general and natural lot of man." Moreover, it is the sacramental sin of the "better class," especially in large cities like Boston.

Quickly moving to political repercussions of this structural evil fostered largely by the middle class, he states that the notion that labor is disgraceful "conflicts sharply with our political institutions, as it does with common sense, and the law God has writ on man" (*Works* X:45). He points out that wage slavery, like African slavery, is a remnant of barbarous times and has no place in a democracy. The Enlightenment's "common sense," which dominated the American Revolution, according to Parker, disdains flagrant violations of human rights as well as human duties. Since all persons have a need to eat, all persons have a duty, insofar as they are capable, to work. Finally, in an appeal to absolute religion, he argues that true manliness, true human development, is found in labor. Humans find its blessing and dignity; they develop the ability to take charge of their lives in a disciplined manner, not merely fitting into the

status quo, but reshaping and redefining their possibilities. Labor in the broadest sense is education, if one's society affords time for cultural growth and reflection as well as avoids intemperate labor.

Only the proper amount of labor is a blessing. And here Parker names the problem, for the entrepreneurial class so disdains labor and sends such cultural clues to the laboring classes that envy grows for the genteel life. In a guarded reflection on his own life, Parker states that "too much of it [labor] wears out the body before its time, cripples the mind, debases the soul, blunts the senses, and chills the affections... [the human being] ceases to be a man, and becomes a thing" (*Works X:47*). On the other hand, the genteel class of entrepreneurs aggravates the difficulty of increased demand for labor due to societal and cultural advancement by escaping from their share of this labor because of superior intelligence, shrewdness, and cunning. The genteel class may live by calculated fraud and lies or by inheriting the result of these qualities (indolence) from their ancestors. "This class then commits a sin, which the class of hands must expiate" (*Works X:49*).

If manliness is the desired outcome of absolute religion, it is also the desired result of temperate labor. "Man was sent into this world," he states, "to use his best faculties in the best way, and thus reach the high end of a man" (*Works X:50*). The middle-class treachery of misusing talents and money is the danger of the entrepreneurial culture of the United States.

Clearly, the costs and the benefits of democracy in the United States deserve a close scrutiny. Parker sees the treachery of avoiding true labor and the tyranny over the laboring classes potentially (and in some cases actually) more ghastly and more aberrant in a democracy dominated by middle-class ideology and values; it is more likely in a capitalist economy but, according to Parker, not inherent in the nature of a capitalist economy. All economies are vulnerable to ego-centrism and selfishness; laissez-faire capitalism is simply honest about the high degree of competition and the goal of personal, individual gain.

He chooses to point out the inconsistencies in the middle-class logic, however, by arguing that waste, intemperance (largely caused by deprivation and despair), treachery, and excess of labor not only hurt the laboring classes but the entrepreneurial classes as well. The language of productivity, value, and individuality is inverted here. "It is not under the burdens of nature that society groans; but the work of caprice, of ostentation, of contemptible vanity, of luxury, which is never satisfied, -- these oppress the world" (*Works* X:53). Clearly placing himself with the majority of his readers, Parker recites a motto of absolute religion: "we that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak." Moreover, there are many ways to be strong and productive:

The productive classes of the world are those who bless it by their *work* or their *thought*. He who invents a machine does no less a service than he who toils all day with his hands. Thus the

inventors of the plough, the loom, and the ship, were deservedly placed amongst those whom society was to honor. But they also who teach men moral and religious truth; who give them dominion over the world; instruct them to think, to live together in peace, to love one another and pass good lives enlightened by wisdom, charmed by goodness, and enchanted by religion; they who build up a loftier population, making man more manly, -- are the greatest benefactors in the world. (*Works X:58*)

It is interesting to note that even the sacred profession of teaching is "production" of manly men (and womanly women, one must add). True teachers are a class of prophets, daring to question received traditions, challenging the easy assumptions of contemporary ideologies of manhood.

In perhaps his most arresting statement to his readers, he states that "this seems to be the rule," at least on a personal level (and, by implication, what should be society's rule) "that no one, whatever be his station, wants, attainments, or riches, has any right to receive from another any service which degrades the servant in his own eyes, or the eyes of the public, or the eyes of him who receives the service" (*Works X:54*). Clearly it is "unmanly" to receive what one has not, in some way, earned or is himself willing to give when called upon. "No man, therefore, has a natural right to any more than he earns or can use" (*Works X:54*).

Parker addresses his readership in a moderating, measured voice in order to keep them. It is easy, he says, to see these evils and mourn; "it is common also to censure some class of men -- the rich or the educated, the

manufacturers, the merchants, or the politicians for example -- as if the sin rested solely with them, while it belongs to society at large" (*Works* X:65). His solution, the solution he aims at throughout the essay, is the application of "Christianity" to social life. Democratic society in the United States will never fulfill its destiny, "things will never come to their proper level so long as thought with the head, and work with the hands, are considered incompatible; never till all men follow the calling they are designed for by nature, and it becomes as common for a rich man's son to follow a trade, as now it is happily for a poor man's to be rich" (*Works* X:66). Absolute religion redresses the treachery and tyranny of the middle class through individual conversion of heart. When an individual recognizes "nature's laws," that society has evolved to the point where an aristocracy of any stripe is an anachronism; that free public education, based on society's abilities and the individual's abilities, is the right of all who live in a democracy; and that the marginalization of women, immigrants, and the slave system are sacramental sins, then Christianity, absolute religion, will have come to an individual heart. For Parker, only individuals can be convinced of moral behavior; conversion, conviction, and moral action are fundamentally private movements. Like-minded individuals made into an aggregate, however, can undermine the dominant ideology at work in the society.

Labor will remain a disgrace and unattractive so long as the dominant middle class perpetuates distinctions gained through violence, cunning, and unjust abuse of the laboring class. "So long as the best cultivation of a man is thought inconsistent with the life of the farmer and the tailor," and so long as men desert an occupation among laboring classes for which they are well suited for a "learned profession" for which they have little ability for the sake of an education, just so long will there exist unjust classes in the United States. Labor, then, has a religious function; "the laws of nature are at work for the [laborer]. For him the sun shines and the rain falls. The earth grows warm to receive his seed. The dews moisten it; the blade springs up and grows he knows not how, while all the stars come forth to keep watch over his corn. There is no second cause between him and the Soul of all" (*Works* X:70). Not only is "man-making" the literal image here, it is also the image of the cultivation of democracy.

