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The relationship of Christian theology to the idea content of Emerson's poetry

Burress, Lee Allan, Jr

Boston University

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THE RELATIONSHIP OF CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY TO THE IDEA CONTENT
OF EMERSON'S POETRY

by

Lee Allan Burress, Jr.
(A.B., University of Wichita, 1942; B.D., Garrett Biblical Institute, 1949)

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First Reader  Professor of English

Second Reader  Professor of English
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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis is to report the results of an investigation which sought to learn the relationships between Christian thought and the ideas expressed in Emerson's poetry. There are several problems involved in such an investigation. One of these is the explication of the poetry. It is cryptic and compressed, contains paradoxes, and is rarely obvious. Emerson's erratic use of capitals, his omission of conjunctions, his omission of subjects, his use of symbols—all contribute to the complexity and suggestiveness of his poetry. Emerson's prose has been studied in order to clarify ideas that are stated in vestigial or allusive fashion in the poetry or to clarify the paradoxes that appear in the poetry.

The necessity of discussing the ideas expressed in poetry will seem clear to many readers, and therefore to them, not in need of defense. To readers who accept the desire of the critic John Crowe Ransome for a "pure poetry" with all ideas removed, no defense of a study like this would be convincing. This thesis rests on the assumption that a description of the ideas expressed in Emerson's poetry and an account of the relationship of those ideas to the various strands of Christian thought will have value to those who wish to read or to teach the poetry. It is not, of course, a substitute for the poetry. The justification for such studies as C. S. Lewis's Preface to Paradise Lost or Dowden's study of seventeenth century literature is essentially the one which is appealed

1James Harry Smith and Edd Winfield Parks, The Great Critics, p. 773.
to here. Dowden's comment in the preface of his book is appropriate: "I write not as a controversialist but as a student of literature. Literature, however, and especially what is most valuable in the seventeenth century literature, cannot be studied without reference to the history of religion." ²

Another difficulty involved in this investigation is the problem of definition of terms in Christian theology. The approach of this thesis is descriptive rather than prescriptive. Description implies a point of view from which the observer describes, no doubt, but the desire is to be objective rather than to evaluate. In this respect, the thesis is an essay in the history of ideas, rather than an attempt to defend the orthodoxy or lack of orthodoxy to be found in Emerson's poetry.

The New England churches that provided the religious climate for Emerson's ancestors for some seven generations have been called Puritan, a term of widely varying meaning. Samuel Eliot Morison has distinguished between the religious and the moral usage of the term. The religious meaning is a description of the extreme Protestants who, in the late sixteenth century in England, wished to carry the Reformation to its logical conclusion by freeing the church from all ceremonies not justified by the Bible. After 1630, the term included three groups, those who wished to purify the Church of England, the Pilgrims who wished to attain purity outside it, and even the Scotch Presbyterians.³ For New England the distinction between Pilgrim and Puritan was applicable for a short while only, as Ralph Barton Perry has shown, for the Plymouth separatists.

² Edward Dowden, Puritan and Anglican Studies in Literature, p. viii.
and the Massachusetts Bay Puritans were soon united by "their common needs and beliefs."^1

The word Puritan has also a moral significance. Morison said that the moral Puritans were

People who read the Bible and sincerely believed in it, adopted or attempted a very exacting code of morals; and as they believed that this code was gospel ordinance, they endeavored to enforce it on others. Such persons were originally called precisions, and were not necessarily puritans in a religious sense. 5

Morison said that the most puritanic diary he ever read, in this sense, was one kept by Samuel Ward, master of Sussex College, Anglican and royalist, who was expelled by Cromwell. 6 Other Anglican moral puritans were the poet Herbert, and even Archbishop Laud, whose courts punished immorality, along with nonconformity. 7 Jansenism in France, and the modern Roman Catholic church in Ireland were cited as further examples of puritanism in a moral sense by Morison. 8

The religious beliefs or doctrinal content of Puritanism were in very large measure indistinguishable from that of all other Protestants, and to a lesser degree indistinguishable from Roman Catholicism. The areas of agreement were much larger than the areas of disagreement, between Puritan and Anglican. 9 Perry has summarized the Puritans' belief

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^1Ralph Barton Perry, *Puritanism and Democracy*, p. 72.

^5Morison, p. 55.

^6Loc. cit.

^7Morison, p. 56.

^8Loc. cit.

^9Douglas Bush, *Paradise Lost in Our Time*, pp. 43-44.
by calling it theocratic, congregational-presbyterian, Calvinistic, medi­
eval Christianity. This series of terms in its movement from differentia to genus suggests the closeness of the Puritans to Christianity in general.

Some scholars refuse to accept the term Calvinistic as a description of the Puritans. Morison said that it is a delusion to believe that "puritanism is synonymous with Calvinism." He admitted however that broadly speaking, the English theologians were Calvinistic in their theology rather than Lutheran or Arminian; but being learned in the ancient tongues they derived their ideas mainly from the Bible and the Fathers. Calvin's Institutes was never to them a sacred book, and I have found Calvin less frequently quoted in their writings than English theologians like Ames, Perkins, and Whitaker.

It is true that the independence characteristic of the Puritans would have caused them to call themselves Christian rather than Calvinists, but their general system may fairly be characterized as Calvinistic, even though it came to them through Ames. Perry Miller, whose The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century must surely be the most profound and most comprehensive study of Puritanism yet made, asserted that William Perkins, William Ames, and John Preston were the great teachers of the New England Puritans, and that Richard Baxter and John Owen were also important, but that what was taught came from Augustine through Calvin. Emerson himself used the term Calvinistic for the religion of his forbears. "Calvinism was one and the same thing in Geneva, in Scotland, in Old and New

10Perry, pp. 80-84.
11Morison, p. 57.
12Pages x, 3.
13Journals, II, 24, 32; III, 220-221, 323-324, 398; VIII, 32; X, 155, 199.
England. In accepting this identification of Calvinism with Puritanism, Emerson agreed with Daniel Neal, whose history of the Puritans he read in 1823.

Another problem that faces the student who attempts to relate Emerson's ideas to the various systems of thought that he studied is that similar forms of an idea that appealed to Emerson may be found in several systems of thought. Otherworldliness, for example, is to be found in the writings of Plato, in the New Testament, and in Hindu thought. Emerson read all of these. To which does the scholar give the credit for the otherworldliness that appears in Emerson? It does not necessarily follow that the statement with most verbal similarities is the most influential one. Emerson's theory about the use of books must be taken into account here. He remarked that the scholar takes from books what he is looking for. One reason for quoting, Emerson remarked, is that the author has said what the quoter wishes to say, in excellent fashion. But the unanswered question is why the scholar chose to say that idea, and to reject the things left unsaid. There is here an inexplicable personal factor at work. The large generalizations about heredity and environment contribute nothing. The thesis will not therefore attempt to draw conclusions, but will rather point out similarities of thought that must be taken into account in the final effort to relate Emerson to the various streams of the cultural heritages that converged in him.

Another problem that faces the student of Emerson is the sheer bulk

14* Works, X, 106.


16 Journals, IX, 506.
of the material in the Journals, the Works, and the Letters. One may fall into the error of unduly emphasizing some portion of the Emersonian corpus. Moreover, Emerson's habit of treating one side of a paradox in one essay without regard to the other may lead the scholar astray, unless he looks for the other side of the paradox in another essay. One can only hope that he has based his generalizations on a comprehensive survey of the material, in a way that does justice to the paradoxes, and qualifications contained in it, and that he has not merely fitted together a structure of texts drawn from the corpus, which really distorts the whole.

The scholarly effort of the last half century to investigate the many influences upon the thinking of Emerson has not emphasized the contributions made by Christian ideas. One could not state in unqualified fashion that the influences of Christian ideas have been ignored, but the interest of the earlier students has been in other areas. John S. Harrison in his The Teachers of Emerson has made a strong case for the influence of Plato and the Neo-platonists. Carpenter's comment on this study seems appropriate to many of the studies of a single influence on Emerson, and implies a caution that the writer of this thesis has attempted to heed: "A valuable, but one-sided scholarly study. 'The teachers of Emerson are Plato and the neo-Platonists.'" Carpenter, in his Emerson and Asia, has discussed the Orientalism and the Neo-platonic influences. A. E. Christy, in The Orient in American Transcendentalism, has devoted a long chapter to Emerson and the Orient with a more

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17Frederic Ives Carpenter, Ralph Waldo Emerson: Representative Selections, p. liv.

18Pages 61-185.
detailed report of the nature of the Oriental ideas than is contained in Carpenter. Neither of these books, however, considers very fully the possibility of use of the Oriental material to express ideas that come from Emerson's own cultural background. Christy does recognize the limitations in Emerson's knowledge of the Orient, however.

Briefer studies of the influence of the Orient are to be found in Frederic I. Carpenter's article, "Immortality from India,\textsuperscript{19}" and in J. D. Yohannan's article, "The Influence of Persian Poetry upon Emerson's Work.\textsuperscript{20} Articles indicating the relationship to the metaphysical poets, to the German philosophers, to Goethe, to Carlyle, to Wordsworth, to Montaigne, and to Dante have been written.\textsuperscript{21}

Kenneth W. Cameron in \textit{Emerson the Essayist}, has published an encyclopedic two-volume analysis of a wide range of the sources of Emerson's thought. He discussed the influences of the pre-Platonic philosophers, of Plato, of Cudworth, of Bishop Berkeley, of Coleridge and of Swedenborgianism. He has included a large body of miscellaneous material that is of great usefulness to the student of Emerson. There is a catalogue of Emerson's father's library. In his earlier book, \textit{Ralph Waldo Emerson's Reading}, Cameron published a bibliography of Emerson's borrowings from the Boston Athenaeum, from Harvard College Library, and from Harvard Divinity School. Both of these works are very useful tools.

No scholar has produced a book length treatment of the relationship

\textsuperscript{19}American Literature, I (1929), 234-242.

\textsuperscript{20}American Literature, XV (1943), 25-41.

of Emerson's ideas to the history of Christian thought. There is much miscellaneous material that does bear on the problem. The relationships between Milton and Emerson have attracted the attention of several scholars, and these articles are highly relevant to the purposes of this thesis.

Chester E. Jorgenson's article, "Emerson's Paradise under the Shadow of the Swords," compared Emerson's attitude toward the problem of evil with Milton's. Richard C. Pettigrew wrote an article on Emerson and Milton. G. R. Elliott's article entitled "Of Emerson's 'Grace' and 'Self-Reliance'" is a study of the influence of Milton upon Emerson.

Arthur Cushman McGiffert, Jr., a competent student of Christian thought, in his introduction to Young Emerson Speaks, has given a useful commentary on Emerson's sermons.

Mary C. Turpie has written an account of the influence of Quaker thought on Emerson. She reported that the source for Emerson's sermon on "The Lord's Supper" is to be found in Clarkson's Portraiture of Quakerism. F. B. Tolles has written an article on Emerson and Quakerism.

Harriet R. Zink gathered up all the references to the Bible in Emerson's work and attempted to weigh something of their significance.

Emerson's attitude toward the Christian church was the subject of an

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22Philological Quarterly, XI (1932), 274-292.
24New England Quarterly, II (1929), 93-104.
25"Emerson and Quakerism," American Literature, X (1939), 142-165.
article by G. H. Hartwig.27

The conservative Calvinist theologian A. H. Strong wrote a disparaging and disapproving discussion of the theological ideas in Emerson's poetry in his *American Poets and Their Theology*.28 There is a similar volume studying the religious ideas of American poets by Elmer James Bailey, an Anglican, who is more objective in his brief description of the poetry of Emerson.29

Perry Miller's article, "Edwards to Emerson,"30 attempts to relate the ideas of Emerson to the New England theology, in very stimulating though brief fashion.

The studies thus far mentioned do not exhaust the contributions to the problem of the relationship of Emerson to Christian thought. There are references to this problem in many other works, some of which will be drawn upon for this thesis. Nevertheless, the lack of any comprehensive effort to summarize the relationships, and the lack of any full dress treatment of this subject has been noticed by at least two scholars. G. R. Elliott, writing in 1929, in the article previously mentioned, expressed surprise at the failure of scholars in general to study the relationship of Milton to Emerson, since Elliot felt that Milton is for Emerson "the acme of the great tradition coming down from the Greek classics and the


29"Ralph Waldo Emerson," in *Religious Thought in the Greater American Poets*, pp. 147-70.

30*New England Quarterly*, XIII (1940), 589-617.
New Testament."  H. H. Clark remarked, "Scholars have yet to interpret and appraise proportionately, however, the extent to which Christian ideas, whether Puritan, Unitarian, or Quaker, entered into the main pattern of Emerson's ideas."  

This is surprising because it is a common assumption that, as Foerster said, "Emerson ... was ... a true descendant of the Puritans."  Lowell said, "The Puritanism that made New England what it is ... found its voice in Emerson."  David Bower, writing in the Literary History of the United States, asserted a similar thesis.

Many volumes have been written to prove that Emerson's final position was based on Neo-Platonism, German Idealism, or Oriental mysticism; but a study of these sermons and of his early reading indicates that he never departed from his loyalty to the faith of his fathers in the Christian tradition as developed by Christ, Paul, Thomas Aquinas, and Calvin. Essentially romantic by disposition, he took his place with the rebels and seekers and like Coleridge and Goethe, sought both confirmation and refreshment from all ages and quarters.

A student would, however, find it relatively difficult to discover a documented and detailed study of Emerson by which the assertion of Bower could be demonstrated. While the thesis is in general agreement with Bower's statement, it is not intended to be a literal demonstration of the complete validity of the judgment that Bower offered. The thesis is primarily concerned to show the relationship between the main stream of Christian thought and the ideas expressed in the poetry. The poetry

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33 Norman Foerster, Nature in American Literature, p. 68.
34 Quoted by Clark, p. 823.
35 I, 365.
is primarily affirmative; the thesis attempts to show that the affirma-
tions contained in the poetry are restatements of basic Christian atti-
tudes. Thus Emerson's Unitarianism will be discussed only incidentally.
Arianism is a strand of Christian thought that is as old as the
Trinitarian strand. The thesis recognizes it as one of the positions
held by those who have called themselves Christian. Since the purpose
of the paper is descriptive, no effort will be made to affix a theologi-
cal label to the system of ideas held by Emerson. In short, the term
Christian is used throughout the thesis in a descriptive, not a defini-
tive fashion.

The thesis is offered in no dogmatic certainty. The words probable
or seem would have appeared entirely too often, had they been used as
frequently as the writer wished. In this respect the thesis is a pro-
legomenon to the final study called for by Clark that would "interpret
and appraise proportionately the extent to which Christian ideas, whether
Puritan, Unitarian, or Quaker, entered into the main pattern of Emerson's
ideas." That effort will require knowledge far beyond that of the present
writer, since the scholar who performs that task will need to have ac-
quainted himself thoroughly with all the systems of ideas that influenced
Emerson. He will need to know Platonism, Neo-Platonism, the history of
Western philosophy and theology, as well as the Hindu and Persian writers
that Emerson read.

The study made by the present writer will confine itself to the task
of showing the similarities between the major affirmations of Emerson and
the main stream of Protestant Christian thought. The method followed by
the writer was to restudy the history of Christian thought through the
books read by Emerson insofar as it was possible to read those books. General histories of various periods were used to complement the particular books and to check the conclusions obtained. The bibliographies published by Cameron, and references in the Journals, were the means by which Emerson's reading in this area was retraced.
PART I

CHANNELS BY WHICH VARIOUS FORMS OF CHRISTIAN THOUGHT CAME TO EMERSON
CHAPTER I

FAMILY TRADITIONS AND CHILDHOOD INFLUENCES

It is a byword of biographers that Emerson came from seven generations of Puritan ministers. Woodberry remarked,

Throughout early years and into early manhood, Emerson was in exclusively clerical surroundings. The traditions of the house, his circle of relatives, all the conversation of his life, were in this atmosphere.¹

His father, William Emerson, was a prominent Boston minister, who was interested in literary and religious ideas. He had a substantial theological library. When it was sold after his death in 1811, there were 212 items, one of which was a twenty-two volume set of theological tracts.² The library included works by Paley, Priestley, Jonathan Edwards, Chauncy, Tillotson, Watts, and many others, most of whom Emerson himself was to study in later years. While part of the library was sold when Emerson was eight years old, the fact of its existence indicates the family's interest in scholarly and religious values. Emerson's father wrote a history of the First Church which, Rusk reported, showed a great deal of knowledge of New England history.³ Furthermore, he named three of his sons after New England ministers, John Clarke, and Charles Chauncy, earlier ministers of the First Church; and Bulkeley, the

¹George E. Woodberry, Ralph Waldo Emerson, p. 22.
²The complete list with bibliographical details is in Kenneth W. Cameron, Emerson the Essayist, II.
³Ralph L. Rusk, The Life of Ralph Waldo Emerson, p. 28.
feebleminded one, was given the name of the founder and first minister of Concord, Peter Bulkeley.

Rusk has indicated that Emerson had far more ancestors who were not ministers than those who were. But the significance of the clerical ancestry probably does not lie in any fact of biology, regardless of the faith of Oliver Wendell Holmes in what he called "the Academic Races." Peter Bulkeley, the founder of Concord, is important, for example, because of traditions kept alive in the family about him. The other sixty-three ancestors of the seventh generation were largely forgotten except for the first New England Emerson, Thomas, a neighbor and contemporary of Nathaniel Ward and of Anne Bradstreet. Ralph's father had a bookplate with a heraldic device on which was a conventional form of the heraldic device which marked the first American Emerson's tombstone.

