THE SECRET SIX AND THEIR THEORY OF AUTONOMOUS INDIVIDUALISM

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Years ago, Mr. Chairman, when you and I were privileged to sit at the feet of the great teachers of those reforms, of whom did we learn the lesson? Was it from the darlings of the Church, the pet clergymen of city parishes? We know too well that we learned our anti-slavery lessons from men outside of the Church, and the objects of its denunciations. . . . We learned them from Theodore Parker, who sits--YONDER. . . . It was the identity of Theodore Parker's creed with the heroic life that he led, that made his name and history immortal from the Atlantic to the Pacific shore. . . .


It has fallen my lot to know, both in youth and in age, several of the most romantic characters of our century; among these one of the most romantic was certainly . . . [Dr. S. G. Howe]. That he was indeed a hero, the events of his life sufficiently declare. . . . Like his nature, his fortunes were romantic; and very few men of our century--hardly even Garibaldi or John Brown--have connected their names with so much that was at once adventurous, momentous, and permanently successful. . . .

F. B. Sanborn, Dr. S. G. Howe, The Philanthropist.

We had a pleasant visit last from the most interesting young man of the day, Frank Sanborn, a senior at Cambridge, and editor of the "Harvard Magazine." He is three inches above my head and very handsome, a person of great talent and noble character; and did you ever hear of his romantic engagement, marriage, and bereavement? He is only twenty-three now.

Thomas Wentworth Higginson, Letters and Journals of Thomas Wentworth Higginson.
CHAPTER I

ROMANTIC REFORMERS: THE CULTURAL VIEWS
OF THE SECRET SIX

On 16 October 1859 John Brown, believing that he had begun a revolution, spectacularly attacked Harpers Ferry in a dramatic, ill-fated effort to purge America with blood of its most damning sin: slavery. Six upstanding men--Theodore Parker, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, Franklin Benjamin Sanborn, Samuel Gridley Howe, George Luther Stearns, and Gerrit Smith--financially and morally supported Brown in his insurrection,¹ for they had definite concepts as to the kind of society that they wanted to establish in America. These six men, later known as the Secret Six, were in the mainstream of mid-nineteenth century American reform; therefore, the dominant theme in the minds of this Secret Six was the romantic belief in the free individual. Since these six men, like all reformers of this period, lacked a class consciousness in their ideology, as a result of a faith in social mobility for all Americans, they avoided a confrontation with the concept that social barriers must be broken. Instead, the ultimate objective of their reform was to free the

individual from institutional restraints, such as slavery, war, inadequate education, and legal discriminations against women.² In time these six crusaders, as typical American reformers of this era, came to consider slavery the greatest institutional restriction from which the individual must be freed. Thus, slavery was the greatest national sin, for it kept the individual slave from obtaining his religious salvation. Hence, this romantic reform was a religious impulse, a moral crusade, appealing to the individual conscience; and this impulse was "both politically and socially conservative."³

Out of this intense individualism,⁴ came the social philosophy of progress, which, these reformers believed,

would eventually liberate and perfect each individual. 5

Consequently, to these six zealots, the belief in the free


individual living in a free, progressive society held out the promise that America could become a perfect community of autonomous individuals and an example for all the world. However, for America to achieve this perfection, these six reformers, adhering to a highly individualistic, Transcendental-Unitarian religion, which did not place any restraints between the individual and God, believed that American theology had to be freed from the absolute determinism of Calvinistic dogmas, for those doctrines denied that sin was voluntary and that each man was a free agent who could accept or reject the bountiful riches of heaven. This theology of salvation available to all, determined by each individual's free will, was analogous to the ideology that America, with its vast virgin lands of the West, offered unlimited social mobility for each individual who exerted his free will. But the Secret Six realized that for America to be this perfect community of autonomous individuals, where each individual could exert his free will and gain social mobility, America had

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to be freed of any determinism in its institutions, such as slavery, which produced a permanent class structure like that of Europe.

These six men espoused the idea that if America could become this progressive and perfect community, then it could easily escape the rising and falling of cycles in history, which had dominated the thinking of the Enlightenment. These six crusaders had such faith in their theories of individualism, which they particularly manifested in their tenets of theology and in their ideas of class structure, that they abandoned moral persuasion, converting each individual to liberal Unitarianism, as the dominant means of establishing their community, and accepted violence as the principal means of establishing their society. These men believed that only that type of an individual, such as Brown, who was willing to use violence if necessary and to die for the dictates of his conscience, could reform America into a community that exemplified to the world a belief in the free individual.

The most erudite and prolific writer of the Secret Six was Theodore Parker, the Transcendental-Unitarian minister. Parker, the youngest of eleven children, was

born 24 August 1810 in Lexington, Massachusetts. The first Parker in Massachusetts, Thomas, had settled at the Bay Colony in 1635.\textsuperscript{8} Theodore's father, John, following in the tradition of his ancestors, was a yeoman farmer and mechanic. Theodore described his father as "a thoughtful man, turning his large and active brain and his industrious hand to the mechanical and agricultural work before him."\textsuperscript{9} John Parker was an independent thinker in religious matters and became a Unitarian before such a religious organization existed, for he considered the Calvinistic creed to be irrational.\textsuperscript{10}

Hannah Stearns Parker, the daughter of a well-off Lexington farmer, was, likewise, a Unitarian; and she had much influence on her son's religious sentiments. She taught Theodore that "the life of God" was "in the soul of man, . . . the Deity was an Omnipresent Father, filling every point in space with His beautiful and loving presence . . . ," and He could be seen in all aspects of

\begin{thebibliography}{10}
\bibitem{8} Henry Steele Commager, Theodore Parker: Yankee Crusader (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1936), pp. 3-5.
\end{thebibliography}
Hannah Parker's most important contribution to Theodore's religious outlook was the concept of conscience, and Parker's earliest religious experience in the realm of conscience occurred when he was only four. He had contemplated killing a little spotted tortoise when a little voice inside him told him that it was wrong. Upon relating the incident to his mother, she told him that the little voice was "the voice of God in the soul of man," and that he should always obey this voice, for it was right. She further reinforced this religious principle in teaching her son the rudiments of education: "the first line of plain reading my mother ever taught me ran thus:--'NO MAN MAY PUT OFF THE LAW OF GOD. . . . " This principle governed Parker's world view for the rest of his life: "It will be the last line, as it was the first: I can never get beyond it."13

At an early age, Parker wrestled silently with the teachings of Calvinism while his mother was teaching him the more liberal doctrines of Unitarianism. At play in his father's house, he found a copy of the Westminster

12Ibid., pp. 15-16.
Catechism which contained the dogmas of Calvinism. The idea of eternal damnation horrified him. These same horrible religious theories confronted him later in his New England Primer, and again these damning notions about God and the Devil tormented him:

I can scarcely think without a shudder of the terrible effect the doctrine of eternal damnation had on me. How many, many, hours have I wept with terror as I laid on my bed and prayed. But before I was nine years old this fear went away, and I saw clearer light in the goodness of God.

These confrontations were so intense that Parker spent most of his life preaching against the damning determinism of Calvinistic dogmas in any form.

Parker's parents not only instructed him in religious matters, they also instilled in him the cultural ethics of New England: self-reliance, hard work, endurance, and personal industry. All of these ethics he reflected in his attitudes toward his farming labors, his preaching, his teaching, his reform efforts, and in his studying and thinking. Although his formal education was skimpy,
he was a devout student. Before he was eight, he had read Homer and Plutarch in translation, could write verses, and upon a single reading could reproduce a poem of 500 to 1,000 lines. He maintained this kind of extensive and intensive private study throughout his life.18

After a short session at Lexington Academy and then several years of teaching, Parker, in the fall of 1830, returned to his father's farm to work and take courses at Harvard.19 Since he was a non-resident student and did not pay tuition and fees, Parker did not receive a degree from Harvard although he had done exceptionally well on his examinations. Finally in 1840 after he became well known, Harvard granted him a degree.20

In 1831 Parker became an assistant teacher in a private school in Boston where, in addition to his teaching and independent studies, he reexamined Calvinistic theology by listening to the sermons of Lyman Beecher, the most popular, uncompromising orthodox preacher of New England. Beecher's purpose in Boston was to quelch with hellfire and damnation the teachings of the liberal Unitarian minister, Dr. William Ellery Channing. Although Parker

18 Weiss, Life and Correspondence of Parker, 1:42-47.
19 Commager, Parker, pp. 14-17.
20 Frothingham, Parker, pp. 26-27.
somewhat respected the preaching technique of Lyman Beecher, he thoroughly rejected Calvinism. The more he understood it, "the more self-contradictory, unnatural, and hateful did it seem," and a year of Beecher's preaching ended all of his "respect for the Calvinistic Scheme of Theology."\(^2^1\)

For the next two years, Parker taught in his own school at Watertown, Massachusetts, where he met two people, Convers Francis and Lydia Cabot, who greatly affected his life. Francis, a Unitarian minister, introduced Parker to German scholarship in theology and to the new Transcendental thinking; and four years later, Parker married Lydia Cabot. Also at Watertown, an event happened for which Parker always felt ashamed. Instead of listening to his conscience, he listened to the dictates of the racist community and dismissed a black girl from his school. Never again would Parker fail to obey his conscience.\(^2^2\)

In 1834 after saving a small amount of money from his school in Watertown, Parker entered Harvard Divinity School where he excelled as a scholar and supported himself by tutoring Hebrew. After graduation from divinity school, Parker accepted an invitation from the Unitarian Church in West Roxbury. Although his ordination ceremony of

\(^{2^1}\)Parker, *Experience As a Minister*, pp. 35-36.

21 June 1837 was a typical and uncontroversial installation, Parker had already begun to reject the more conservative religious views prevailing at Harvard Divinity School. The demands of his small West Roxbury Parish were few; consequently, he had much time for study and thought, and long visits with Dr. William Ellery Channing, who had a tremendous impact on Parker's religious thinking. 

Parker thoroughly studied Emerson's *Nature* and read such European writers as Kant, Carlyle, and Hegel. All of these writers appealed to him, and he began a drift toward Transcendentalism.

In 1838 civil war erupted in the Unitarian Church. Emerson delivered his controversial "Divinity School Address," in which he said man could communicate directly with God; and he, furthermore, refuted the miracles, the divinity of Jesus, and the authority of the Scriptures. 

Parker was impressed: "so beautiful, so just, so true and terribly sublime, was his [Emerson's] picture of the faults of the Church in its present position. My soul is aroused. . . . "

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23 Frothingham, *Parker*, pp. 82-106.


25 Ibid.

the souls of many orthodox Unitarians. Emerson, unconcerned about their anger, quietly ignored the controversy, for he already had withdrawn from the Unitarian Church. However, Parker clearly saw the effects of these hostilities: "there are now two parties among the Unitarians; one is for progress, the other says, 'Our strength is to stand still.' Dr. Channing is the real head of the first party; the other has no head. . . . Some day or another there will be a rent in the body. . . . "27 Although Henry Ware, Jr., levied the first charge against Emerson, Andrews Norton emerged as the teacher of the orthodox party. In a detailed criticism of Emerson's address, "A Discourse on the Latest Form of Infidelity," Norton accused Emerson of having carelessly attacked the very foundation of Christianity. This was too much for Parker; the orthodox Unitarians were becoming as fundamental and unprogressive as the Calvinist, whom they just had refuted. Parker became the head of the "party of progress" by issuing three manifestoes: the pseudonymous letter of Levi Blodgett; "The Transient and the Permanent in Christianity," a sermon preached on 19 May 1841; and five lectures given during the winter of 1841 and 1842, and published later as A Discourse of Matters Pertaining to Religion. 28

27 Parker to G. W. Ellis, 3 January 1839, in Weiss Life and Correspondence of Parker, 1:119.

The controversy intensified in the Unitarian Church and became one of the bitterest controversies in American religious history. The Boston Association of Unitarian Ministers and The American Unitarian Association almost expelled Parker and practically denied him Christian fellowship, for very few ministers would exchange pulpits with him. Feelings were so intense that Parker wrote in his journal: "This is the nineteenth century! This is Boston! This is among Unitarians!" But Parker knew he must endure, study, preach, and rely on himself, for this was a second reformation, more radical than Luther's; and he saw himself as the leader who must stand alone in this conflict "in which the soul was to be on one side, and Protestantism backed by Romanism on the other. . . ."

In January 1845 friends in Boston, concerned about Parker's isolation within the Unitarian structure and determined for Parker to be heard, persuaded him to preach a series of sermons at the Melodeon, a stuffy entertainment hall in Boston. The attendance was so large and consistent that Parker organized the Twenty-eighth Congregational


31Frothingham, Parker, p. 181.
The purpose of this "free church" was "to produce a healthy development of the highest faculties of men, to furnish them the greatest possible amount of most needed instruction, and help them each to free spiritual individuality." With reluctance Parker left his faithful West Roxbury Unitarian congregation and became the first permanent minister of the "free church."

In his installation sermon, "The True Idea of a Christian Church," of 4 January 1846, Parker declared that a Christian church should be a means of reforming the world, of forming it after the pattern of Christian ideas," alert the people of "a public sin in the land," lead the way in making war on such a sin, and be a "church of martyrs." True to Parker's preachings, the Twenty-eighth Congregational Society became a source of inspiration to many reformers, such as William Lloyd Garrison, Rufus Leighton, Dr. Samuel Gridley Howe, Julia Ward Howe, F. B. Sanborn, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, George Luther Stearns, and George W. Slack.

32Albrecht, Parker, p. 69.  
33Parker, Experience As a Minister, p. 105.  
34Albrecht, Parker, pp. 69-70.  
36Chadwick, Parker, p. 204.
Parker, in 1846, considered slavery as the greatest "public sin in the land"; however, he was interested in ridding the nation of other sins: drunkenness, poverty, discrimination against women, bad prison conditions, and lack of observance of the Sabbath. Although he preached his first antislavery sermon on 31 January 1841, he did not devote all of his energy and time to the abolitionist cause until after the admission of Texas and the Mexican War. Probably his interest in antislavery reform would have come earlier than 1841 had it not been for his thorough commitment to reforming the Unitarian Church.37

With the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law, Parker became more of an activist and began to accept violence in his war on slavery: "The Fugitive Slave Bill is one of the most iniquitous statutes enacted in our time; it is only fit to be broken. In the name of justice, I call upon all men who love law, to violate and break this Fugitive Slave Bill; to do it 'peaceably if they can, forcibly if they must.' "38 Both peaceably and forcibly, Parker violated the Fugitive Slave Law; he organized vigilance committees, harbored fugitive slaves, and with the other members of the Secret Six participated in riots to rescue the captured

37 Frothingham, Parker, pp. 352-434.

38 Parker to the Reverend S. J. May, 1 October 1853, in Weiss, Life and Correspondence of Parker, 2:119-120.
fugitive slave.\textsuperscript{39} When violence erupted in Kansas, Parker wrote in his journal that "America is now in a state of revolution;"\textsuperscript{40} and he believed it, for he became involved in the crusade to save Kansas with bullets and, subsequently, became a member of the Secret Six.

Parker died in 1860 without seeing the end of slavery, but he had contributed much to the cause of abolition: particularly, in his influence on Thomas Wentworth Higginson and F. B. Sanborn. In his autobiography, Higginson proclaimed high regard for Parker: "in the direction of pure thought and advanced independence of opinion, Theodore Parker was my teacher."\textsuperscript{41} Higginson was born 22 December 1823 on Professor's Row in Cambridge, Massachusetts, to Stephen Higginson, Jr., and Louisa Storrow Higginson. The first Higginson, the Reverend Francis, came to Salem in 1629; and a line of Puritan clergymen, officials, militia officers, and East India merchants descended from him.\textsuperscript{42} Louisa Storrow Higginson, Thomas' mother and a descendant of the aristocratic Appleton and Wentworth families of New Hampshire,


\textsuperscript{40}Journal of Theodore Parker, 7 September 1856, in Weiss, \textit{Life and Correspondence of Parker}, 2:183.


\textsuperscript{42}Ibid., pp. 3-8.
became an orphan in her teens; Stephen Higginson, Jr., a
wealthy Boston merchant, moved Louisa into his household
to care for his invalid wife and two younger daughters.
When his wife died, he married Louisa, who was sixteen
years younger than he, went bankrupt, and moved to
Cambridge where he became a Steward for Harvard College
in 1818. Here he helped to establish the Harvard Divinity
School and the American Unitarian Association.\textsuperscript{43}

Hence, Thomas Wentworth Higginson grew up in a reli-
gious environment of Unitarianism, and later considered
himself fortunate that he had escaped the dark dogmas of
Calvinism: "Greatly to my bliss, I escaped all those
rigors of the old New England theology which have darkened
the lives of so many. I never heard of the Five Points of
Calvinism until maturity. . . ."\textsuperscript{44}

At the early age of thirteen, Higginson entered
Harvard College and graduated in 1841. He taught school
for a few months in a Boston private school, but became
bored and went to Brookline to teach the children of his
reformer cousin, Stephen Higginson Perkins. This cousin
provided Higginson with the first direct exposure to the
ideas of social protest and reform. Also it was at Mr.