In August 1841, Parker expanded his thoughts on class structure in the United States in "The Education of the Laboring Classes" and once again found his critique of entrepreneurial male ideology focused most effectively by the right to education in a democracy. Parker rehearses his themes of society and culture as evolutionary realities, the sacramental sins of treachery and tyranny of the educated and wealthy over the laboring classes, and the genteel notion that manual labor is a disgrace to be avoided.

What Parker adds to his developing argument for dignity and equity for all levels of society is the explicit statement that the patrician and entrepreneurial ideologies of manhood are outmoded because they are neither reasonable nor compassionate.

It is time that we in New England had given up that old notion, that a man is to be educated that he may serve the State, and fill a bar or a pulpit, be a captain or a constable; time we had begun to act, and in good earnest, on this principle, that a man is to be educated because he is a man, and has faculties and capabilities which God sent him into the world to develop and mature. The education of classes of men is, no doubt, a good thing, as a single loaf is something in a famished household. But the education of all born of woman is a plain duty. (*Works X:79*)

Individuality, difference, and personal talent are still the keys to Parker's ideology of manhood and his man-making process but "reason" teaches, at this juncture in history, human faculties and capacities cannot be fulfilled without education. Moreover, Christianity (absolute religion) mandates that if human beings are to serve God and fellow human beings with their mind, heart, and soul, then the mind, heart, and soul of all should receive education, not only lawyers, physicians, and clergymen "but all the sons and daughters of Adam" (*Works X:79*). Individuals are to seek education themselves, but the society must provide it, "not because a man is to fill this or that station, and so needs the culture, but because he is a man, and claims the right, under the great charter whereby God created him an immortal soul" (*Works X:79*).

Thus education is a birthright in a democracy. And only in a democracy can the individual's initiative be met with public responsibility to secure the general cultivation of all persons and give some assurance that the talent of the wealthy and clever will not tyrannize the poor and ordinary. "All the difference between the best educated men of Massachusetts and the natives of New Zealand, ignorant, savage, cannibal as they are, comes of this circumstance: one has had a better education than the other" (*Works* X:80). If this is true of the comparison of mercantile, sophisticated Americans and aboriginal Maori of New Zealand, Parker stresses, then it is certainly true of the various classes in the United States. Circumstances of history (e.g., war or peace, availability of public funds), the cultural sophistication of the society in question, and an individual's talent and drive should be the considerations for a person's education.

As an end in itself, education must be promoted in a democracy as valuable to the individual first and not simply as a means of developing or maintaining society. Here Parker gives battle to the educated middle class who maintain that "there must be an educated class. . . but also, from the imperfection of man, the necessity of the case, and the very nature of things, there must be an ignorant class also; that the hard work necessary for the comfortable subsistence of man in society renders it indispensable that seven-eighths of men should continue in hopeless ignorance" (*Works* X:82). Not only

has this attitude of heart enforced ignorance and lack of dignity, it is an attitude which is "unmanly." It has, according to Parker, "too generally become the creed of the strong, and the indolent, and the selfish" (*Works X:82*).

Clearly attacking the "feudal heritage" of the ideology of manhood at work in the middle class as not in accord with American democratic ideals, he returns to the theme of "waste" which pricks the entrepreneur where he lives. The waste of "mental capital" of laboring men and women, the reduction of "manly excellence" to marketable or visible commodities robs the United States of its resources.

On August 30, 1846, Parker again addressed the issues of class structure in the United States in a sermon delivered at the Melodeon Theater. "The Perishing Classes" indicts the contemporary culture in the United States in no uncertain terms. Parker maintains that American society is founded on a basis of selfishness, a "society wherein there is a preference of the mighty, and a postponement of the righteous, where power is worshipped and justice little honored, though much talked of[;] it comes to pass that a great many little ones from both these classes actually perish" (*Works X:103*). He attacks the middle class ideology of manhood as it may be observed in its effects on two classes of "weak," marginalized people: those "little by nature. . . born with feeble powers, not strongly capable of self-help" and those "little by position," comprised of "men that are permanently poor and ignorant" (*Works X:103*).

Clearly, a man may be marginalized or "perish" when financially, emotionally, or physically ruined or even "when he fails to attain the degree of manhood he might attain under the average circumstances of this present age, and these present men" (*Works* X:103). In this sermon, Parker asks the pastoral questions, the practical questions concerning those who are perishing due in part to society's structures: "What shall be done **with** them?" adding that "Seldom has it been the question, What shall be done **for** them?" Parker walks the tightrope of nineteenth-century philanthropic counsels. He emphasizes the personal sacrifice necessary in a Christian and democratic society by arguing that the strong must work "for" the weak, helping them to foster self-esteem and self-support. Yet, Parker, like Henry David Thoreau, suspects any "philanthropy" which does not foster self-esteem by developing personal independence.

In the very act of arguing for individual responsibility of the wealthy and strong for the permanently poor and feeble, Parker undermines the radical individualism which is central to the entrepreneurial ideology of manhood. "Who is it that organizes society," Parker asks, and is therefore responsible in a real way for the "organic sins" of society? He answers by pointing out the mercantile class:

I know rich men tell us that capital is at the mercy of labor. That may be prophecy; it is not history; not fact. Uneducated labor, brute force without skill, is wholly at the mercy of capital. The

capitalist can control the market for labor, which is all the poor man has to part with. . . The condition of the poor has hitherto been bettered, not so much by the design of the strong, as by God making their wrath and cupidity serve the weak. (*Works X:113*).

The mercantile, entrepreneurial classes set a "poor example of fraud" for the poor. Since merchants control the all-important capital, they control politics, tax revenues, foreign policy (through the army and the navy), the Church, and the press. Thus it falls to the mercantile class to work with and for the laboring classes in a self-conscious manner; a task, Parker states, which heretofore has not been accomplished.

Specifying the already prevalent theme of individual conversion through absolute religion, he stresses private initiative. Parker instructs his listeners to stop complaining, look around themselves and see the hard reality of others' lives; to train and employ the poor; to provide comfortable, safe housing at a reasonable rate; to give better pay when that is possible; and certainly to pay a fair wage, not being "grossly overfed" on the labor of others.