There is a great deal of evidence of a strong sense of family and of pride in the clerical tradition. Rusk has reported the tradition as the family kept it alive by diaries, and tales told from one generation to the next. Although Ralph was born in Boston, the family history centered in Concord, where Ralph was first taken to spend his second summer and which he finally chose to be his permanent home, because it was the "old dear odious haunt of the race." During the first 179 years of the

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4Ibid., pp. 47-50.
5Oliver Wendell Holmes, Ralph Waldo Emerson, p. 2.
6Rusk, Life, pp. 49-50.
7Ibid., pp. 43-53.
8Ralph L. Rusk, ed., The Letters of Ralph Waldo Emerson, II, 243, in a letter to Emerson's aunt, Mary Moody Emerson.
existence of Concord, the preachers in the town's pulpit had been ances-
tors of Emerson, except for forty-three years, and except for the pastorate
of Ezra Ripley, Emerson's stepgrandfather.9

Ezra Ripley was a storehouse of anecdotes about the history of the
village. He wrote an account of the Concord fight, but more frequently
told his anecdotes. Emerson wrote after Ripley's death,

I remember, when a boy, driving about Concord with him, and in
passing each house he told the story of the family that lived
in it, and especially he gave me anecdotes of the nine church
members who had made a division in the church in the time of
his predecessor, and showed me how every one of the nine had
come to bad fortune or to a bad end.10

As the last part of the comment just quoted indicates, Emerson was
a thoughtful critic of the religious ideas of his stepgrandfather. Yet
he appreciated the sincerity and the vitality that spoke through the
sermons and prayers of the old minister. Emerson especially valued his
sense of acquaintance with life and used the old minister as a kind of
touch-stone for measuring the sincerity and vitality of the more cul-
tured Boston ministers. It is significant also that through his acquain-
tance with Ezra Ripley, Emerson had immediate knowledge of one who "by
education, and still more by temperament . . . was engaged to the old
forms of the New England Church."11 It is perhaps a significant fact,
that in the comparisons between the old minister and the more modern
ones, in spite of all that Emerson had to say about tradition, the old
minister was the one who came off best.

9Rusk, Life, p. 47.
10Works, X, 385-386.
11Works, X, 394-395.
Emerson's biographical sketch of Ripley, written after his death, contains an evaluation of the old man's religious attitudes. He was identified with ideas and forms of the New England Church which expired about the same time with him, so that he and his coevals seemed the rear guard of the great camp and army of the Puritans, which, however in its last days declining into formalism, in the heyday of its strength had planted and liberated America. The same faith made what was strong and what was weak in Dr. Ripley and his associates. He was a perfectly sincere man, punctual, severe, but just and charitable, and if he made his forms a strait-jacket to others, he wore the same himself all his years. Trained in this church, and very well qualified by his natural talent to work in it, it was never out of his mind. He looked at every person and thing from the parochial point of view.

Emerson's aunt, Mary Moody Emerson, his father's sister, was another powerful agent in his life. She too, like Ezra Ripley, came early into Emerson's life. She was for many years a potent gadfly, stimulating his ambition, reproving his errors, as she saw them, and infecting him with her enthusiasm for Milton and Young, and Plato and the Neo-Platonists. Most of the biographers have recognized her influence as a factor of importance. Cabot wrote of her,

She united with a good share of Puritan rigor, a keen appreciation of modern ideas. She exemplified the exaltation of faith over works to an extent that made her hard to live with. Van Wyck Brooks has devoted the first chapter of his biography to Mary Moody Emerson; anyone reading it cannot avoid being impressed by her remarkable personality. Rusk has been similarly impressed by her influence. "It is true however that his Aunt Mary Moody Emerson loomed

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12 Works, X, 383.
13 Works, X, 385.
14b James Elliot Cabot, A Memoir of Ralph Waldo Emerson, I, 30.
14b Van Wyck Brooks, The Life of Emerson, p. 45.
larger in Ralph's early life than did either his schoolteachers or his playmates.\textsuperscript{15}

Emerson himself recognized his debt to his aunt, as the Journals and letters indicate. There are a number of items in that indebtedness. One of the first perhaps was an interest in books, especially her beloved Milton. She had had a copy of \textit{Paradise Lost} without cover page or title, and was surprised to learn that her favorite book was by the Milton of whom she had heard so much.\textsuperscript{16} Toward the end of his life, Emerson wrote of her early reading. The authors he mentions are significant: "Milton, Young, Akenside, Samuel Clark, Jonathan Edwards and always the Bible."\textsuperscript{17} A second item was a sense of pride in family, and in the traditions of that family. Emerson speaks of the fact that

\begin{quote}
In every family is its own little body of literature, divinity, and personal biography—a common stock which their education and circumstances have furnished and from which they all draw allusion and illustration to their conversation. . .\textsuperscript{18}
\end{quote}

Aunt Mary Moody Emerson was the transmitter across the generations of that body of traditions peculiar to the Emerson family.

It is not a denial of piety to recognize that other motives may operate in the human heart; genuine as was Mary Moody Emerson's piety, there was a strong sense of pride in the Emerson family and intense ambition for her brother's sons. The ministry afforded much prestige. Ministers were public personages of importance. Even were the minister desirous of less attention, his position, ex officio, brought him

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{15}Rusk, \textit{Life}, p. 24.
\item \textsuperscript{16}\textit{Works}, X, 411.
\item \textsuperscript{17}\textit{Works}, X, 402.
\item \textsuperscript{18}\textit{Journals}, V, 540.
\end{itemize}
attention. The pride of the Emembers is reflected in part in the very fact that the ministers were felt to be the important part of the family tree. All of the Emerson boys felt the goad of Aunt Mary's driving ambition for them, and they made it their own. Ralph himself felt later that the death of Charles and of Edward was partially caused by the intensity of their drive toward success. He described the driving of ambition in his poem written after Edward's death, "In Memoriam."

And evermore the cruel god
Cried "Onward!" and the palm crown showed.\(^{19}\)

It is probable that the greatest influence of Emerson's Aunt Mary was the contagion of a deep and genuine piety. That piety was of a mystical nature,\(^{20}\) and it may be that the example of his Aunt Mary was the greatest single cause of his own mysticism, although other factors, including his temperament and his reading, must also be taken into account. Emerson wrote in the Journal, thinking of his aunt's influence,

The Sabbath reminds me of an advantage which education may give, namely a normal piety, a certain levitical education which only rarely devout genius could countervail. I cannot hear the young men whose theological education is exclusively owned to Cambridge and to public institutions, without feeling how much happier was my star, which rained on me influences of ancestral religion. The depth of the religious sentiment which I knew in my Aunt Mary, imbuing all her genius and derived to her from such hoarded family traditions, from so many godly lives and godly deaths of sainted kindred at Concord, Malden, York, was itself a culture, an education.\(^{21}\)

Earlier in his life Emerson had written,

The religion of my Aunt is the purest and most sublime of any I conceive. It appears to be based on broad and deep and

\(^{19}\) Works, IX, 263.

\(^{20}\) See page 306 for definition of mysticism as used in this thesis.

\(^{21}\) Journals, IV, 229-230.
remote principles of expediency and adequateness to an end—principles which few can comprehend and fewer feel. It labours to reconcile the apparent insignificance of the field to the surpassing grandeur of the Operator and founds the benignity and Mercy of the Scheme on adventurous but probable comparisons of the condition of other orders of being. Although it is an intellectual off-spring of beauty and splendour, if that were all, it breathes a practical spirit of rigid and austere devotion. It is independent of forms and ceremonies, and its ethereal nature gives a glow of soul to her whole life. She is the Weird-Woman of her religion, and conceives herself always bound to walk in narrow but exalted paths, which lead onward to interminable regions of rapturous and sublime glory.

There are notes in this passage that were to receive much fuller treatment in Emerson's own religious experience.

McGiffert has remarked on the relationship between Emerson and his aunt,

... a person of rare capacity for drawing out the best in him and for interpreting to him the tradition of Calvinism with a sympathy all the more effective because of its tinge of irony and skepticism. She it was who wrote the prayers which first his brother, and then when William went to college, he himself read aloud morning and evening, at the family devotions, and years afterward they still sounded in his ear with their prophetic and apocalyptic ejaculations. When he came to write sermons for his own church, he found no examples or treasuries of piety so high-toned, so profound, or promising such rich influence, as his remembrances of his aunt's conversations and letters.

Emerson himself recognized that some of his later ideas that seemed repugnant to her had to some degree been implied by her, that perhaps she had plowed the ground for some of the most characteristic affirmations he later made. He wrote in his Journal in 1841,

The genius of that woman, the key to her life is in the conflict of the new and the old ideas in New England. The heir of what-

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22 Journals, I, 77-78.

23 Arthur Cushman McGiffert, Jr., ed., Young Emerson Speaks, pp. xli-xiii. See also Journals, IV, 231.
ever was rich and profound and efficient in thought and emotion in the old religion which planted and peopled this land. She strangely united to this passionate piety the fatal gifts of penetration, a love of philosophy, an impatience of words, and was thus a religious skeptic. She held on with both hands to the faith of the past generation as to the Palladium of all that was good and hopeful in the physical and metaphysical worlds; and in all companies, and on all occasions, and especially with these darling nephews of her hope and pride, extolled and poetised this beloved Calvinism. Yet all the time she doubted and denied it, and could not tell whether to be more glad or sorry to find that these boys were irremediably born to the adoption and furtherance of the new ideas.24

That he came to think for himself should not have surprised her. She urged him to do so in the most vehement fashion.

Would to Providence your unfolding might be there—that it were not a wild and fruitless wish that you could be disunited from travelling with the souls of other men, of living and breathing, reading and writing with one vital time-sated idea—their opinions.25

Nor should she have been surprised that he became intensely critical of the religious life of his time. Emerson quoted a couplet from Don Juan,

They grieved for those who perished in the cutter And likewise for the biscuit-cakes and butter, that became a family

... byword for the mean spirit of derision that characterized the present age, in contrast with the alleged earnest and religious spirit of the Puritans, and especially the austere saints of Concord and Malden, she was so swift to remember.26

There was a genuine strain of otherworldliness, of contemptus mundi, in Mary Moody Emerson, that caused her to look with derision at those who made the acquiring of this world's pleasures the chief end of their lives. As Rusk remarked,

24Journals, V, 547-548.
26Journals, V, 541.
She escaped wealth and was glad, for she believed it would have spoiled her. After due consideration she refused an offer of marriage from 'a man of talents, education, and good social position, whom she respected.'

Emerson later described this renouncing of the world in his poem "The Nun's Aspiration," using in part words written in her diary. There is also a line that reflects Donne's poem "The Ecstasy."

Time, shake not thy bald head at me
I challenge thee to hurry past
Or for my turn to fly too fast.
Think me not numbed or halt with age,
Or cares that earth to earth engage,
Caught with love's cord of twisted beams,
Or mired by climate's gross extremes.
I tire of shams, I rush to be.

It is interesting in view of his emphatic rejection of tradition that Emerson used the term nun to apply to his aunt, in the most complimentary and approving fashion. The poem is rarely anthologized, but it contains many of his characteristic ideas; it perhaps is his loveliest tribute to his aunt.

There was a marked contrast between the "fiery Calvinist," as Rusk called Mary Moody Emerson, and Emerson's father. He was a member of that generation who finished the long process of socializing Calvinism. He and his contemporaries had arrived at a time when the process of domesticating Calvinism, carried so far by the mid-eighteenth century preacher Charles Chauncy, was completed. The creeds and the Psalm singing sat very loosely on the shoulders of William Emerson. It was the achievement of his confreres to make religion genteel and in good taste,

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27 Rusk, Life, p. 25.
28 Works, IX, 254.
29 Rusk, Life, p. 25.
as Perry Miller has shown in his article, "Edwards to Emerson," and as Haroutunian has traced out in more detail in his book, Pietist Versus Moralism. From his sister Mary's viewpoint, his theology was "defective." 30

Nevertheless, the religious educational influences of the father must have been considerable. Rusk remarked, "For him the parental and priestly offices as well as vocabularies were closely related." 31 Ralph studied the catechism and with other boys repeated it to his father on Communion Sunday afternoons. He was also expected to learn hymns and Psalms by memory; his father had published A Selection of Psalms and Hymns in 1808. 32 There were daily practices of piety. The day began with family prayers in the morning, with each child reading his own Scripture verse, as Rusk reported. 33 The Sabbath was observed with decorum; the Sabbath restrictions began the evening before, and did not end until the following evening when the rigors of the religious rites were relaxed. Emerson remembered the Sabbath observance with approval all his life, and in his own home required similar quiet. Edward Emerson reported that the children were prevented from playing shuttlecock on Sunday by Emerson, although Mrs. Emerson had previously given permission.

... no sooner did the sound of the shuttlecock on the parchment bathead ring through the house than we heard the study door open and our father's stride in the entry. He came in and said, "That sound was never heard in New England before on Sunday and must not now be in my house. Put them away." 34

30 Ibid., p. 29.
32 Ibid., p. 22.
33 Ibid., p. 27.
34 Emerson in Concord, p. 171.
Ruth Haskins Emerson, Ralph's mother, was from a family that was divided between Episcopalian and Congregational loyalties. Her father was steadfastly Episcopalian; his wife, apparently an early feminist, gathered up half of her family and went off to the Congregational church. Ruth herself gave evidence of a quiet devotion that expressed itself in a cheerful carrying out of duty. Mary Moody Emerson had been responsible for the meeting between William Emerson and Ruth Haskins that resulted in their marriage. Mary Moody wrote to her brother that Ruth possessed "mild and amiable virtues," but there must have been more iron in Ruth than Mary Moody realized, in view of the heroic efforts she made to rear her sons and assist them through college, after the death of her husband.

The religious aspects of Ralph's education suffered no diminution after the death of his father. Indeed perhaps the frequent visits of his Aunt Mary, to help the widowed sister-in-law, were more potent goads than his father's efforts had been. When Ralph was nine, he responded to his training with a poem, "The Sabbath," in the regular long meter of the hymnal, and in terms of "impeccable orthodoxy," as Rusk commented. The hymn called for observance of the Sabbath, church attendance, prayer, the reading of holy books, and there were also recommendations for specific emergencies, according to Rusk's summary. The single verse cited by Rusk as typical contains a suggestion of otherworldliness.

Remember your Redeemer's love,
And meditate on things above,
Forsake while you are here below,
The path which leads to realms of woe.  

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37 *Loc. cit.*
This was not the only effort of the young poet. There were others, one of which was an elegy commemorating the death of his grandfather Haskins, written when Ralph was eleven. Rusk calls it "perfectly regular in both meter and theology." 38

Rusk pointed out that Ruth Emerson was "seriously religious," and said further,

Ralph felt the cumulative effective effect of stern religious training quite as much as he felt the discipline of poverty. At church he was expected to digest the sermon in order that he might give text and outline when he returned home. At home on Sunday afternoons he and his brothers had hymns to learn, though he might manage to substitute original composition for memorizing. In Beacon street [1815] he had experiences of religious terror that paralleled those of young Lydia Jackson of Plymouth, as he learned in later years. 39

Emerson's memories of the religious experiences of his childhood were on the whole happy ones, and he apparently regretted that the customs that were a part of his own youth had ceased to exist. He wrote in the Journal in 1849, "A feature of the times is, that when I was born, private and family prayer was in the use of all well-bred people, and now it is not known." 40 In the essay on "Domestic Life," he wrote apparently from the memory of the early years of his life,

... who has not seen, and who can see unmoved the eager, blushing boys discharging as they can their household chores, and hastening into the sitting room to the study of to-morrow's merciless lesson ... the youthful criticism, on Sunday, of the sermons ... 41

38 Rusk, Life, p. 42.
39 Ibid., p. 55.
40 Journals, VIII, 35.
41 Works, VII, 119-120.
The memory of the quietness and calm of the Sabbath lingered long also. There are several comments in the Journals bearing witness to his pleasant associations with it. He wrote in 1857, in the lecture "Works and Days," of

The old Sabbath, or Seventh Day, white with the religions of unknown thousands of years when this hallowed hour dawns out of the deep,—a clean page, which the wise may inscribe with truth, whilst the savage scrawls it with fetishes...  

In the essay "The Sovereignty of Ethics," put together by Mr. Cabot from materials used in lectures between 1859 and 1869, Emerson said perhaps his final word on the religious training of his youth.

We all give way to superstitions. The house in which we were born is not quite mere timber and stone; is still haunted by parents and progenitors. The creeds into which we were initiated in childhood and youth no longer hold their old place in the minds of thoughtful men, but they are not nothing to us, and we hate to have them treated with contempt. There is so much that we do not know, that we give to these suggestions the benefit of the doubt.  

The Emerson family maintained their subscription to the Boston Library Society after the death of William Emerson. Cameron has published the record of the borrowings of the family. While it is not possible to determine which books Emerson himself read, in all probability many of the books were read or discussed by all the older members of the family. During the years between 1815 and 1820 approximately a fourth of the borrowings were of a specifically religious interest.