\textsuperscript{43}Tilden G. Edelstein, \textit{Strange Enthusiasm: A Life
of Thomas Wentworth Higginson} (New Haven: Yale University

\textsuperscript{44}Higginson, \textit{Yesterdays}, p. 35.
Perkins' residence that he became closely acquainted with Mary Channing, his second cousin and future wife. Mary's father, Dr. Walter Channing, was the dean of the Harvard Medical School. Under the urgings of Mary Channing, he attended the liberal Unitarian services of James Freeman Clarke and William Ellery Channing, brother to Mary's father. Thomas and Mary also visited Brook Farm which he thought was impractical, but he became acquainted with the ideas of free religion, Transcendentalism, and social reform. His readings shifted from the more accepted American authors--Irving, Cooper, and Hawthorne--to the romantic writers: Carlyle, Goethe, Coleridge, and Richter.45

After studying independently for a short time, Higginson entered the Harvard Divinity School in the summer of 1844. He had already read "Emerson over and over"; and under the influence of Theodore Parker, he adhered to the Transcendental elements of liberal Unitarianism.46 Harvard Divinity School disgusted him, for it did not teach the ideas of Parker and Emerson; therefore, he dropped out in 1845 to become a poet of reform. Nonetheless, he still showed an interest in the Harvard Divinity School. He charged the new divinity students of 1845 of not being of the same caliber as the

45 Edelstein, Life of Higginson, pp. 39-52.
46 Higginson, Yesterdays, pp. 91-99.
students of the 1825-1836 era: George Ripley, Frederic Hedge, William Henry Channing, James Freeman Clarke, and Theodore Parker. After publishing several poems in the Harbinger, a Fourieristic periodical, he gave up being a reform poet and decided to return to the ministry and use the pulpit, like Parker, to advocate reform.47 In his application for readmission to the Harvard Divinity School, he stated that he wanted to preach and awaken the moral sentiment of society, for "there are times when the assertion of greater principles is the best service a man can render society."48 He wanted to speak out like Parker. In 1847 while he was still in divinity school, he preached to different congregations; and nothing pleased him more than for a listener to describe his sermon as a "real Parker sermon."49

After graduation from Harvard Divinity School and his subsequent marriage to Mary Channing, Higginson became the minister of the First Religious Society of Newburyport, Massachusetts, where on 15 September 1847 Dr. William Henry Channing preached the ordination sermon. This conservative congregation at Newburyport tolerated Higginson's liberal Transcendental religious views and his advocating social

47 Edelstein, Life of Higginson, pp. 52-60.
48 Higginson to the Faculty of Harvard Divinity School, 9 September 1846, in Edelstein, Life of Higginson, p. 63.
49 Higginson to Mary Channing, 14 February 1847, in Edelstein, Life of Higginson, p. 65.
reform in areas of poverty, crime, and drunkenness; but when he damned this Whiggish congregation as sinners for voting for Taylor instead of the Free-Soil candidate, they rebelled. Higginson resigned in March 1850. He remained in Newburyport for two more years and ran as a Free-Soil candidate for Congress and lost. He was also a member of Parker's Boston Vigilance Committee which made him militant and ready to sanction violence as a means to end slavery.50

In 1852 Higginson became the minister of the Free Church of Worcester which Parker had organized. This congregation liked Higginson, for it was full of reformers and Free Soilers. Here he helped to form the Worcester Freedom Club dedicated to ending the Fugitive Slave Law and "protecting the rights of men of toil."51 Higginson responded to the Kansas-Nebraska Act by delivering a blistering sermon on 17 February 1854 in which he pledged more agitation and promised that "never, never will there be peace in this nation until Slavery be destroyed!"52 After his involvement in attempting to help the fugitive slave, Anthony Burns, to escape and Higginson's subsequent arrest in May 1854, he cried out that the abolitionist

\[50\text{Edelstein, Life of Higginson, pp. 68-128.}\]
\[51\text{Boston Commonwealth, 14 September 1852, in Edelstein, Life of Higginson, pp. 133-134.}\]
\[52\text{Liberator, 17 February 1854.}\]
movement was not a reform, but a revolution, and that he could "only make life worth living . . . by becoming a revolutionist." 53

He put his words into action and helped to organize the Massachusetts State Kansas Aid Committee, a militant extension of Eli Thayer's Emigrant Aid Society. This committee elected George Luther Stearns as its chairman, and Stearns and Gerrit Smith became the chief contributors to the committee. Since Higginson was one of the agents of this committee, whose purpose was to arm New England settlers migrating to Kansas, he purchased rifles, revolvers, cannons, knives, and powder for these immigrants to the West, and made two trips to Kansas. It was through his efforts in this undertaking that he met John Brown who convinced Higginson and the other members of the Secret Six of the absolute necessity of an invasion of the South to liberate the slave. 54

When Higginson heard of Brown's raid on Harper's Ferry, he immediately wrote his mother that this was a most formidable slave insurrection, for there were great leaders behind it. He thought that the invading party could withstand a counterattack for some time by retreating and establishing "a Maroon colony there, like those in Jamaica

53Liberator, 16 June 1854.
54Edelstein, Life of Higginson, pp. 175-220.
& Guiana." He also wrote that the effect of the invasion would be "to frighten & weaken the slave power everywhere, & discourage the slave trade." 55 Although Higginson's optimism did not last long, he was the only member of the Secret Six to remain in the country throughout Brown's trial and execution, and the following Congressional investigation. He did not burn letters and deny being a part of the raid as did Smith, Sanborn, Howe, and Stearns; and he truly wanted to testify at Brown's trial. 56 Parker was in Italy slowly dying.

Higginson welcomed the war, and organized and fought beside a black regiment. For a while he enthusiastically supported the Radical Republicans in their reconstructing the South, but in 1876 he was ready to bind up the nation's wounds and neglect the black. Higginson now directed all of his energy to writing novels, literary criticisms, histories, and autobiographies. After Mary Channing Higginson died in 1878, he married Mary Thacher and lived a rather quiet life, resting upon his past reputations. He died on 9 May 1911. 57

Another member of the Secret Six whom Parker greatly influenced was Franklin Benjamin Sanborn: "with all respect

55 Higginson to Louisa Higginson, 17 October 1854, in Edelstein, Life of Higginson, p. 221.
56 Edelstein, Life of Higginson, pp. 221-236.
57 Ibid., pp. 237-400.
for Harvard College, ... it must be said that I owed more to several other persons than to any of the college Faculty, and more to Emerson and Theodore Parker than to all the professors and tutors together.\textsuperscript{58} Sanborn was born 15 December 1831 at Hampton Falls, New Hampshire, where his ancestors had lived for six generations. His father, Aaron Sanborn, like his ancestors, was an artisan and prosperous farmer, for the land around Hampton Falls was excellent for agriculture.\textsuperscript{59}

Sanborn's maternal and paternal ancestors, the Leavitts and Sanborns, were Puritans until his grandfather Leavitt, a Jeffersonian justice of the peace, joined the seceding Baptists and refused to pay his "church-rates" which led to his arrest. Leavitt soon left the Baptists, who were Calvinist, and organized a small Universalist society in Hampton Falls. Aaron Sanborn and his brother, Joseph, soon joined;\textsuperscript{60} somewhat later Aaron's father, "Grandsire" Sanborn, joined. Since the major doctrine of Universalism was universal salvation for all men, as opposed to the determinism of Calvinism,\textsuperscript{61} it was easy for this church

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{58}Franklin Benjamin Sanborn, Recollections of Seventy Years, 2 vols. (Boston: Richard G. Badger, 1909), 2:313.
\item \textsuperscript{59}Sanborn, Recollections, 1:13-17.
\item \textsuperscript{60}Ibid., pp. 18-19.
\item \textsuperscript{61}Persons, American Minds, p. 96.
\end{itemize}
to become Unitarian at a time when many churches in New England were changing their base. Although Sanborn's parents did not require him to espouse any particular church dogma, he read both the Universalist and Unitarian books and became a Universalist "at the mature age of nine, after reading how Origen and other Greek fathers believed in final salvation for all."62 Although he was a Universalist, Sanborn took up the "habit of going among the Baptists, the congregationalists, and others whenever there was good preaching and singing."63 This sort of meandering from church to church stopped after he met Parker, Emerson, and Higginson. He then considered himself a part of "the more advanced type of Unitarians."64

Sanborn attended the school in Hampton Falls where he, before the age of eight, had read Plutarch's Lives. Soon he began studying Latin and Greek, and reading Dr. Samuel Gridley Howe's history of the Greek Revolution and the writings of Emerson, Carlyle, and Hawthorne.65

In September 1851 Sanborn entered Phillips Academy at Exeter which considered itself liberal for admitting blacks. Here Sanborn very much admired one of his teachers, Professor

62Sanborn, Recollections, 1:19-20.
63Ibid.
64Ibid.
65Ibid., 2:255-267.
Joseph Gibson Hoyt, an ardent abolitionist who favored students having self-government and preached "the honor system, self-reliance, independence, and hard work."

In July 1852 he entered Harvard College where he met Emerson and Parker although they were not members of the faculty.

Before Sanborn had entered Harvard, he had met Ariana Smith Walker of Peterboro, New York. Through a common interest in literature, a friendship developed and then a deep love. Although Ariana was dreadfully ill, Sanborn became engaged to her in August 1853. They were married on 23 August 1854, and she died on 31 August 1854. From Ariana he received the needed encouragement to enter the literary world.

After graduating from Harvard in 1855, Sanborn became a teacher and principal of Emerson's school at Concord. Although Sanborn considered his career as a school teacher of little importance, his teaching and his school elicited much praise from many of New England's most critical minds. He was not only entrusted with the education of Emerson's children, but he had the responsibility of teaching the two

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67 Ibid., pp. 48-52.

68 Sanborn, Recollections, 2:268-294.
sons of Horace Mann; the two sons of Henry James, Sr., George Luther Stearns' son, Frank; two of John Brown's daughters; and Julian Hawthorne. While he was principal of this school, he proposed marriage to Edith Emerson, who, under her father's promptings, refused; he later married Louisa Leavitt, his cousin, in August 1862.69

Sanborn could never devote his full attention, talents, and energy to teaching, for he was too deeply involved in abolishing slavery. During the Mexican War, he became convinced that slavery was wrong and that the evil slaveholders and their allies dominated national politics. In April 1851 he heard Parker preach on the sin of the Fugitive Slave Law; from that sermon he realized that he must get more involved in the war on slavery, and he was so impressed with this magnificent preacher that he wanted to know him personally. He became friends with Parker in 1852 and, consequently, became devoted to the religion of reform. In 1854 he joined the Bird Club, a reform organization, where he became friends with other reform minded activists: Dr. Samuel Gridley Howe, George Luther Stearns, Gerrit Smith, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, and Charles Sumner. When the Kansas conflict came, Sanborn joined with these men in a movement to raise money and buy arms for New England pioneers migrating to Kansas; and he

69Hickok, Careers of Sanborn, pp. 90-110.
became secretary of the Massachusetts State Kansas Committee. As an agent of this committee, he went West "to inspect the emigrant route through Iowa, in order that it might be kept open for men, arms, and ammunition."  

It was through Sanborn's activities in this committee that John Brown heard of him. George Walker, Sanborn's brother-in-law and a banker with whom Brown did business, informed Brown of Sanborn's membership in the State Kansas Committee. Therefore, Brown, needing money for his Kansas plans, went to see Sanborn, who was greatly impressed with Brown's plans and appearance. Sanborn later described Brown as "a Calvinist Puritan, born a century or two after the fashion had changed;" but Brown was ready "to engage in any work of the Lord to which he felt himself called," and he "knew the inward cancer that was destroying our Republic; he pointed to the knife and the cautery that must extirpate it. . . ."  

Sanborn immediately began to try to aid Brown; he introduced Brown to Parker, Higginson, Howe, Stearns, and other interested New Englanders. Sanborn attempted to secure for Brown as much aid as possible by appearing with him in both public and private meetings; and  

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70 Sanborn, Recollections, 1:30-65.  
71 Ibid., p. 68.  
72 Ibid., 76, 77, 82.
through these efforts, Sanborn became a member of the Secret Six. After Brown's ill-fated invasion, Sanborn temporarily fled to Canada.  

In 1860 the Supreme Court of Massachusetts freed him after an arrest for refusal to appear before a United States Senate investigating committee.

After the war came, Sanborn returned to his school at Concord but resigned in 1863 to accept an invitation from Stearns to become the editor of the Boston Commonwealth. This Free-Soil paper had died in 1855, but Stearns and Howe revived the paper to publish the views of Sumner and other Radical Republicans. Although Sanborn was actually editor for only eight months, he maintained some supervision over the paper and contributed many articles to it. In 1864 his good friend, Governor John A. Andrew, appointed him secretary to the newly formed Massachusetts State Board of Charities, and he served on the Board until 1868 when he became an editor of the Springfield (Massachusetts) Republican. Although he served as an editor for only four years, Sanborn contributed many articles to this paper, the Atlantic Monthly, and the Independent throughout the remainder of his life. He also devoted the latter part of his life to writing biographies of important people with whom he had

74 Sanborn, Recollections, 1:208-218.
associated such as Emerson, Howe, Thoreau, and Bronson Alcott. Sanborn died in February 1917. In an article written soon after his death, Victor Channing Sanborn described his father's "turn of mind" as "essentially individualistic."  

Sanborn described Dr. Samuel Gridley Howe as a "born revolutionist" and "born philanthropist, who was well aware that the service of mankind often requires political revolutions." Sanborn wrote with considerable insight, for Howe considered aiding John Brown as a revolution to end slavery. Dr. Howe was born the second son of Joseph Neals Howe and Patty Gridley Howe in Boston on 10 November 1801. The Howes and the Gridleys were proud, old New England families who had settled in the Puritan Holy Commonwealth in 1636 and had fought in the wars of 1776 and 1812. Joseph Howe was a prosperous ropemaker until the war of 1812 in which he almost went broke; but he still had enough money to give Samuel an excellent education although he was unable to educate his other two sons. He selected Samuel to receive the education, for he could read the Bible better than the other two. Since Joseph Howe was a Jeffersonian Republican

75 Hickok, Careers of Sanborn, pp. 243-246.


and the Federalists were in control of Harvard College, he sent Samuel to Brown University, a Baptist school, although Joseph Howe considered himself a devout Unitarian. After Samuel graduated from Brown in 1821, he entered Harvard Medical School.78

After graduating from medical school in 1824, Howe could not settle down to a private practice. He considered himself a romantic adventurer; therefore, following Lord Byron's example, he went to Greece in 1824 to aid the Greeks in their war against the Turks as a soldier and physician. He performed many heroic acts, returned to the United States in 1828 to raise money for the Greek cause, and then went back to his romantic adventure. In 1831 he became a director of the newly-formed New England Asylum for the Blind, which took him to Europe to study the European teaching methods. Before he had time to study the European methods, he found himself in a Prussian prison for aiding the suffering Poles in East Prussia. After being released from prison, he began his study of the European schools for the blind and concluded that the European schools were unprogressive, for they did not teach the blind student a vocation which would allow him

to be self-supporting. With this view in mind, he returned to Massachusetts "to begin on his actual task in life, the uplifting of the race by education, and by the creation of an original institution of philanthropy." 

Out of a sense of noblesse oblige, he extended his humanitarian work to include the deaf and blind; and he received much praise in his work with the deaf, blind, and dumb Laura Bridgman. Although Laura's parents appreciated Howe's helping Laura, they did not approve of his religious instruction; they accused him of trying to convert her to liberal Unitarianism. After somewhat of a controversy, Laura joined the Baptist Church, the preference of her parents.

Howe's work with Laura established his reputation as being a great humanitarian. It was through his philanthropic devotion that he became a close friend of Charles Sumner who introduced him to the talented and well-educated Julia Ward, the daughter of the wealthy Calvinist, Samuel Ward. After a lengthy courtship, Howe and Julia Ward were married in April 1844. During their honeymoon-tour of

\[79\] Ibid., pp. 7-66.


\[81\] Ibid., p. 190.

\[82\] Schwartz, Howe, pp. 67-90.
Europe, they met Theodore Parker. Howe and Parker became the closest of friends and later worked together to reform America.  

After seeing much of Europe, Howe returned to America dedicated to reform. He tried to help his friend Horace Mann limit the use of corporal punishment in the public schools of Massachusetts. Howe was also instrumental in creating the Massachusetts School for Idiotic and Feeble-Minded Youth; and in addition, he stressed prison reform. However, the reform that soon captured all of his energy was the abolition of slavery. As early as 1833, he had condemned slavery; but he did not join the abolitionist movement, for he had not approved of the movement's tactics. Although in 1841 and 1842 he had toured the South and had become upset at the injustice of slavery and slavery's effect on the white race, Howe still refused to join the movement.  

The Texas question in 1844 and 1845 and the plight of fugitive slaves changed Howe's mind about the abolitionists and stimulated him to action. Howe, Parker, and others were instrumental in forming a vigilance committee to aid fugitive slaves. Howe also aided John Andrew and Charles Sumner in splitting the Whig Party in Massachusetts into the Conscience

83 Ibid., pp. 103-119.
84 Ibid., pp. 120-154.
Whigs and the Cotton Whigs. In the election of 1846, the Conscience Whigs ran Howe against Robert Winthrop, a Cotton Whig, for a seat in Congress. As the result of Howe's defeat, Sumner, in 1848, called for the reconstruction of political parties; thus, Howe, Sumner, Andrew, and Henry Wilson formed the Free Soil Party in Massachusetts and ran Sumner for Congress. Although Summer lost, the Free Soil Party demonstrated that it was a rising political force. The party won its first election in 1850 when a Senate seat became vacant. When the legislature convened in January 1851 to elect a senator, Howe worked day and night to get Sumner elected, for he felt that "no man now eligible can so well represent the antislavery sentiment of the North as he." After the legislature narrowly elected Sumner, both Howe and Parker expected Sumner to be "the Senator with a conscience." During the hard-fought campaign to elect Sumner, Howe discovered that the Free Soil Party in Massachusetts needed a journalistic voice. Consequently, he became the head of a board of trustees to raise money for publishing a party paper. This board purchased several newspapers and combined them into the Boston Commonwealth for which Howe wrote the prospectus. Although the purpose of the paper was to voice

85Sanborn, Howe, pp. 211-231.

86Howe to Horace Mann, April 1851, in Schwartz, Howe, p. 174.

87Parker to Sumner, 26 April 1851, in Schwartz, Howe, p. 175.
Free-Soil views, Howe wrote that it would not be the "bond-servant of any cause or party, except that of Freedom, Truth and Humanity." In January 1853, Howe became the political editor; but in spite of his efforts, the financial situation of the paper became desperate. In September 1854, much to Howe's sorrow, the trustees sold the paper.

As a consequence of the Compromise of 1850 with its Fugitive Slave Act, Howe, Parker, and Higginson reorganized the vigilance committee of 1846 and elected Parker as chairman. Immediately the committee aided two slaves in their escape to England, and through force they saved another from being sent back to slavery. Although these men used violence, they were unsuccessful in keeping two others from being returned to slavery. Clearly Howe and the other members of the committee had begun to accept violence as a means of combating the forces of slavery.

In his work regarding the Kansas War, Howe again decided violence was a means of ridding the nation of slavery. He was a director of the New England Emigrant Aid Company, whose purpose was to aid New England pioneers in settling Kansas; and he was a member of the Massachusetts State Aid


89 Schwartz, *Howe*, pp. 177-182.

90 Ibid., pp. 193-194.
Committee, formed to provide these settlers with arms and ammunition. In 1856 Howe went to the western territories to inspect the conditions on the frontier. He came back with the realization that he must devote himself completely to Kansas affairs and that, to keep those Kansas settlers from starving in the winter, Massachusetts would have to give liberally. After Kansas quieted in 1858, Howe began to think of the possibility of organizing some kind of movement to make the western part of Texas a free state by having settlers emigrate from Kansas to West Texas. It was through these Kansas activities that he met John Brown and became a member of the Secret Six. After Harper's Ferry, he and Stearns burned any letters linking them to the raid and then fled to Canada; but when they returned, they still had to appear before a Senate investigating committee. 91

Since Howe had accepted violence as a means of rooting out slavery, he gladly supported the Union war efforts. Feeling that he was too old to do actual fighting, Howe became a member of the newly formed Sanitary Commission, whose purpose was to mobilize public benevolence in aid of the soldiers. He was also a commissioner on the American Freedman's Inquiry Commission. 92 As a member of this board, he studied the Canadian free black. His conclusion was that

91 Ibid., pp. 195-246.
92 Ibid.
the freed black could make it in American society provided that he was given the necessary aid to put him in a position to help himself, and then he should be left alone to rise or fall in this competitive marketplace society on his own merit. Hence, he supported his friend, Senator Sumner, and other Radical Republicans in their views on reconstructing the South.