The great work must be done by good men, acting separately or in concert, in their private way. You are your brother's keeper; God made you so. If you are rich, intelligent, refined and religious, why, you are all the more a keeper to the poor, the weak, the vulgar, and the wicked. In the pauses of your work there will be time to do something. In the unoccupied hours of the Sunday there is yet leisure to help a brother's need. If there are times when you are disposed to murmur at your own hard lot, though it is not hard; or hours when grief presses heavy on your heart, go and look after these children, find them employment, and help them to start in life; you will find your murmuring are ended, and your sorrow forgot. (*Works X:128*)

There is no room for self-pity or indolence in a democracy, particularly among the middle class. Self-esteem, productivity, the creation of wealth is the right of every person but must be fostered by those who have the intelligence and capital to create it.

Yet the preacher is not satisfied with passive acknowledgment of sinful social structures, the wringing of hands, and well-intentioned localized points of light.

What I have suggested only palliates effects; it removes no cause; -- of that another time. These little ones are perishing here in the midst of us. Society has never seriously sought to prevent it, perhaps has not been conscious of the fact. It has not so much legislated for them as against them. Its spirit is hostile to them. If the mass of able-headed men were earnest about this, think you they would allow such unthrifty ways, such a waste of man's productive energies? Never! no, never. They would repel the causes of this evil as now an invading army. (*Works X:133*)

The removal of social injustice on this scale must be brought about by a change in the spirit of society. Parker calls for a change in the "spirit" and the related ideology of manhood as necessary for social reform. "We want justice which prevents causes no less than the charity which palliates effects" (*Works X:134*).

The application of Christianity to social life by the vigorous middle class is Parker's solution: "I look to you to do something in this matter. You are many; most of you are young. I look to you to set an example of a noble life, human, clean, and Christian, not debasing these little ones, but lifting them up. Will you cause them to perish; you?" (*Works X:135*).

Among some rough sketches of sermons set down and stitched together in 1846, Parker wrote as a heading to sermon sketch 445 "A S[ermon] of Merchants etc."¹⁸ Immediately beneath this title in the manuscript is penciled an abbreviated scriptural reference, "Eccles[iasticus] XXVII 2." The preceding two verses and the verse to which the note refers read:

A merchant can hardly keep from wrongdoing,
 and a tradesman will not be declared innocent of sin.
 Many have committed sin for a trifle,
 and whoever seeks to get rich will avert his eyes. As a
 stake is driven firmly into a fissure
 between stones,
 so sin is wedged in between selling and buying.
 (Ecclesiasticus 26:29-27:2).

This section of the Book of Ecclesiasticus, or The Wisdom of Jesus the Son of Sirach, articulates the dangers which confront a person of integrity; trade or commerce, in particular, present real dangers to both the merchant and the customer. "This concept leads to a more general consideration of the use of the tongue. The section ends with the evil of betraying a confidence" (*Jerome Biblical Commentary*, 549-50). The point is rather straightforward and so it is easy to discern Parker's use of the passage. Since small-scale trade in the Ancient Near-East was conducted largely on a barter basis, the agonistic, competitive nature of bargaining was a skill necessary for survival. Merchants and consumers both had to possess a sophisticated set of verbal cues sufficient to convey their desires and at the same time be skilled enough to fend off the

standard manipulations of the other.¹⁹ The great sin of cheating the consumer, of course, was lying about the goods for sale. The "stake" driven firmly between the stones (merchant and consumer) is the spoken word which can be used for truth-telling or lies. The image conjured is that of a tent peg wedged between rocks for the sake of stability; it is the point of connection between the two. The words used in bargaining should be as "good" or stable as the men who use them. Clearly, the implication of the writer of Ecclesiasticus and, therefore, that of the writer of this sermon, is that merchants are not always as good as their words.

"The Merchant Classes," preached at the Melodeon Theater on November 22, 1846, sets out to examine the "position," "temptations," and "opportunities" of the dominant class of men in the antebellum United States. Before proceeding to the "position" of the merchant class, Parker reiterates his taxonomy of men. First, "there are men who create new material for human use," called "direct producers." These are fishermen, farmers, miners, and inventors, teachers, and the whole class of superior intellects Emerson calls generically "Genius." Second, there are "men who apply their head and hands to this material, and transform it into other shapes, fitting it for human use." These are "indirect producers" or "manufacturers." Men of talent, they are a little lower than the men of genius. Third, there are "men who simply use things, when thus produced or manufactured." These are called "consumers"

and, as all persons are consumers, this is the largest group. Finally, there are "men who buy and sell: who buy to sell, and sell to buy the more. They fetch and carry between the other classes." These Parker calls "distributors" or, more commonly, "merchants" (*Works X:1*).

He also ranks these for classes of people, stating that "the value of the calling depends on its importance; its usefulness is the measure of its respectability. The most useful calling must be the noblest. If it is difficult, demanding great ability and self-sacrifice, it is yet more noble" (*Works X:2-3*). His criterion for valuing a "calling" is pragmatic more than utilitarian. The key concept can be found in the notion of rigor or "difficulty." The truly noble person is not born of certain blood lines but possesses a great-soul; true respectability (not gentility) is measured by self-sacrifice and working for the other, not simply one's self. What makes this criterion "pragmatic" rather than "utilitarian" is that Parker appeals to the "permanent" in human nature, not the "transient." Usefulness ultimately cannot be defined in terms of "the greatest good for the greatest number"; rather, it must be defined in terms of the individual person authentically living out of his or her God-consciousness. It is "to judge by the natural law published by Jesus -- that he who would be greatest of all, must be most effectively the servant of all" (*Works X:3*).

Moreover, the merchant class is itself divided into three groups. First, there are "merchant-producers" who "deal in labor applied to the direct creation

of new material"; who "buy labor and land, to sell them in corn, cotton, coal, timber, salt, and iron." Second, are the "merchant-manufacturers" whose business is to "deal in labor applied to transforming that material" produced by "merchant-producers." These buy "labor, wool, cotton, silk, water-privileges, and steam-power, to sell them all in finished cloth." Finally, there are the "merchant-traders" who "simply distribute the article raised or manufactured" (*Works X:5*).