As Cameron has pointed out, it would not be correct to assume that

\[\text{Works, VII, 169.}\]  
\[\text{Works, X, 201.}\]  
\[\text{Emerson the Essayist, II, 149-187.}\]
Emerson read only the books of a religious nature.\textsuperscript{45} It is possible, however, to determine that some of the books did come to the attention of Emerson himself. One is the work by Thomas Clarkson, \textit{A Portraiture of Quakerism}.\textsuperscript{46} When Emerson took a vacation from the Second Church in 1832 to prepare his sermon on the Lord's Supper, he took this work along, and used it as a source for the sermon.\textsuperscript{47}

It was during these years (1815-1820) that the Unitarian controversy was coming to full boil. It is significant that in 1817 the family checked out Wardlaw's \textit{Discourses on The Socinian Controversy}. Quite possibly reading such books as the one by Wardlaw, and the defense of Unitarianism by Yates\textsuperscript{48} (checked out by the family in 1819) was in part responsible for Emerson's disgust with theological argument, for these are the driest of tomes, full of verbalizations without meaning, and using Scriptural quotations torn out of context. Wardlaw asserted the traditional defenses of orthodoxy. He appealed to man's ignorance, to the incomprehensibility and mystery of the Deity, and to a very literal method of interpreting the Scripture to prove the divinity of Jesus and the existence of the Deity. A typical method of arguing was to assert that there must be a plurality of persons in the divine unity because in Genesis 1: 26 Jehovah is represented as saying, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness."\textsuperscript{49} Wardlaw insisted on the efficacy of the

\textsuperscript{45}Ibid., II, 150.

\textsuperscript{46}Thomas Clarkson, \textit{A Portraiture of Quakerism}, 3 vols, New York, 1806.


\textsuperscript{48}James Yates, \textit{A Vindication of Unitarianism}, Boston, 1816.

\textsuperscript{49}Ralph Wardlaw, \textit{Discourses on the Socinian Controversy}, p. 12.
blood of Christ in atonement and he insisted on the divinity and personality of the Holy Spirit. The book is oddly rational and unemotional, in view of the mysteriousness of the material he dealt with. Yates's *A Vindication of Unitarianism* is more consistent in its rationalism. Yates asserted that reason is the final test of truth, that even revelation must be submitted to reason. He insisted on using the most reliable information obtainable by the critical approach to the Bible. He distinguished between church tradition and Scriptural sources. He was opposed to believing anything in the realm of mystery. It was in this refusal that he was more consistently rational than was Wardlaw. Yates defended the unity of God by the evidence of nature and by the testimony of the Scriptures. Yates insisted that Jesus was not God, but a being distinct from Him, that Jesus's wisdom, knowledge, and power were derived from God. He disagreed with the two-natures theory of the personality of Christ. Yates presented his case with more consistent adherence to rational standards than did Wardlaw.

These books are significant because they mark the clear breach that occurred between the two schools of thought. In William Emerson's lifetime, the division remained implicit, and there was no obvious distinction between the old and the new. Thomas Belsham's book, *American Unitarianism*, 1815, was one of the agencies that brought the battle out in the open. Belsham, the English Unitarian, commended certain American preachers—Freeman, Thacher, Sherman, and Cary—and labeled them with a term that was to many New Englanders the most terrible of heresies, and the arguments

For a full account of the situation see Joseph Haroutunian, *Piety Versus Moralism*, pp. 177-200.
began which led finally to Channing's famous ordination address on the occasion of the ordination of the Reverend Jared Sparks in 1819.

The use of the books by Yates and Wardlaw is a clear indication that the Emerson family was informed about the conflict, and that they had opportunity to learn well before Channing's address, what the issues were, and what the arguments were that were used by each side. That there were other considerations than those mentioned in these books may not have occurred to Emerson at the time.

Emerson's religious education was certainly assisted by the attendance at church that characterized the family and by reading sermons as well. That Emerson's interest in preaching was lifelong is indicated by the frequent references to preaching that mark the Journals. One of his classmates in the Latin School remembered many years later Emerson's telling him of a sermon by Frothingham at the First Church apparently attacking the doctrine that describes man as "coming into the world girt with the poison robes of depravity and with the curses of his Maker upon his head."51 The Emerson brothers developed favorite preachers—Everett, Buckminster, and Channing. The family read a number of volumes of sermons, including collections by Jebb, Buckminster, John Logan, Archibald Alison, Newcome Cappe, Thomas Chalmers, Samuel Horsley, Walter Blake Kirwan, John Taylor, Isaac Watts.52

51 Cabot, I, 44.

52 For full bibliographical information see Cameron, Emerson the Essayist, II, 149-186.
It is probably a safe conclusion that Emerson learned much of the religion of the New England tradition through his stepgrandfather, his aunt, and his mother and father, and through the religious education of his childhood. The knowledge he acquired must have given him an awareness of the deeply devotional undercurrent of piety, the "Augustinian piety," as Perry Miller has described it,\textsuperscript{53} that characterized Puritanism, as well as an acquaintance with the creedal content of the traditional faith.

\textsuperscript{53}The Seventeenth Century, p. 4.
CHAPTER II

EMERSON'S PREACHING CAREER

There were no doubt a number of motives operating to direct Emerson into the ministry. Among these were probably the need for economic security, that devil that the Emersons had always with them; the desire to fulfill the expectation of both his Aunt Mary and of his mother; the operation of ambition within himself; the motivation of piety; and the desire to be socially and morally useful.

The economic pinch that the Emerson's felt during their frantic efforts to educate themselves would have been eased by the generous rewards that the more successful ministers received in that day. When Emerson became the minister at the Second Church, he received $1800 a year, which must have seemed a small fortune to him. Something of the scale of that salary is seen by comparing it with the $120 his brother William received for teaching one year in Maine, when Ralph was still in Harvard. William, apparently receiving board and room as part of his wages, was able to send his mother $400. That fact is a sign, not only of his self denial, but of the value of the dollar in that day. Emerson finally came to feel that to work for money alone was one of the world's worst hardships. But in his youth, the position of the minister probably appeared very good to him.

This would have been true in terms of prestige as well as the financial rewards. As minister of the Second Church Emerson was elected to
the School Committee in Boston, spoke to the societies of philanthropists, had a small purse of money\(^1\) to be dispensed according to his own discretion, and felt no doubt, in a variety of ways the pleasing flattery of public opinion, perhaps the most subtle temptation and corrosive of the minister. He was aware of this aspect of his satisfaction in being called to the Second Church. "I am called by an ancient and respectable church to become its pastor."\(^2\) The eminent respectability of the young pastor was signalized by his election as chaplain of the state senate in 1829 and as chaplain of the house in 1832.\(^3\)

That Emerson was ambitious is clearly indicated in the Journals and letters. He wrote in 1823,

> From childhood the names of the great have ever resounded in my ears, and it is impossible that I should be indifferent to the rank which I must take in the innumerable assembly of men . . . .\(^4\)

That he thought of ambition as a family trait is indicated in a letter written to William, who had been ill, cautioning him against the "leprosy of your race--ill weaved ambition."\(^5\) And Ralph mentioned ambition as one of the causes of Edward's death in the poem he wrote in memory of Edward.\(^6\)

That Emerson's religious experience was intense enough to

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\(^1\)McGiffert, *Young Emerson Speaks*, p. xv.

\(^2\)Journals, II, 261.

\(^3\)Rusk, *Letters*, I, 40.

\(^4\)Journals, I, 242.


\(^6\)See *Works*, IX, 261.
justify calling him a mystic, is one of the major contentions of this thesis. That contention is discussed in a later section of the thesis, but it is appropriate here to indicate that his piety was a major motivation in his entering the ministry, as well as in his leaving it.

That Emerson was a moralist, who regarded ethical and moral consideration as of the highest importance, is evident in almost every thing he wrote, and has been recognized as a factor of major importance in his works. Whicher has pointed out the fact that the moralist is always at hand in Emerson, with the never forgotten message that "All things are moral." The moralist is frequently sure that he knows the absolute right, and he must therefore by social organization, through institution and laws bring pressure upon others to conform to the right. The theocratic ideal of the early Puritans in New England grew out of this kind of thinking, and it is more or less typical of all moral Puritans, whether seventeenth century New Englanders or nineteenth century Roman Catholics, or twentieth century Prohibitionists.

Whicher has described the conflict in Emerson between the impulse of the reformer to engage in organized activity to change the world, and the impulse of the mystic to seek solitude, in order to be found by God. Emerson's entering the ministry is an indication of the strength of the moral impulse. In one way or another, Emerson strove all his life to enact his moral impulse, though he finally found the lecture platform and the writer's study better agencies of moral endeavor, than

7 Stephen E. Whicher, Freedom and Fate, p. 44.
8 Ibid., pp. 72-94.
the pulpit.

Emerson's preparation for the ministry began in the influences described earlier in the chapter. His more specific education, at Harvard, with Channing, and later at the Divinity school has been described very fully by Rusk in *The Life of Ralph Waldo Emerson*. As a freshman at Harvard he studied Tacitus, Grotius's Latin defense of the truth of Christianity, Greek, history, rhetoric and grammar. The second year included a continuation of the Latin, the Greek New Testament, Locke, rhetoric, algebra and geometry. The mathematics he described with the comment, "Mathematics I hate." As a junior he studied the Greek New Testament, mathematics, Locke, Paley, and Dugald Stewart. The program of his senior year was much the same as the junior year. His dissertation on Socrates was meaningful to him, for more than the $20 prize he won. Rusk reported that he saw Socrates as a moralist, and reviewed the various theories concerning the daemon. Rusk commented that the mediocre achievement of Emerson in college is not an adequate measure of the significance that college had for him. His part in the commencement ceremonies afforded him an opportunity to describe the character of John Knox in a conference with two other graduates, who were to describe William Penn and John Wesley. He apparently did not take the assignment seriously, because of the disappointment he felt in being relatively low in rank in the class. Probably the most important aspect of his college experience was the interest he took in philosophy, as Rusk commented.

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8a See also Cabot, I, Chapters 2 and 3; Woodberry, pp. 13-30; Holmes, pp. 43-54; Brooks, pp. 27-33.

9 Rusk, *Life*, p. 75.

10 Ibid., p. 78.

11 Ibid., p. 80.
An important aspect of this interest in philosophy was his awareness of the work of Hume and Locke, in questioning the traditional grounds of support, the belief in miracles, and scriptural literalism, for orthodox Christianity.

He became aware also of the rational defenders of Christianity Paley, Lardner and Bishop Butler, and later apparently canvassed extensively the defenses of the faith offered by those writers. The respect shown in the Journals for Bishop Butler seems odd in the light of the contrast between Emerson's personality, and the bishop's completely rational approach, one devoid of all piety.

During Emerson's unhappy years as a schoolmaster, he continued to study philosophy and theology and to make plans for entering the ministry. In 1822 he did a good deal of reading in history and in religion. He wrote an essay on "Thoughts on the Religion of the Middle Ages," based on the reading of Mosheim, Gibbon, Hallam, and Sismondi. Rusk has summarized the article, which appeared in The Christian Disciple in November and December of 1822. It suggested ideas that Emerson was to devote his life to developing.

The power of the medieval church has rested on its assumption of an authority over human conduct that annihilated the independence of society; on adherence to sanctimonious forms that affected only the surface of society, leaving the social order fundamentally unregenerate; on accumulated wealth that corrupted the clergy and the popes; and on an exercise of temporal authority that finally roused the laity against the church and spelled its ruin. The lapse of the Dark Ages was a lesson to after generations showing the need of a pure religion, plain in doctrine and rigid in practice.13

12 Whicke, p. 10.

13 Rusk, Life, p. 96.
He thought of studying theology at Andover, and saw some attractions in orthodoxy. "Presbyterianism and Calvinism at the South, at least make Christianity a more real and tangible system ... But he was doubtful and wrote a friend:

When I have been to Cambridge and studied Divinity, I will tell you whether I can make out for myself any better system than Luther or Calvin, or the liberal besoms of the modern days. I have spoken thus because I am tired and disgusted with preaching which I have been accustomed to hear. 15

His committal to the direction of liberal ideas however was indicated by his signing the "Declaration of Faith" at the First Church, in May, 1823.

I. We, whose names are underwritten, declare our Faith in the only living and true God.

II. We believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, that he was sanctified of the Father, and sent into the world, that he might "redeem us from all iniquity; and purify to himself a peculiar people zealous of good works."

III. We believe in that gospel, which was ratified by the death and resurrection of its author; and solemnly promise to make it the only rule of our faith and practice.

United by the ties of one Lord, one common Faith, and one Baptism, we promise to live in Christian love; to watch over each other as members of the same body; to counsel and assist, whenever there shall be occasion; to be faithful to our master, and faithful to each other, waiting in joyful hope of an eternal happy intercourse in the heavenly world. 16

Not long after signing the Declaration of Faith at the First Church, Emerson began to walk into Boston every Sunday from the family home in

14Ibid., p. 99.

15Loc. cit.

16Rusk, Life, p. 100.
Roxbury to hear Channing. Dr. Channing and a Mr. Cunningham were tutoring him, by means of which he hoped to enter the middle class at the Divinity School instead of the first class. Channing gave him one reading list of eleven titles, ranging from Jeremy Taylor on Holy Living to Miss More on practical piety.  

Rusk believed that Channing's greatest single service was to help Emerson become aware of himself. In the Journal he had dedicated himself to the church. He attempted to analyze his abilities and concluded that he could not match the reasoning faculties of Butler, as displayed in the Analogy, or the work of Hume. He spoke of "theology" as from everlasting to everlasting "debatable ground," and resolved to turn to the use of "moral imagination." The distrust of reason here illustrated continued throughout his life. His distrust of reason is a part of the basis for recognizing the mystic in his temperament. His comment about theology being forever "debatable ground" was another form of the protest against reason represented by the rational ass of Buridan. The ass acted only on rational considerations, and therefore starved to death while standing between two bales of hay, because the reasons for eating either bale were equally good.

Emerson chose to regard "the highest species of reasoning upon divine subjects" as the "fruit of a sort of moral imagination." He accused himself of lacking a "logical mode of thinking and speaking."  

18 *Journals*, I, 360.  
19 *Journals*, I, 361.  
20 *Journals*, I, 362.
"But in Divinity I hope to thrive."

He based his hope on his belief, justified by his career as preacher and lecturer, that he could become a good practitioner of the art of speaking. "The office of a clergyman is twofold; public preaching and private influence. Entire success in the first is the lot of few, but this I am encouraged to expect."21

There are other significant notes in this dedication of himself to the ministry. One of them is a dedication to the moral laws. "My understanding venerates and my heart loves that cause which is dear to God and man—the law of morals, the Revelations which sanction, and the blood of martyrs and triumphant suffering of the saints which seal them." He wished to take Milton for his model in his work. "I would have my pen so guided as was Milton's when a deep and enthusiastic love of goodness and of God dictated the Comus to the bard, or that prose rhapsody in the Third Book of Prelaty."22

There is another note in the dedication that represents an idea later rejected. "But the coolest reason cannot censure my choice when I oblige myself professionally to a life which all wise men freely and advisedly adopt."23

Emerson entered the Divinity School in February, 1825, for a period of intermittent study, interrupted by eye strain, and illness. Apparently because of the study with Channing, he was admitted to the second

21 Journals, I, 363.
22 Journals, I, 364.
23 Loc. cit.
year. The graduate school in divinity was still so new that the formalities were not yet enforced. Rusk reported that the objectives announced in 1827, two years after Emerson's entrance, were:

"the study of Hebrew, Biblical history and criticism, natural and revealed religion, Christian theology, Christian institutions, ecclesiastical powers, and the rights, duties and relations of the pastoral office."²⁴

Emerson was greatly interested in the studies of his brother William who had gone to Göttingen. He wrote anxious queries whether his brother thought he should come to Germany, and whether he should study Hebrew and German. He was interested in the Biblical criticism there, also. But William's letters were vague, and it was not until William returned home that Emerson learned that he no longer intended to preach. Ralph's letters may be read in Volume I of Rusk's edition of the Letters.²⁵ In *The Life* Rusk reported a reply from William to Ralph containing a question that was to grow larger and larger during the years that followed.

"In this connexion the remark occurs, that every candid theologian after careful study will find himself wide from the traditionary opinions of the bulk of his parishioners. Have you yet settled the question, whether he shall sacrifice his influence or his conscience?"²⁶

In October, 1826, Emerson was granted a license to preach by the Middlesex Association. He preached a sermon for the group based on a suggestion made by the "methodist Tarbox," a laborer on his Uncle Ladd's farm at Newton, where he spent some time recuperating from eyestrain in 1825. The laborer said that all men pray and that all prayers are

answered. He took as his text, "Pray without ceasing." Rusk has reported the circumstances of the first sermon.

The theological education was further interrupted by his illness and the subsequent trip to Florida. After his return he took a room in Divinity Hall again, and preached in various churches (including the church in Concord, New Hampshire, where he met Ellen Tucker), until he was chosen as the pastor at the Second Church in Boston. He was ordained in March of 1829, at the Second Church.

Rusk believed that his theological education before his approbation to preach was inadequate, and wrote that, had they examined him carefully, they would not have permitted him to preach. It is difficult to judge the adequacy of his preparation or the preparation of the average preacher of that day. Certainly there can have been few preachers of that day who studied more books than Emerson finally did. If his preparation was not adequate in 1826, he worked very diligently to make it adequate, nor did his study of theology and philosophy end when he left the Second Church in 1832.

Among the books he used at Divinity Hall in Cambridge were several of significance to his increasing understanding of the conflicting strands of the Christian tradition. One volume of historical interest was Golden Remains, a seventeenth century collection of sermons, largely casuistical, though the volume is chiefly remembered for its account of the famous Synod.

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27 McGiffert, Young Emerson Speaks, p. 1.
28 Rusk, Life, p. 117.
29 Loc. cit.
of Dort, where the Calvinistic-Arminian controversy was debated, at Dort, Holland, in 1619.