After the war, Dr. Howe began to do work in public charity. In 1863 Governor Andrew created a state board of charities and appointed Howe as a member. As chairman of this board in 1865, he argued that paupers should not be congregated in almshouses but placed in the homes of industrious families. During this time the Cretans rebelled against Turkish rule; again Howe considered himself a romantic adventurer fighting tyranny. Although the rebellion failed, Howe raised money and went to Crete to disperse it. When he returned, President Grant appointed him as one of the commissioners to go to Santo Domingo to study conditions for possible annexation to the United States. Although Senator Sumner opposed annexation, Howe was for

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95 Sanborn, Howe, pp. 291-322.
it, arguing that annexation was

a rare and golden opportunity for extending
and fortifying our own political and social
institutions: for growth of our commerce:
and especially for diverting the vast sums
of wealth collected by slaveholders from
continuing to go to the support of despotic
and aristocratic institutions of Europe:
and for turning and using it to the ends
of abolishing slavery in Cuba, Porto Rico
and Brazil, &c. 96

Congress did not accept Grant's plan of annexation; however,
Howe became so determined to annex the island that he became
involved in the scandalous Samana Bay Company which hurt his
reputation. His involvement in the annexation of Santo
Domingo was the last of his activist days; he died in
January 1876. 97

The most unheard-of and least educated member of the
Secret Six was a wealthy, self-made man whose Puritan an-
cestors had come to Massachusetts in 1630. George Luther
Stearns was born in Medford, Massachusetts, on 8 January 1809
to a reputable physician, Luther Stearns, who died when
George Luther was only ten. His mother, Mary Hall Stearns,
reared him and his younger brother and taught them the
cultural ethics of New England which were supposed to pro-
duce success: good manners, good morals, hard work, en-
durance and self-reliance. George Luther grew up in somewhat

96 Howe to Dr. Blackwell, 6 September 1874, in Schwartz, Howe, pp. 303-304.
97 Schwartz, Howe, pp. 291-332.
of a Unitarian religious environment, for Mrs. Stearns had changed from a strict Calvinist to a Unitarian when much of New England and Harvard College changed their religious views.98

Since Mrs. Stearns was a widow, she had financial problems; hence, George Luther Stearns' one objective in life became to earn money. When he was fifteen, he went to Brattleboro and worked in his uncle's store. In August 1827 he moved to Boston to work in a ship-chandler's store where he saved his money and lived in a cheap room; his social life consisted of returning to Medford every weekend and attending the local Unitarian church. In 1835 Stearns began the process of becoming a self-made man. With his small savings, a mortgage on his mother's home, and a loan from conservative Deacon Train, one of the pillars of the local Unitarian church, he went into business for himself in Medford: the manufacturing of linseed oil. The business prospered quickly; thus, Stearns was able to pay off the mortgage on his mother's home and the loan from Deacon Train, who was so impressed with Stearns that he let Stearns marry his daughter, Mary Ann Train in December 1835. The marriage did not last long, for Mary Ann died in October 1840.99


99 Ibid., pp. 28-37.
Since Stearns was a successful businessman in the community, he contributed generously to the Unitarian church and became one of the church's leaders. He became very good friends with the new Unitarian minister in the town, the Reverend Caleb Stetson who attended many of the Transcendental discussion sessions at Brook Farm. As a Transcendentalist, the Reverend Caleb Stetson preached reform; and two of his favorite issues were the sins of slavery and rum selling. These sermons greatly influenced Stearns. It was through the Reverend Stetson and Stetson's contacts with the Transcendentalists that Stearns met Mary Elizabeth Preston, whom he married on 12 October 1843.

Stearns suffered somewhat of a setback in accumulation of wealth when his linseed oil plant burned; but by October 1843 he was getting wealthy from the manufacturing of lead pipe. His legal advisor, Charles Sumner, introduced Stearns to many reformers, such as Parker and Howe. As a result, he contributed heavily to the Free Soil Party. After hearing Sumner's "Higher Law" speech, Stearns purchased a revolver and declared that no fugitive slave would ever be taken from his premises. He then joined the vigilance committee of which Theodore Parker was chairman. Stearns became very close friends with Parker and often attended his services in Boston. When the Kansas-Nebraska Bill went into effect, he became a member of the New England Emigrant Company and
chairman of the Massachusetts State Aid Committee; and he made a trip to Kansas to inspect the conditions of the settlers. It was through his efforts in behalf of New England settlers in Kansas that he met John Brown and became a member of the Secret Six. After Brown's failure at Harper's Ferry, Stearns fled with Dr. Howe to Canada.100

When the war came, Stearns immediately called for the emancipation of the slaves. Since none of the Boston newspapers would print Senator Sumner's speeches, which called for an immediate end to slavery, Stearns and Howe decided that it was time to revive the Boston Commonwealth. To this cause Stearns gave $1,000 and Howe $300. The paper, appearing in September 1862, advocated the emancipation of slaves as a war measure, the removal of General McClellan as an incompetent commander, and the re-election of Senator Sumner and Governor Andrew. About this time, Stearns began to advocate using black troops in the war; and the War Department commissioned him as a major to raise and organize black troops to serve in the war. In the latter part of the war, he resigned his commission, for the army did not give black troops the same pay as whites. After the war, Stearns, supporting Senator Sumner and other Radical Republicans, organized another paper, the Right Way, to advocate the reconstruction policies of these men. He was

100Ibid., pp. 38-226.
in Washington fighting for the cause of the Radical Republicans when he died on 9 April 1867. Emerson, speaking at his funeral, described him "as a type of the American Republican."102

The oldest member of the Secret Six was Gerrit Smith, the wealthy philanthropist, who was born 6 March 1797 at Utica, New York. His father, Peter Smith, with the aid of a partner, opened the first store at Utica as a venture in the Indian fur trade. Peter and his partner also became involved in real estate, and they both became wealthy. In a few years, Peter bought his partner out and became a wealthy land speculator. His favorite practice was to buy land which the state sold at low prices for non-payment of taxes. Instead of paying the taxes, he would wait until the state offered the property for sale again for unpaid taxes and then buy it back. By using this procedure, he could finance large tracts of land at a very low cost.103 Thus, Peter Smith became one of the largest landholders in the state, owning nearly a million acres.104

101Ibid., pp. 240-382.
Peter Smith had to be wealthy, for in February 1792 he married Elizabeth Livingston; the Livingstons were an old, wealthy family, who were also related to the aristocratic Van Rensselaers and Schuylers. In 1818 Elizabeth Livingston Smith died, and Peter later remarried.105

In 1809 Gerrit Smith moved with his family to Peterboro, and in 1813 he entered Hamilton College at Clinton where he met Wealtha Ann Backus. He graduated from Hamilton College in 1818 and married Ann in January 1819. The marriage did not last long, for she died in July 1819. Gerrit hardly had time to recover from his wife's death when his father, distressed over his soul and grieving over the death of his own first wife, turned all of his property over to Gerrit and Gerrit's uncle, Daniel Caddy in November 1819. Although Gerrit was under some financial strain in 1841 and 1842, he was wealthy for the rest of his life.106

For more than two years after his first wife's death, Gerrit remained a widower; but in January 1822 he married Ann Carroll Fitzhugh of Maryland, a relative of George Fitzhugh. During the fiery evangelistic endeavors of the 1820's in New York State, Ann Smith was converted and began to worry about Gerrit's soul. Gerrit responded to the pressure, and he and Ann joined the Presbyterian Church in

105Ibid., pp. 19-20.
106Harlow, Smith, pp. 4-5.
Peterboro on 17 March 1826. After his conversion, Gerrit saw the need for regenerating his fellow man. Believing that Christianity was the bedrock of American society and that Christianity could not survive in a land which did not observe the Lord's Day, Smith worked and gave money for the Sunday School movement and the movement for observing the Sabbath. He contributed fifty dollars and became a life member of the American Home Missionary Society and an honorary member of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. Smith gave $150 to a missionary plan to convert France, a stronghold of Catholicism, to evangelical religion. Smith turned his interests from the evangelism of France to reform causes in America. He gave his enthusiastic support to the New York State Temperance Society, which began operation in August 1829; and he was soon known nationally for his work in the cause. He considered his crusade against the sale and use of alcohol as an attack on sin. To him any reform which did not include God was as ridiculous as an "attempt to enact the play of Othello, --and leave out the part of Othello." Not only was the sale and use of liquor a sin, but it was the cause of poverty and crime; and "neither

107Ibid., pp. 53-60.
property nor life" was "safe from the presumption, the blindness and the fury of the drunken maniac."\textsuperscript{109}

Although Gerrit Smith did not show any concern over the problem of the growing factory system and organized labor, he did become involved in other miscellaneous reforms. He opposed the use of tobacco for health reasons; but more importantly, he believed that tobacco made men crave strong drinks like beer and whiskey. To improve the race and for the sake of his health (Gerrit was constantly worried about his health), he became a vegetarian and tried to convince others to be. He aided the American Bethel Society, which had for one of its pet projects the moral instruction of low-class workers on canal projects in the Northeast. Although he contributed to the American Bible Society, he championed "the perfect equality of woman with man--Bible or no Bible;"\textsuperscript{110} and he felt that it was a crime for the government not to allow women the right to control property and to vote.\textsuperscript{111}

The reform which occupied most of Smith's time and energy was the abolition of slavery. As early as


\textsuperscript{110}Smith to Elizabeth Wilson, 12 May 1856, in Harlow, Smith, p. 107.

\textsuperscript{111}Smith, True Office of Civil Government, p. 9.
October 1826, Smith had shown concern for the black and considered starting a seminary where promising young blacks might study for the ministry. Ralph Randolph Gurley, Secretary of the American Colonization Society, heard about Smith's idea of a black seminary and advised him to spend that money for schools in Liberia, the society's African colony. Thus, Smith became interested in the colonization cause and gave $9,000 to the society[112]; but by 24 November 1835, he had decidedly become more interested in the American Antislavery Society: "From its organization to the present time, I have looked to that society as, under God, the best hope of the slave and my country."[113] About this same time, Smith was interested in his manual labor school for blacks at Peterboro which he had opened in May 1834. Although the school had a number of students, financial reasons forced him to close it in the summer of 1836.[114] But Smith continued to work in behalf of the abolition movement. He helped to form the Liberty Party and ran as a candidate in various elections on that ticket in order that the abolitionists would not have to commit a sin by voting for a non-abolitionist for public office.

He gave a large tract of his land to poor blacks who did not drink in order that these blacks could become independent farmers and mechanics. He, likewise, gave some land to poor whites. Smith crusaded against the Fugitive Slave Law, arguing it was unconstitutional and was against God's law; and he aided in smuggling fugitive slaves into Canada. His activities against the Fugitive Slave Law helped to get him elected to Congress in 1850 as an Independent although he considered himself a member of the Liberty Party. He served in Congress until August 1854.115

With the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act and the subsequent conflict in Kansas, Gerrit Smith decided that only violence would end slavery. He gave $250 to Eli Thayer's New England Emigrant Aid Company and, later in the year, became a leader in establishing a New York State Kansas Committee to provide arms for settlers in Kansas. Speaking at a meeting of the National Kansas Committee, he begged for violent acting instead of the ballot: "You are looking to ballots, when you should be looking to bayonets: counting up votes, when you should be mustering armed and none but armed emigrants: electioneering for candidates for civil rulers, when you should be inquiring for military rulers."116 Through his activities in the Kansas struggle,

115Ibid., pp. 136-334.

116Liberator, 8 August 1856.
he became a member of the Secret Six. After Brown's disastrous raid, Smith tried to destroy all evidence linking him with Brown. Five days after the courts had sentenced Brown to death, Gerrit Smith committed himself to the New York State Asylum for the Insane at Utica where he made a quick recovery from his mental breakdown and was back at Peterboro within six weeks. This illness protected him from having to appear at a Senate investigation of the raid in January 1860.¹¹⁷

In his abolitionist crusading, Smith came into direct conflict with the churches, for the churches would not condemn slavery. In this conflict, he began to examine thoroughly the orthodox doctrines of these churches and came to the conclusion that these doctrines were "false theologies" and not a "true religion." Because the Presbyterian Church in Peterboro had remained silent on slavery, Smith, in 1843, withdrew and formed the "Free Church of Peterboro." The members, under Smith's leadership, defined a true church of Christ "as a company of moral reformers, and that a church which refuses to engage in the prosecution of moral reforms, especially those that are nearest at hand and most urgent, is, however excellent may be the character of the individuals in it, not a Church of Christ;" they further declared that any member who voted

¹¹⁷Harlow, Smith, pp. 336-442.
for public officials who were not antislavery was guilty of "treason toward the cause of humanity and the cause of God."118 Within his Free Church, he slowly moved to a "true religion:" a religion of nature,119 which showed Theodore Parker's and Ralph Waldo Emerson's influences on his theology.120

Although Smith did not vote for Lincoln in 1860, for he, himself, was a candidate on an abolitionist ticket, he did support Lincoln after the war began; and he immediately advocated emancipation. After the war ended, he supported the Radical Republicans' plan of reconstruction of the South. He continued to campaign against alcohol and deeds of philanthropy such as giving $4,300 to Howard University, a black school, and $2,000 for the relief of a grasshopper plague in Kansas and Nebraska. On 28 December 1874 Gerrit Smith died still believing in laissez faire individualism.121

All six of these men were from old, wealthy or respectably middle-class New England families whose ancestors had adhered to some form of Calvinism. Five out

118Printed circular, "Free Church of Peterboro," 10 February 1844, in Harlow, Smith, pp. 204-205.
120Harlow, Smith, p. 461.
121Ibid., pp. 423-492.
of the six were college graduates, and four of them had some degree from Harvard. The only one who did not attend college, George Luther Stearns, was a self-made man. Strongly influenced by Emerson and Parker, all of them accepted the highly individualistic Transcendental-Unitarian religion. The society of New England—the independent farmer, the shopkeeper, the mechanic, and the artisan—powerfully impressed them; and the culture of this society imbued them with the ethics of hard work, endurance, self-reliance, frugal living habits, and moral living, which were supposed to be necessary for success. They were in the mainstream of the liberal, intellectual, reform climate of mid-nineteenth century America with its heavy emphasis on the individual; therefore, one aspect of their theory on community was individualism; and their religious dogmas and their ideas on class structure reflected this individualism.
The popular theology, with its idea of God and man, and of their relation, is the philosophy of unreason, of folly. How can you ask men of large reason, large conscience, large affections, large love for the good God, to believe any one of the numerous schemes of the Trinity, the miracles of the New or Old Testament; to believe in the existence of a devil whom God has made, seeking to devour mankind? How can you ask such men to believe in the existence of an angry God, jealous, capricious, selfish, and revengeful, who has made an immeasurable hell under his feet, wherein he designs to crowd down ninety-nine thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine out of every hundred thousand of his children . . . ?


Were men but mere machines, they could reflect but little honor on their maker. It is because they are free agents--free to choose to know God, and free to be ignorant of Him--free to grow either in likeness or unlikeness to Him--that they are capable of doing Him large honor. . . .

Gerrit Smith, Speeches and Sermons of Gerrit Smith.

A Christian Church then should put no fetters on the man; it should have unity of purpose, but with the most entire freedom for the individual. When you sacrifice the man to the masses in church or state, church or state becomes an offence, a stumbling block in the war of progress. . . .

Theodore Parker, Collected Works of Theodore Parker, vol. 3.
CHAPTER II

PERFECTIBILITY THROUGH INDIVIDUALITY: THE
PHILOSOPHICAL AND THEOLOGICAL VIEWS

The Secret Six believed in common that the determinism of Calvinistic tenets was morally wrong because predestination denied the belief in the free individual. Orthodox Genevan Calvinism, as English churchmen of the Cromwellian period interpreted it, was the central doctrine of American Congregational churches from the mid-seventeenth century until the mid-eighteenth century. This set of dogmas affirmed the absolute sovereignty of God, described this omnipotent God as revealing himself in three persons, and declared that God had decreed that the Holy Scriptures were infallible and the final authority for human faith and action. The Calvinistic catechism also advocated the concepts of original sin (because of Adam's fall) and predestination: the theory that God, in a divine fiat before the creation of the world, had selected certain men for salvation and these men could neither refuse the gift of grace, nor could these men force God to withdraw that grace. This select few, the elect, received their salvation through Jesus Christ, an equal member of the Godhead, who,
as both man and God, purchased the elect's salvation by dying on the cross and accepting the just punishment due to all men because all men were depraved. The rest of mankind, this just God damned to an eternal, tormenting Hell.¹

In spite of Jonathan Edwards' fiery efforts, the Arminian theories of a benevolent God and man's free will regarding salvation and sin gained a stronghold in New England under the leadership of Charles Chauncy and Jonathan Mayhew. By 1750 New England's Calvinistic Congregationalism, therefore, was in a schism. As this Arminian wing of Congregationalism tried to stabilize itself after the Great Awakening, it laid some of the intellectual foundations for Unitarianism, which espoused Arianism: the belief in the unity of the deity (from which the name Unitarian came), rather than the belief in the Trinity.²

Eastern Massachusetts had the heaviest concentration of Unitarian sympathy, and by 1805 the Unitarians had captured control of Harvard College; by 1833 they had


established themselves as a major religious denomination in New England by seizing many of the wealthiest parishes of the seaboard which brought about a major reorganization in the parishes. This reorganization coincided with the quick development of commercial and manufacturing wealth along the Northeastern coast, and these respectably middle-class and wealthy Unitarians were elitists with liberal religious views and conservative social perspectives.

Unitarianism was a reaction against Calvinism; and Calvinist leaders such as Leonard Woods, Jedidiah Morse, and Moses Stuart damned Unitarian leaders as infidels, particularly William Ellery Channing, Andrews Norton, and Henry Ware, Jr. Channing, leading the attack on Calvinism in 1820, believed that the damning determinism and the utter depravity of man were morally wrong and could not come from

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"the just and good God." Although the Unitarians recognized man's tendency to do evil, they placed much more emphasis upon man's capacity for good and categorically rejected the Calvinistic dogma that there was a class of sinners whose striving for salvation was fruitless. Instead, the Unitarians, being influenced by Arminian theory, taught that God had made each individual a free agent who could accept or reject salvation. Since the Unitarians recognized man's tendency for evil, they did believe that a process of personal regeneration was necessary and that Christ with his example and sacrifice had made such a regeneration possible; but they refused to accept Christ's death on the cross as part of a legal settlement or bargain between a just God and evil man. Christ's death was a necessary episode in God's fullest revelation in which God demonstrated to man through the Resurrection the Divine purpose of defeating sin and death. Thus, the Unitarians regarded salvation as simply a moral process in which Christ was not the Savior but the pre-eminent source of inspiration; and Christ, therefore, was not a member of the Godhead but Jesus the Man who represented an unequaled, sublime spirituality and had died for his ideals. Since the early

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Unitarians believed in the truth and divine inspiration of the Scriptures (they professed to be unable to find in the Bible any satisfactory evidence of the divinity of Christ), what were they to say about the miracles performed by Christ of which the Scriptures were most explicit? To circumvent this impasse, they placed Christ halfway between God and man as the only being who ever had a perfect character; and they assumed that such a perfect character would have the power to perform miracles.\(^7\)

Although the Unitarians did not have any formal creeds and had a high regard for the individual's free intellect, they advocated only limited inquiry in theological matters; the individual was to maintain a delicate balance between a faith in the Scriptures and a belief in the individual's rational power of free intellect. Furthermore, nearly all of the Unitarians believed that if a conflict existed between the two, then the individual certainly would submit to the Scriptures. For some Unitarians, however, maintaining this frail balance proved to be too difficult; and out of this high regard for the individual's free intellect developed Transcendental thinking.\(^8\)

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7 Persons, American Minds, pp. 178-182; Hutchinson, Transcendentalist Ministers, pp. 5-6.