Parker then defines a few terms. The three divisions of merchants he will speak of as one body. Next, "property" he defines as "accumulated labor." Finally of the class of merchants, Parker states that

As a general rule, merchants are the only men who become what we call rich. There are exceptions, but they are rare, and do not affect the remarks which are to follow. It is seldom that a man becomes rich by his own labor employed in producing or manufacturing. It is only by using other men's labor that anyone becomes rich. A man's hands will give him sustenance, not affluence. In the present condition of society this is unavoidable; I do not say in a normal condition, but in the present condition. (*Works X:5-6*)

Here, in microcosm, is the point of the sermon. Parker neither lauds nor decries the "present condition" of capitalist economics. Yet in light of what he has said in previous addresses and sermons, it is clear that "no man has a natural right to any more than he earns or can use" (*Works X:54*), that the reduction of men (and women) to commodities by over-work and, thus, leaving them with no time for culture and education are sacramental sins. And since the

mercantile class controls the politics of the country, the press, and the Church because of its wealth, then the temptations to cheat the laboring classes are enormous and sophisticated.

Parker likens the position of the mercantile class in antebellum America to the aristocracies of old -- aristocracies of the soldier in the Imperium of Rome and that of birth in feudal Europe. America has created an "aristocracy of gold" and

the position of this class is the most powerful and commanding in society. They own most of the property of the nation. The wealthy men are of this class; in practical skill, administrative talent, in power to make use of the labor of other men, they surpass all others. Now, wealth is power, and skill is power -- both to a degree unknown before. . . . To this class belongs the power both of skill and wealth, and all the advantages which they bring. It was never so before in the whole history of man. It is more so in the United States than in any other place. (*Works X:6*)

He challenges his middle-class audience by reminding them that the evolutions of culture and society are not over, however. "The aristocracy of gold has faults enough, no doubt, this feudalism of the nineteenth century. . . [Yet] we are going forward, and not back. God only knows when we shall stop, and where. Surely not now, nor here" (*Works X:8*). Too many people are marginalized; too many kept from education and culture. Absolute religion has yet to take hold in American society.

For Parker, the merchant class's strength may be summed up by stating that "the ablest men go into the class of merchants"; indeed, "the strongest men

in Boston, taken as a body, are not lawyers, doctors, clergymen, book-wrights, but merchants." Yet, like Emerson before him, Parker points out the merchants' weakness as a class: "They know their power, but are not yet fully aware of their formidable and noble position at the head of the nation. Hence they are often ashamed of their calling; while their calling is the source of their wealth, their knowledge, and their power, and should be their boast and their glory" (*Works* X:9-10).

Evidence of the "shame" this class of men felt may be found in an allusion to an ugly power struggle in 1841. The struggle took place between the Reverend John Pierpont, pastor of the Hollis Street Church in Boston and close friend of Parker, and his congregation. Many of latter were rum and spirits merchants who stored their commodities in the basement of the church against Pierpont's wishes. Both Pierpont and Parker were appalled by the misuse and abuse of alcohol in the working class people of Boston. Even more galling was the fact that parishioners were getting wealthy by selling cheap liquor to the destitute and thus perpetuating the downward cycle of poverty, alcoholism, crime, and death among the marginalized in Boston. Pierpont vigorously argued for the removal of the liquor and preached openly on the subject in the church. He found for his pains that the most wealthy and powerful of his parishioners called for his removal. Parker defended him publicly but to no avail. Pierpont

eventually resigned his pastorate and Parker earned the wrath of the Boston Association of Ministers.²⁰

Elaborating on the position of the mercantile class, Parker asserts that they control the politics, the Church, and the clergy in New England.

Acting consciously or without consciousness, it [the mercantile class] buys up legislators when they are in the market; breeds them when the market is bare. It can manufacture governors, senators, judges to suit its purposes, as easily as it can make cotton cloth. It pays them money and honors; pays them for doing its work, not another's. It is fairly represented by them. Our popular legislators are made in its image; represent its wisdom, foresight, patriotism and conscience. Your Congress is its mirror. (*Works X:9-10*)

And with regard to the Church and the clergy, Parker states that "this class is the controlling one in the churches, none the less, for with us. . . the churches have no existence independent of the wealth and knowledge of the people." The wealthy class is adept at getting the ministers who will "do its work" and reward the clergy with "comfortable places." "It drives off such as interfere with its work. . . It raises or manufactures others to suit its taste" (*Works X:11*). Not surprisingly, the merchants build the churches and endow the theological schools. Hence, Parker claims, "the metropolitan [Boston] churches are, in general, as much commercial as the shops" (*Works X:11*).

The temptations merchants endure because of their social position are the temptations of the powerful in every age. First, they experience an "extravagant desire of wealth." Money is power and once they gain power, social position,

and access to education follow soon after. Their second temptation consists of thinking "any means justifiable which leads to the that end," that is, the accumulation of wealth and power. This is the temptation to fraud, deceit, and tyranny discussed in previous sermons and addresses. It consists of the attempt to "abuse the power of this natural strength or acquired position, to tyrannize over the weak, to get and not give an equivalent for what they get." Finally there is the "strong temptation to use one's power of nature or position to the disadvantage of the weak. This may be done consciously or unconsciously" (*Works* X:11-3). Here, of course lies the sacramental sin. From this root of the real presence of evil stem unfair labor practices, artificial limits in production, the manipulation of markets in order to raise prices -- without a concomitant rise in wages. Ultimately, this sin of "tyranny" logically results in African slavery in the South and wage slavery in the North.

Exhibiting the optimism of transcendental religion, Parker assures his hearers that "if their temptations are great, the opportunities of this class for doing good are greater still." Power is neither "bad" nor "neutral"; rather, it is more readily useful for good than ill" (*Works* X:16).

In their calling they direct and control the machinery, the capital, and thereby the productive labor of the whole community. . . . By their control of the legislature the merchants can fashion more wisely the institutions of the land, promote the freedom of all, break off traditionary yokes, help forward the public education of the people by the establishment of public schools, public academies, and public colleges. They can frame particular statutes

which help and encourage the humble and the weak, laws which prevent the causes of poverty and crime, which facilitate for the poor man the acquisition of property, enabling him to invest his earnings in the most profitable stocks, -- laws which bless the living and so increase the number of lives. They can also help organize society after the Christian idea, and promote the kingdom of heaven. They can make our jails institutions which really render their inmates better, and send them out whole men, safe and sound. . . . They too can found houses of cure for drunkards, and men yet more unfortunate, when released from our prisons.