He also checked out several volumes of the Whole Works of Jeremy Taylor. He checked out the Taylor volumes a number of times and wrote affectionately of Taylor in the Journal. He recommended Taylor's Holy Dying to a cousin of Ellen Tucker's in 1832, as "a good book." He associated a "fragrant piety" with Taylor and referred to him in "The Problem" as "the Shakespeare of divines." In 1827 Emerson checked out volumes II and XI of Taylor; in 1828 he checked out volumes II, III, V, VI, and XI. Emerson's interest in Jeremy Taylor continued for many years. As Cameron has pointed out, Emerson put Taylor in a class with Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, Bacon, and Milton, or in other words, included him among the Emerson canon of the greatest English writers. Cameron asserted that Emerson regarded the Sermons of Taylor as no ordinary book but as a vade mecum.

There were many other theological works checked out by Emerson during this period, including a collection of sermons by the Anglican Warburton and a defense of Christianity on rational grounds by the English Unitarian, Lardner. In 1828 he used a translation of the Pauline epistles by Belsham, the English Unitarian, with notes and commentary by Belsham.

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31 Journals, II, 459.
32 Works, IX, 8.
33 Kenneth W. Cameron, Ralph Waldo Emerson's Reading, p. 50.
34 In Emerson the Essayist, I, 347.
35 Ibid., p. 57.
36 Cameron, Ralph Waldo Emerson's Reading, p. 50.
37 Loc. cit.
Emerson regarded study and the preparation of sermons as the most important tasks of the preacher and apologized in a sermon delivered at the Second Church for not calling on the parishioners as much as they might wish, because of the pressure of his studying. He told them that

... the laws of thought are not accommodated to the divisions of time ... the minister who makes it an important aim to convey instruction must often stay at home in the search of it when his parishioners may think he would be more usefully employed in cultivating an acquaintance with them. You will therefore have the charity to think when you do not see your pastor as often or at the times when you could wish it and desire it, that he may be employed with earnest endeavours to speak to you usefully in this place. 38

A number of reasons have been advanced to explain Emerson's withdrawal from the Second Church. The theories cover a wide range. The rumors that the church was dissatisfied with the pastor's failure to make calls, or that he was otherwise inept in the work of the church are apparently not correct. The reports indicate that his sermons were well received and that on the whole there was a happy relation between the young minister and his congregation. 39 He made lifelong friends there—Abel Adams, his financial adviser, for one—and came back fifteen years later to address the congregation. 40 McGiffert suggested that Emerson had hoped that the congregation would accept his attitude toward the Lord's Supper. He told one of his successors at the Second Church, many years later, "I had hoped to carry them with me, but I failed." 41

McGiffert believed that the reason for the break was because of the

38 McGiffert, Young Emerson Speaks, pp. 70-71.
39 Ibid., pp. xxii, xxxvi-xxxvii.
40 Journals, VI, 498.
41 McGiffert, Young Emerson Speaks, p. xxxvi.
views of leadership held by Emerson. He was unable to accommodate his ideas to the gap between himself and his parishioners. "He left because his view of the function of a leader was that of moving toward his goal regardless of the ability of the people to follow him." There are in the Journals and essays many statements about the value of sincerity that indicate some basis for McGiffert's theory. "Speak as you think, be what you are," said Emerson. He was incapable of proceeding on any other basis than the fullest and most complete honesty. Like Milton, he felt hypocrisy a great breach of morality. It seemed to him to be dishonest to take part in ceremonies to which other people attached a meaning that he did not accept.

Another aspect of this problem was the difficulty of "professional" goodness. The minister must always act from external, or mechanical, or predetermined ideas of goodness. Since the minister is supposed to be a man of good will, he must act with good will to all men, certainly to all his parishioners, whether he feels good will to them or not. Thus his smile is forced, mechanical, not an expression of inner friendliness. He must take part in the communion service and give every evidence of being spiritually moved. He must pray at the fixed hour with the appearance of emotion, whether he feels happy or depressed. Emerson must have felt this discrepancy frequently. There is evidence of a definite periodicity of exhilaration and depression in the Journals. Inevitably, there

42 Ibid., p. xxxix.

43 Works, VI, 322. See also Journals, II, 308; III, 543; III, 123-124; III, 173; VI, 10-11; VI, 11; VI, 12.
must have been Sunday mornings when he was in a depressed state, and yet was required to continue with the usual pastoral functions. It is this problem that he refers to in the passage written in the Journals on January 10, 1832.

It is the best part of the man, I sometimes think, that revolts most against his being a minister. His good revolts from official goodness. If he never spoke or acted but with the full consent of his understanding, if the whole man acted always, how powerful would be every act and every word. Well then, or ill then, how much power he sacrifices by conforming himself to say and do in other folks' time instead of in his own! The difficulty is that we do not make a world of our own, but fall into institutions already made, and have to accommodate ourselves to them to be useful at all, and this accommodation is, I say, a loss of so much integrity and, of course, of so much power.

There was another side of the matter to be considered however, and the moralist in Emerson spoke out to present the other side.

But how shall the droning world get on if all its beaux esprits recalcitrate upon its approved forms and accepted institutions, and quit them all in order to be single minded? The double refiners would produce at the other end the double damned.

This passage reflects the moralist who feels the necessity of organizing institutions to redeem the world. It implies that there are the saved, the beaux esprits, and that they must work in the world to save the damned, although Emerson was more likely to call them "sots " than the damned.

Perhaps the conflict illustrated by these citations is in part the problem considered in the poem "The Problem."

I like a church; I like a cowl;
I love a prophet of the soul;
And on my heart monastic aisles

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[Journals, II, 448-449.]

[Ibid., p. 449.]
Fall like sweet strains, or pensive smiles;  
Yet not for all his faith can see  
Would I that cowled churchman be.

Why should the vest on him allure,  
Which I could not on me endure?46'

There were many reasons why Emerson would have liked "a prophet of the soul." There were many factors in his life, as has been suggested above, that predisposed him toward the church. Yet the demands of his own inner life of consciousness prevented him from being satisfied in the ministry. Still, the memories, the associations of his early life, continued to exert their poignant pressures. These were very powerful motivations operating in his mind, perhaps largely subconsciously, to cause him to feel an attraction to the ministry. The moral imperative was another of the internal pressures that motivated him to the ministry. Throughout his life, the moral imperative continued, so that the poem may be a description of a conflict that continued to disturb him long after he had left Second Church.

The remainder of the poem contains a description of Emerson's faith that by passive obedience to the leading of God, all worthwhile things are accomplished. The poem is therefore an assertion, that though he was drawn and continued to be drawn to the life of the clergyman, he was more strongly drawn to a life of obedience to God, and that obedience prevented him from remaining a clergyman. He was interested in the fact that to the Quakers he met in New Bedford, as to Socrates, the inner voice was frequently one of prohibition.47 He has in the poem described

46Works, IX, 6.
47Journals, III, 259-260.
an attraction, but implies that there is an inner negation which will not permit him to be a clergyman. But the essence of conflict is the existence of two mutually incompatible, but continuing, desires. And the poem is faithful to the fact of a dilemma that he did not understand. He wrote in the Journal in 1838,

It is very grateful to me to go into an English Church and hear the liturgy read, yet nothing would induce me to be the English priest. I find an unpleasant dilemma in this, nearer home. I dislike to be a clergyman and refuse to be one. Yet how rich a music would be to me a holy clergyman in my town. It seems to me he cannot be a man, quite and whole; yet how plain is the need of one, and how high, yes, highest is the function. Here is division of labor that I like not; a man must sacrifice his manhood for the social good. Something is wrong; I see not what.48

The conflict described in this poem, if the foregoing interpretation is correct, must therefore be seen as a special form of the conflict that Whicher has described between Emerson’s impulse to take a vigorous part in the various reform movements of the time, and his stronger impulse to continue his life of study and meditation.49

Another explanation of the break between Emerson and the Second Church may be found in the antagonism of the mystic to the institution, and to rationalism. James Bissett Pratt’s analysis of the psychology of religion has distinguished between “four temperamental kinds of religion.” His discussion of these distinctions is relevant to the attitude of Emerson toward the church. Pratt asserted that the four kinds of religion are:

(1) the traditional which takes its attitude from the authority of the past—from parents, teachers, tradition, the Church, etc.;
(2) the rational, which seeks to free itself altogether from

49 Whicher, pp. 76-79.
authority and to base itself purely on reason and the facts of verifiable experience; (3) the mystical which appeals solely to a particular kind of experience and a kind that is peculiarly subjective and hence not scientifically verifiable; (4) the practical or moral which lays the emphasis upon the thing that must be done rather than upon the thing which must be believed or felt. 50

This analysis, applied to Emerson, suggests that his was a religion primarily mystical, and secondarily moral or practical, and that where the mystical conflicted with the institution, the mystical predominated. Pratt reported that while mysticism has frequently been found within institutions, the church has always been distrustful of mysticism.

Not without reason has the Church always feared every popular outbreak of mysticism. He who has experienced the Divine within his own heart is likely to hold all formalism and tradition unnecessary or cheap if not misleading or even diabolic. 51

The principal accusations that Emerson himself made against the churches of his own day, both Calvinistic and Unitarian, were coldness and formality. He speaks repeatedly of "these Puritans, however in our last days, they have declined into ritualists..." 52 ... the great camp and army of the Puritans, which however in its last days declining into formalism." 53 His objection was not to form per se, for he realized that every impulse must clothe itself in a form of some sort. But he objected to the maintenance of forms when the impulse was gone. "The old forms rattle." 54 The difficulty seemed to him that the forms had no

51 Ibid., pp. 18-19.
52 Journals, VI, 53.
53 Works, X, 383.
54 Works, X, 217.
relationship to life. He spoke with some contempt of the "externality of churches . . . a speck of whitewash on the wall." Here he referred to the process that Perry Miller has described by which the requirement for church membership, the church covenant, was retained but the allegiance given to the covenant was a formal one only. That is, the first generations of Puritans in the New World fervently accepted otherworldliness. They worked hard in this world, but remained "deadhearted" to this world's goods. But as the years passed, many of the conservative merchants of State Street made their chief loyalty to this world, not the other world. Still they continued to affirm their faith in the old forms of confession of faith. They sang in Watts's words,

Alas! and did my Saviour bleed!
And did my Sov'reign die?
Would he devote that sacred head
For such a worm as I? 56

Or they sang Watts's translation of Psalm CXLIV,

Lord, what is man, poor feeble man,
Born of the earth at first!
His life a shadow, light and vain
Still hasting to the dust.

O what is feeble, dying man
Or any of his race,
That God should make it his concern
To visit him with grace? 57

There was a time when such hymns expressed a genuine sense of piety and devotion, as Miller has shown. 58 But the confessions and psalms were

55 Journals, IX, 203.
56 I. Watts, Hymns and Spiritual Songs, p. 130.
58 The Seventeenth Century Mind, pp. 3-64.
probably correctly described by Emerson as "a spot of whitewash" that had little relationship to the life of the worshippers.

Emerson apparently felt that the Unitarian church was too rational. It is clear that Unitarianism in that day was more rational than the conservative Calvinists. Belsham, Yates, and the American Unitarian Channing were far more consistent than the Calvinists in their dependence upon reason. Emerson apparently finally felt that it was fatal to trust in the reason alone, and it seemed to him that the Unitarian church did that. Reason relies on abstraction, and this seemed to Emerson cold and disembodied. His favorite term of abnegation for the Unitarian church was "cold." He spoke of the "thin porridge or cold tea of Unitarianism,"59 of "the corpse cold Unitarianism ... of Brattle Street and Boston,"60 of the Unitarian "icehouse, all external."60a

It is surprising to realize that Emerson objected to the Unitarian church because of its formalism. His chief objection to the communion service in the Lord's Supper is the importance attached to a particular form.

I am not so foolish as to declaim against forms. Forms are as essential as bodies; but to exalt particular forms, to adhere to one form a moment after it is outgrown, is unreasonable, and it is alien to the spirit of Christ. If I understand the distinction of Christianity, the reason why it is to be preferred over all systems and is divine is this, that it is a moral system; that it presents men with truths which are their own reason and enjoins practices that are their own justification ... I am not engaged to Christianity by any decent forms, or saying ordinances; it is not usage ... that binds me to it ...61

59 Journals, VII, 137.
60 Journals, VII, 169.
60a Journals, VI, 218.
He had buttressed his sermon on the Lord's Supper with a careful analysis of the Scriptural and traditional arguments for the communion service, using the logic of the Quakers as found in Clarkson, and perhaps using arguments sent home from Germany by William to Dr. Ripley at Concord. But the sermon made clear that the careful reasoning was a sop for the weaker brethren. His basic objection was the importance given to a form that seemed no longer useful to him.

His attitude toward forms was an extreme example of the Protestant view that forms are means to an end, that they are not in themselves sacred. Protestantism reduced the number of sacraments from seven to two, and stated in such creedal organizations of belief as the Augsburg Confession that all forms are worthless, unless the spirit of God moves in the heart of the worshipper. The Roman Catholic doctrine of *ex opere operato* was understood by Protestants to mean that salvation came by the mechanical work of the sacrament.

As soon as the coin in the coffer rings,
The soul from purgatory springs,
said Tetzel in Germany. This was not orthodox Catholic doctrine, but it represented Catholicism to Protestants for generations. Even such a lover of the forms of the Anglican Church as Jeremy Taylor wrote,

For no rational man can think that any ceremony can make a spiritual change without a spiritual act of him that is to be changed; nor work by way of nature, or by charm, but morally, and after the manner of reasonable creatures.

The seventeenth century Cambridge Platonist, John Smith, wrote in his *Select Discourses*,

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I fear we are too apt to sink all our religion into these ceremonies as if religion were fast locked and bound up in some sacred solemnities... as the superstitious heathen of old thought, that it might stir abroad and wander too far out of these hallowed cloisters, and grow too busy with us in our secular employments.64

Emerson might have even remembered the words of Watts's hymns, and reminded his congregation that their forefathers had sung for many years these words:

Not all the outward forms on earth,
Nor rites that God has giv'n
Nor will of man, nor blood, nor birth
Can raise a soul to heav'n.

The sov'reign will of God alone
Created us heirs of grace
Born in the image of his Son
A new peculiar race.65

Only the Quakers were completely consistent in the carrying out of the implications of this way of thinking, however, and so it was in Clarkson that Emerson found the specific precedents for the conviction he expressed in the Lord's Supper sermon.66

As early as 1826, he had debated in the Journal the values and weakness of public prayer.67 He finally decided that the practice of the pastoral prayer spoken aloud at the fixed hour on Sunday morning was also a requirement that did injustice to the spirit. He might have found reinforcement for that point of view in Barclay's True Christian Divinity, which he read in 1835, as well as in the ideas expressed by the Quakers.

64P. 373.
65Watts, Hymns, p. 78.
66Turpie, loc. cit.
67Journals, II, 92.
he met in New Bedford. Barclay wrote: "... preaching and praying without the Spirit is an offending of God, not a waiting upon him."

The break with the Second Church did not mean a final break with the church in general. Emerson preached a few times at New Bedford and there were discussions concerning the possibility of his being called permanently to that church. Apparently he was not unwilling, but did stipulate the condition that he would pray on Sunday morning only when the Spirit moved him. This was felt to be an unsatisfactory arrangement and the negotiations were broken off.

Later Emerson preached at the church at East Lexington for three years, until 1838. When he finally ceased his responsibility with that church, it was on his initiative; the people there were apparently sorry that he would no longer be responsible for their services.

Emerson's interest in the church and in preaching did not cease in 1838. He was always the religionist and moralist, but he was also interested in the organized expression of religion. There are hundreds of comments in the Journals about churches and preaching. As late as 1867 he was lecturing on "The Preacher" at the home of the Reverend J. T. Sargent in Boston. The lecture, with additions, was read to the divinity students in Cambridge in 1879. This lecture affirmed his faith in what he regarded as the two great Christian institutions, the Sabbath and preaching. He said in the Lord's Supper

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69 McGiffert, Young Emerson Speaks, p. xxxvii.
70 Rusk, Letters, II, 113.
71 Works, X, 215-239.
sermon that the ministry had many duties which "will ever be my delight to discharge according to my ability, wherever I exist." 72

During the years at the Second Church, he had already begun to develop the characteristic Emersonian affirmations in sermons preached there, as the sermon title, "Trust Yourself," indicated. 73 Some of the early lectures were brought into the pulpit at the East Lexington church and elsewhere. His lectures on "Martin Luther," "George Fox," "Peace," and "Religion" were all used in the East Lexington church. 74 It must therefore have seemed to him that there were only slight and unimportant differences between the pulpit and the lecture platform as a means of educating and inspiring men through eloquent discourse. He wrote in the Journal in October, 1839, a passage using an ecclesiastical trope that indicates his feeling that his vocation had not substantially changed.

What shall be the substance of my shrift? Adam in the garden, I am to new name all the beasts in the field, and all the gods in the sky, I am to invite men drenched in Time to recover themselves and come out of time, and taste their native immortal air. I am to fire with what skill I can the artillery of sympathy and emotion. I am to indicate constantly, though all unworthy, the Ideal and Holy Life, the life within life, the Forgotten Good, the Unknown Cause in which we sprawl and sin. I am to try the magic of sincerity, that luxury permitted only to kings and poets. I am to celebrate the spiritual powers in their infinite contrast to the mechanical powers and the mechanical philosophy of the time. I am to console the brave sufferers under evils whose end they cannot see by appeals to the great optimism, self-affirmed in all bosoms. 75

This ministry to man has been recognized by many. Matthew Arnold's

72 Works, XI, 24-25.
73 McGiffert, Young Emerson Speaks, p. 105.
74 Ibid., pp. xxxvii-xxxviii.
75 Journals, V, 288-289.
comment that Emerson is the "friend and aider of those who live in the spirit" is paralleled by the statement with which McGiffert ends his account of the preaching career.