8 Persons, American Minds, p. 182.
William Ellery Channing, in "The Moral Argument Against Calvinism," opened the door for this Transcendental philosophy by arguing that "the ultimate reliance of a human being is and must be on his own mind . . . , and nothing is gained to piety by degrading human nature, for in the competency of this nature to know and judge of God all piety has its foundation. . . ." Most Unitarians did not accept such an optimistic view of man; and such ministers as Nathaniel L. Frothingham, Andrews Norton, and Henry Ware, Jr., reacted by stating that man now had begun to worship himself. Nonetheless, the Unitarians of the next generation, such as Emerson and Parker, accepted and carried Channing's ideas to their logical conclusion.

Although certain European writers like Kant, Coleridge, Richter, Goethe, and Carlyle influenced American Transcendentalism, it was more a native religious reaction against

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10Channing, Works, 1:226.


12Hutchinson, Transcendentalist Ministers, pp. 24-30; Frothingham, Transcendentalism in New England, pp. 1-76.
Unitarianism. Regardless of the divergence of opinions over minor issues, all of the Transcendentalists were in agreement on one basic principle: the "infallibility of intuition." Emerson's *Nature*, the first significant writing to espouse Transcendental views, appeared in 1836. In this, Emerson succinctly expressed the mystical union of God, nature, and man. He believed that man was divine, not just good; and each individual could receive direct, divine inspiration from nature because nature was an "apparition of God." Emerson tipped the balance in favor of the individual's free intellect. His *Nature* stressed optimistic, anarchic, progressive individualism. Although this little book caused some controversy, it did not produce the deep hostilities that Emerson's Divinity School Address of 1838 triggered. In his address, Emerson reiterated the


thesis of Nature\textsuperscript{18} and condemned contemporary "historical Christianity" as unprogressive because it had as one of its beliefs that the age of divine inspiration had passed. To Emerson this meant that "the Bible was closed. . . ." Emerson also proclaimed that Jesus Christ was simply a prophet who believed not only in his own divinity but in each individual's divinity. Emerson further declared that when Christ spoke of the miracles, He meant that each man's life was a miracle; and Emerson criticized the church's use of the miracles: "But the word Miracle, as pronounced by Christian churches, gives a false impression; it is Monster. . . . Historical Christianity . . . is not the doctrine of the soul, but an exaggeration of the personal, the positive, the ritual. . . ." Emerson charged the graduates to "go alone" and have a faith like Christ's in the infinitude of man, and Emerson issued a call for a "new Teacher" who would not profane a man's soul by attempting to convert him with miracles.\textsuperscript{19}

Traditional Unitarians were furious because Emerson definitely was urging man to worship himself by arguing that man was divine, instead of just being good. Furthermore, Emerson impugned the miracles, the authority and divine

\textsuperscript{18}Hutchinson, Transcendentalist Ministers, p. 65.

\textsuperscript{19}Emerson, Collected Works, 1:81-93.
inspiration of the Scriptures, and the idea that the age of divine inspiration had passed. His allusions to formalism and coldness in the pulpit and his condemning as "monster" the church's concept of the miracles, the Unitarians considered as irreverent. Andrews Norton, retorting that Emerson was an infidel, emerged as the spokesman for the conservative Unitarians.20

Theodore Parker, mentor of the Secret Six in religious matters, believed that Emerson's sermon was "the most inspiring strain . . . [that he] ever listened to,"21 and that Emerson very concisely depicted "the faults of the Church in its present position." It was such an inspiration to Parker that he decided to "write the long-meditated sermons on the state of the Church and duties of these times."22 Parker reacted to Norton's "A Discourse on the Latest Form of Infidelity," in which Norton argued that there could not be any Christianity if the miracles were denied,23 "What a cumbrous matter he [Norton] makes Christianity to be! You must believe it is authenticated by miracles; nor that only, but this is the only way in which

20Hutchinson, Transcendentalist Ministers, pp. 64-97.
21Parker to George Ellis, 7 August 1838, in Frothingham, Parker, p. 106.
23Dirks, Critical Theology of Parker, p. 69.
it can be attested. I doubt that Jesus himself could be a Christian on these terms."24

After Norton's discourse, George Ripley, a liberal, gave a rebuttal; and the schism in the Unitarian Church had begun. This conflict resembled the one which had taken place about twenty years earlier between the Calvinists and the Unitarians. In the earlier crisis, the Calvinists, refusing to call the Unitarians Christians, charged the Unitarians with infidelity and said they were following German scholarship and German rationalism into heresy. Hence, the orthodox Unitarians were making the same indictments against the liberal, Transcendental Unitarians as the Calvinists had made against them. This later controversy had developed so quickly that some of the liberals in the first schism (Norton and Ware) became conservatives in the second.25 To Parker it was plain: the orthodox Unitarians were as fundamental and unprogressive as the Calvinists, and these Unitarians, like the Calvinists, placed the "Bible above the Soul" instead of the individual's "Soul above the Bible." Furthermore, to Parker, these Unitarians adhered to traditional ideas on inspiration: the

24Parker to Miss E. P. Peabody, n.d., in Frothingham, Parker, pp. 113-114.

day of an individual's receiving divine revelation directly from God had ended long ago.\textsuperscript{26} Because of Parker's belief in the free individual, this seemed unnatural.

Since Emerson had left the Unitarian Church and refused to participate in the religious wrangle, Parker, deeply interested in the controversy, felt that Ripley had not said enough.\textsuperscript{27} Consequently, Parker, viewing himself as another Martin Luther, entered the dispute by writing a discourse, "The Previous Question Between Mr. Andrews Norton and His Alumni Moved and Handled in a Letter to All Those Gentlemen," under the pseudonym of Levi Blodgett, a fabricated common farmer without religious training. In this letter, Parker, espousing Transcendental views too sophisticated for an ordinary farmer, became known to the conservative Unitarians; and they decided that he should be watched as a potential heretic. On 19 May 1841, "a raw day" to Parker, he preached his "The Transient and Permanent in Christianity" at the ordination of Charles G. Shackford in the South Boston Unitarian Church. In this sermon, Parker more clearly articulated his liberal views which shocked and terrified the conservative Unitarians. In the winter of 1841 and 1842, Parker gave five lectures preaching these Transcendental

\textsuperscript{26}Parker to Dr. Francis, 22 March 1839, in Frothingham, \textit{Parker}, pp. 115-118.

\textsuperscript{27}Chadwick, \textit{Parker}, p. 92.
views and then published them as *A Discourse of Matters Pertaining to Religion*. He became, therefore, the spokesman for this new breed of Unitarians and became the center of this religious conflict, for Parker refused to withdraw from the Unitarian Church as Emerson and Ripley had done.28

In Parker's individualistic scheme of theology, God was "the Infinite God: the perfect Cause and perfect Providence . . . [who] made the universe from a perfect motive, of perfect materials, for a perfect purpose, and as a perfect means thereto. . . . "29 To Parker, God was not only perfect, omnipotent, and omniscient; but He was omnipresent: "there is no point of space, no atom of matter, but God is there. . . . "30 This presence of God in nature—"the material world"—gave nature its existence; without God, nature would not be. Because nature did not have a will and self-consciousness of its own, God's will was its "law and force; His wisdom its order; and His Goodness its beauty."31 Nature was, therefore, a reflection of God's

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28 Ibid., 94-234.


30 Ibid., 108.

image: "an apparition of the Deity, God in mask," and an "exhibition of God to the senses."32

Parker, refuting the Calvinists and the conservative Unitarians, proclaimed that since God was omnipresent, God had to be in the soul of man; and since God was in the soul of man, man had to be divine, not just good, or evil. Parker further declared that although the free-will in man modified God's presence in the soul,33 man was innately a religious being: man "was made to be religious as much as an ox was made to eat grass. . . . "34 Parker, labeling his scheme of theology as the "Natural-Religious View," "Spiritualism," or the "Absolute Religion,"35 declared that since each individual had an innate, natural desire to know God (and God was a "bountiful parent" who had not left man stranded36), the individual's knowledge of God's existence came "unavoidably from the legitimate action of the intellectual and the religious faculties, just as the belief in light . . . [came] from using the eyes, and belief in our existence from mere existing." Parker said that philosophers called this type

32Ibid., 112, 111, 30.

33Ibid., 117.

34Parker, "The Previous Question Between Mr. Andrews Norton and His Alumni Moved and Handled in a Letter to All Those Gentlemen," in Dirks, Critical Theology of Parker, pp. 140-141.

35Parker, Collected Works, 1:138-139.

36Ibid., p. 138.
of reasoning as to God's existence the "INTUITION OF REASON," and theologians called it a "REVELATION FROM GOD." Parker further taught that the a priori method logically established God's existence, and the a posteriori method "beautifully confirmed it." But God's existence, Parker made plain at this point, was not contingent upon either because God's existence depended "not on reasoning but Reason." Parker espoused the idea that God was an integral part of the individual, and that God was innately and spontaneously felt in the individual's consciousness. This feeling, however, confirmed God's existence; it did not originate it. Parker made it clear that intuition gave "the thing to be reasoned about." Parker, moreover, exhorted that unless this intuitive function be formed, "it . . . [was] not possible to attain a knowledge of God." 37 Each individual's inherently knowing that there was an infinitely perfect God was one of three of Parker's "great primal Intuitions of Human Nature, which depend on no logical process of demonstration, but are rather facts of consciousness given by the instinctive action of human nature itself." The other two were: "the Instinctive Intuition of the Just and Right, a consciousness that there is a Moral Law, independent of our will, which we ought to keep; and the Instinctive Intuition of the Immortal, a consciousness that the Essential Element of man, the principle

37 Ibid., pp. 8-9.
of Individuality, never dies."  

These three optimistic beliefs about man were the foundation of Parker's Transcendentalism.  

Parker preached that the age of divine inspiration had not passed because each individual could know God and had "direct access to Him through Reason, conscience and the Religious Faculty, just as . . . [the individual had] direct access to Nature through the eye, the ear, or the hand." Parker proclaimed that through "these channels . . . and by means of a law, certain, regular, and universal as gravitation," God directly and divinely inspired the individual and made "revelations of truth." Each man could "get truth at first hand from its Author" and would not have to rely on hearsay. Since God was "omnipresent and omniactive," Parker exhorted, "this inspiration . . . [was] no miracle, but a regular mode of God's action on conscious Spirit, as gravitation on unconscious Matter. . . ." Parker thoroughly believed that this was not "a rare condescension of God, but a universal uplifting of Man."  

Parker advocated that God had not limited His divine inspiration to the "learned alone," to the "great and wise,"

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38 Parker, Experience As a Minister, p. 42.  
39 Cathey, "Transcendentalism of Parker," p. 53.  
40 Parker, Collected Works, 1:138-139.
or to any particular "sect, age, or nation," because divine inspiration was "the light of all . . . [one's] being, the background of all human faculties, the sole means by which . . . [the individual gained] a knowledge of what . . . [was] not seen and felt, the logical condition of all sensual knowledge . . . [and one's] highway to the world of Spirit." But because divine inspiration was so important, Parker felt that God had given it "to every faithful child of God." To be a faithful child of God," Parker announced that the individual had to be faithful to his own "Reason, Conscience, Heart, and Soul . . ., [for] through them . . . [the individual received] inspiration to guide him through all his pilgrimage. . . . " Parker realized, however, that all men were not "true to Conscience, faithful to Reason, [and] obedient to Religion" because each man had a self-consciousness and a free-will; thus, there were "degrees of inspiration from the lowest sinner up to the highest saint." Some men quenched the spirit of inspiration and others fed it. Although Parker stated that God might have endowed some individuals with more ability ("noble intellect" and deep rich

41 Ibid., p. 148.
42 Ibid., p. 141.
43 Ibid., p. 148.
44 Ibid., p. 150.
"benevolent affections") to receive this divine inspiration, Parker basically adhered to the idea that the degree of inspiration which the individual received depended upon the use the individual made of his God-given faculties. The amount of inspiration which one received, therefore, depended on how much the individual exerted his free-will: the man who was less gifted than the individual of "larger outfit," who neglected his talent, could attain a greater degree of inspiration by "faithful obedience" to his "soul's law; inspiration . . . [was] the consequence of a faithful use of . . . [one's] faculties. Each man [was] its subject; God its source; Truth its only test. . . ." Parker further explained that the highest perception of truth was that of "Reason, Morals, Philanthropy, [and] Religion"; and the individual who had the most of "Wisdom, Goodness, Love, and Religion" was the most inspired and his character was more like God's. The aim that Parker's "Absolute Religion," "Spiritualism," or "Natural Religious View" proposed was "a complete union of Man with God, till every action, thought, wish, feeling . . . [was] in perfect harmony with the divine will. . . ."

Inherent in Parker's "Absolute Religion" was a direct conflict with Lockean philosophy of knowledge: "there was

46 Ibid., p. 317.
nothing in the intellect which was not previously there."
From Immanuel Kant, this intuitive, idealistic, optimistic philosophy of Emerson, Ripley, Parker, and others received its name because Kant had refuted John Locke's skeptical philosophy by arguing that there were ideas "which did not come by experience, but through which experience was acquired; such ideas were intuitions of the mind itself."
Kant, thus, called these ideas Transcendental, since they transcended experience. The ideas of God, Immortality, and Truth were intuitions of human nature; and they not only had sentimental values but real validity. On this concept of innate ideas rested the whole Transcendental philosophy,\(^4\) which was basically a doctrine explaining how to attain a knowledge of God: the ultimate source of all knowledge.\(^4\) John Locke had denied the possibility of innate ideas, and his theory of knowledge had greatly influenced Unitarian thinking. The Unitarians placed a heavy emphasis on sense experience; and the Unitarians, like the Calvinists, considered the Scriptures infallible. The Unitarians, therefore, defended the miracles and other supernatural evidence found in the Scriptures as God's means of

\(^4\) Goddard, Studies in New England Transcendentalism, pp. 2-3; Frothingham, Transcendentalism in New England, pp. 105-111.

conveying specific religious truths to the human senses; men would know that miracles had really happened because they could see or hear the miracles. To Parker the followers of this concept of knowledge were believers in "Supernaturalism" because they believed that there was not "anything in Man which was not first in the senses." Parker further criticized these Supernaturalists for believing that whatever transcended the senses could come only to the individual through a miracle because a miracle was a phenomenon "obvious to senses."

Parker taught that these advocates of Supernaturalism believed that God had "revealed his own existence in a visible form to the first man" and had taught this human being "religious and moral duties by words orally spoken." This "first man" sinned and fell from frequent, direct communication with God; this "first man," however, "communicated this knowledge to his descendants, from whom the tradition of the fact has spread all over world. . . ." Since man would perish without some communication from God, God made divine revelations to "one single people" through miraculous persons (prophets) and "accompanies each revelation


50 Parker, Collected Works, 1:133.
by some miraculous sign, for without it none could distinguish the truth from a lie." Eventually other nations heard about this chosen people; and in time, God made a revelation to all men through His Son, Jesus Christ: a divine and miraculous being who performed miracles in order that people would know that Jesus Christ was "both God and Man." Through a miracle, God inspired prophets and apostles to record and preserve God's revelations in the Scriptures in order that man might have a "knowledge of God's will, of morality, and Religion." Hence, these persons who received direct communication from God through a miracle, were mediators between God and the individual. Moreover, these Supernaturalists taught that the age of miraculous, divine, inspiration from God had passed: "that God . . . [had] no further revelations to make;" the Scriptures were infallible. The individual could not approach God except by miracle: through the interceding of Jesus Christ who man knew was both God and man, because Christ had performed miracles. Parker disliked Supernaturalism because in that theology limitations were placed upon man as a free agent: intercessors were between man and God.

51 Ibid., p. 134.
52 Ibid., p. 135.
53 Ibid., p. 136.
Clearly Parker was describing the Calvinists as being followers of Supernaturalism, but he did not stop there; he accused the conservative Unitarians of being in that fold. Although Parker realized that these Unitarians professed to believe that man was basically good (or they at least placed more emphasis on the goodness of man) instead of innately evil, nonetheless, Parker classified Unitarians as just another form of Calvinists because Unitarians still believed that "Christianity . . . rested on the authority of Christ, and that on the miracles, and the words of the New Testament." The individual, therefore, "must not inquire into their authority." Parker charged further that such Unitarians believed that if there were "a contradiction between the Word of the New Testament and Reason . . . , the 'Word' must be believed in spite of Reason . . . ," because the individual should always be more certain of what he read instead of what he intuitively knew. To Parker these orthodox Unitarians differed only from the Calvinists "in exegesis, and that alone" because such Unitarians were ready to believe anything which had "a Thus-saith-the-Lord before it." Parker damned these Unitarians because their scheme of theology hid behind the Bible which cut the individual "off from direct communion with God" and curtailed the individual's efforts.54

54Ibid., pp. 312-313.
Parker warned these conservative Unitarians that their scheme of religious doctrines was based on "a poor and sensual philosophy" because their religious tenets were "legitimated only by the sensations of the apostles." Because of such beliefs Parker declared that Unitarianism was in danger of becoming a truncated supernaturalism, its apex shorn off; all of supernaturalism but the supernatural. With a philosophy too rational to go the full length of the supernatural theory [Calvinism], too sensual to embrace the spiritual method [Parker's Transcendental Religion] and ask no person to mediate between man and God, it [Unitarianism] oscillates between the two; humanizes the Bible, yet calls it miraculous; believes in man's greatness, freedom, and spiritual nature, yet asks for a Mediator and Redeemer, and says, "Christ established a new relation between Man and God;" it admits man can pray for himself, and God hear for himself, and yet prays "in the name of Christ," and trusts an "intercessor." It censures the traditionary sects, yet sits itself among the tombs, and mourn over things past and gone; believes the humanity of Jesus, that he was a model-man for us all, yet his miraculous birth likewise and miraculous powers, and makes him an anomalous and impossible being. It blinds men's eyes with the letter, yet bids them look for the spirit . . . ; it reverences Jesus manfully, yet denounces all such as preach Absolute Religion and Morality, as he did, on its own authority, with nothing between them and God, neither tradition nor person. . . .

Parker believed that the Unitarians either had to affirm his Absolute Religion, or "it must . . . cease to represent the progress of man in theology. . . ."  