By their control of the churches, and all our seminaries, public and private, they can encourage freedom of thought; can promote the public morals by urging the clergy to point out and rebuke the sins of the nation, of society, the actual sins of men now living; can encourage them to separate theology from mythology, religion from theology, and then apply that religion to the State, to society, and the individual; can urge them to preach both parts of religion -- morality, the love of man, and piety, the love of God, setting off both by an appeal to that great soul who was Christianity in one person. . . . Thus laboring, they can put an end to slavery, abolish war, and turn all the nation's creative energies to production -- their legitimate work. (*Works X:16-9*)

In four powerful pages, Parker challenges the mercantile class to embody "manliness" in a creative, compassionate, and rigorous manner. While making use of the language of power, productivity, and value with regard to the nation, society, and the individual person, he challenges the "aristocracy of gold" to use their gifts for other persons in accord with the anthropology of absolute religion. Most cognizant of the fact that he speaks to the "conservative element in society," an element "which resists the further application of Christianity to public affairs," he takes the opportunity to assess the "practical" power for change available to the merchant class -- an assessment he knows will appeal to

the business mentality desirous of clear results. He judges according to the "highest standard" he knows, that of absolute religion. The judgment is harsh:

There is always a conservative element in society; yes an element which resists the further application of Christianity to public affairs. . . . There will always be such an element in society. Here I think it is represented by the merchants. They are backward in all reforms, excepting such as their own interests demand. (*Works* X:19)

Not only have merchants opposed the abolition of the slave trade and "had it guaranteed them for twenty years after the formation of the Constitution," but through their means the country "stands before the world pledged to maintain it." The merchant class "opposed abolishing imprisonment for debt, thinking it endangered trade." Moreover, they "oppose the progress of temperance and the abolition of the gallows." He charges that they aided and encouraged the invasion of Mexico (Mexican War, 1846-8) and saw "the evils of war" but could not see its sin. The "merchant-manufacturers" require a "protective tariff," while the "merchant-importers" want "free trade," a situation which makes national politics vulnerable to foreign interference. Closer to home, Parker asserts that "when Massachusetts was a carrying State [an import-export state], she wanted free trade; now a manufacturing State, she desires protection. That is all natural enough; men wish to protect their interests, whatsoever they may be. But no talk is made about protecting the labor of the rude man who

has no capital, nor skill, nothing but his natural force of muscles" (*Works* X:21-3).

Most galling to Parker is that "this class controls the churches, as the State" and, thus, reduces prophets to priests of various denominations. Shame accrues to the class of clergy because they are co-opted by moneyed interests. "As a general rule, the clergy are on the side of power. . . The clergy also are unconsciously bought up, their speech paid for, or their silence. As a class, did they ever denounce a public sin? a popular sin?" (*Works* X:29). As an example, Parker recalls that quite recently, "the Unitarian clergy published a protest against American slavery. It was moderate, but firm and manly. Almost all the clergy in the country signed it. In the large towns few [signed the petition, and] they [were] mainly young men and in the least considerable churches. The young men seemed not to understand their contract, for the essential part of an ecclesiastical contract is sometimes written between the lines and in sympathetic ink" (*Works* X:30). Other structural sins, only slightly less obvious, include the Mexican War, fostering intemperance, creating and maintaining the conditions reducing women to prostitution, and especially the lack of free public education.

The good merchant, states Parker, cannot afford the naivete which blocks recognition that he belongs to the class most responsible for leadership in the United States; that it is the duty dictated by absolute religion to protect

the "rights" of all persons -- especially the poor. For "when you protect the rights of all, you protect also the property of each, and by that very act. To begin the other way," to begin by merely protecting the right to property, real or monetary, "is quite contrary to nature" (*Works X:23*). Thus for the "good" merchant, "all work is sacramental: he communes with God and man in buying and selling -- communion in both kinds" (*Works X:36*).

On January 31, 1847, Parker preached a sermon at the Melodeon Theater entitled "The Dangerous Classes."²¹ Once again beginning with "evolutionary" concepts of human consciousness and human society, Parker articulates a developmental concept of anthropology. The paradigm of growth, clearly, is that from infant to adult as physical beings. Parker insists that the interiority of the human follows the same pattern but may be interrupted and even halted by one's personal choice or "will," or by external forces of society and culture.

In the physical process of growth from the baby to the man, there is not direct intervention of the will. Therefore the process goes on regularly, and we do not see abortive men who have advanced in years, but stopped growth in their babyhood. But as the will is the soul of personality, so to say, the heart of intellect, morals, and religion; so the force thereof may promote, retard, disturb, and perhaps for a time completely arrest the progress of intellectual, moral, and religious growth. Still more, the spiritual development of men is hindered or promoted by subtle causes hitherto little appreciated. (*Works X:139*)

The result of such hindrances by choice or by context within society is that "you find persons and classes of men who do not attain the average culture of mankind, but stop at some lower state of this spiritual development, or else loiter behind the rest" (*Works X:139*). Moreover, if a single class in a nation, "especially a democracy, "lingers behind the rest, the cause thereof will commonly be found in some outward hindrance. They move in a resisting medium, and therefore with abated speed" (*Works X:139*).

Careful to maintain that humanity has not reached full development yet, he names stages of individual spiritual development which correspond to the stages or epochs of human society. The "Animal period" for an individual means that he or she "is incapable of any considerable degree of development, intellectual, moral, or religious. The defect is in his [or her] body" (*Works X:140*). The "Savage period" provides little more and indicates that "he would be a freebooter, a privateer against society, having universal letters of marque and reprisal; . . . his rule is to get what he can, as he will and where he pleases, to keep what he gets" (*Works X:140*). The "Barbarous period" brings about significant change but, still, "he is lazy and will not work; others must bear his share of the general burden of mankind. He claims letters patent to make all men serve him. He is not only indolent, constitutionally lazy; but lazy consciously, and wilfully idle. He will not work, but in one form or another will beg or steal" (*Works X:140*). In his day, Parker insists, people have

reached only the "Half-civilized period." In this stage, people "will work with [their] hands, but no more. He cannot discover; he will not study to learn; he will not even be taught what has been invented and taught before. None can teach him. The horse is led to the water, or the water brought to the horse, but the beast will not drink" (*Works X:140*). For Parker, what is "exceptional" about these persons is that they remain stationary, not advancing with the rest of humanity. The "perishing classes," then, are named the "idiot, the pirate, the thief, and the clown."