No longer limited to a single pulpit for his utterance, he became, first an itinerant lay preacher not only to New England, but to the advancing West; and finally minister at large to imprisoned, dormant and inquiring minds everywhere.

Along with his continued interest in preaching and organized expressions of religion was a continuing interest in the study of the literature of Christian thought. He continued to study the documents of historic Christianity, until he had surveyed an imposing bibliography. A study of the Journals, and of the borrowings from various libraries reported by Cameron will indicate something of the comprehensiveness of the historical range of the books concerned with Christian thought. Emerson's interest in history as a whole and in the religion of all societies makes it difficult to abstract the ones related specifically to Christianity thoroughly.

He studied several general histories of Christianity. He used Mosheim's An Ecclesiastical History twice, in 1823 and in 1831, confining his reading to volume one of a six-volume work. He checked out Milner's History of the Church of Christ in 1834, taking only volume four, which concerned the Reformation. Since he checked out a life of Luther by Bower the same day, it is probable that he was interested in a background

76 Discourses in America, p. 179.
77 McGiffert, Young Emerson Speaks, p. xi.
78 Ralph Waldo Emerson's Reading and Emerson the Essayist, II, 149-186.
for the events of Luther's life. In 1828, he checked out Paola Sarpi's account of The Council of Trent. He read other works concerning the early period of the Christian era. One of these was William Cave's Apostolici, or The history of the lives, acts, death, and martyrdom of . . . the primitive father. He checked out the same year a translation of Eusebius's collection of The Ancient Ecclesiastical Histories of the first six hundred years, translated by Meredith Hammer in the sixteenth century. In 1829 he had checked out a study of the writings of the primitive fathers and of the later theologians made by the dissenting English preacher, Nathaniel Lardner.

Lardner's attitude toward religion is indicated by the comment of his biographer that he felt the two great enemies of religion were infidelity and enthusiasm. He wanted religion to be "clear and plain." "His piety, too, was of the most rational kind." He wanted above all to remove mystery from religion so that all men could understand it.79 Lardner felt the need in the rational atmosphere of the eighteenth century to prove the truth of the Christian religion, when it was being questioned for resting its case on revelation. In essence he was trying to defend religion in terms that would be agreeable with Locke's dicta that real religion can never be contrary to reason.80 He applied something of the beginning science of Biblical criticism to the later texts and histories written by the church fathers. His first two volumes contained a history of the fathers through Barnaby, Clement, Ignatius, and

79 Nathaniel Lardner, Works, I, lxxxviii-lxxxix, biography by Andrew Kippis.

80 Frederick Mayer, A History of Modern Philosophy, p. 192.
Justine Martyr, but in subsequent volumes, he continued his work until he had written a history of the first twelve centuries of the Christian era. Although a dissenter, he was quite conservative, and his history was designed to prove the "credibility of gospel history." His method of proof was to state that without the miracles and literal resurrection from the dead of Jesus, the Christian church could not have begun to exist. Since the church exists, the miracles must have happened. He demonstrated the accuracy of the reporters by pointing out the historical correctness of their report, and thereby concluded that they were accurate channels of information.

The work is interesting as a forerunner of the eighteenth century attempts to prove the truth of the gospel by rational methods. There are references to it in the sermons of such men as Buckminster, Everett, and others. No doubt Emerson read the work partly because of the doubts concerning religion that he had, inspired by Hume. He was looking for "a victorious answer to these calumnies upon our nature." Emerson withdrew volume three of Lardner from the Divinity School in 1829, and volumes one and two from the Athenaeum in 1831.

That all of the rational defenses of Christianity proved finally unsatisfactory to Emerson is suggested in a comment written many years later that expressed his opinion of Paley and Butler, as well as Lardner. "The saint is . . . quite careless of the vaunted evidences. He has vision." 82

82 Journals, X, 233.
There are some books indicating special interests that show up on the bibliography. The Emerson family had withdrawn a history of the Quakers by Clarkson in 1817. Emerson withdrew two of the three volumes of the book in June of 1832 from the Athenaeum. That he was interested in the Quakers is shown by his reading in the works of other Quaker writers. He used Sewell’s *History of the Quakers*. He checked out volumes of the works of Penn in 1830, in 1832, and 1835. He checked out *An Apology for the True Christian Divinity*, written by the Scotch Quaker Robert Barclay in the last quarter of the seventeenth century, from the Athenaeum in 1835. There are references to Fox, Woolman, and the martyr James Naylor in the Journals, in addition.

Emerson checked out a book by George Fox and John Burnyeat called *A New England Firebrand Quenched (An Answer to Roger Williams)*, from the Athenaeum in 1835. The book is difficult to read because of its emotional attack on the Puritans for their cruelties toward the Quakers. It describes a visit to Rhode Island by Fox and his companion not long after the persecution of Quakers ceased in 1660 by order of King Charles. The book is a good example of the term Emerson used in describing his letter to President Van Buren protesting the treatment of the Cherokee Indians; the letter he said was only a scream, but sometimes “a scream is better than a thesis.” Fox’s book is a scream of indignation, in which at least every third or fourth page contains a sentence like the following:

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83 *Journals*, II, 335.
84 *Journals*, II, 497-500; IV, 173.
85 *Cabot*, II, 433.
And our Hope and Trust and confidence is in the Lord, the Living God, and we do not fear what man can do unto us; for had we, we had never [stood] WHIPPING-STOCKS Your GALLOWSES TO DEATH (whose BLOOD Crie to God through the Nations) and your CUTTING OFF EARS and your HOT BRANDING IRONS and your cruel mockings and threats, and SPOILING OF GOODS and besides all the Lies and Slanders and Forgeries that have been forged against ... the people of God called Quakers ... 66

Fox did not know as much about Roger Williams and Rhode Island as Emerson probably did, or at least could have learned from the rather intensive study he made of the primary documents that concerned New England history, political and religious. He was asked to make the principal oration on the two hundredth celebration of the founding of Concord, and so made a sustained effort to inform himself for the speech, which now appears in volume eleven of the Works.87

Rusk has discussed Emerson's use of the sources of New England history for his Concord Address. He wrote that "Emerson made a serious attack on the available sources of New England history."88 Among the many sources which he consulted was The History of the Province of Massachusetts-Bay, a history and a collection of New England documents by Thomas Hutchinson, the last royal governor of New England, and a descendant of Anne Hutchinson. The book contains a fascinating body of miscellaneous information concerning the early years of the colonies. Among them is a letter from the Rhode Island government to the government at Massachusetts-Bay, which is an interesting retort to the book written by Fox.

86Fox to the reader, no page.
87Pp. 27-87.
88Rusk, Life, p. 222.
And as concerning these Quakers, (so-called) we have no law among us whereby to punish any for only declaring by words, their minds and understandings concerning the things and ways of God as to salvation and an eternal condition. And we moreover finde that in those places where these people aforesaid in this coloney, are most of all suffered to declare themselves freely, and are only opposed by arguments in discourse, there they least of all desire to come and surely we find that they delight to be persecuted by civill powers, and when they are soe, they are like to gaine more adherents by the conceyte of their patients sufferings then by consent to their pernicious sayings. And yet we conceive, that their doctrine tend to very absolute cutting downe and overturning relations and civill governement among men, if generally received. But as to the damage that may in likelihood accrue to the neighbour colloneys by their being here entertaind, we conceive it will not prove so dangerous (as else it might) in regard of the course taken by you to send them away out of the countrey, as they come among you.

Other books mentioned by Emerson as the basis for his address were, in addition to the Hutchinson history, two books written by the first minister of Cambridge, the gentle Thomas Shepard: The Clear Sunshine of the Gospel, and New Englands Lamentation for Old Englands Present Errours. He used also the book written by his ancestor, Peter Bulkeley, The Gospel Covenant: or the Covenant of Grace Opened. Emerson's interest in Bulkeley appears several times in the Journal. As late as 1861 he thought of using a reference to the books left by Bulkeley as an illustration in a speech to the Concord school. He examined also the town records of Concord and the church records, as well as Johnson's Wonder Working Providence, Cotton Mather's Magnalia Christi Americana: or The Ecclesiastical History of New England. In addition to these he read other books, a history of the United States by Bancroft among them.

89 Thomas Hutchinson, The History of the Province of Massachusetts-Bay, p. 526.

90 Journals, IX, 316.
As early as 1823 the Journal records his having quoted Neal's *The History of the Puritans*. Daniel Neal (1678-1743) wrote a *History of New England*, for which Harvard gave him an M. A. degree. Emerson no doubt remembered *The History of the Puritans*, and so procured his *History of New England* while writing the "Concord Address." When *The History of the Puritans* was published in England in 1738, some Anglican ecclesiastics accused the author of prejudice. The portions read by this writer did not seem to merit the charge of excessive prejudice. It is true that Neal was identified by his biographer, a Dr. Jennings, as a Calvinist, and the book defended Calvinistic ideas, but the author seemed just as horrified by the cruelty of the Puritan party as he was by the excesses of Laud. The author began his account with Wyclif and the Lollards, discussed the translations of the Bible by Tyndale, and Henry VIII's disapproval of Tyndale. He also related Puritanism to the ideas of Augustine, "... our reformers built pretty much upon the plan of St. Austin with relation to the doctrines of justification and grace." The book is lengthy, detailed, and constitutes a massive array of information about the period it covers. The author was probably not a great historian, but he was interested in the specific happenings and recounts many anecdotes, so that the book is interesting to read. Emerson remembered the book and wrote in 1848 that the work of Carlyle caused him to feel that "No book can any longer be tolerable in the old husky Neal-on-the-Puritans model."

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91 Daniel Neal, *The History of the Puritans*, biographical preface by a Dr. Jennings.

92 *Loc. cit.*

93 Neal, p. 44.

94 *Journals*, VIII, 262.
CHAPTER III

THE THREE LEGS OF CALVINISM

There are three literary channels of especial importance that should be considered in a study of the means by which Emerson's attitude toward historic Christianity was formed. They are Watts's Psalms and Hymns, Milton's Paradise Lost, and the Bible. There is an anecdote in the Journals that illustrates the significance of these three works of literature. The anecdote first occurs in the Journal of 1828.

Burnap, a student in the Divinity School, was very witty tonight. He said there was one man who had the queerest reputation--Dr. Watts--such a mixture of heathenism and scholastic learning and Calvinism and love and despair and mully-grubs--he was the funniest cock in the theological walk; that old Betty should be one of the three legs that support the Trinity, and that the church should go chanting his hymns for centuries, mistaking the effusions of bellyache for the inspirations of David--was the greatest phenomenon. ¹

By 1868 Emerson had a slightly different version of the story. He discussed Calvinism in the Journal, speaking of it as "acute, but narrow, ignorant and revengeful, yet devout." Then he remembered the anecdote of Burnap, in slightly altered form.

I remember that Burnap in the Cambridge Divinity School used to say that Calvinism stood on three legs,--Dr. Watts's Psalms and Hymns, Milton's Paradise Lost, and the Westminster Catechism,--or was there not a fourth, King James's translation of the Bible?²

By his own standards, then, Emerson should have been familiar with

¹ Journals, II, 236-237.
Calvinism, for he knew all three or four legs. As a child he had studied the Catechism, his interest in Milton began early and never ceased, he knew the Bible thoroughly and intelligently, and he knew, and came later to appreciate, Watts's psalms and hymns.

Emerson's father was greatly interested in hymns, and compiled an anthology of them. He also required his children to memorize some hymns and psalms. Emerson himself recognized the importance of hymns in church worship, and preached a sermon on the subject at the Second Church. He pointed out in his sermon all the objections to the collection of psalms and hymns then used by the church and proposed a new one. His two main objections to the collection then in use, edited by Belknap, were the Trinitarian sentiments and the inappropriateness of many of the psalms. He found some of the psalms cruel, others he said described the Deity in anthropomorphic terms. He referred specifically to Dr. Watts as one who

though his mind was imprisoned in a dark and barbarous system of religious faith, did yet by the fervour of his piety and the freedom of his thought wonderfully raise the downtrodden muse of the English churches.

Perhaps his statement about Watts was also based on reading the volume of Watts's sermons that the Emerson family had withdrawn from the Boston Library society in 1819 and in 1821. He expressed regret that the "best poet"—Milton—wrote no hymns for the English tongue. He asked the congregation to buy a new set of hymnals, and later they did. One of the significant notes that appeared in the sermon is an awareness of the psychological effects of hymn singing. He spoke of the "power of the

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3 McGiffert, Young Emerson Speaks, pp. 145-151.

4 Ibid., p. 147.
music, the associations of the place." Here he referred to one of the
great means by which religion is transmitted from one generation to the
next; Emerson was aware of the basic conservatism of religion and wanted
the hymns to express the ideas that seemed correct to him. 5

As the years passed, Emerson's attitude toward the psalms of Watts
changed subtly. The process which he had suggested in his sermon was
no doubt at work; the hymns and psalms he had sung in his youth had
poignant memories attached to them. He wrote of his stepgrandfather
Ezra Ripley and his old meeting house.

I am sure all who remember both will associate his form
with whatever was grave and droll in the old, cold, unpainted,
uncarpeted, square-pewed meeting house, with its four iron­
gray deacons in their little box under the pulpit,—with Watts' hymns, with long prayers, rich with the diction of ages . . . 6

Perhaps his admiration for Everett had something to do with the
change in his attitude toward Watts. He wrote an account of Everett's
influence on young people in 1842, in the Journal.

Especially beautiful were his quotations. He quoted
Milton, more rarely Byron; and sometimes a verse from Watts,
and with such sweet and perfect modulation that he seemed to
give as much beauty as he borrowed, and whatever he quoted
will seldom be remembered by any who heard him without in­
separable association with his voice and genius. 7

In 1869 Emerson gave a series of readings of his favorite literary
selections. The time, of course, was limited, and he had much to read;
he wrote in the Journal a long list of authors he regretted not having
read; among others, he regretted his failure to include some of Watts's

6 Works, X, 383.
7 Journals, VI, 255-256.
hymns. It is probable that early in his life Emerson's attitude toward Watts's hymns was a general dislike, based upon a recognition of the poorer qualities of many of the hymns and upon his general youthful disapprobation of the immediate past. As the years passed, he became more discriminating and felt that some of the hymns did have real value. If this is an accurate conclusion, it would indicate that Emerson was in agreement with church people in general, since a few of the Watts hymns have been preserved by Protestantism, and appear generally in many hymnals. The knowledge of Watts's hymns is significant as a sign of his knowledge of one of the "legs" upon which Calvinism and Christianity in general rested.

Emerson's interest in Milton and his knowledge of the work of the English poet is frequently shown in the Journals. One of the sources of Milton's power over Emerson was through the associations he felt between Milton and his family. Rusk has discussed Mary Moody Emerson's interest in Milton,9 and Emerson recalled later in his life his aunt's fondness for quoting Milton.10 There were other family ties he felt that were associated with the poetry of Milton. He made a walking trip with his brother, William, on one occasion; and they took a volume of Milton along to read.11 One of the many passages expressing his admiration for Milton in the Journals, indicated his association of Milton with his

8 Journals, X, 283.
9 Rusk, Life, p. 25.
10 Journals, X, 219.
11 Rusk, Letters, I, 115.
memories of his dead brothers, Charles and Edward. 12

There is much in the Journals to indicate that Emerson believed the implications of Burnap's story were true insofar as the relationship between the Puritans and Milton were concerned. He thought Puritanism should be credited with producing Milton. He described Milton's education, then wrote:

Well, on the man to whose unpalled taste this delicious fountain is opened add the fury and concentration of the Hebraic genius, through the hereditary and already culminated Puritanism,—and you have Milton . . . 13

He made other approving references to the effect of Puritanism on English letters and literature.14 "The Puritans had done their duty to literature when they bequeathed it the Paradise Lost and Comus . . ."15

Although Emerson did not hesitate to identify Milton with the Puritans, he also recognized that as a Puritan, Milton was not lost in the party or to be identified with the party.16 Dowden has argued that Milton is not to be called a Puritan.17 His argument rests on the same perception that Emerson has expressed in the passage cited above, of Milton's independence. To Emerson, however, Milton's independence was one of his Puritan characteristics.

In his address on Boston, Emerson described the idealism of the

12 Journals, IV, 395.
13 Journals, VII, 214.
14 Journals, VIII, 500.
16 Works, XII, 270.
17 Dowden, Puritan and Anglican Studies in Literature, pp. 176-183.
early settlers at Boston.

So these Englishmen, with the Middle Ages still obscuring their reason, were filled with Christian thought. They had a culture of their own. They read Milton, Thomas à Kempis, Bunyan and Flavel with religious awe and delight, not for entertainment. They were precisely the idealists of England. 18

That Milton had religious authority for the New Englanders, Emerson remarked in a comment he made about his aunt,

Nobody can read in her manuscripts, or recall the conversation of old school people, without seeing that Milton and Young had religious authority in their minds, and nowhere the slight, merely entertaining quality of modern bards. 19

Emerson believed that Milton had greatly influenced "the result of human history." 20 The source of Milton's power over events lay, in Emerson's judgment, in the poet's absolute sincerity.