55Ibid., pp. 313-314.
Parker, with his concept of man as a divine free agent who could communicate directly with God and become perfect like God (if man would only listen and comprehend fully God's speaking to his conscience), damned the Unitarians for not breaking all ties with the Calvinists. Parker despised the idea of having mediators or intercessors between the free individual and God because the use of such beings placed limitations upon man. Moreover, Parker considered it unreasonable to take the Scriptures as the source of infallible truth when the free individual could communicate directly with God; and such a theology, Parker regarded as a theology of the past:

it [supernaturalism which to Parker included both Calvinism and Unitarianism] relies entirely on past times; does not give us the Absolute Religion, as it exists in Man's nature, and the Ideas of the Almighty, only a historical mode of worship, as lived out here or there. It says the canon of Revelation is closed; God will no longer act on men as heretofore. We have come at the end of the feast; are born in the latter days and dotage of mankind, and can only get light by raking amid the ashes of the past, and blowing its brands, now almost extinct. It denies that God is present and active in all spirit as in all space--thus it denies that he is Infinite. ... 56

Obviously, Parker thought that his Absolute Religion was the live religion of the present; therefore, innate in

56Ibid., p. 136.
Parker's theology, like Emerson's, was the belief that the individual must be freed from a religion of "the dry bones of the past." Although Parker was trying to free the individual from a religion of the past, he used scientific inquiry into the past to reinforce his intuitionist argument because he wanted to make that argument appear scientifically respectable. To him Transcendentalism "does not neglect experience. In human history it finds confirmations, illustrations, of the ideas of human nature. . . . It illustrates religion by facts of observation, facts of testimony." Being influenced by German scholars of both the Old and New Testament, Parker did a scientific and historical

57 This does not imply that Parker was a thoroughgoing disciple of Emerson; for differences between their views see Chadwick, Parker, p. 177; Commager, Parker, p. 141; Dirks, Critical Theology of Parker, pp. 66-136; Hutchinson, Transcendentalist Ministers, pp. 100-102; Smith, "Was Parker a Transcendentalist?" pp. 351-364.

58 Emerson, Collected Works, 1:7.

59 Hutchinson, Transcendentalist Ministers, pp. 104-106.


examination of the basic Christian doctrines: the fundamental beliefs in God, the relationships between man and God, immortality, dogmas regarding the church, the ethical imperatives of Christianity, evidence for the authority of Jesus, the universal character of inspiration, and the numerous claims for the infallibility of the Scriptures.\textsuperscript{62}

This study reinforced Parker's beliefs that the Scriptures were not infallible. From his examination of the New Testament, Parker concluded that the apostles and the evangelists were not divinely inspired because they made contradictory statements about Christ's teachings. Parker discovered that these writers never claimed to be inspired men who were writing the infallible Word of God; they were simply trying to record the main features of Christ's life.\textsuperscript{63}

Furthermore, Parker concluded from his historical research that "evidence for the Christian miracles [was] very scanty in extent, and very uncertain in character" and that the current beliefs of the times favored miracles.\textsuperscript{64} Parker felt that "the Christian miracles are best, but a matter of testimony, and therefore of secondary and indirect knowledge. . . . "\textsuperscript{65} Certainly Parker was convinced that the Calvinists

\textsuperscript{63}Parker, \textit{Collected Works}, 1:160-162.
\textsuperscript{64}Ibid., pp. 178-179.
\textsuperscript{65}Ibid., p. 186.
and Unitarians were mistaken in their views about the Scriptures just as they were mistaken about Christ. From his investigations Parker decided that Christ was simply "a young man full of genius for Religion" who began "his public career with the narrow aim of reforming Judaism." Like any other human, Jesus made some mistakes; to Parker the biggest ones were that Jesus claimed to be the Messiah of the Old Testament and 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." Parker, however, had much praise for Jesus Christ because Christ in time came to preach a very optimistic Christianity: "a reunion of Man and God, till we think God's thoughts, and will God's will, and so have God abiding in us, and become one with Him." To Parker this was Absolute Religion.

Innate in Parker's religious thinking was the idea of progress. This optimistic belief was predicated upon the idea of the free, self-reliant individual working out his own salvation directly with God without the aid of any intercessor. Then God would make direct revelations to this individual with the amount of divine inspiration contingent upon the effort the individual put forth to

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66Ibid., pp. 165, 192, 193, 169.
receive such truths. If this free individual would discipline his conscience, listen carefully, and comprehend these direct truths from God, then in time and with much effort, this free agent would become perfect like God. It was Parker's faith in this belief that forced him to enter the Unitarian controversy, and it was this same faith that led him to condemn not only the Unitarian Church but all churches which taught historical Christianity because such a Christianity tyrannized the free individual.

It [historical Christianity] does not look forward but backward. It does not ask truth at first hand from God; seeks not to lead men directly to Him, through the divine life, but only to make them walk in the old paths trodden by some good pious Jews, who, were they to come back to earth, could as little understand our circumstances as we theirs. The Church expresses more concern that men should walk in these peculiar paths, than they should reach the goal. Thus the means are made the end. It en-slaves men to the Bible; makes it the soul's master, not its servant; forgetting that the Bible, like the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Bible. It makes man the less and the Bible the greater. . . . It rejects all attempts to humanize the Bible, and separate its fiction from the facts. . . . It trusts the imperfect Scriptures of the Word, more than the Word itself, writ by God's finger on the living heart. "Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty," says the Apostle. But where the spirit of the Church is, there is slavery. It would make all men think the same thoughts; feel the same feelings; worship by the same form.

The Church itself worships not God, who is all in all, but Jesus, a man born of woman. Grave teachers, in defiance of his injunction, bid us pray to Christ. It supposes the Soul
of all our Souls cannot hear, or it will not accept a prayer, unless offered formally, in the Church's phrase. . . . Practically speaking, its worst feature is, that it mars and destroys the highest ideal of man, and makes us beings of very small discourse, that only look backward. 67

According to Parker's idea of progress, the Roman Catholic Church had some positive aspects. Parker viewed as progress the Church's preserving the Greek and Roman thought when barbarians overran Rome and its spreading Christianity among these barbarians. Parker also saw the Church's involvement in social problems as good: its helping the poor and downtrodden; its giving religious education to its people, and its limiting the power of kings. To Parker the most "peculiar merit of the Catholic Church" was its concept that divine inspiration had not passed because "the humblest priest had a little inspiration, enough to work the greatest of miracles; the bishop had more; the Pope as head of the Church . . . [was] infallibly inspired so that he could neither act wrong, think wrong, nor feel wrong. . . . " 68 But Parker thought that the Church's tyrannizing the individual--placing mediators between the individual and God and its belief in Christ as a divine intercessor--far exceeded its merits. The Church's

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67 Parker, Collected Works, vol. 9, Critical Writings (1864), pp. 11-12.

68 Parker, Collected Works, 1:277-283, 273.
clergy "became spiritual tyrants, forcing all men to utter the same creed, submit to the rite, reverence the same symbol, and be holy in the same way."\textsuperscript{69} This was the opposite of Parker's belief in individuality. Parker believed that the Catholic Church was morally wrong in its deterministic beliefs about divine inspiration: "the Catholic Church is based on the assumption that God inspires that Church, miraculously and exclusively. This assumption is false. Though the oldest organization in the world, it has no right over the soul of man."\textsuperscript{70}

With his belief in the idea of progress predicated upon the free individual, Parker saw the development of Protestantism in sixteenth-century Europe as progress because it

logically denied that an inspired man was needed to stand between mankind and the inspired Word. Each man must consult the Scriptures for himself. . . . Each man, therefore, must have freedom of conscience up to this point, but no further. God was immanent in the Scriptures; not in the Church. . . . The Catholic Church had no miraculous inspiration.

Parker viewed this as "a great step for the human race to make . . . in the sixteenth century."\textsuperscript{71} Parker divided the "Protestant Party" in nineteenth-century New England into

\textsuperscript{69} Ibid., p. 284.
\textsuperscript{70} Ibid., pp. 288-289.
\textsuperscript{71} Ibid., p. 289.
the Calvinists--"the Party that sets out from the Sovereignty of God"--and the Unitarians--"the Party that sets out from the Paternity of God."\(^72\)

Although Parker realized a few of the good influences of Calvinism on the "fathers of New England": "their self-denial, their penitence, their austere devotion, [their] unconquerable daring, [and their] religious awe which marked those iron men,"\(^73\) he genuinely felt that Calvinism was outdated and morally wrong because its predestination set limits upon the free individual by creating a permanent class of sinners who were deprived of their free will and control of their fate. To Parker this whole system was the antithesis of his principle of individuality and

\[\ldots\] makes God an awful king. The universe shudders at his presence. The thunder and earthquake are but faint whispers of his wrath. \[\ldots\] He [God] sits in awful state. Human flesh quails at the thought of Him. It is terrible to fall into his hands, as fall we must. Man is born "totally depraved" and has \[\ldots\] no power of himself to discern good from evil, and follow the good. \[\ldots\] Sin is native in his bones. Hell is his birthright. \[\ldots\] This system degrades Man. It deprives him of freedom. \[\ldots\] Man is \[\ldots\] the veriest worm that crawls the globe. \[\ldots\] All the human race are sinners, by being born of woman. The damning sin of Adam vests in all their bones. They must suffer eternal damnation to atone for their inherited sin, unless some "substitute" take their place. \[\ldots\] God's "Mercy" overcomes his "Justice,"

\(^{72}\) Ibid., p. 297.

\(^{73}\) Ibid., p. 302.
for Man deserves nothing but "damnation," He will provide the ransom. So he [God] sent down his Son . . . [to] prepare . . . a ransom for all; "purchasing" their "salvation." Thus men are saved from hell, by the "vicarious suffering" of the Son. . . . The Son, therefore, is the Father, and the Father the Son. . . . [However] . . . God did not . . . purchase the redemption of all, for such "forgiveness" would ill comport with his dignity. Therefore certain "conditions" are to be complied with, before man is entitled to this salvation. God knew from all eternity who would be saved, and they are said to be "elected from before the foundation of the world," to eternal happiness. God is the cause of their compliance--for men have no free-will,--hence "fore-ordination:" they are not saved by their own merit, but each by Christ's--hence "particular redemption:" having no will, they must be "called" and moved by God, and if elected must be sure to come to him. . . . The salvation of Man is wrought for him not by him. . . .

Parker further felt that this religion was unnatural to man and made "Christianity alien to the soul because it paved Hell with children's bones" and set "a personal devil in the world to harry the land and lure or compel men to eternal woe." Moreover, there was another aspect of this religion which set limits upon man as a free agent: "it . . . [put] an Intercessor between God and Man." Man could only approach God through an "attorney, as a beggar comes to a Turkish king. . . . " Parker felt this was not only morally wrong but ridiculous:

Away with such folly. Jesus of Nazareth bears his own sins, not another's. How

74Ibid., pp. 297, 298, 302, 299, 300.
can his righteousness be "imputed" to me! Goodness out of me is not mine; helps me no more than another's food feeds or his sleep refreshes me. Adam's sin,—it was Adam's affair, not mine.  

Parker believed that his highly individualistic Absolute Religion had to replace this backward religion for man to progress.  
Parker felt that it was his moral duty to move the Unitarian Church completely away from Calvinism and into the Transcendental fold. Parker praised the Unitarians for their earlier quarrel with the Calvinists and he believed because of that controversy the "spear, with its 'five points,' [Calvinism] was somewhat blunted. Thus far, Unitarianism was but carrying out the principles of the Protestant Reformation . . .," but it had taken too much from "the ungrateful doctrines of the darker system." Parker felt that although most Unitarians did not consider the Old Testament infallible, they still "clung strongly as ever to . . . the New Testament." Parker tried to convince the Unitarians to forsake their belief in Christ as any kind of mediator and to take a more individualistic belief: "Each man must be his own Christ or he is no Christian."  

75 Ibid., pp. 303-304.  
76 Ibid., pp. 308-310.
did not accept this truly individualistic Transcendental religion then they could not represent the progress of man in theology. 77

Parker believed that his Transcendental religion (which he called Spiritualism or the Absolute Religion) was progressive because it was not only reinforced by historical research but because its basic premise was individuality. Parker preached that his Spiritualism relied on

no Church, Tradition, or Scripture as the last ground and infallible rule; it counts these things teachers, . . . not authorities. It relies on the divine presence in the Nature of Man; the eternal Word of God, which is Truth, as it speaks through the faculties he has given. It believes God is near the soul, as matter to the sense; thinks the canon of revelation not yet closed, nor God exhausted. It sees him in Nature's perfect work. . . . It calls God Father and Mother, not King; Jesus brother, not redeemer; Heaven home; Religion nature. It loves and trusts, but does not fear. It sees in Jesus a man living manlike, highly gifted though not without errors. . . . But he lived for himself; died for himself; worked out his own salvation, and we must do the same. . . . Its [Spiritualism] redeemer is within; its salvation within. . . . It falls back on Perfect Religion. Its watchword is, BE PERFECT AS GOD. . . . It makes each man his own priest. . . . It is progress without end. . . . [because] Spiritualism liberates us from all personal and finite authority, and restores us to God, the primeval fountain, whence the Church, the Scriptures, and Jesus have drawn the water of life, wherewith they fill their urns. . . . 78

77 Ibid., p. 315.

78 Ibid., pp. 316, 317, 318, 320.
Because none of the churches of his day taught his anti-institutional religion, Parker set out to reform the Unitarian Church and in the process became ostracized in the loose federation of Unitarian Churches. Although Parker was popular in his West Roxbury congregation, he left them in 1846 to become minister of a free church in Boston where he hoped to realize his ideal church. In his installation sermon Parker preached that the "first design of a church" was to help men practice this Absolute which "aims not to destroy the sacred peculiarities of individual character." Parker exhorted:

A Christian church then should put no fetters on the man; it should have unity of purpose, but with the most entire freedom for the individual. When you sacrifice the man to the mass in church or state, church or state becomes an offence, a stumbling-block in the way of progress, and must end or mend. The greater variety of individualities in church or state, the better is it, so long as all are really manly, humane, and accordant. A church must needs be partial, not catholic, where all men think alike, narrow and little. . . . If a church cannot allow freedom it were better not to allow itself, but cease to be. Unity of purpose, with entire freedom for the individual, should be the motto. It is only free men that can find the truth, love the truth, live the truth. . . . It is a poor thing to purchase unity of church-action at the cost of individual freedom.

79 Albrecht, Parker, pp. 69-70.
80 Parker, Collected Works, 3:38-40.
Parker spent the rest of his life trying to reform the Unitarian Church and America to reflect his principle of individuality.

In 1898 Thomas Wentworth Higginson, reflecting on his life, paid tribute to Parker as an influence which kept Higginson from accepting any forms of Calvinism:

Thanks to a fortunate home training and the subsequent influence of Emerson and Parker, I held through all my theological studies a sunny view of the universe, which has lasted me as well, amid the storms of life, so far as I can see, as the more prescribed and conventional forms of faith might have done.\(^{81}\)

Higginson was elated in 1847 at his graduation exercises from Harvard Divinity School because Parker had principally come "out to hear me . . . and he [Parker] said he was not disappointed--and . . . said some wise words of sympathy and encouragement."\(^{82}\)

Early in his studies as a divinity student, Higginson reflected Parker's highly individualistic Transcendental-Unitarian views; he argued that only the individual's revelation from God, not the revelations of the Bible, were necessary for religious knowledge: "Religion . . . is a feeling . . . in our mind. Reason can do nothing itself but accept revelations." Higginson, like Parker,

\(^{81}\)Higginson, *Yesterdays*, p. 111.

was refuting the conservative Unitarians who taught that intuitive knowledge was of no value in religion. He clearly saw the influence of John Locke on Unitarian beliefs and concluded that Locke had explained "away all our highest ideas." 83

Although Higginson had never been taught or forced to learn Calvinistic dogmas, he, in a Parker-like fashion, preached against Calvinistic determinism because it limited the free individual. Higginson cried out that he would rather disbelieve in God than to believe in eternal damnation because "God's power . . . without His eternal love is only infernal." Higginson, like Parker and Emerson, taught that "the life of God [was] in the soul of man." Higginson, arguing highly individualistic views, taught that there were natural and spiritual laws inherent in the universe; and every individual, not just the learned, intuitively recognized these laws because man and nature were a part of each other. Therefore, man intuitively would know when he was in sin because he would be in opposition to the natural laws of God as reflected in nature; all of nature would be "leagued against him." Nature was a "hieroglyphical Bible." 84

83 Higginson, "Divinity School Notes," in Edelstein, Life of Higginson, pp. 54-55.

Moreover, Higginson, believed that the "one great law of nature, as of man, is of progress, but . . . here Nature separates herself in date from man, and . . . [nature's] progress seemed to cease when his began. . . ." Higginson, reviewing the earlier periods of nature--the eras of the mastodon and mylodon, and earlier times of hot volcanic action--concluded that the nature of the nineteenth century was rather serene even though there were still storms and earthquakes; he was convinced that nature had reached its perfect harmony: "a gradual elevation and pacification of nature." Higginson, therefore, thought that the only logical process that could follow was the "elevation and pacification of man." He believed that towards man all orders of beings ascend, "in man they are all summed out, he is the sole microcosm," and taught that man could be harmonized as nature through the principle of individuality pervading all aspects of man's existence.  

Like his teacher, Parker, Higginson called for a scholarly approach to the Scriptures which would prove that they were not infallible. Higginson attacked all religious denominations from the Catholics to the "weak, timid, and inconsistent Unitarians" for placing final authority in the Bible instead of the individual's conscience and reason. Because of the many contradictions and incredible statements in the Bible, Higginson reiterated

85Ibid., pp. 131-134.
one of the basic themes of Parker's teachings: a belief that
the infallibility of the Scriptures limited man as a free
agent from having divine revelations of truths directly from
God. Higginson argued that the individual should rely upon
the "life of God in the human soul," a "faith in God and
love to man," a "reverent study of the vast and simple laws
of nature," and the "cultivation of the Inward Light," and
the "personal experience of Religion." To him this highly
individualistic approach was the true authority of all
churches and Christianity; churches and Scriptures could
come and go, but the individual's faith in God would be
undisturbed because that faith was outside of any man-made
authority. Higginson thoroughly believed that "the whole
course of history shows that the soul of man . . . has a
magnet in it, and slowly and surely comes round to the
reception of all Truth." Higginson believed that man
could progress and become perfect by accepting Transcen-
dentalism as truth.

By 1900 the Unitarians had accepted Parker's Absolute
Religion. Higginson was one of those Transcendental
Unitarians who helped bring this about. It began in 1865
at the organizational meeting of the National Conference
of American Unitarians (the first truly representative
Unitarian body) when the Transcendental Unitarians tried

86 Liberator, 10 October 1854.
to keep the phrase "Lord Jesus Christ" out of the preamble to the Constitution. Failing, these Transcendentalists tried again in 1866 with no avail; they decided, therefore, to form a separate association. This group called themselves the Free Religious Association and were active from 1867 to 1897. Throughout that time the Association suffered from internal strife between the second-generation Transcendentalists, under the leadership of Higginson, John Weiss, and Samuel Johnson, and the "scientific theists" who, under the leadership of Francis E. Abbot, O. B. Frothingham, and John Chadwick, believed that scientific demonstration, rather than intuition, should form the basis of a religious faith. Many of these "scientific theists," such as Frothingham and Chadwick, had been converted to Transcendentalism during the 1840's and still had much sentimental attachment to it, but now felt that they had outgrown it. There was also constant dissension about the Association's relationship to Unitarianism. Higginson was a very active member of the Association, pleading for Absolute Religion.

At the first meeting of the Free Religious Association on 30 May 1867, Higginson preached Parker's Absolute Religion and argued that what America needed was this Absolute Religion.