Parker believed his age to be on the cusp of a breakthrough. He saw the signs of readiness and need for society's advancement. Society's tolerance for compromising or settling for arrested growth was over; such was the optimism and articulation of absolute religion.

The human race moves not by column or line, but by echelon as it were. We go up by stairs, not by slopes. Now comes a great man, of far-reaching and prospective sight, a Moses, and he tells men that there is a land of promise, which they have a right to who have skill to win it. Then lesser men, the Calebs and Joshuas, go and search it out, bringing back therefrom new wine in the cluster and alluring tales. Next troops of pioneers advance, yet lesser men; then a few bold men who love adventure. Then comes the army, the people with their flocks and herds, the priesthood with their ark of the covenant and the tabernacle, the title-deeds of the new lands which they have heard of but not seen. At last there comes the mixed multitude, following in no order, but not without shouting and tumult, men treading one another under foot, cowards looking back and refusing to march, old men dying without seeing their consolation. (*Works X:140-1*)

In the "advanced" state of civilization of the United States, the dangerous classes are not "left to die" as they would be in the "animal," "savage," "barbarous," or "half-civilized" stages of development. Rather, they are not abandoned but ground down; they run the danger of being "trodden under foot," to perish unless, that is, the most advanced individuals rally society to come to their aid, to instruct them in hopes of their maturation. The question in a truly civilized society is, "What shall be done for these stragglers, or even with them?"²² What, in other words, are the society's responsibilities to those who endanger the progress, if not the very life, of the society? His answer is clear and unequivocal. The method of dealing with such individuals who are criminals or pariahs is that called Christian love, the only true wisdom.

In the world and in society the question is answered in about the same way. In a low civilization, the instinct of self-preservation is the strongest of all. They are done with, not for; are done away with. . . . In the family alone is the Christian answer given: the good shepherd goes forth to seek the one sheep that has strayed and gone, lost upon the mountains; the father goes out after the poor prodigal, whom the swine's meat could not feed nor fill. . . . The spirit of Christianity comes into the family, but the recognition of human brotherhood stops mainly there. It does not reach throughout society; it has little influence on politics or international law -- on the affairs of the world taken as a whole.
(*Works* X:144-5)

Far from the Christian ideal as Parker sees it, the United States remains the best hope for incarnating the ideal. The democratic form of government coupled with the recognition of individual rights and duties keeps the society from

becoming a true aristocracy and promises, in theory at least, education, culture, and dignity to all. This pragmatic appeal to individualism, development, and democracy disparages waste, tyranny, and retributive justice.

One is the method [a method of dealing with outcasts] of force. . . . The mischief is, they leave it no wiser than they found it. . . . I think it never did any other good. It belonged to a rude and bloody age. A man is seldom elevated by an appeal to low motives; always by addressing what is high and manly within him. . . . Force may hide and even silence effects for a time; it removes not the real causes of evil. By the method of love and wisdom the parents remove the causes; they do not kill the demoniac, they cast out the demon, not by letting in Beelzebub, the chief devil, but by the finger of God. . . . That is nature; the strong protecting the feeble. (*Works* X:147)

While Parker betrays some paternalistic attitudes toward the marginalized, in light of his overwhelming determination to empower them through education and his challenge to the tyranny of the moneyed classes, as well as his appeal that humane and just treatment of the "dangerous" classes must not be retributive but rehabilitative, it is clear that he parts from the usual company of "liberal" contemporaries more indulgent of the entrepreneurial ideology of manhood. For Parker the appeal to manliness is grounded in "nature." It is "natural" for the strong to protect the weak, for the healthy to correct the wayward, and for the mighty to work *with* the marginalized so they may be empowered. He takes his case to the extreme when he asks what shall be done with the incorrigible:

Some will not be mended. I stop not now to ask the cause. Some will not return, though you go out to meet them a great way off. What then? Will you refuse to go? Can you wholly abandon a friend or a child who thus deserts himself? Is he so bad that he cannot be made better? Perhaps it is so. Can you not hinder him from being worse? Are you so good that you must forsake him? Did God forsake mankind? Not one of those sinners did His love forget. (*Works X:150*)

The way of wisdom in Christian love starts with understanding that poverty, lack of education, and intemperance are the roots of criminality. To be sure there are "foes of society," those that are "criminals of the soul, born criminals, who have a bad nature" (*Works X:158*). But most criminals, in Parker's view, are the "victims of society," people "who become criminals by circumstances, made criminals, not born; men who become criminals not so much from strength of evil in their soul, or excess of evil propensities in their organization, as from strength of evil in their circumstances" (*Works X:158*). For a class to stop staggering behind other classes, for the whole society to progress, and for the individual to learn wisdom, society must be converted person by person to absolute religion.

Concluding Thoughts

Theodore Parker cast a wide net in his ministry. He preached to all who would listen and as his most important biographers, Octavius Brooks Frothingham and John Weiss, have noted, he reached a very large and diverse

audience indeed. The key to Parker's successful ministry lay in his preaching. The hallmarks of his preaching were, as Frothingham stated in an address reprinted by the *Boston Commonwealth* on July 21, 1877, integrity, catholicity, and outspoken honesty.²³ His preaching embodied the strategy of "manly" Christianity he sought to articulate in his own brand of expressive individualism.

Parker's genius was not the same caliber as that of Emerson and neither was his ministry as radical in form. Yet Parker engaged the critical social issues of his day as constituent aspects of his ministry. From his pulpit, he taught all levels of Boston society about the fundamental equality of all human beings without compromise or concealment. Consciously taking the mantle of the religious prophet, he challenged and undermined the dominant ideology of manhood of the day by advocating the abolition of slavery, free public education, women's rights, and a critical view of the class structure perpetuated by the "aristocracy of wealth" in the United States.