The sentiment which like Milton's comes down to new generations is that which was no sham or half sentiment to Milton himself, but the utterance of his inmost self 21

Sincerity is a merit only when the self to be revealed is a worthy one. The values that Emerson found in the "inmost self" of Milton were the values that Emerson himself preferred. He spoke of Milton as a "saint," 22 "a religious genius," 23 "the most devout man of his time," 24
and said that he was a prophet as clearly as was Moses or Isaiah. In addition to his sense of Milton's piety, he felt a great respect for Milton's moral sensitivity. There is a paean to moral beauty in the Journals in which he cites the Comus and Milton's tract, Reasons for Church Government Urged Against Prelaty, as incitements to moral beauty. He almost never failed to associate morality with Milton.

Nor can I conceive of any man of sense reading the chapter of Milton [Book 2, c. 1, of Prelaty] without his heart warming to the touch of noble sentiments; and his faith in God and in the eternity of virtue and truth being steadfastly confirmed.

He saw also in Milton that virtue of trust in God which he called self-reliance. That Milton had significant influence over Emerson in the area of ideas and religion, though not in literary craftsmanship, has been pointed out by Richard C. Pettigrew in an article entitled "Emerson and Milton." Pettigrew wrote:

According to Emerson's theory of poetry, the vital union of truth, goodness and beauty which is so marked in the works of Milton, would naturally arouse in Emerson genuine enthusiasm for the English poet. But when Emerson approaches Milton in a critical spirit, we find him overemphasizing the ethical element at the expense of technical appreciation ... We note at once Emerson's especial interest in the moral characteristics of Milton's poetry. The greater part of his essay on Milton emphasized the degree to which his poetry reflected Milton's character; his spiritual humility and idealism; and his emphasis on his all possessing love of liberty in all its aspects.

Emerson was not uncritical of Milton, however. He felt that even

25 Journals, III, 222.
26 Journals, I, 345.
27 Journals, III, 449.
29 American Literature, III (1931), 45-59.
the self-reliant Milton had relied too much on tradition, and he objected to his overuse of Hebraisms and of royal imagery.  

Emerson's knowledge of Milton must have begun very early in his life. Rusk reported that he knew Milton through the life written by Johnson as early as 1815. Cameron has reported the borrowing of various volumes of Milton's prose during the 1820's and 1830's. Rusk reported that the largest group of the Milton quotations in Emerson's letters are from Paradise Lost, but there are in addition allusions to Paradise Regained, to the minor poems, and even to some of the letters of Milton. The time when Emerson first became acquainted with the English translation of Milton's Latin treatise on theology, De Doctrina Christiana, is apparently not recorded. There is a very late reference to it in the Journal for 1861, but since the book aroused a stir of public interest on its publication in 1825, it seems probable that Emerson must have known it not long after publication.

The nineteenth century feeling that Milton was heterodox, expressed by such defenders of the faith as the editor of the first edition of the De Doctrina Christiana, the Anglican bishop, Charles R. Sumner, (in the preface and footnotes), is not supported by some twentieth century commentators. C. S. Lewis, also Anglican, has defended the poem, Paradise Lost from the imputation of heterodoxy. He said that the De Doctrina

30 Journals, III, 328-329.  
31 Rusk, Letters, iii.  
32 Emerson the Essayist, I and II; and Ralph Waldo Emerson's Reading.  
33 Rusk, Letters, iii.  
34 Journals, IX, 320.
Christiana is Arian, in that Milton expressed a disbelief in the "coeternity and equal deity of the three persons." He believed, however, that the Arianism does not appear in the poem, *Paradise Lost* or in *Paradise Regained*; and therefore they are in his words,

Augustinian . . . and also Catholic in the sense of basing its poetry on conceptions that have been held 'always and everywhere and by all' [in the Christian world].

Douglas Bush has written a discussion that emphasized the similarities of Milton with the seventeenth century divines, Anglicans such as Jeremy Taylor, and Cambridge Platonists like Whichcote. As Bush observed, Milton's Arianism is not particularly important except as an example of Milton's independent thinking. In any case, Milton's conception is very close to orthodoxy; the fact that Milton conceived Jesus to have been created and therefore not co-eternal with God, did not prevent Milton from describing Christ's mission in quite traditional terms, as Bush said.

With all Milton's emphasis on reason and moral choice, he is thoroughly orthodox in making Christ the incarnation of divine love and the atonement the great manifestation of that love.

It seems probable that Milton contributed little or nothing to Emerson's Unitarianism, which was the result of the liberal movement in the New England churches under the leadership of Dr. Channing. Since the *De Doctrina Christiana* did not appear until after 1825, and since the poetry

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35C. S. Lewis, *A Preface to Paradise Lost*, p. 84.
36Ibid., p. 81.
38Ibid., p. 45.
39Loc. cit.
contained nothing unorthodox enough "to be observed by generations of devout readers,"\textsuperscript{40} it would appear that the influences of Milton were not primarily significant factors in Emerson's Unitarianism. The specific contributions of Milton will be discussed in later sections of this paper, especially in the discussion of self-reliance and of the problem of evil. That Milton was an important channel by which one interpretation of the Christian tradition came to Emerson seems to be a safe conclusion.

Harriet R. Zink's monograph, "Emerson's Use of the Bible," shows the great extent of Emerson's knowledge of the Bible and the great frequency of the appearance of Biblical quotations and allusions in the Emersonian corpus. Her conclusions are verified by Rusk's comment that in his collection of the letters, the largest single group of quotations and allusions comes from the Bible, followed by Shakespeare and by Milton. Interestingly enough, the largest group of Biblical quotations comes from the Psalms,\textsuperscript{41} which is no doubt the result of the influence of Watts on the Psalm-singing Puritans.

Emerson's attitude toward the Bible was one of great respect. "This old Bible, if you pitch it out the window with a fork, it comes bouncing back again."\textsuperscript{42} He wrote in the Journal that Shakespeare was inferior to Isaiah.\textsuperscript{43} On another occasion he wrote that if he could have only one book for the rest of his life, he would take the Bible. But his respect

\textsuperscript{40}\textsuperscript{Bush, p. 45.}
\textsuperscript{41}\textsuperscript{Rusk, Letters, I, ii.}
\textsuperscript{42}\textsuperscript{Journals, VI, 317.}
\textsuperscript{43}\textsuperscript{Journals, VIII, 353.}
was not uncritical.

He was unwilling to subordinate his mind or his conscience to the Bible, as McGiffert has pointed out. McGiffert quoted from one of the sermons,

Let it be supposed that in any case a man is clearly of the opinion that Saint Peter or Saint Paul is mistaken, and positively lays down a false doctrine, the faith he follows has educated him, I say, to reject that doctrine.44

In making this statement he was quite in line with precedents set for him by some of the earlier Protestant writers. Milton wrote in the De Doctrina Christiana,

It is difficult to conjecture the purpose of Providence in committing the writings of the New Testament to such uncertain and variable guardianship, unless it were to teach us by this very circumstance that the Spirit which is given to us is a more certain guide than Scripture, whom therefore it is our duty to follow.45

Emerson had perhaps not yet read the De Doctrina Christiana when he preached the sermon quoted by McGiffert. But he had correctly understood the spirit of Milton, through his studies of Paradise Lost and the prose works that were available to him. Emerson wrote in the first paragraph of "Self-Reliance," "the highest merit we ascribe to Moses, Plato, and Milton is that they set at naught books and traditions, and spoke not what men, but what they thought."46

The Anglican Bishop C. R. Sumner47 commented on the passage from

44McGiffert, Young Emerson Speaks, p. xxv.
45John Milton, Works, IV, 448-449.
46Works, II, 45.
47Translator and editor of the Christian Doctrine used in the preparation of this thesis, though not used by Emerson so far as the present writer knows.
Milton quoted above,

It is singular that Milton should have fallen into this error, which is that of the Quakers. Once admitted, it opens the door to any wild conceit which the imagination can frame.48

Milton was not alone in the seventeenth century in refusing to make the Bible the final authority. Dowden has pointed out Hooker's refutation of the idea that the Bible is the chief and only source of religious authority, in the second book of the Ecclesiastical Polity. Dowden quoted the following statement:

Whatsoever either men on earth or the angels in heaven do know, it is as a drop of that unemptiable fountain of wisdom; which wisdom hath diversely imparted her treasures unto the world . . . Some things she openeth by the sacred books of Scripture; some things by the glorious works of nature; with some things she inspireth them from above by spiritual influence; in some things she leadeth and traineth them only by worldly experience and practice. We may not so in any one special kind admire her, that we disgrace her in any other.49

It is quite clear that the Cambridge Platonist, mystic, and Puritan, John Smith, does not fulfill the stereotype of the literal Biblicist that is frequently associated with the Puritans. He was very willing to recognize the value of the classical and Platonic authors as sources of knowledge about morality and religion. One of Smith's fairly modern ideas was that the Bible was primarily a source of moral and religious truths; he did not consider it veritable history, or a source of astronomical, physical, geological or other kinds of information. He wrote:

I might instance in many more things of this nature, where-in the philosophical or physical nature and literal verity of things cannot so reasonably be supposed to be set forth to us

49. Dowden, p. 88.
as the moral and theological.

He was aware also of the great difficulty of deciding what the Bible meant:

\[\ldots\text{ though perhaps the Bible is not so clear in matters of speculation, as some magisterial men are apt to think it is.}\]

Bishop Sumner was quite correct in his judgment that Milton agreed with the Quakers in his attitude toward the Bible, as Emerson discovered by reading in Barclay, *An Apology for a True Christian Divinity*. Barclay pointed out the untrustworthiness of the Scriptures. Lutherans, Arminians and Calvinists disagree, "though they all do unanimously acknowledge it to be the rule." His conclusion is that the Bible must not be a good rule, if all disagree about its meaning. "Therefore the Scripture is not a good nor a certain rule." Barclay's final judgment on the matter is to emphasize the superiority of the inward testimony of the spirit to the Scripture. In this respect, the Quaker position was the logical carrying out of the implications of the belief of the reformers that nothing could save a man, not ceremonies, nor preaching, not reading the Bible, unless the effective Grace of God moved in the heart of the individual.

The efforts of John Locke were, of course, highly influential in

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50 John Smith, Select Discourses, p. 177. It has thus far been impossible to determine when Emerson may have read the Select Discourses. He planned to do so in October of 1829 (Journals, II, 268). There are laudatory references to John Smith in Journals, VIII, 127, and Works, IV, 40. These imply that he did read Smith's works.

51 Ibid., p. 62.


creating a new attitude toward the Bible. Dowden has summarized Locke's use of the Bible.

In his interpretation of the Bible, the reasonable temper, characteristic of Locke's entire habit of thought, is strikingly manifested. The sacred writings were not for him, as for the theologians of a preceding generation, a vast treasure of elaborated dogma; they did not constitute for him, as for Bunyan, a living book of magic, from which darted forth fiery sentences of terror or words of irresistible consolation. He tried to place himself in the position of each writer, to follow the writer's track of thought, to put to use the aids of history; he distrusted the inner light of private inspiration or enthusiasm; he recognized the misleading parallax of personal passion.54

The reasonable temper and distrust of enthusiasm appeared in several of the books concerning the Bible that Emerson studied. One has already been mentioned, Lardner, who was something of a Biblical critic, and who discussed the problems raised by the new science of Biblical criticism. Lardner used the reasonable approach of Locke to defend orthodoxy, generally, though he was on the liberal side in the Trinitarian-Unitarian conflict. He defended the Pauline authorship of fourteen of the epistles, and especially insisted on the Pauline authorship of Hebrews, now generally not thought Pauline.55 He objected to the harmony of the gospels made by MacKnight. He felt that the three gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke, did not depend on each other, but that each was an independent witness.56 His objection to a harmony was no doubt based on a fear that a harmony would show the weaknesses of his belief in the independence of the three gospels. His conservatism is fully seen in the judgments cited above.

54 Dowden, p. 317.
56 Nathaniel Lardner, Works, I, iii.
Emerson used the MacKnight Harmony of the Gospels in 1831, and could have then, if he wished, compared the ideas of Lardner with those of MacKnight. Another conservative interpretation of the Bible was used by the Emerson family in 1816, Newcome Cappe's Critical Remarks on Scriptures; Emerson checked out the Cappe book again in 1832. At Harvard in 1825 Emerson had access to the Paraphrase and Annotations of the New Testament, written in the middle of the seventeenth century by Henry Hammond; it is not a very useful work. The author believed that there were literal devils, driven out of the swine, in the account in Matt. 8:31.57

In 1831 Emerson withdrew from the Harvard Library Herbert Marsh's translation of Michaelis's Introduction to the New Testament. In that volume Emerson had access to German scholarship, but the scholarship of the period antedating the turn of the century, for the book was published in 1793. The most recent report from German criticism that Emerson had available was probably the book by the Unitarian Thomas Belsham, published in London in 1824, based on the work and texts of Griesbach. Emerson withdrew this book from the Divinity School library in 1828.

The volume was a new translation of the Pauline letters, by Belsham, based on the text by Griesbach. Belsham was the successor of Priestley and quoted Priestley and Locke with approval. He declared that every translation of the Bible reflected the bias of the translator; since he was Unitarian, and believed that

... the SIMPLE HUMANITY of Jesus Christ is the clear indissiputable doctrine of the New Testament, the Author makes no hesitation in avowing that he translates passages which admit

57Hammond, p. 42.
equally of two senses, in that which is most favourable to this plain and important doctrine.\textsuperscript{58}

Belsham defined inspiration as the supernatural communication of truth to the mind.\textsuperscript{59} He denied verbal infallibility, "That every sentence in every epistle and every word in every sentence, was dictated by the holy spirit."\textsuperscript{60} He emphasized the human side of the processes by which the Scripture was produced. He remarked,

When the language of the apostle is understood as the natural and unaffected expression of his own thoughts, views, and feelings, in the very extraordinary circumstances in which he was placed, and in the arduous and hazardous ministry with which he was charged, it gives a life, a spirit, a raciness, to his compositions, which they would not otherwise express.\textsuperscript{61}

Belsham expressed his indebtedness to Locke for the notes on the Epistles written by Locke, and for Locke's \textit{Essay on Human Understanding}. He repeated Locke's injunction that the epistles must be read as a whole from beginning to end, not erratically, a verse here or there. He denied emphatically that the epistles of Paul justify Calvinism.

Far indeed were they from being intended to incumber the plain and simple doctrine of Christ, with an additional mass of curious speculations concerning election and predestination, original sin, vicarious suffering, irresistible grace, imputed righteousness, and final perseverance, to none of which do the epistles, when rightly understood, give the least countenance.\textsuperscript{62}

Belsham was quite traditional in one or two details, however. He believed that all fourteen of the epistles are to be attributed to Paul.

\textsuperscript{58}Thomas Belsham, \textit{The Epistles of Paul the Apostle}, pp. xxxi-xxiii.

\textsuperscript{59}\textit{Ibid.}, p. xxv.

\textsuperscript{60}\textit{Ibid.}, p. xxviii.

\textsuperscript{61}\textit{Loc. cit.}

\textsuperscript{62}Belsham, \textit{The Epistles}, pp. xxxviii-xxix.
He believed in a literal appearance of Christ to Paul on the Damascus road, and in the direct education of Paul by Christ in Arabia.63

The character of Belsham's translation may be seen in his rendering of Romans 1: 4:

Who by natural descent was of the lineage of David, but with respect to his inspiration, was miraculously distinguished as the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead.

It is an interesting detail of the commentary that Belsham, while denying the Calvinist doctrine of original sin, insisted on the empirical correctness of the verses in Romans on which the doctrine had largely been based. He commented on Romans 3: 10 ("There is none righteous, no, not one," ) that

There is not an individual who can plead that he has himself fully complied with all the requisitions of the law, as to be in a strict and legal sense perfectly innocent and free from every offence in heart and life.64

He commented on Romans 3: 23 ("For there is no distinction; inasmuch as all have sinned and come short of the glory of God"),

I say all without exception; for there is no difference between the privileged Jew and the unprivileged Gentile, both parties having equally transgressed their respective institutes, having equally failed in their duty to God, having equally forfeited their antecedent privileges, and being equally obnoxious to the sentence of the violated law.65

It is clear that in this volume Emerson had access to the sort of Biblical criticism that in part had driven William from the ministry, in Göttingen. It was Eichhorn in Göttingen who gave William the latest theories of Biblical criticism, but as it turned out, Ralph did not need

63 Ibid., p. xxiii.
64 Ibid., p. 38.
65 Ibid., p. 43.
to go to Germany. The new ideas came to him. This perhaps was one of the significant contributions of the Unitarian strand of Christianity to Emerson's thought.

Emerson's interest in Biblical criticism continued all his life. He wrote to his brother, William, in Göttingen, asking about the ideas William was learning from Eichhorn, and inquiring whether he ought to learn Hebrew and German. In 1842 he asked Theodore Parker for a review of Strauss's work to be published in The Dial, and he wrote, with a note of tiredness in 1864, "I suppose I must read Renan, Vie de Jesus." Practically, however, Emerson had been freed from Bibliolatry at quite an early period in his life, as the quotation cited from the sermon at the beginning of this section indicates.

One of the most interesting aspects of Emerson's use of the Bible is well described in the letter he wrote to Henry Ware, Jr., explaining that he had no arguments to support the position he had taken in the Divinity School Address. His final sentence was a very adequate description of his way of reporting traditional ideas.

I shall go on just as before seeing whatever I can & telling what I see and I suppose with the same fortune as hitherto attended the joy of finding that my abler & better brothers... unexpectedly confirm my perceptions, & find my nonsense is only their own thought in motley.