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87 Persons, Free Religion, pp. 35-155; Hutchinson, Transcendentalist Ministers, pp. 198-203.
which taught "love to God and love to Man." He exhorted that belief in Christ limited the individual's freedom because it placed intercessors between the individual and God. At another meeting of the Association on 28 May 1868, Higginson again praised Parker for his religious beliefs and considered it a privilege to have had the opportunity to sit at Parker's feet and learn. In a Parker-like fashion, Higginson then attacked Calvinism as being unnatural to man's soul and cried out that such a theology placed limits on man as a free agent. Of course the conservative Unitarians received a slap for not accepting Absolute Religion. 88 Throughout his life Higginson believed in this individualistic religion.

Franklin Benjamin Sanborn was also a member of this Free Religious Association. Speaking at the 28 May 1868 meeting of the association, Sanborn reiterated the same idea of a religion based on "love to God and love to man," which clearly reflected Parker's influence on Sanborn. Moreover Sanborn declared that the teachings of this highly individualistic religion "will never be falsified or antiquated,

since they are the expression of a sentiment inborn and natural to the heart." He also stated that the beliefs of such a religion did "not require the support of logic, nor of infallible authority, for they furnish their own evidence, and no miracle could make them more impressive. . . . "

Under the tutelage of Emerson and Parker, Sanborn had accepted Transcendental religion while he was a student at Harvard College, and he went as often as he could to hear Parker preach. As a student Sanborn wrote often for the Harvard Magazine, and in an essay describing a Transcendental periodical, he gave a defensive definition of Transcendentalism. Sanborn wrote that the Transcendentalist believes in what transcends the senses; he believes in inspiration, flowing ever fresh and pure from the Infinite Source of all wisdom and power; he believes in the human soul, its power; its divine lineage, and its glorious destiny. He values the past, but he values more the present, and most of all the future,—that great promised land of all our hopes. He does not believe that all truth is enshrined in any book, or any institution, for he holds that man is always greater than his achievements, and God infinitely greater than either our memory or our comprehension. . . .


90 Sanborn, Recollections, 2:313, 2:315, 2:556.

Like Parker and Emerson, Sanborn wanted to free the individual from a religion of the past.

During Sanborn's last term at Harvard, he wrote a dissertation, entitled "The Thoughts of Pascal," for the May exhibition; he based this essay on the conversations that he had had with Emerson on Pascal and Carlyle. In the essay he compared Pascal with Carlyle; and because of his Transcendental views, Sanborn's sympathies were with Carlyle:

Carlyle dwells on the greatness of human nature. . . . He belongs to the party of Hope. . . . Pascal, on the contrary, assaults and degrades human nature. True, he does it with a noble motive, . . . but neither our respect nor our sympathy can overcome our aversion to his gloomy system. He belongs to the party of Despair. . . .

Sanborn, in his July commencement address on graduation from Harvard College, praised the individualism of his age:

"in religion it [individualism] loosens the bands of the church, giving rise to all manner of protest and dissent; in philosophy it manifests itself as Transcendentalism, which is the stronghold of the individual against authority and against numbers." Sanborn so held on to his

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92 Sanborn, "The 'Thoughts' of Pascal," Exhibition and Commencement Performances no. 32 (May 1855), Harvard University Archives, Cambridge, Mass., in Hickok, Careers of Sanborn, p. 94.

93 Sanborn, "The Schoolmaster of the Future," Exhibition and Commencement Performances no. 44 (July 1855), Harvard University Archives, Cambridge, Mass., in Hickok, Careers of Sanborn, p. 94.
Transcendentalism throughout his life that he came to be regarded as the "last of the Transcendentalists." Like all Transcendentalists, he had much faith in the idea of progress based on the free individual and considered the progress and achievements of his own age to be an inspiration to write poetry:

shall the modern knight—errantry of science, the great crusades of commerce, and matchless conquests of civilization—be left unsung? Can we see nothing inspiring in the earth-shaking revolutions of nations; the steady progress of freedom; the increasing heroism of man?  

Although Sanborn thoroughly despised the deterministic aspects of Calvinism, he viewed Calvin's works as progressive because Calvin and Luther "restored the right of private judgement in matters of religion. . . . "

Sanborn spent the latter part of his life writing romantic biographies of men whom he considered worthy of such an honor. Dr. Samuel Gridley Howe was one such man, and Sanborn considered Howe to be one of the "most romantic characters" of the century. Howe, like Sanborn, attended Parker's church in Boston. Howe met Parker in Rome where Parker christened Howe's oldest child.

94Hickok, Careers of Sanborn, p. 67.
96Boston Commonwealth, 2 February 1863.
97Sanborn, Howe, p. v.
Howe was an active member in Parker's church until his children grew older. He left his good friend's church because people read newspapers in church until the services began, and Howe felt this was not a good atmosphere for his children's religious training. The Howes then began attending the services of James Freeman Clarke who was also a Transcendentalist although Julia Ward Howe felt that giving up "Parker's ministry for any other would be like going to the synagogue when Paul was preaching near at hand." This did not cause a rupture in Howe's and Parker's friendship, and there was not a disagreement in their philosophical views. These two men continued to work together to reform America into a society of free individuals.

Another active member of Parker's Twenty-eighth Congregational Society was George Luther Stearns, and one biographer of John Brown described Stearns "as a leading spirit among the prominent men who gathered around Parker." Stearns, like all members of the Secret Six, had had ancestors who were Calvinists; his parents, however, were

98Hutchinson, Transcendentalist Ministers, pp. 31, 183.
100Ibid., 241-246.
Unitarians. He grew up listening to the sermons of Samuel Osgood, who considered himself an early Transcendentalist.\textsuperscript{102} When Osgood moved from the Unitarian Church in Medford, Stearns became personal friends with the new Transcendental minister, Caleb Stetson.\textsuperscript{103} In a letter to Mary Preston, his betrothed, Stearns reflected some Transcendental views: "all nature breathes a holy fragrance as if new from the hand of God; yes, it is always new, . . . the blessed assurance of our future existence, bright and beautiful, . . . it speaks peace to my soul."\textsuperscript{104} After the Reverend Stetson left Medford, Stearns, in 1848, tried to get the Unitarian Church of Medford to call the young Samuel Johnson, a follower of Parker, to its pulpit; but the more conservative members cast such a strong protest that Stearns advised Johnson not to come, for fear the dissension in the church would limit Johnson's ability to minister. Stearns was so dissatisfied that he wrote to Johnson: "the Word of God shall not come to me through a keyhole."\textsuperscript{105} After the


\textsuperscript{103}Stearns, George Luther Stearns, p. 38; Hutchinson, Transcendentalist Ministers, p. 198.

\textsuperscript{104}Stearns to Mary Preston, 17 May 1843, in Stearns, George Luther Stearns, pp. 48-49.

\textsuperscript{105}Stearns to Samuel Johnson, 28 November 1848, in Stearns, George Luther Stearns, pp. 63-64.
Johnson controversy, Stearns became less interested in the Unitarian Church in Medford and more interested in Parker's Free Church in Boston. 106 Like all Transcendentalists, Stearns believed in the idea of progress based on the free individual and considered the Catholic Church as very unprogressive. 107

Although Gerrit Smith, following in the tradition of his forbears, joined the Presbyterian Church in 1826, he broke with that highly Calvinistic denomination in 1843 and slowly drifted into the individualistic religion of Parker and Emerson. Although he was not a trained theologian, Smith considered himself a preacher and did much preaching. Smith reiterated many of Parker's basic themes; he preached that "the clergy made the Bible the supreme authority." But Smith argued that "the individual's reason under God is the final judge in all questions. . . . Reason must sit in judgment upon the Bible, as well as upon all things else: for it is the voice of God in the soul, and nothing must ever be allowed to be exalted above it. . . . Reason, in a word, is religion. . . ." Reason, to Smith, was intuition. 108 He believed that most Protestants were with the Catholics in favoring "a religion of authority" over the

106 Stearns, George Luther Stearns, pp. 63-70.
107 Ibid., 154.
108 Smith, Sermons and Speeches, pp. 8-9.
individual's soul; both were against the religion of reason (intuition). Smith damned the Calvinists for teaching predestination and the depravity of man; Smith, therefore, believed that Calvinism was morally wrong. He also considered any religion morally wrong which placed any barriers or intercessors between the free individual and God.\textsuperscript{109}

Smith taught that because men were free agents, they would be able to become perfect like God; he, therefore, believed in the idea of progress based upon the principle of individuality. Like all Transcendentalists, Smith wanted to free the individual from a religion of the past and preached that the individual should not be content "to have the dead past continue to furnish the religion of the living present." Smith thoroughly believed that the time was ripe for all men to abandon their old, unprogressive Christian teachings; each man should now work out his own salvation as Christ did and then strive to become perfect like God. He cried out:

\begin{quote}
When the true religion [Absolute Religion] shall prevail, and men shall be judged by their life and character rather than by their adoption or rejection of creeds, the church, in the common-sense of the word, will have disappeared, and the priesthood have lost its vocation!\textsuperscript{110}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{109}Ibid., 13-20.

\textsuperscript{110}Ibid., 25-36
Smith preached that God was a benevolent God who wanted all men to attain salvation, and God had made it possible for each individual to attain salvation by simply listening to God speaking to the individual's conscience and obeying; therefore, if the individual did not attain salvation it was the individual's fault:

If any are left unholy, it is because they refuse to be made holy. If any are cut off from the overflowing fountain of impartial love and free salvation, it is because they cut themselves off from it. . . . If we have debased our reason, we alone are responsible for the wrong, and we must alone bear the loss.  

Parker was the mentor of the Secret Six, and the other five adopted his Transcendental belief in God which led them to denounce the dogmas of the Catholics, Calvinists, and conservative Unitarians. All six of these men believed in the Transcendental idea of the perfectibility of man, in the divinity of man, in the humanity of Christ, and in the infallibility of intuition: the Scriptures were not the only way to know God. But the amount of inspiration that the individual received directly from God (these men did not want any intercessors between God and man) depended on how much the individual exerted his free will toward being perfect like God. If one did not receive divine inspiration, it was the individual's fault; the

111Ibid., 80, 9.
burden of responsibility was clearly the individual's. Since the Secret Six believed that there should not be any man-made barriers or theories between the individual and God, this, inevitably, led to reform in order to free the individual from institutional restraints.
Who rings the loud anvil, who guides the deep plough,  
Where solitude nursed her dark children but now?  
Who sows the new furrows with wide swinging hand,  
With a gesture, as he were baptizing the land?  
Who flashes his scythe, like a brook on the plain?  
Who drives the swift sickle?—who garners the grain?  
Who tames the wild stream teaching labor and rest?  
The hardy New Englander blessing the West. . . .

Thomas Buchanan Read,  
Boston Commonwealth, 11 May 1867

Moreover, slavery stunts the growth of individuality, and strives to make boyhood life-long. Of course, there can be no manliness without the feeling of independent individuality and the habit of self-guidance, and slavery prevents the exercise of these. . . .

Samuel Gridley Howe,  
Report to the Freedman's Inquiry Commission.

Hasten, O God, the coming of the age of individualism!

Gerrit Smith, Sermons and Speeches of Gerrit Smith.
CHAPTER III

TOWARD "THE PROMISED LAND OF REPUBLICANISM"--
THE WEST: THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL VIEWS

Since the Secret Six believed in a highly individualistic religion and viewed progress as each individual's striving to be perfect like God, they did not want any restraints or mediators between the free individual and God. Inevitably such religious beliefs led to reform. They became involved in women's rights and peace movements; and ultimately, they saw the institution of slavery as the predominant social evil which held man, the free agent, in bonds.

These men believed that slavery was morally wrong because it was a type of authority forbidden by God; the evil slaveholder interfered between God and another moral agent.¹ Slavery, like Calvinism, was a "unique case of determinism and predestination" in a society which was supposed to be made up of free men who were personally responsible for their own moral character, social situation, and fate.² In his sermons,


Parker reiterated this theme many times: "now man was made to be free, to govern himself, to be his own master, to have no cause stand between him and God, which shall curtail his birthright of freedom. He is never in his proper element until he attains this condition of freedom; of self government."\(^3\) Urged on by Parker's sermons on the evils of slavery, all six men were involved in efforts to prevent the fugitive slave from being returned. Parker preached that there was a higher law than fugitive slave laws:

There is no supreme law but that made by God; if our laws contradict that, the sooner they end or the sooner they are broken ... the better. It seems to be thought a very great thing to run counter to a law of man, written on parchment; a very little thing to run counter to the law of Almighty God. . . .

Parker taught that man should rely on his conscience to know this higher law: "having determined what is absolutely right by the conscience of God, or at least relatively right according to my conscience today, then it becomes my duty to keep it. I owe it to God to obey His law or what I deem His law; that is my duty."\(^4\)

Parker maintained that slavery in every respect was the antithesis of his principle of individuality. It not only denied the free individual direct contact with God, but it denied the slave the fruits of his own labor. Because


\(^4\)Ibid., 13, 148.
someone else profited from the slave's labor, slavery created an aristocratic class: "in the South the freeman shuns labor; in a slave country every freeman is an aristocrat."\textsuperscript{5} Because the South was aristocratic, it was like Europe, unprogressive and anachronistic; slavery was part of the old world that needed to be weeded out of the new world.\textsuperscript{6} Parker, like most reformers of this era, thoroughly despised all European institutions (churches, monarchs, and aristocrats) because they limited the free individual.\textsuperscript{7} Parker wrote from Italy that Rome was depressing to the man who looks for the progress of mankind. Rome is one of the most hopeless places in the world, for it is the headquarters of sloth and reaction; its religion is despotism; the subordination to an authority outside of nature, and even to its noblest instincts and reflections; nobody knows how bad the principle of Roman religion is and how fatal to humanity are its logical measures until he comes here and studies, and sees how it works the ruin of the people. . . . \textsuperscript{8}

Parker felt that England was not much better: "it is the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{5}Ibid., 38.
\item \textsuperscript{6}Smith, Virgin Land, pp. 165-177.
\item \textsuperscript{8}Parker to Mr. Senkler, 22 January 1860, in Weiss, Life and Correspondence of Parker, 1:372.
\end{itemize}
paradise of the rich, the purgatory of the wise, and hell for the poor. . . . "9

Parker saw all of Europe in a regressive state, and the cyclical theory of history would have its way in Europe because there the unprogressive forces were limiting the free individual.

In Europe, at present, and especially on the continent, this regressive power carries the day and the progressive force is held down. . . . When any nation permanently consents to this triumph of regressive over the progressive force, allows one class to do all the government and shun all the labor it is presently all over with that nation. . . . 10

Parker clearly saw the South as the regressive element in America: "the South had formed a permanently idle and lordly class, who shun labour and monopolize government. . . . " Parker felt that for America to escape the cyclical theory of history and to progress, slavery had to be abolished.11

Parker's view of the South contrasted naturally with his view of the free states because "in the free states the majority work with their hands, counting it the natural business of a man, not a reproach, but a duty and a dignity. . . . "; while "in the South manual labor is considered

9Parker to Dr. Francis, 18 March 1844, in Weiss, Life and Correspondence of Parker, 1:230.
10Parker, Collected Works, vol. 6, Discourses of Slavery (1864), p. 251.
11Ibid., 255.
menial and degrading; it is the business of slaves. . . .”

Parker believed that New England was superior to the South or "any of the foremost nations of Europe" because in New England there was "more Christianity . . ., more democracy and freedom for the individual, [and] more material comfort."

Parker attributed New England's superiority to its "free school," "free state," and "free church."""13

Parker advised all men of this superior society "to shun poverty; to seek a generous competence for themselves and their dependents, and that too by honest work, earning all they take." Parker honored "the manly self-denying enterprise which starts with no heritage but itself, and honestly earns a great estate;" Parker felt that this reflected his principle of individuality. He further preached that

in the Northern States our civilization is based on respect for industry in both forms, toil and thought. Property is the product of the two. . . . Our political and social institutions do not favor the accumulation of wealth in a few men or a few families; no permanent entails are allowed; it follows the natural laws of distribution amongst all the owner's children, or according to his personal caprice; in a few generations a great estate is widely scattered abroad. . . .


Parker further argued that those individuals who had worked hard with their own hands and accumulated wealth were fulfilling a natural order, and they should control the government because they had a material stake in it. Parker felt that this natural order did not limit the free individual because "every poor white boy may hope to trundle its golden wheels on to his little patch of ground, for the millionaire is not born, but self made. . . ." Parker thoroughly believed in the laissez faire capitalist system of his age and felt that "if a man fully pay in efficient productive toil and thought, he is entitled to all he gets, one dollar or many million dollars. . . ." Parker placed heavy emphasis on this money's being earned honestly; and once the individual had earned enough for his own material comfort, some of the surplus money earned thereafter should be used for spiritual development and philanthropy.14

Although Parker praised the wealth of New England, he did notice that New England had some poverty; but he felt that this "poverty belongs to the state of transition we are now in, and can only be ended by our passing through this into a better." Parker could even see some therapeutic effect "of poverty. . . . It drives some men to work, to frugality and thrift. . . . It is very plain that the people of New England are advancing in wealth, in intelligence and

immortality; but in this general march, there are little apparent pauses, slight waverings from side to side.

Moreover, Parker believed that "the condition of the working man has improved relatively to the wealth of the land. . . . The wages of any kind of labor . . . bear higher proportion to the things needed for comfort and convenience. . . ."  

As to the solution of poverty, Parker believed that simply applying Christian principles to all facets of life would solve all problems; the employer should pay the employee a Christian wage; and the wealthy, like Smith and Stearns, should contribute generously to philanthropy as they did.  

He also preached that "in arresting intemperance, two-thirds of the poverty, three-fourths of the crime . . . would end at once and an amount of misery and sin which I have not the skill to calculate. . . ."

Parker felt that New England was the hope for mankind and that New England had a natural affinity with the western territories:

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16 Ibid., 276.


18 Parker, Centenary Edition Works, 10:286.
across the stage of time the nations pass
in solemn pomp of their historical pro-
cession; what kingly forms sweep by, leading
the nations of the past, the present age!
Let them pass--their mingled good and ill.
A great people now comes forth, the newest
born of nations, the latest hope of mankind,
the heir of sixty centuries--the bridegroom
of the virgin West.19

Because Parker realized that slavery degraded the dignity
of work, he wanted slavery kept out of the western terri-
tories. On 7 May 1856 in a sermon entitled "The Present
Crisis in American Affairs: The Slave-Holders' Attempt to
Wrench the Territories from the Working People, and to
Spread Bondage Over All the Land," Parker preached that
the western territories must be kept open for the working
man of the Northeast who could go west, obtain his material
stake in society, and become part of the system; and the
West would become a society patterned after New England.20

Inherent in Parker's thinking was the concept of the ex-
panding economy: for each member of New England's society
to become an autonomous individual (by living Parker's
Absolute Religion and obtaining his stake in the system)
expansion into the West was a necessity. This expansion
would keep America from having a rigid class structure, and
it reflected Parker's principle of individuality: each indi-
vidual's working out his material salvation in the plentiful,

19Parker, Collected Works, 5:83.
20Parker, Collected Works, 6:194-286.
virgin land of the West was analogous to each individual's working out his spiritual salvation with a loving and bountiful God.