Parker's integrity as a minister is made clear in the metamorphosis of his manuscript sketches of sermons to his finished pieces. Both the refinement of his thought as well as the elaboration of the practical implications of absolute religion did not dull the points of his sermons. Rather, he fit the message of each sermon to his hearers, as all ministers must. The experience of exclusion and the power of his intellectual gifts compelled Parker to preach what his

intuition and faith recognized, namely, that service of the outcasts and of the marginalized of society was the embodiment of absolute religion and the true Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Such integrity combined with a compulsion to broad comprehension, to catholicity of thought, is another hallmark of his ministry. Parker's days as a student at Harvard made obvious what became a life-long pattern of frenzied, if critical, receptivity. He simply read as much as he could on a given subject if he thought the material would bear fruit in his ministry. Moreover, the huge personal library he collected over his brief lifetime, now housed in the Boston Public Library, testifies to the eclectic yet technical qualities of his intellectual interests. He was well-read in theology and philosophy spanning the centuries but took particular interest in the German developments in theology, philosophy, and biblical criticism from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Finally, as Frothingham points out, his outspoken honesty often caused him a great deal of personal pain. Parker's protracted battle with the Boston Association of Ministers has been discussed above. It is fair to speculate that no other rejection caused him as much internal turmoil as that by his liberal ministerial peers.

If integrity, catholicity, and outspoken honesty were the dominant aspects of Parker's character which gave shape and form to his ministry and may be

summarized as "manly," it must be said that this is the strategy of manhood he attempted to impress upon the whole society, not just ministers. His "manly" Christianity came from the very roots of his life and consisted of the heroism required of prophets who powerfully speak an unpopular message and the heroism of which valorizes compassion for those who disagree and the empowerment of the marginalized.

NOTES

1. Jeremiah 20:7-9. Some translations, such as the Revised Standard Version, render the Hebrew verb *patâ* as "to deceive," while maintaining that, literally, the verb means to seduce sexually, "and is used in the case of a virgin being seduced by a man" (see *Jerome Biblical Commentary*, 319). The translation provided comes from the RSV, the lineal descendant of the King James or Standard Version which Parker surely used. Instead of rendering the verb as "deceive," I have rendered it in its more evocative and more accurate translation as "seduce." Parker knew Hebrew very well and was surely aware of the verb's denotation and connotation. *The Jerusalem Bible* translates the verb as "seduce."
2. See *The New Oxford Annotated Bible* (RSV), 1973, introduction and notes to "The Book of the Prophet Jeremiah." What is to be noted is that God "seduces" his own prophet in the sense that God's sweet and pleasant word of commissioning carries the force of a command which cannot be overridden. In other words, God's call and the errand of the prophet to chastise and convert Judah to the "Truth" was sweet when first uttered. Now, however, when the prophet's very life is threatened, Jeremiah accuses God of seducing or deceiving him as a man seduces a virginal woman. Jeremiah has been deceived for if he could have built and planted instead of merely tearing down and destroying by means of the prophetic word, his situation would have been markedly different. This errand will cost Jeremiah his life. But the dilemma is that Jeremiah has no one else to turn to, no where else to go.
3. Lawrence Buell, *New England Literary Culture: From Revolution Through Renaissance* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1986) 126.
4. The standard edition of Parker's works is the *Centenary Edition* published by the American Unitarian Association from 1907 to 1913. The bibliography of this edition gives a good but incomplete list of published sermons. At the Andover-Harvard Theological Library of the Harvard Divinity School, there are nearly 1000 sermons in manuscript. See *Parker Papers* (bMS 101) catalogued in December, 1971 by Dr. Alan Seaburg, the Divinity School archivist.
5. Theodore Parker, "A Sermon of My Own Stewardship," Sermon 338, Theodore

Parker Paper, bMS 101/9, Vol. 8 (1843-1844), Andover-Harvard Theological Library, Harvard Divinity School.

6. See John Weiss, *Life and Correspondence of Theodore Parker* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1864; Freeport New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1969 reprint), I:188-193. See also, Hutchison, *The Transcendentalist Ministers*, 118-124. Pierpont had been minister at the Hollis Street Church since 1819 but ran afoul of certain powerful members of his congregation for opposing the storage of rum in the cellar of the church building and for "his advocacy in the pulpit of prison reform, the peace and temperance movements, and antislavery."

7. Theodore Parker, "The Idea of a Christian Church and of Its Minister," Theodore Parker Papers, bMS 101/10 (1846), 408, Andover-Harvard Theological Library, Harvard Divinity School. See also "The True Idea of a Christian Church," in *The Works of Theodore Parker, Centenary Edition*, XIII (Boston: American Unitarian Association, 1910) 17-49. This is an edited version of the sermon published for a readership rather than a listening audience.

8. See "The Gospel According to Mark" in *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*, 22.

9. See David Leverenz, *Manhood and the American Renaissance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989) 3.

10. Theodore Parker, "Education of the People," in *Sins and Safeguards of Society*, Vol. IX of *The Works of Theodore Parker, Centenary Edition*, (Boston: American Unitarian Association, 1907). Hereafter cited in the text as *Works IX*.

11. See Robert F. Harvanek, S.J., "The Jesuit Vision of a University" (Loyola University of Chicago, 1989) 10. This brief monograph not only articulates the fundamental characteristics of higher education in the Jesuit tradition but also parallels much of Parker's thinking on formal education as personal development and value centered.

12. It should be noted that at the Gettysburg battlefield on November 19, 1863, Abraham Lincoln used a phrase very similar to one of Parker's in this address. Parker said, "The government [of the United States] is a democracy[;] the government of all, by all, and for all, in the name of all" (*Works X:99-100*). The final periodic sentence of the Gettysburg Address reads, "It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us -- that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion -- that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain -- that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom -- and that government of the people, by the

people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth." See Garry Wills, *Lincoln at Gettysburg: The Words that Remade America* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992) 263. See especially chapter three, "The Transcendental Declaration," where Wills discusses the general influence of Transcendentalism and the particular influence of Theodore Parker on Lincoln's politics.

13. Theodore Parker, uncatalogued manuscript entitled "Of Women after the Savage, Classic" in "Sermon Sketches, Book 5: 'Pencil Sketches of Sermons.'" "Book 5" is one of many booklets of sermon sketches sewn together from loose sheets and written in Parker's hand. They are listed without reference to corresponding sermons or much description and bibliographic information in the catalogue entitled "Theodore Parker Manuscripts" in the Rare Book and Manuscript Room at the Boston Public Library. The Boston Public Library holds approximately 440 of these uncatalogued sketches under the heading "Autograph Manuscripts, 493 pp: Sermon Sketches #314-754." According to the "Catalogue of Theodore Parker Papers Deposited with the American Unitarian Association" compiled by H.E. Hudson (October 30, 1958), the original of which is now in the archives of the Andover-Harvard Theological Library, the only known sermon to be preached by Parker on the status and condition of women in 1846 is entitled "Woman" and corresponds with bMS 101/10:441 held at the Andover-Harvard Theological Library.