Emerson's phrase, "in motley," is not quite fair to himself, yet it is a good one. He succeeded very well in translating the timeworn ideas of traditional Christianity and of the Bible into the idiom of the New

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66 Rusk, Letters, III, 54, 70, 71.
67 Journals, X, 18.
England Yankee. His literary skill, his verbal craftsmanship, was very successful; the response he received indicated that people understood him quite well. Ulich has described this ability of Emerson to dress the older ideas "in motley."

In a way, he secularized Christianity, if secularization means the transformation of older mythical symbols into the language of one's own time. He did so in order to rescue the living spirit of the past for the present. But if secularization meant to deprive life of its transcendence, then Emerson did exactly the opposite. 69

Emerson's term "motley" is not quite accurate, for sometimes he clothed the terms in the shimmering garb of the ballet dancer or the trapeze artist, instead of the motley of the clown. But always the terms were alive, always the expression succeeded in communicating the reality that Emerson had experienced to the mind of the listener or the reader. Emerson's ability to translate the traditional into "motley" will be illustrated a number of times in the thesis.

Part I of the dissertation has shown the channels by which Emerson acquired a thorough knowledge of Christianity. Through his family relationships he learned the basic ideas and attitudes of the Puritan tradition. His knowledge of the literary channels of Calvinism—Paradise Lost, Watts's hymns, the Westminster catechism, and the King James version of the Bible—was complemented by a study of the literature of Christianity generally. Emerson had studied the church fathers, including Augustine, and the medieval figures of importance to Christian thought. Emerson studied the period of the Reformation; his study of the religious literature

of the English speaking world for the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was thorough, long continued, and motivated by great interest. A by-product of the remainder of the dissertation will be the demonstration of the extent and thoughtful nature of Emerson's study of the literature of Christian thought. It seems to be a safe conclusion that Emerson was familiar with the basic ideas of Christian thought.
PART II

THE RELATIONSHIP OF CHRISTIAN THOUGHT TO CERTAIN AFFIRMATIONS IN EMERSON'S POETRY
PART II

PURPOSE AND METHODS

Part II of the dissertation is devoted to a development of the main contention, that, in the areas discussed, the affirmations contained in Emerson's poetry are in agreement with the Christian tradition.

Chapter IV discusses the problem of nature; the three elements of the discussion are the law of correspondences, the value of the commonplace, and the problem of the attitude that people should adopt toward the goods of the natural world. Chapter V discusses the paradox of the immanence and transcendence of God. Chapter VI discusses man's utter dependence on God—in Emersonian language, "self-reliance." Chapter VII discusses the problem of evil. Chapter VIII asserts that Emerson is a mystic, in the tradition of Christian mysticism. The dissertation concludes that, in all these areas, the affirmations contained in the poetry are in agreement with Christian thought.

Much of the problem posed by the task set forth above is one of definition and exposition. In each of the five chapters, there is an extensive exposition of the idea discussed in that chapter, in order to set up an acceptable standard for determining whether the ideas found in the poetry of Emerson conform to the standard that is established.

In order to make the definitions explicit, and to avoid impressionistic statements, the ideas that are discussed are those of persons who were the originators or determiners of the idea under discussion. In general, the method of Part II is first, to set up an acceptable
description of the idea; second, to point out how the idea may have come to Emerson; and finally, to indicate how the poetry of Emerson reflects the idea. There is some variation of the method, since the various areas present different problems. Where it seemed safe to assume that Emerson's general knowledge of Christianity, as shown in Part I, made the tracing of sources unnecessary, the discussion emphasizes other matters. Chapter VII, on the problem of evil, for example, is relatively less concerned with sources, although some influences are shown even there.

Since some of the conclusions represent contradictions of widely held judgments concerning Emerson, the discussions are fully developed in order to lay a safe foundation for the conclusion.
CHAPTER IV

THIS INSUBSTANTIAL PAGEANT

Chapter IV of the dissertation is intended to demonstrate that the ideas concerning the natural world contained in the poetry of Emerson are in agreement with the Protestant tradition. The chapter begins, therefore, with an account of the origin of the attitude toward nature adopted by Protestantism, primarily as a result of the work of Augustine. The work of Augustine has relevance to all the rest of the dissertation. The Augustinian piety is relevant to the chapter concerning the paradox of immanence and transcendence of God. Luther was an agency of importance in transition from Augustinian ideas to Protestantism, as Chapter VI shows. Augustinian piety has an important bearing on Emerson's solution to the problem of evil; it reappears for full consideration in the chapter on Emerson's mysticism.

The first section of the chapter, "The Historic Background," is immediately relevant in setting up as a standard the Protestant attitude toward the natural world, which may be used for a consideration of the treatment afforded the theme of nature in Emerson's poetry. It is hardly less relevant for the succeeding chapters; all the succeeding chapters rest upon the ideas and implications of the historic background described in Chapter IV. It is important, to cite but a single example, to keep in mind the precedent set by Augustine and later Christian thinkers in the use of Platonic philosophy, when studying Emerson's poetry. Harrison's
study of Emerson's ideas apparently ignored the material reported in the first part of Chapter IV. In effect, the Augustinian tradition, modified by Luther and later thinkers, is set up as the standard by which to determine whether the ideas contained in Emerson's poetry are in agreement with Christianity.

1. The Historic Background

Christianity began with men who had no training or interest in metaphysical speculation. When Christianity appeared in the cities where Greek culture was known, it had to compete with systems of thought of a high degree of sophistication. Evidences of influences of Greek thought appear in the Gospel of John, in the book of Hebrews, and in the Pauline letters. Clement and Origen, in Alexandria, were the first of the fathers to make more specific use of Greek thought to enable Christianity to compete with the various systems of philosophy in that center of culture and learning. Clement was not an indiscriminate admirer of Greek thought or of Plato, but he felt the Platonic system was most nearly useful for the faith he was defending. Origen continued to use Platonic concepts for the defense of the faith. The development of Neo-Platonism by Plotinus, who was a contemporary of Origen, was significant because of its later influence on Augustine. Augustine, born of a Christian mother, as a youth became a devotee of the Manichean sect, a group who believed in a radical dualism of good and evil. The Manicheans believed in two principles of Deity, one who was the creator of good, and one who was

1 John S. Harrison, *The Teachers of Emerson.*

the creator of evil. Eventually Augustine lost faith in the Manichean system, as a result of reading Plato, especially the *Timaeus*, and Plotinus. The Neo-Platonic solution to the problem of evil seemed more satisfactory to Augustine than the Manichean. He was responsible for making the Platonic and Neo-Platonic solution one of the basic elements of Christianity. The result of his accepting the Neo-Platonic solution was an immediate conversion to the Catholic Church, as McGiffert reported.

The result, however, was not as strange as it seems. The kinship between Platonism and Christianity had long been recognized by the church Fathers, both east and west, and Victorinus himself, the translator of Plotinus, had died a Christian. Once released from the radical dualism of the Manicheans, which made the Catholic belief in divine creation impossible, ... Augustine swung back naturally to the Catholic Church. Platonism and Catholic Christianity, he believed, were at bottom really one. Both of them laid emphasis on the contrast between the visible and invisible worlds, both interpreted man and the universe in similar ways, both recognized a divine Logos, and both had a doctrine of the Trinity. (The Neoplatonic Trinity, suggested already in Plato’s *Timaeus*, was the supreme good, or one, the reason or word, and the soul of the world.) Platonism, as he understood it, seemed to Augustine only the philosophical expression of what in Christianity appeared in popular and unphilosophical form. Plato he thought of as the Christ of the philosophers, Christ as the Plato of the masses. ... while Manichaeism and Catholic Christianity were mutually exclusive, Neoplatonism and Catholic Christianity were not, and hence when he had been required to withdraw from the Catholic church when he became a Manichaean, he could now return to it.3

Later in his career, more steeped in orthodoxy, Augustine would, no doubt, have qualified his statement of the identity of Platonism and Christianity. But the interrelationships are many and the affinities great, and the influence of Augustine upon the Christian church has been so great that it is difficult to untangle many of the most characteristic strains of Christianity from the Platonism that has become its handmaiden,

Augustine's knowledge of the Platonic corpus was limited to a small part of the whole that we now have. He was unaware of the difficulty of deciding which were Socrates's ideas and which were the ideas of Plato. There was no doubt in his mind whether Plato was a monist or a dualist. Lovejoy has described the difficulties in solving these two problems in his book, *The Great Chain of Being*. Platonism's usefulness to Christianity did not depend upon solving those problems, however.

One of the great contributions of Plato to Christianity was a philosophic solution to the problem of nature. The Manichaean attitude toward the natural world was that it was evil, because it was created by an evil deity. Salvation lay in having as little to do with the world as possible. The asceticism recommended by the Manichaean sect was thorough, including celibacy and vegetarianism. Plato differed from the Manichaean attitude by assuming that this world, in some sense, is derived from the other world. That God created the world is so thoroughly accepted by the western world that a philosophic statement of this doctrine hardly seems necessary. The value of Platonism to Christianity was, however, in providing a philosophic argument against the dualism of the Manichaeans.

Lovejoy traced out the manifold and profound implications of Platonism for Western thought in his *The Great Chain of Being*. He described the paradoxical relationship between the other world and this world: the creator, though perfect in every respect, and in no need of companionship or anything other than self, must still have been responsible for creating this world, with all its imperfections. Furthermore, every imperfection

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must be necessary to the perfection of the whole. According to Lovejoy there is in Plato

a peculiarly exuberant kind of this-worldliness. For his philosophy no sooner reaches its climax in what we may call the otherworldly direction than it reverses its course. Having arrived at the conception of an Idea of Ideas which is a pure perfection alien to all the categories of ordinary thought and in need of nothing external to itself, he forthwith finds in just this transcendent and absolute Being the necessitating logical ground of the existence of this world: and he does not stop short of the assertion of the necessity and worth of the existence of all conceivable kinds of finite, temporal imperfect and corporeal beings. Plato clearly was dissatisfied with a philosophy in which no ground or explanation of the existence of mundane things, and of the number and of diversity of their several modes and degrees of imperfection, was so much as suggested, and in which the flux was a wholly senseless and supererogatory addition to the Eternal. And if any reason for the being of the sensible world was to be found, it must necessarily, for Plato, be found in the Intellectual world, and in the very nature of the sole Self-Sufficing Being. The not-so-good, not to say the bad, must be apprehended as a derivative Idea of the Good, as involved in the essence of perfection. The self-same God who was the Goal of all desire must also be the Source of the creatures that desire it.5

On the other hand for Platonic thought this world was conceived as

a place of illusion; it had no reality, or stability, to the Platonic mind. The real to the Platonist is the eternal, the unchanging. This world, subject to change, can not satisfy the demand for a reality that is changeless. Lovejoy described Plato's attitude toward this world.

The world we now and here know--various, mutable, a perpetual flux of states and relations of things, or an ever-shifting phantasmagoria of thoughts and sensations, each of them lapping into nonentity in the very moment of its birth--seems to the otherworldly mind to have no substance in it; the objects of sense and even of empirical scientific knowledge are unstable, contingent, forever breaking down logically into mere relations to other things which when scrutinized prove equally relative and elusive.6

6 Ibid., pp. 25-26.
The similarity between this attitude toward the world, and the Christian belief that the world was created *ex nihilo* was close enough to regard the Platonic view as a philosophic statement of the Christian position.

Christianity’s use of Platonism was continued through the work of Anselm, the great medieval philosopher; but after the year 1200, when the works of Aristotle became available, the major thinkers adopted the Aristotelian approach. The thirteenth century was devoted to recasting theology in Aristotelian terms, by such thinkers as Alexander of Hales, Bonaventure and Albertus Magnus, the teacher of Aquinas. The synthesis of Aristotelian philosophy and Christian theology achieved in the *Summa Theologiae* dominated the thought and literature of the Christian world during the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, as the *Divine Comedy* illustrates.

Since Aristotelian philosophy dominated the world of Catholicism and of the schoolmen, Aristotle was held in low repute by the Protestant reformers of the sixteenth century; they rejected Aristotle along with the Roman Catholic church. The new manuscripts from Constantinople made fuller knowledge of Plato possible; and the Italians, Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499) and Pico Mirandello, (1463-?), devoted their lives to a study of the Platonic material. An important Platonist of the Renaissance was Petrus Ramus, as Miller has shown. Ramus was primarily responsible for a kind of logic that the Protestants and especially the Puritans, seized

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7 Fuller, I, 389-408.

8 See *The Seventeenth Century*, pp. 116-117, for a brief account of his career.
upon to defend their views against the Aristotelian logic of the Catholics and against Hooker's use of Aristotelian logic in his defense of the polity of the Anglican church. Many versions of the Ramist logic appeared in England in the seventeenth century, including one by John Milton. The Ramist logic was the dominating system at Harvard until well into the eighteenth century, Miller reported. Miller believed that the great interest of the Puritans in the logic of Ramus was the defense it gave them of universals in the old argument against the nominalists.

Thus the ancient battle over universals was renewed, with the Ramists taking up the "Platonic" chant that if general concepts are merely figments of the mind and not objective essences, then no generalization has any relevance to facts. The important thing was that logic does take hold on reality.

Thus it appears that the appeal of this logic to the Puritan mind resulted from its satisfying one of the deepest desires of that mind. A world made up of concrete entities which conformed to no collective terms, to no laws or rules conceived by men could never serve as the scene for the drama of salvation; Puritanism's need for a stick to beat the dog of nominalism was desperate, as is shown by the recurrence in the literature of New England of the insistence that universals are objectively real.

There were far reaching results of the adoption of Platonism by Christianity. The belief that God could be known by reading the book of nature was given philosophic support. The doctrine of common grace was a theological concept that was supported by the Platonic belief that this world with all its imperfections was derived from the perfect other world.

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9 Ibid., p. 118.
10 Ibid., pp. 118-125.
11 Ibid., p. 147.
12 Loc. cit.
The Protestant attitude toward the goods of this world was undergirded by the Platonic philosophy. The elements of mysticism in Christianity were emphasized and given philosophic rationalization.

The following sections of the chapter will be devoted to the development of the three preceding ideas which, made explicitly a part of Christian thought by Augustine, were important elements of the Christian tradition, and appeared in the poetry of Emerson.

2. The Laws Below Are Sisters of the Laws Above

It is apparently not generally recognized that the law of correspondences, which is associated with Emerson's name, was not originated by Emerson or by Swedenborg. The following section of the dissertation is intended to show that the law of correspondences, which was made an explicit part of Christian thought by the work of Augustine, was a familiar part of Christian thought, both Catholic and Protestant, that the concept came to Emerson through many channels, and that his usage of the principle was in accord with traditional Christianity. The section will therefore discuss the origin of the principle and will provide a detailed report of the use of the principle by religious writers, both Catholic and Protestant, in order to demonstrate the widespread usage of the principle and to point out the large number of works available to Emerson that contained the principle.

Not the least of the influences of Plato on western thought was his description of this world as the shadow or image of a perfect world of ideas. He was, therefore, the original source of the principle in Emersonian thought called the law of correspondences.
The Platonic doctrine has a long history; present day scholars debate the precise relationship that Plato believed the ideas have to the sensory world in which man lives. Possibly the traditional interpretation of Plato was wrong; nevertheless it was highly influential. For theology, the Platonic doctrine seemed close to the Biblical statements that the nature of the Creator could be read in the creation. The Psalms insisted that "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handiwork." Natural theology, or the study of nature was recognized as a valuable, but limited, means of insight into the nature of God and reality.

The doctrine appeared in Catholic theology in form not very different from the form in which Emerson used it and with about the same function. Lovejoy reported that Cardinal Bellarmino, (1542-1621), wrote in a treatise entitled *De ascensione mentis in Deum per scalas creaturarum*, that God willed that man should in some measure know him through his creatures, and because no single created thing could fitly represent the infinite perfection of the creator, he multiplied creatures, and bestowed on each a certain degree of goodness and perfection, that from these we might form some idea of the goodness and perfection of the Creator, who in one most simple and perfect essence, contains perfection.

Like Emerson, Bellarmino felt that the study of the creatures, of the visible world, was not an end in itself. It was a means of knowing spiritual and moral truths, and finally God himself. There was considerably more appreciation for the visible forms by Emerson, than by the cardinal, but Emerson was closer to the cardinal, than to the

13 Fuller, I, 133-135.
14 Psalms 19: 1.
15 Lovejoy, p. 91.
scientist who makes gathering knowledge an end in itself. Lovejoy summarized the position of Bellarmino in these words:

Bellarmino concedes that "we are not commanded while on this earth to put away all consolation from creatures." Yet their chief office is to remind us of their own transiency and insufficiency or to serve as sensible symbols of supersensible attributes of deity.10

That men were to read the book of nature and to learn of God's wisdom, and to some degree his will for men was a truism in the seventeenth century Protestant writers, judging by the frequency of the idea across the gamut of theological opinions.

Almost every work of religious literature read by Emerson, published in the seventeenth or eighteenth century in England or in the United States, contained illustrations of the principle. John Smith, the Cambridge Platonist, in his Select Discourses, strikingly anticipated many attitudes and ideas of Emerson. When Emerson may have read the Select Discourses is not apparently recorded. That he knew of Smith and approved of his ideas is indicated by references in the Works and Journals.17

John Smith discussed man's ability to learn of the book of nature in a way very much like Emerson's doctrine of correspondence.