Parker felt that if slavery were allowed in the West, there would be a privileged class who would own all of the land, control education, and make laws for the slaveholding class. Parker taught that the working man migrating from the North to a West controlled by the slaveholder would be trying to live by his own labor in a society where industry is not honoured, as in Connecticut, but is despised, as in the Carolinas and Arkansas. The working white must stand on a level with the slave. He belongs to a despised caste. He will have but little self-respect, and will soon sink down to the character and condition of the poor whites in the old slave states.

Parker was convinced that nowhere were the Caucasian people "so degraded as in Tennessee and the Carolinas." Parker feared that if slavery went into the West that there would be no "miscellaneous mechanical industry, as in New England. . . . Agriculture will be poor, land will be low in price, and continually getting run out by unskillful culture. The slave's foot burns the soil and spoils the land; that is the master's fault." Parker further felt that there would not be any good roads or railroads nor

\[21\] Ibid., p. 267.

\[22\] Ibid., p. 268.
free schools. The slaveholding class would write laws forbidding "the education of the slave, and discourage the culture of the mass of the people." He argued that there would be "no Lyceums, no courses of lectures; but in their place . . . [would] be horse-races, occasionally the lynching of an Abolitionist, or the burning of a black man at slow fire!" He was confident that there would not be any libraries, or newspapers, nor any abundant and convenient meeting houses, as in the North; not one hundred and twenty thousand comfortable pew-seats in neat and decorous churches, as in Michigan; but only sixty thousand benches in barns and log huts, as in Arkansas. No army of well-educated ministers will help, instruct, and moralize the community, but ignorant ranters or calculating hypocrites will stalk through the Christian year, perverting the Bible to a Fugitive Slave Bill, and denying the higher law which God writes in man.

Parker considered losing the territories to the slaveholder worse than letting those territories be annexed by Spain because if they did belong to Spain, they could be reclaimed "by filibustering"; and the American government would aid, not hinder.23

Parker thoroughly believed that if America did not keep slavery out of the West and abolish it from her shores, America would go to ruin: "The power of self-rule, which we were not fit for, will pass from our hands, and the

23 Ibid., pp. 269-270.
halter of vengeance will gripe our neck, and America shall lie there on the shore of the sea, one other victim who died as the fool dieth. . . . "24 He, however, felt that if the West would come in as free states it would become a "New Haven in the Wilderness"; 25 the West would soon fill up with educated and industrious men, each sharing the labour and the government of society, helping forward the welfare and progress of all, aiding the organization of Christianity and Democracy. What a development there will be of agriculture, mining, manufacture, commerce! What farms and shops! What canals and railroads! . . . 26

He believed that if the West could be left open for the working man and slavery abolished from America, then America would have a progressive society: "a Church without a bishop, a State without a king, a community without a lord, a family with no holder of slaves, with welfare for the present, and progress for the future. . . . "27

Parker believed that New England had the best society in the history of mankind because there was no other society that had "such love of liberty, such individual variety of action, or such national unity of action; nowhere is such respect for law; nowhere is property so secure, life so safe,

24Ibid., p. 286.
26Ibid., pp. 283-284.
27Ibid., p. 286.
and the individual so little disturbed. . . . "28 He, however, felt that it was not the ideal society because all of New England did not practice his Absolute Religion and pure democracy. He argued that a pure democracy was "government over all the people by all the people, and for the sake of all"; he believed that such a democracy would be a "government according to the natural law of God, by justice, the point common to each man and all men, to each nation and all mankind, to the human race and to God." In such a democracy, Parker felt that the people would "reign with sovereign power; their elected servants govern with delegated trust." He thought that in this democracy there would be "national unity of action, represented by law," which made the "nation one, a whole"; to Parker this was the "centripetal force of society." Parker's pure democracy had for one of its basic premises the principle of individuality:

But there is also individual variety of action, represented by the personal freedom of the people who ultimately make the laws; this makes John John, and not James, the individual a free person, discreet from all other men; this is the centrifugal force of society, which counteracts the excessive solidification that would else go on. Thus, by justice, the one and the many are balanced together, as the centripetal and centrifugal forces in the solar system.

Parker felt that this pure democracy would be based upon "the whole natural right" of each individual: each would

28 Ibid., p. 253.
labor for his own material comfort; and after having accomplished that, each would have time to further develop himself spiritually—striving to be more perfect like God. Of course, Parker thought that there would be a natural order in each pursuing his material wants; each would work "at such calling as his nature demands: on the mare liberum, the open sea of human industry, every personal bark sails whither it may, and with such freight and swiftness as it will or can." He believed that this ideal democracy would be the "reign of righteousness, the kingdom of justice" because it was based on the "natural law of God." Despite all of Parker's disclaimers, there was a strong current of conformity throughout all aspects of his ideal society because each individual was supposed to interpret God's speaking to his conscience in the same manner; all would believe in Absolute Religion. Also perfectibility to Parker was the acceptance of middle-class values.

Parker felt that slavery was keeping the North from progressing and attaining this ideal society; but he foresaw

29Ibid., pp. 245-246.

30Fredrickson, Black Image in the White Mind, pp. 29-42.

31Parker always equated New England with the North: "All the North is like New England in the main. . . . " (Parker, Collected Works, vol. 4, Discourses of Politics [1863], p. 238.)
the day when slavery would be wiped out and the South would become like the North:

then when we are free from this plague--spot of slavery--the curse to our industry, our education, our politics, and our religion--we shall increase more rapidly in numbers and still more abundantly be rich. The South will be as the North--active, intelligent. . . .

Furthermore, Parker saw America expanding and spreading this ideal society over the whole North and South American continents:

then by peaceful purchase, the Anglo-Saxon may acquire the rest of this North American continent,--for the Spaniards will make nothing of it. Nay, we may honourably go further South, and possess the Atlantic and Pacific slopes of the Southern continent, extending the area of freedom at every step. We may carry thither the Anglo-Saxon vigour and enterprise. . . . Then what a nation we shall one day become! America, the mother of a thousand Anglo-Saxon States, tropic and temperate, on both sides of the Equator, may behold the Mississippi and the Amazon uniting their waters, the drainage of two vast continents in the Mediterranean of the Western World; may count her children at last by hundreds of millions--and among them all behold no tyrant and no slave! What a spectacle--the Anglo-Saxon family occupying a whole hemisphere, with industry, freedom, religion! It is our function to fulfil this

vision; we are the voluntary instruments of God. . . . 33

This vision of Anglo-Saxon expansion had no place for other races. Although Parker strongly advocated equal opportunity for the black, he seemed to imply that blacks would have a hard time competing after emancipation.34 In a letter to Sarah Hunt, Parker wrote that the black was not strong enough to compete with the white; the black race, therefore, would die out. This was the "curious law of nature,—the strong displaces the weak . . . ; thus the white man kills out the red man and the black man. When slavery is abolished the African population will decline in the United States, and die out of the South as out of Northampton and Lexington. . . ." Parker compared this process to a strong variety of New England grass inevitably choking out a weaker variety.35 In another letter to Miss Hunt, Parker wrote that

there are inferior races which have always borne the same ignoble relation to the rest of men, always will. For two generations, what a change there will be in the condition and character of the Irish in New England! But in twenty generations,

33Parker, Collected Works, 5:328.
34Fredrickson, Black Image in the White Mind, p. 157.
35Parker to Hunt, 3 June 1858, in Frothingham, Parker, pp. 472-473; Fredrickson, Black Image in the White Mind, pp. 156-157.
the negroes [of New England] will stand just where they are now; that is, if they have not disappeared. . . . 36

Parker's concept of the slave was that of the docile, defenseless black: "the African race is greatly inferior to the Caucasian in general intellectual power, and also in that instinct for Liberty which is so strong in the Teutonic family. . . . The African race have but little desire for vengeance--the lowest form of the love of justice. . . ." 37 Nevertheless, Parker worked hard for the emancipation of the slave so that the slave could function as an individual in a competitive society.

As a student of Parker, Higginson believed in progress predicated on the free individual and a glorified New England; his human perfectibility, too, was actually little more than attaining middle-class values. Although he realized that there was poverty in New England, he offered middle-class solutions: education and charity. He had a paternalistic attitude toward the poor, since he believed it was the duty of the more fortunate classes to guide and aid the less fortunate. He, therefore, opened for a short time a free evening school, expanded it to fifteen women


37 Parker to Francis Jackson, 24 November 1859, in Weiss, Life and Correspondence of Parker, 2:174.
teachers, and financed it from private donations. Although he criticized the merchants for not being more honest, Higginson wholeheartedly approved of New England society and culture, and saw it as progressive because he felt it did not limit the free individual. He was certain that New England was a classless society with economic mobility for all. Like Parker, he felt for New England to be a society which did not place limits on the free individual then women should have full rights; not giving women their full rights created an aristocracy which he considered to be morally wrong.

In 1855 while visiting Fayal, a province of Portugal, Higginson concluded, after noticing all of the poverty on the island, that the "most wondrous of all recorded social changes . . . [was] the transformation of the European peasant into an American citizen. . . . " He condemned the citizens of Fayal as being unprogressive because "they never had a public meeting and never had but one paper and

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38 Edelstein, Life of Higginson, pp. 124-125.


41 Liberator, 3 June 1853.

one printing press, and that they threw into the water. Think of a Yankee passing eight months in such a place as that. . . . " Higginson despised European institutions; and later in life, he noted that "if the step we have taken in America, away from courts and hereditary institutions be a step in civilization, then it has led to more individuality, not less." Higginson believed that the New England farmers had contributed much to this principle of individuality because nowhere would one have found more individuality than "among New England farmers, whose fathers lived before them on the same soil . . . ; [yet] among restrictions of hard soil and severe competition . . . [they] kept their separate identity." Higginson wrote that the American society before the Civil War had few restrictions on the free individual because there was much economic mobility. During this time, he felt that "wealth did not come by accident but by natural leadership, skill, inheritance from skill . . . ; the rich man used the laws of nature and general progress of society . . . " to attain their wealth. Reflecting on America's past in 1891, Higginson wrote that American literature from its beginning

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43 *Liberator*, 8 August 1856.


had reflected this individuality because of America's fluid society: "But from the moment American fiction came upon the scene, it brought a change. Peasant virtue vanishes when the peasant is a possible president and what takes its place is individual manhood."  

Higginson was very impressed with New England society, and he wanted the aristocratic South to become like New England. He was very pleased to learn after the war that some of his former black soldiers had acquired land and were trying to practice middle-class values:

she [wife of a former black soldier] told me that she and her husband owned one hundred and sixty acres of land, bought and paid for by their own earnings at $1.25 per acre; they had a log house, and were going to build a frame-house; they raised for themselves all the food they needed, except meat and flour, which they bought in Jacksonville. They had a church within reach (Baptist); a school-house of forty pupils, taught by a colored teacher; her husband belonged to the Good Templars, as did all the men in their neighborhood. For miles along the St. John's, a little back from the river, such settlements are scattered; the men cultivating their own plots of ground, or working on the steamboats, or fishing, or lumbering. . . .

Certainly the blacks Higginson described here were progressing and could become eventually autonomous individuals.

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Higginson's belief in the Absolute Religion led him to reform, and slavery became the worst evil in the republic. Because of slavery, Higginson preached that the South was unprogressive and asserted that a Turkish harem compared to the South was a "cradle of virgin purity." Since America was in sin, Higginson was convinced that America could not escape the cyclical theory of history:

"Do not despair of the Republic," say some, remembering the hopeful old Roman motto. But they had to despair of that one in the end—and why not this one also? Why, when we are going on step by step as older Republics have done, should we expect to stop just as we reach the brink of Niagara? . . . May God help us to redeem this oppressed and bleeding State, and to bring this people back to that love of Liberty without which it must die amidst its luxuries, like the sad nations of the elder world. . . .

At other times he compared America to Sodom and Gomorrah:

Against the seeds of ruin now upspringing
Here in this sunny land we call Free,
Through public crime and private coldness bringing
Her noble name to scorn and mockery;
While with calm eyes beholding slavery's horror,
We dare to read of Sodom and Gomorrah!
To Arms! To Arms!

48 Newburyport Union, 7 October 1850, in Edelstein, Life of Higginson, p. 100.
49 Higginson, Massachusetts in Mourning (Boston: James Munroe and Co., 1854), pp. 9-15.
Higginson used arms to free the black; however, his attitude was a romantic racism:\(^{51}\): "if the Truth were told, it would be that the Anglo-Saxon despises the Negro because he is not an insurgent, for the Anglo-Saxon would certainly be one in his place. . . ." Higginson felt that there was "more spontaneous sympathy with Nat Turner than with Uncle Tom."\(^{52}\) At other times Higginson did not accept completely this passive view of the black slave; sometimes out of desperation the black slave seems to pass at one bound, as women do, from cowering pusillanimity to the topmost height of daring. The giddy laugh vanishes, the idle chatter is hushed, and the buffoon becomes a hero. Nothing in history surpasses the bravery of the Maroons of Surinam, . . . or those of Jamaica. . . . Agents of the "Underground Railroad" report that the incidents which daily come to their knowledge are beyond all Greek, all Roman fame. . . .\(^{53}\)

Higginson, however, displayed this condescending, paternalistic attitude more clearly when he was a commander of a black regiment during the Civil War; he admitted that he had a "constitutional affinity for underdeveloped

\(^{51}\)Fredrickson, Black Image in the White Mind, p. 119.


races,\textsuperscript{54} but he was impressed with the black's ability to follow white leaders and learn military drill. He commented that "to learn the drill, one does not want a set of college professors; one wants a squad of eager, active, pliant school-boys; and the more childlike these pupils are the better." Higginson felt that the blacks had such qualities and would, therefore, "surpass the whites" in military drill. He believed the blacks to be the "world's perpetual children, docile, gay, and lovable. . . ."\textsuperscript{55}

Immediately after the Civil War, Higginson thought that there were two systems of dealing with the freed black. One system was preparation under some form of apprenticeship in which "the bargains of the freedman would be made for him not by him." Higginson wanted "fair play"; he meant by this "to remove all obstructions, including the previous monopoly of the soil, to recognize the freedman's right to all social and political guarantees and then to let him alone." If these conditions were put into effect, Higginson believed that the freed black could hold his own


\textsuperscript{55}Higginson, Army Life in a Black Regiment (1870; reprint ed., East Lansing: Michigan State University, 1960), pp. 8, 22.
against his former master in trade. Higginson expected every freed black to gain possession of some land, reflect Christian moral living, and become the epitome of the autonomous individual. By 1877 Higginson, however, was convinced that the black was making progress and that federal intervention in the South was no longer necessary.

Higginson wrote in his old age that the early migrations to the frontier were progress: "De Tocqueville pointed out in his day, a log hut in America was not a home, but a halting-place on the way to something better. . . . " Like Parker and other members of the Secret Six, Higginson was very concerned about slavery entering the western territories; he felt that the West should be kept free of slavery and open for the working man of the Northeast. In 1856 in efforts to keep slavery out of the West, Higginson went to Kansas because he felt that the future of America depended on keeping Kansas free: "Give it freedom, and a few years it will make Kansas the garden of America. . . . "

58 Fredrickson, Black Image in the White Mind, pp. 200-201.
59 Higginson, Book and Heart, pp. 157-158.
60 Edelstein, Life of Higginson, pp. 120-124.
He also felt that if Nebraska could be kept free of slavery it could produce more corn and grain than New England because of Nebraska's virgin soil. Higginson, therefore, felt that the West must be kept open for the laboring class of the Northeast, and then the West would be made in the image of New England. Higginson thoroughly despised the influences of the old South in the West:

it was my second visit to that forlorn little Virginia town. I call it thus because the whole sensation is that of the Old Dominion. Instead of rising school-houses and churches of Lawrence [a free-soil town in Kansas] the little street is lined with bar-rooms, whereof the chief is the "Virginia Saloon." The tavern is true Virginia-bacon, corn-bread, and dirty negro boys and girls to wait at tables. Southern provincialisms strike one's ear at every moment. . . .

Implicit in Higginson's world view was the idea that New England was the best society thus far in the history of mankind. The individual's becoming perfect was simply working out one's own salvation with God and creating one's material stake in the system by exerting one's free will. Of course, for everyone to obtain this success this meant constant expansion; the West, therefore, was most important because that was the only way that the laborers of the Northeast could avoid the absolute of a predestined class

of peasants who would have no control over their fate. The West, thus, would be the means of keeping America different from Europe and avoiding the cyclical theory of history. Ultimately, Higginson's concept of an ideal community was conformity because he felt that everyone would interpret God's speaking to the individual's conscience in the same way. All individuals would become perfect which basically meant accepting the middle-class values of New England.

Like his teacher, Parker, and his friend, Higginson, Sanborn praised the individualism of New England:

Within the last hundred years have occurred the most astonishing political revolutions which authentic history records... The tendency of all these changes, whether in the church, the state, or the community has been to develop and fortify individual freedom at the expense of established institutions. In politics this strong individualism weakens the authority of the state, making men revolutionists and followers of the Higher Law... 64

It was his belief in this "Higher Law" based on his Transcendentalism that led Sanborn to help destroy the institution of slavery. Sanborn, like Higginson and Parker, felt that New England society was the most progressive in the history of mankind because it placed the fewest limitations on the free individual. Although Sanborn thoroughly despised Calvinism, he believed that it had contributed to progress

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64 Sanborn, "The Schoolmaster of the Future," in Hickok, Careers of Sanborn, p. 94.
by breaking down many of the old class distinctions and
this had led the people toward democracy and greater
freedom for the individual.65

The prevailing attitudes of Hampton Falls, New
Hampshire, where Sanborn was reared, greatly influenced
his world view. In that community, Sanborn believed, all
members could save their money and become landholders.66
In 1904 Sanborn, grieving that the age in which he grew
up was gone, wrote that now there was "irresponsible pov-
erty, developing a proletariat in the place of that his-
torical yeomanry, whose possession of landed property gave
assurance that government would not get beyond the control
of families who had, as their ancestors used to say, 'a
stake in the country. . . . ' "67 Sanborn believed before
and for awhile after the Civil War that an individual could
rise from the bottom to the top in society:

Born in poverty, he [Abraham Lincoln] rose
to his high position by the exercise of
virtues and talents by no means peculiar
to himself. In his youthful career of
obscurity, as well as in his conspicuous

65William E. Connelley, "Personal Reminiscences of
F. B. Sanborn," Collection of the Kansas State Society

66Hickok, Careers of Sanborn, p. 9.