14. See Samuel B. Stewart, "Editor's Preface" in *Sins and Safeguards of Society*, Vol. IX of *The Works of Theodore Parker, Centenary Edition* (Boston: American Unitarian Association, 1907) i. Stewart points out correctly that Parker's sermons and addresses are not the treatises of a sociologist. Rather, as a minister, Parker intends to uncover the "chief sins of the people," the structural evils woven into the fabric of antebellum American society. For him, the two chief sins are the "slave-power" in the South and its "subservient money-power" in the North. From these two economic iniquities stem the other structural evils under consideration: repression of the poor, the marginalization of women, and the lack of free public education.

15. See Theodore Parker, "To Rev. Convers Francis, D.D.," 24 June 1842, A.L.S., MS. C.1.6; Parker Manuscripts, Rare Book and Manuscript Room, Boston Public Library. A particularly poignant example of Parker's expression of his well-founded anxiety over income, career security, and alienation from his peers can be found in this letter. Francis was a long-time mentor and friend and had just been appointed to the faculty of the Harvard Divinity School, a post in which he served until 1863. The fact that Francis was "acceptable" to the Harvard faculty, and thus far more theologically conservative than Parker, indicates both the reverence the author holds for Francis and the despair the author feels. Parker begins his letter by congratulating Francis on his appointment but ends by pouring out his own misery and anxiety over his career and future prospects.

I suppose I shall soon see you or hear from you -- & find that you have accepted the offer. But there is a thing of some consequence to me, though of little to you -- of which I want to say a word or two. (I am not *complaining* of anyone, nor writing a Jeremiad to grieve you.) The experience of the last XII months shows me what I am to expect for the next XII years. I have no *fellowship* from the other clergy -- no one that *helped* in my ordination will now exchange ministerial courtesies with me. Only one or two of the Boston Association & perhaps one or two out of it will have any ministerial intercourse with me. "They that are younger. . . turn the cold shoulder."

If I stay at Spring Street [the location of the Second Church of West Roxbury], I must write 104 sermons a year for about 104 people. This will consume most of my energies & I shall be in substance *put down* -- a bull whose [lowing?] can't be stopped, but who is tied up in the corner of the Barn-cellar, so that *nobody hears him*, & it is the same as if he did not [roar?], or as if he were muzzled. Now this I *will not do*. . . .

Now I am not to sit down [timidly?] & be driven out of my position by the *opposition*, . . . [by] others whose conduct shows that *they* have no [care?] of freedom -- except for [themselves?]. . . I shall do this, when obliged to [decline?] the pulpit, -- because a *free voice* & a *free heart* can't be in that bad [eminence?]." I mean to live at Spring Street, perhaps with [George] Ripley [at Brook Farm very near at hand, not the parish house], I will study 7 or 8 months of the year & 4 or 5 months I will go about & preach & lecture in city & glen, by the road side & field side, & wherever men & women may be found. . . . It grieves me to the very soul of my heart's life to think of leaving the ministry (which I *love*, as few *ministers* love it -- & this little parish.

16. Theodore Parker, "Home Considered in Relation to Its Moral Influence" in *The Works of Theodore Parker, Centenary Edition*, Vol. IX, ed., Samuel B. Stewart (Boston: American Unitarian Association, 1907). Hereafter cited in the text as *Works IX*.

17. Theodore Parker, *Social Classes in a Republic*, Vol. X of *The Works of Theodore Parker, Centenary Edition*, ed. Samuel A. Eliot (Boston: American Unitarian Association, 1907). Hereafter cited in the text as *Works X*.

18. Theodore Parker, uncatalogued manuscript entitled "A S[ermon] of Merchants etc." held in the Rare Book and Manuscript Room at the Boston Public Library,

"Book 6: Sermon Sketches No. 445-462." This sermon sketch is actually misnumbered as there is a sketch numbered "445" immediately preceding this sketch entitled "Inward Christ." In the Hudson catalogue at the Andover-Harvard Theological Library, sermon 445 is entitled "Merchants and Their Calling." It is interesting to note that the content of the 1846 sermon presently under examination entitled "The Mercantile Classes" incorporates a great deal of material concerning the vocation or "calling" of merchants. It would appear these notes were a source for both sermons.

19. See Walter J. Ong, S.J., *Interfaces of the Word: Studies in the Evolution of Consciousness and Culture* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977) 113, 210, 216-7, 222-9; see also Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London: Methuen, 1982) 43-4, 55, and especially 68. In the last citation of this second text, Ong puts the point concisely: "In primary oral cultures, even business is not business: it is fundamentally rhetoric. Purchasing something at a Middle East souk or bazaar is not a simple economic transaction, as it would be at Woolworth's and as a high-technology culture is likely to presume it would be in the nature of things. Rather, it is a series of verbal (and somantic) maneuvers, a polite duel, a contest of wits, an operation in oral agonistic."

20. See Octavius Brooks Frothingham, *Theodore Parker: A Biography* (Boston: Osgood and Company, 1876) 176. See also, Hutchison, *The Transcendentalist Ministers* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1965) 118-24.

21. Theodore Parker, "The Dangerous Classes," Vol. X of *The Works of Theodore Parker: Centenary Edition* (Boston: American Unitarian Association, 1907). Hereafter cited in the text as *Works X*.

22. It should be noted that these same two related questions were asked by Parker in a sermon called "The Perishing Classes" preached the year before, on August 30, 1846. See *Works X*:104; 340, note 1.

23. Octavius Brooks Frothingham, "The Claim of Theodore Parker: An Address by O.B. Frothingham," rpt. in *Boston Commonwealth*, 21 July 1877, n. pag. A copy of the article is contained in a scrapbook of Parker materials compiled by Caroline C. Thayer, MS K.138.19 held in the Rare Book and Manuscript Room at the Boston Public Library.

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