67Sanborn, New Hampshire: An Epitome of Popular
Government (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1904),
p. 326.
station, he was representative of the American people. In no other country could such a man have risen so high. ... 68

Certainly Sanborn recognized that there was poverty in New England, but he believed that that poverty could be solved through good moral living and education. He felt, however, that this education should be "individual teaching corresponding to the individualism in politics and religion. ..." He was certain that that type of education would reconstruct a society based on individualism.69

Sanborn too was involved in keeping the West open for the working man of the Northeast, and he too believed the South was unprogressive and compared it to Europe.70 Like Parker and Higginson, he believed in expansion; this was analogous to his religious thinking: each individual could obtain as much religion as he was willing to exert his free will and gain. Of course this meant extending the New England system over the rest of the country:

she [New England] will sit on her throne of granite, the Atlantic at her feet, bringing her tribute with every tide; with one long arm she will seize the Hudson and its noisy port; with the other she will grasp the growing greatness of Canada, adding those endless forests to her Maine woods. The lakes will be hers, the commerce of the

68Boston Commonwealth, 22 April 1865.

69Sanborn, "The Schoolmaster of the Future," in Hickok, Careers of Sanborn, p. 94.

70Sanborn, Recollections, 1:51-76.
Western Hemisphere will sail in her ships; she will equip an invincible navy, and plant her colonies, like those of old England, wherever they can protect her trade or increase her power. She will nod to her faithful children in Iowa and Kansas, in California and Oregon, and they shall give her either slope of the Rocky Mountains for her sheepwalk and granary, her vineyard and her mint. No longer fettered by her union with slavery, the world shall see as never before, how glorious are the triumphs of an enlightened Democracy.

Sanborn also advocated extending the New England way over the South at the end of the war. He advised "disbanded veterans of the North to emigrate at once to the South where they . . . [could] not only provide well for their own families, but teach the freedman the use of the Northern plough and musket. . . . "

Sanborn was thoroughly convinced that the evil slaveholder had wanted to make America into a society with a rigid class structure:

what the slaveholders wanted at the beginning was to amass all the wealth, especially the landed wealth of the country in the hands of their own class. They did, creating such a domination of the wealthy few over the impoverished many, black and white, as never was before. . . .

To Sanborn this was morally wrong because it created a predestined class structure in which the members had no

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71 Boston Commonwealth, 21 February 1863.
72 Boston Commonwealth, 10 June 1865.
73 Boston Commonwealth, 3 March 1864.
control over their fate. Because the South was aristocratic Sanborn believed that the South had been better prepared for the Civil War:

Because the South is an oligarchy like Sparta, like Rome, like England; and an oligarchy is always better prepared for a war than a democracy. A privileged class, like the slaveholders, exempt from the need of labor, with time on their hands and many occasions for the use of force in everyday life, are sure to practice the art of war and those manly exercises which are its best school, hunting and horsemanship. . . .

Sanborn justified the Civil War because it ended slavery which saved the nation from the clutches of the cyclical theory of history. Sanborn furthermore believed that America would certainly be more free of the absolute of the cyclical theory if the black were given full citizenship and if large plantations of the South were broken into small farms and given to blacks and poor whites. Sanborn felt that "as fast as the States are reconstructed with every man a homestead and none but criminals counted out, there will be few objects of charity that are not White, and perhaps the Christian and Sanitary Commissions will take care of them." Sanborn believed that if the black would practice good Christian principles and farm his small plot

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74 Boston Commonwealth, 21 February 1863.
75 Boston Commonwealth, 11 March 1865.
76 Boston Commonwealth, 18 February 1865.
of land, then the black would become an autonomous individual; he would simply be middle class. Although Sanborn wanted to give blacks a small amount of land and full rights, he still reassured himself and other people of the North that the blacks when freed would not only stay in the South but Northern blacks would also go south because of the climate and political economy.

Howe, like Sanborn and Higginson, received inspiration for reform from Parker. Like them, Howe believed in the principle of individuality to the point of arguing that political parties hampered all "individual effort. . . . The effect of parties is not merely to repress individual men of independent minds, but also to repress all exertions on the part of the individual, by representing such exertions as useless. . . . " He argued that men would come to the conclusion that each individual had no control as they became "accustomed to see all political movements and political plans accomplished by large and organized associations. . . . A most dangerous idea. . . . " Howe finally came to the conclusion that political parties were a necessary evil and became involved in the Free Soil

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77 Boston Commonwealth, 17 June 1865.
78 Sanborn, Emancipation in the West Indies (Concord, Massachusetts, 1862), p. 15.
and Republican Parties after he became a devout abolitionist.

From his early travels in Europe, Howe concluded that America was the only place where there were the least number of restraints placed on the free individual:

the European system of social helotism never can and never should prevail in this country. In Europe the castes have been established since the feudal age. The distinction between the classes is perfectly well defined; the working man believes it impossible for him to attain in the rank above him, and he is content to live and die as did all his fathers before him. But here, the people, though not well enlightened, know something about their rights; and unless they are granted to them fully and freely they will take them. . . . 80

Howe believed that America was the "watchword and the rallying-cry of all discontent in Europe" and those discontented in America should look at Europe:

Let then the American who distrusts the excellence of our political institutions, look at convulsed England, let him cross to distracted and unhappy France, or look on gagged Italy and bleeding Poland--and he will hurry home, blessing God that his lines have fallen in pleasant places. . . . 81

Because of the many European woes, Howe believed that it was the moral duty of this country to be an example to

Europe:


81Sanborn, Howe, p. 105.
if our institutions are preserved in their purity, our history will be the pillar of fire going before the nations in bondage, and pointing out to them the promised land of republicanism. There will then be no concealing or denying the fact, that the people of these United States, under the simplest and cheapest government in the world—without kings or priests... have... become the most intelligent, the richest, and happiest people on earth. ... 82

Howe was concerned that America might not survive to be the example to the world because slavery would bring about its demise; slavery violated "the laws of nature, and the laws of God." Howe had this concern long before he became an ardent abolitionist, and at this stage he advocated exporting the slaves to Africa and the federal government's paying the planters for manumission. Then both sections of the country would become progressive. He pleaded with the Southerners to free the slave for the sake of this great Union, which was "the fairest fabric which ever blessed the vision of the philanthropist and the liberal." 83 Howe finally concluded that his pleas were of no avail and resorted to violent means to end slavery.

Howe believed that because of slavery the South was unprogressive:

83 Ibid., pp. 122-129.
Let a man be dropped from a balloon upon the surface of the earth, and he could tell in three minutes whether he were in a Slave State or not; the very first sights, the very first sounds, the first odours would attest the fact. The whites stand with their hands in their breeches pockets, and the blacks are helping them to do nothing. Fences are down, doors ajar, filth in the streets, foul odours in the air, confusion and neglect are everywhere. . . . 84

In another letter to Horace Mann, Howe felt that "the evils and disadvantages of slavery fall more heavily upon the whites than the blacks. . . . "85

From his travels in the South and Europe, Howe concluded that "there is no people in the world superior to those of New England, in intelligence, in moral worth, in genuine patriotism"; he also believed that a population twice the number of New England could not produce more "prompt and efficient aid . . . to any object of philanthropy, or science. . . . "86 Howe attributed New England's progressiveness to "the village church, the country school, [and] the ballot-box." Howe believed that these were "the tendrils of the roots, by which the tree of Liberty shall be held fast in our


85Howe to Mann, 23 December 1841, in Howe, Letters and Journals, 2:113.

land. . . . "87 Howe, however, felt for New England to continue to progress, it must bring into its good society the handicapped, defectives, criminals, and paupers; these outcasts from society would be able to progress by contact with this good society. Howe wanted young criminals placed in good moral, upright families instead of being in reformatories because he believed that the family unit was a natural law of God; separating young criminals from the family unit was a violation of this natural law.88 Howe took a paternalistic attitude toward outcasts, arguing that

intelligent and virtuous parents strive to give their children the best possible organization, and to teach them how to keep it in the best condition. So it should be with the virtuous and intelligent classes; they should look upon less favored classes as their children;--strive to improve their condition, and above all to give them that knowledge which will enable them to dispense with all aid. The frightful number of those unfortunates whose number encumber the march of humanity . . . will dwindle away as the light of knowledge makes clear the laws which govern our existence. . . . 89

Howe wanted to help these unfortunates in order that they might express the principle of individuality; these

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unfortunates would not have to be condemned "to a life of listless idleness in the almhouses" and could "gain their own livelihood by the labor of their own hands. . . ." 90

He expressed this same principle in his work with the poverty-stricken Greeks during the Greek Revolution. He felt that giving each of these poor families a plot of land to cultivate would give them dignity and make them content. 91

Howe did take notice of the condition of the working class in the Northeast. Although he believed that the condition of the laborer in America was much better than the laborer in England or France, 92 Howe urged the wealthier employing class to teach the laws of God to their employees; this meant urging the working class to become capitalists of some sort. 93 Then each member of the working class could become an autonomous individual interpreting God's speaking to his conscience as God spoke to Howe's.

Howe wanted a homogeneous population of middle-class property

91 Howe, Letters and Journals, 1:353.
holders. Howe believed that for each member of the working class to become a property holder, the economy would have to expand; the West, therefore, became very important to Howe. He in no way wanted slavery in the West; it must be kept open for the laboring class of the Northeast. In behalf of the efforts to keep the West free of slavery, Howe went to the West in 1856. An excerpt from Howe’s letter written in Nebraska to P. T. Jackson gives some insight to the kind of community Howe wanted to establish there. He expected those poor New Englanders migrating to the West to express the cultural views of middle-class New England. He described the emigrants as camping in

their tents and waggons [sic]. . . . There is no liquor in the whole camp; no smoking, no swearing, no irregularity. They drink cold water, live mostly on mush and rice, and the simplest and cheapest fare. They have instructions for the little children; they have Sunday schools, prayer meetings, and are altogether a most sober and earnest community. Most of the loafers have dropped off . . . I could give you a picture of the drunken rollicking ruffians who oppose this emigration--but you know it. Will the North allow such an emigration to be shut out of the national Territory by such brigands?

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Howe was convinced that these individuals could each become an autonomous individual through thrift, sobriety, Christian living, and residing on their own plot of virgin soil. Howe saw the West as an image of New England society.

Although Howe worked to free the slave, like other members of the Secret Six, he had some racist beliefs. After being appointed in 1863 to the three-man American Freedman's Inquiry Commission, Howe relied partly upon the scientific information of Dr. Agassiz. Howe asked Dr. Agassiz such questions as whether the "African race . . . will be a persistent race in this country? Or will it be absorbed, diluted and finally effaced by the white race . . . ?" He asked other such questions as was it true that the "mulatto is unfertile, leaving but few children, and those mainly lymphatic and scrofulous . . . ?" Howe noted in the letter to Agassiz that many blacks "have drifted northward, right in the teeth of thermal laws, to find homes where they would never live by natural election. . . ." Howe also wrote that "the colored population will disappear


from the Northern and Middle States, if not from the continent, before the more vigorous and prolific white race. . . . " Howe further suggested to Agassiz that it should "be the duty of the statesmen to favor by wise measures, the operation of these laws and the purification and elevation of the national blood. . . . " Howe told Agassiz that he advocated "entire freedom, equal rights and privileges, and open competition for social distinction. . . . "\(^98\) Agassiz replied to Howe that emancipation was a good thing. He reassured Howe that the blacks, according to natural law, would prefer to live in the Southern states. The whites, therefore, would all move northward bringing a natural segregation of the races. He also informed Howe that the weak and infertile, degenerate, hybrid race, the mulattoes, would gradually disappear.\(^99\)

In the summer of 1863, Howe did a personal report on the Negro refugee population in Canada. Howe liked what he saw in Canada because it reflected the individuality of New England culture:

the refugees in Canada earn a living, and gather property; they marry and respect women; they build churches, and send their children to school; they improve in manners

\(^98\)Howe to Agassiz, 3 August 1863, in Sanborn, Howe, pp. 286-289.

and morals,--not because they are "picked men," but simply because they are free.

In the report, Howe reiterated his same argument about the inferiority of the mulatto and how the purity of the national blood had been impaired from a mixing of the races. He reassured the whites that blacks upon freedom would not want to marry whites and that blacks would first settle in the South and finally disappear from the continent:

with the additional advantage which they [blacks] will or surely ought to have of choosing the soil and climate most congenial to their nature, they will give no trouble upon this score, at least in the Northern, Western or Middle States. Drawn by natural attractions to warmer regions, they will co-operate powerfully with the whites from the North in re-organizing the industry of the South; but they will dwindle and gradually disappear from the peoples of this continent, outstripped by more vigorous competitors in the struggle for life. But surely, history will record their blameless life as a people; their patient endurance of suffering and wrong; and their sublime return of good for evil to the race of their oppressors.

Howe also argued that there would be fewer blacks on welfare rolls than the foreign population because the blacks when freed would be thrifty and industrious. Moreover, Howe believed that the blacks should be given equal rights, which included a small plot of land, and then left alone;

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101 Ibid., 33.
there should be no prolonging of his servitude "even under the pretext of taking care of him." The black should be left alone to rise or fall on his own merits in the highly individualistic competitive marketplace society.

Stearns also drew inspiration for reforming America from Parker's sermons. Like other members of the Secret Six, he too felt that slavery violated the natural laws of God. Since he was a self-made man, he strongly believed that each man had "a right to the fruits of his labor." Stearns felt the South with its aristocracy limited the free individual, and it was unprogressive. Because slave labor "killed free labor" whenever free labor came in contact with it, he wanted slavery kept out of the West and the large plantation system, which monopolized the soil, destroyed. He saw the fertile plains of the West as a great opportunity for the working class of the Northeast; consequently, Stearns and his five friends turned to this working class for financial support in keeping Kansas free: "our dependence was upon the laborer, the mechanic, the

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102 Ibid., 104.


104 Stearns, George Luther Stearns, pp. 41-43, 98, 348-350.
farmer, and such persons, much more than it was upon the professional men and merchants. "105 Like his five friends, Stearns saw New England as a progressive society where each man as a free agent could go from the bottom of society to the top; Stearns, therefore, believed New England to be the antithesis of Europe: "Europe will send millions, now crushed under the might of despotic authority to share with us the bounteous rewards of honest labor, and contribute to our national wealth. . . . "106

Smith, like other members of the Secret Six, believed in the higher law of God: "There is a law above all the enactments of human codes. It is the law of God written by the finger of God upon the heart of man. . . . "107 Smith so believed in this principle of individuality that he pleaded to God to hasten "the coming of the age of individualism."108

Smith believed that slavery violated this principle of individuality and the natural law of God: "for

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106 Stearns, A Few Facts Pertaining to Currency and Banking; Adapted to the Present Position of Our Finances (Boston: A. Williams and Co., 1864), p. 15.

107 Smith, Speeches and Sermons, p. 30.

108 Ibid., 30.
slaveholding lifts up the slaveholder above all the rights of human nature and reduces the slave to a brute. . . . "109

Because of slavery, he compared the South to European countries and felt that European aristocrats were in sympathy with the aristocracy in the South.110 Smith too felt that slavery degraded free labor: "she [the South] sneered at our 'small-fisted farmers' and our 'greasy mechanics.' She stigmatized our noble laborers as the 'mudsills' of society. . . . "111 Smith saw the South as unprogressive and degrading to the whole nation. America had at one time been the symbol of freedom and an example to all the despotic European nations, but slavery smeared that image:

how melancholy upon our country, and through her, upon the world, has been the influence of American slavery! In the beginnings of our national existence, we were the moral and political lighthouse of the world. The nations "which sat in the darkness saw the light and rejoiced." Sad to say, we were the first to dim that light. . . . 112

Smith believed that the United States could be saved only by practicing the "religion of nature" (Absolute Religion):

a nation can be saved only by righteousness. It is only in a low sense that as yet any of the nations have been saved. When all of them

109 Ibid., 66.


111 Ibid., 9.

112 Liberator, 12 May 1854.
recognize and protect all the natural rights of all men, then all of them will be saved. Then there no longer be war, not slavery, nor land-monopoly, nor licensed dram-shop, nor denial of woman of civil and political equality with man. Then, indeed will have come "millennium"; not because it was foretold, but because it was earned. It will come not as the beginning, but as the fruit of righteousness; not to last for only a thousand years, but so long as justice shall reign amongst men, and so long as the religion of nature and reason [intuition] shall be their religion.

Smith advocated this principle of individuality in government: "government in a word, is to say to its subjects: 'You must do for yourselves. My only part is to defend your right to do for yourselves. You must do your own work. I will protect you in that work. . . .'" Smith believed that such a government would then be fulfilling the natural laws of God. Smith felt that the governments of the North were the most progressive because those governments had given the most individual freedom in the history of the world.

Smith, like all other members of the Secret Six, wanted the West free of the evil influences of slavery; he wanted

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114 Smith, True Office of Civil Government, pp. 6-7.

115 Smith, Speeches and Sermons, pp. 90-92.
the West made available to the working man of the Northeast.
Because he saw land monopoly in the South and in European
countries, Smith advocated limiting the amount of land that
one individual might own. Smith genuinely believed that the
way to keep America different from Europe was to have a
society of free individuals with their material stake in
the system:

much happier world will this be, when land
monopoly shall cease; when his needed portion
of the soil shall be accorded to every person;
when it shall no more be bought and sold; when
like salvation, it shall be "without money and
without price," when a word, it shall be free,
even as God made it free. . . . So long, then,
as the masses are robbed by land monopoly, the
world will be cursed with riches and poverty.
But, when the poor man is put in possession of
his portion of the goodly green earth, and is
secured by the strong arm of the Government in
the enjoyment of a home, from which not he,
nor his wife, nor his children, can be driven,
then he is raised above poverty, not only by
the possession of the soil, but still more by
the virtues which he cultivates in his heart,
whilst he cultivates the soil. . . . 116

By 1846 Gerrit Smith had translated this belief into action.
He offered to distribute 140,000 acres of his land in up-
state New York to 3,000 blacks. With grants of forty to
sixty acres to each black family, Smith hoped to establish
a large population of independent black families and qualify
them to vote under New York laws. The project failed

116 Smith, Speeches of Gerrit Smith in Congress (New
York: Mason Brothers, 1855), pp. 82-83.
miserably because much of the land was poor and unfit for cultivation, and the cost of moving, seeding, and waiting for the first crops compelled many blacks to abandon their grants. Although Smith voted against a homestead bill in 1856 because it excluded blacks, Smith still reassured the North that the North was not a natural habitat of the black: "the abolition of slavery will not send the Southern blacks to the North, but it will send Northern blacks to the South. A genial climate, and, still more, masses of their race will attract them thither. . . ." Despite Smith's vote against the homestead bill in 1856, the free distribution of the land in the West was essential to his philosophy of autonomous individualism predicated upon Transcendentalism and the individual's obtaining his material stake in the system.

All of the Secret Six followed their Transcendentalism into reform in order to liberate the individual from all restraints. Parker's religion was the focal point for this individualistic reform in its stress on higher law. Just like their opposition to Calvinism and its theory of


118 Smith to Fredrick Douglass, 6 March 1854, in Smith, Speeches of Smith in Congress, p. 91.

predestination, these six men opposed slavery because it placed a mediator between the individual slave and God and denied the slave the fruits of his own labor. The society of the South was unprogressive because slavery created a parasitical class which was a violation of the natural laws of God. In contrast to the stagnant society of the South, these men considered New England (they viewed all of the North as New England transplanted) as the most progressive society in the history of man; this society, therefore, deserved to expand in order to provide opportunities for the individuals of that society. The logical place for New England to expand was the West, and all six men favored reserving this area for the free state laborers of the North.
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