Thus may a good man walk up and down the world as in a garden of spices, and suck a divine sweetness out of every flower. There is a two-fold meaning in every creature, as the Jews speak of their law—a literal and a mystical meaning—and the one is but the ground of the other ... so a good man says of everything that his senses offer to him—"it speaks to his lower part, but it points out something above to his mind and spirit ... .18

16 Ibid., p. 92.
17 See Works, IV, 40; Journals, II, 268; VIII, 127.
18 Smith, Select Discourses, p. 441.
That truth, goodness, and beauty were one, was taken for granted by Smith. All of these attributes of the Deity were to be found in the universe. They could not ever be separated.

Whereas, true religion never finds itself out of the infinite sphere of the Divinity, and where it finds beauty, harmony, goodness, love, ingenuousness, wisdom, holiness, justice, and the like, it is ready to say, here and there is God: wheresoever any such perfections shine out, a holy mind climbs up by these sunbeams and raises itself up to God.\(^{19}\)

Smith believed, like Emerson and Thoreau, that one did not need to own the object to find the meaning or the beauty it had for man. Like Emerson, Smith believed a man might have "property in the horizon."

Now it is that a good man is no more solicitous "whether this or that good thing be mine, or whether my perfections exceed the measure of this or that particular creature;" for whatsoever good he beholds anywhere, he enjoys and delights in it as much as if it were his own, and whatever he beholds in himself, he looks not upon it as his property, but as common good; for all these beams of light come from one and the same fountain and ocean of light . . . in a particular being he loves them as the universal goodness.\(^{20}\)

Smith felt that a love of the particular objects of this world for their own sake was adulterous; a study of them for the sake of the study, and not as a means of advancing the spiritual and moral welfare of men, he felt atrocious. He thought there was a decline in the philosophy of his own day, the day when Bacon's empirical ideas were gaining headway, because men had separated metaphysical truths from the truths of nature. They were, in short, beginning to be scientifically minded, and Smith doubted the value of science to contribute any thing really significant to man.

\(^{19}\)Loc. cit. 
\(^{20}\)Loc. cit.
Smith thought the best analogy of God in the world was man; in this respect he was in agreement with the other religious figures of the century. The theory that man was a microcosm of the universe appears in the poetry of Donne and Herbert, the prose of Sir Thomas Browne, Jeremy Taylor, and many others, as Dowden has shown, or as a reading of the material of these writers will reveal. Emerson was, of course, very familiar with the seventeenth century writers mentioned by Dowden.

Emerson would have found frequent references to the principle of natural theology in the sermons of the Anglican preacher Robert South. Emerson withdrew the **Sermons** from Harvard College Library in 1823. South, however, was more interested in reminding his listeners of the limitations of natural theology than of its values.

For that these things [the Christian scheme of redemption] could be read in the book of nature, or in the common works of God's providence, or be learned by the sun's and moon's preaching the gospel, as some have fondly (not to say prophaneled) enough asserted, it is infinitely sottish to imagine . . .

South, an intolerant Anglican, therefore concluded that the heathen would certainly not be saved, since all they had was the book of nature, not the Book.

It is interesting to observe that the word correspondence was used by preachers and theologians, although not as often as other terms. Emerson could have encountered the word, used in the sense that he himself later made famous, in the **Theological Works** of Isaac Barrow, which Emerson

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21Dowden, pp. 9-10.
22Cameron, Ralph Waldo Emerson's Reading, p. 104.
withdrew from Harvard College Library in 1824. Barrow used the word in his sermon entitled "The Being of God Proved from the Frame of the World."

Even in this visible world, there are manifest tokens, or footsteps by which we may discover it to be the work, or product of one Being, incomprehensibly wise, powerful, and good; ... of these footsteps (or signs) there be innumerable many which simply taken, do discover such perfections to be concerned in them ... the connection and correspondence of all together doth still add force and evidence.

Emerson's familiarity with Jeremy Taylor has already been shown. In Taylor's works, the doctrine of natural theology is very frequently used. God's wisdom, goodness, and omnipotence were all "written with a sunbeam in the great book of the creature," Taylor thought. He advised men therefore to

Let every thing you see represent to your spirit the presence, the excellency, and the power of God; and let your conversation with the creatures lead you unto the Creator; for so shall your actions be done more with an actual eye to God's presence, by your often seeing Him in the glass of the creation. In the face of the sun you may see God's beauty; in the fire, you may feel his heat warming; in the water, his gentleness to refresh you; He it is that comforts your spirit when you have taken cordials; it is the dew of heaven that makes your field give you bread, and the breasts of God are the bottles that minister drink to your necessities. This philosophy, which is obvious to every man's experience, is a good advantage to our piety; and by this act of understanding our wills are checked from violence and misdemeanor.

Taylor's anthropomorphic imagery is very attractive. Perhaps Taylor's statement in Holy Living that the sun teaches men about God was one of

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24 Cameron, Ralph Waldo Emerson's Reading, p. 55.
26 Taylor, Works, III, 171.
27 Ibid., III, 26.
the foolish and profane suggestions that South objected to.

Dowden saw the doctrine of correspondence in many of the writers of the century. He described it in the poet Herbert, in Richard Baxter, and in Sir Thomas Browne. Dowden's description of the use of the principle in Browne is as follows:

This goodly habitation, the earth, seemed thus to grow more luminous; what was opaque became transparent; the quaint hieroglyphic of the forms of beast and reptile and plant ceased to be merely grotesque, as the hidden significance of each emerged to view; what was most trivial to the eye of sense might give access to an abyss of intellectual light. The flux and reflux of the sea, the waning and increase of the Nile produced in the mind of Browne no deeper sensation of awe than did the skill of the little citizens of a hive. Beauty and what is ignorantly termed deformity alike served the ends of the supreme Artist. Art itself is only the perfection of nature, and nature, everywhere significant of ideas, is no other than the art of God.

The wisdom of the Creator he sought to trace particularly in His creatures--such is part of a physician's piety--and, seeing in the visible world an image of the invisible, he believed that in the study of nature he was in truth deciphering the supernatural:

Give Thou my reason that instructive flight,
Whose weary wings may on Thy hands still light.

Bush has pointed out that one aspect of the seventeenth century's faith in right reason was a belief "in the divine unity and order of the world, and the divine unity of all truth, natural and supernatural." This belief was held, Bush reported, by Milton, by the Cambridge Platonists such as Benjamin Whitchcote, and also by many others, including Jeremy Taylor and Richard Hooker. Bush did not mention John Smith, but Smith was another who took the idea for granted.

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28 Dowden, p. 108.
29 Ibid., pp. 9-10.
30 Ibid., pp. 47-49.
The influence of Milton on Emerson has been pointed out in Chapter III. One of the elements of Milton's influence on Emerson surely consisted of the frequent usage of the principle of natural theology by Milton, both in his prose and in his poetry. That Milton used this principle has been shown by Dowden, who discussed Milton's usage in detail. Dowden felt that Milton differed from the Puritans by using physical objects as symbols of spiritual reality. Dowden was not entirely consistent, since he recognized the use of the same kind of symbolism in Richard Baxter. Perhaps Dowden did not notice the use of symbolism in John Smith, or other Puritan figures of the century. Perry Miller has shown that the idea of correspondences was a commonplace in Puritan thought in New England. Jonathan Edwards titled one of his books, *Images and Shadows of Divine Things*. It seems a safe conclusion that the use of physical realities to indicate the spiritual world was not foreign to the Puritan way of thought.

Dowden has described Milton's letter to Samuel Hartlib as a summary of Milton's attitude toward the world as a source of spiritual knowledge.

If to know God aright be the first end of education, the Puritan Milton does not suppose that this knowledge is to be gained solely or chiefly from churches or creeds and catechisms, or even from Holy Scripture. Through the visible world, through the nature of man, through the laws of human society, we make acquaintance with what is divine. Through sense we ascend to spirit. To spell our lesson aright, we must begin with easy and simple things. The eternal world lies around us, and it is God's world; let us try to understand it, and thus the senses may become inlets for the soul.

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32 Dowden, pp. 33, 181.

33 *The Seventeenth Century*, p. 213.

34 Dowden, p. 148.
Dowden discussed the symbolism in *Paradise Lost*, the artillery, the war in heaven, the chariots, swords, and spears.

Are we reading a Christian or pagan poem? Christian and Scriptural, Milton would reply. If to think scorn of visible things was a Puritan habit of mind, if the party with which Milton was most closely associated strove to make a breach and division between the spiritual and the material, he had assuredly transcended the Puritan modes of conception, and in so doing he held that he was following the guidance, not of his own imagination, not of classical literature, but of the Divine Word. Milton, the theologian, and Milton the poet, were in entire agreement. He looked on the earth, indeed, as suffering from the consequences of the fall of man, but he was the reverse of a Manichean; he honored the material universe;

Milton's most explicit passage describing his conviction of the relationship between the corporal and the spiritual, appeared in Book V of *Paradise Lost*.

... what surmounts the reach
Of human sense, I shall delineate so,
By lik'ning spiritual to corporate forms,
As may express them best, though what if Earth
Be but the shadow of Heav'n, and things therein
Each to other like, more then on earth is thought?36

The Anglican editor of the *De Doctrina Christiana*, writing in 1825, thought this passage meant that "his deliberate opinion seems to have leaned to the belief that the fabric of the invisible world was the pattern of the visible."37 It is very probable that Milton's usage of this belief was highly influential upon Emerson.

The conviction that the visible world was a means by which the existence and nature of the Deity might be learned by man was an especially favorite idea in the eighteenth century. The teleological argument

36Book V, 571-576.
for the existence of God was restated by Paley, who argued that the careful construction of the eye and the purposeful organization of the organs in the body, as well as the organic nature of the body, all were evidences of a purposer.38 Paley drew heavily upon the advancing scientific knowledge of his time to prove his case, but his whole argument was based on the assumption that the nature of the spiritual world could be inferred by an examination of the visible world. Another very popular book in the eighteenth century based on the same assumption, was Bishop Butler's Analogy. He omitted the scientific detail with which Paley's book was filled, and simply assumed that the moral government of the world was analogous to the physical government of the world.39

The seriousness with which Emerson studied Paley and Butler while he was at Harvard College has already been shown.40

A book of daily devotions on the goodness of God, used by the Emerson family, was devoted in its entirety to the theme of correspondences.41

The book was written by a German pietist, in the late eighteenth century, and translated into English about the turn of the century. The book ran into many editions in America; apparently it appealed to American pietists.

The author announced that his purpose was to point out whatever was most essential to be known relative to the objects which God daily presents to us in the widely extended empire

38 William Paley, Natural Theology, or Evidences of the Existence and Attributes of the Deity.


40 See pp. 21-22.

of nature. For this purpose, I have chosen out of the vast mass of natural history the objects which daily surround us, the historical knowledge of which requires no extraordinary depth of capacity. I have endeavored so as to express myself . . . to show the reader how he may derive lessons of wisdom and virtue from the contemplation of natural things. 42

Sturm found "wisdom and virtue" in vegetables that "preserve their verdure in winter," in the structure of the eye, in the magnitude of the sun, in the seeds of the earth, in animals, in the dawn, in the "wonderful construction of the ear," in the blossoms of trees, in venomous plants and animals, in the life and labour of the bee, in herrings, in stalks of wheat, in the silkworm, in the ravages of winter, and the heat of summer.

Sturm felt, in accordance with the Christian attitude toward evil, that nothing could injure the good man, and so many of his daily devotions were intended to show that the natural evils were really goods in disguise. A favorite theme was that "The Divine Goodness is manifested to Us, even in Things which Appear Hurtful." 43 Every object therefore, had value for us, he thought; every happening was important. His argument was that ignorance prevented man from knowing that the apparent evil is really good. "Some rays of the Divine wisdom shine forth in every part; but how many more are hidden from us." 44

The use of the doctrine of natural theology was an integral part of the culture of Puritan New England. Emerson did not need to find the tradition in books from England or Germany. His own Puritan tradition

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42Ibid., pp. iii-iv.
43Ibid., p. 581.
44Ibid., p. 27.
contained it, as Perry Miller has shown. Miller observed that while the New England theologians of the seventeenth century were careful to point out that what man could learn from natural theology was not sufficient for salvation, nevertheless they became very eloquent about the truths taught by the beauties of nature. The most important truth taught by natural beauty was the existence of God, according to Miller.\textsuperscript{45} One preacher said,

\begin{quote}
Can we, when we behold the stately theater of heaven and earth, conclude other but that the finger, arms, and wisdom of God hath been here, although we see not him that is invisible, and although we know not the time when he began to build. Every creature in heaven and earth is a loud preacher of this truth.\textsuperscript{46}
\end{quote}

John Cotton wrote that the world is "a mappe and shadow of the spiritual estate of the soules of man."\textsuperscript{47} Miller reported, "There was always a place in New England theology for the doctrines that men learned, or could learn, from nature."\textsuperscript{48} Their interest in the natural world led the Puritans to defend the validity of science, with the qualification that knowledge from natural objects should not be valued over knowledge that came from revelation. Furthermore, this approach made science of didactic value. Miller describes their use of science in this way,

\begin{quote}
No matter what facts were observed, whether through microscopes or telescopes, they must have been ordained in the providence of God, and if any hypothesis explained them, it must have pre-existed as a law in the archetypal pattern of God. But not only were the general conclusions of physics and chemistry looked upon as emblems of God's wisdom; every single fact was a symbol, not only of the law governing things, but of the laws
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{46}\textit{Loc. cit.}
\textsuperscript{47}\textit{Miller, The Seventeenth Century}, p. 212.
\textsuperscript{48}\textit{Loc. cit.}
of the spirit.49

Young people of New England, reports Miller, copied such truisms as the following into their diaries: "There is no creature but may teach a good soule one step toward his creator."50 Cotton Mather moralized in similar fashion about the happenings of his everyday life. Miller remarks that,

The disposition to read sermons in brooks and morals in stones seems thereby to have become ingrained in the New England nature and to have persisted as a habit beyond the demise of Puritan theology, until it could at length be transmuted into art by Nathaniel Hawthorne, or given new philosophical expression in Emerson's assertions ... 51

However, Miller also remarks,

It is truly strange that the generation of Emerson and Alcott should have had to go to Emmanuel Swedenborg for a doctrine of "correspondence," since something remarkably like it had been embedded in their own tradition for two hundred years.52

The hymns of Watts, sung by the Puritans, contained many examples of natural theology. The figure of the imagery of the book of nature appeared frequently in Watts's hymns and psalms.

Nature with open volume stands,
To spread her Maker's praise abroad;
And every labour of his hands
Shews something worthy of a God.53

Watts ignored South's dicta that to use the sun and moon as teachers of the heavenly wisdom was "fond" and "profane." Probably because of the

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49 Miller, p. 213.
50 Loc. cit.
51 Miller, p. 214.
52 Ibid., p. 213.
53 Hymns, p. 263.
influence of the book of Psalms in the Old Testament, Watts used astronomy frequently as a symbol of the attributes of the Deity. He was careful, however, to insist that the book of nature did not contain saving grace.

The sun, like some young bridegroom drest
Breaks from the chambers of the east,
Rolls round and makes the earth rejoice.

Where'er he spreads his beams abroad,
He smiles, and speaks his maker, God;
All nature joins to shew thy praise.
Thus God in ev'ry creature shines;
Fair is the book of nature's lines
But fairer is thy book of grace.\(^5\)

Watts was capable of working into a psalm the names of a wide array of animals, plants and marine creatures, as symbols of God's creativity; he mentioned the lark, the linnet, "fierce lions," the goat, the "grazing beasts," "creeping ants and worms," "the flies in swarms," "the humble shrubs and cedars high," "the monsters of the seas," the "wind, hail, and flashing fire," and many other objects as means by which men learn of the attributes of the Deity.

It cannot be doubted that Emerson encountered many expressions of the assumption that there are correspondences between the physical world and the natural world in the literature that he read very early in his life. He would have encountered the assumption in the Psalms, both in the Old Testament and in Watts. Watts expressed the assumption in both his hymns and psalms; perhaps Emerson memorized some of the expressions of the idea in Watts's hymns. He read \textit{Paradise Lost} and other works of Milton, at an early time, between 1815 and 1820. He encountered such devotional works as Sturm's, and no doubt read the idea in many sermons.

\(^5\)\textit{Psalms}, p. 54.
Emerson must, therefore, have found the idea a very familiar one, when he encountered it in Swedenborg. Miller cannot be correct, therefore, in saying that Emerson and Alcott had to go to Swedenborg to find the doctrine of correspondences. The doctrine must have been a very familiar part of the New England tradition, appearing as it did in the Psalms of the Old Testament, in Milton, and Watts's hymns, as well as in many other forms of literature.

Emerson thought that the doctrine of correspondence was a very old one. He cited several men who stated or practiced the theory. He believed Plato was one of the earliest exponents of the theory. He thought Socrates "believed that the laws below are sisters of the laws above." He thought Paul used the doctrine in the New Testament. Emerson made use of the doctrine of correspondence in his sermons. In a sermon entitled "Summer", he described the Scriptural basis for the usage.

But there is more in nature than beauty; there is more to be seen than the outward eye perceives; there is more to be heard than the pleasant rustle of the corn. There is the language of its everlasting analogies, by which it seems to be the prophet and the monitor of the race of man. The Scripture is always appealing to the tree, and the flower, and the grass, as the emblems of our mortal state... There is nothing in external nature, but is an emblem, a hieroglyphic of something in us... My brethren, do you say these things are old and trite? That is their very value and warning; so is the harvest old--the apple that hangs on your tree, six thousand times has shown its white bloom, its green germ, and its ripening yellow... And this day as the fruit is as fresh so is its moral as fresh and significant to us as it was to Adam in the Garden.

55 Works, II, 436; IV, 62.
56 Works, IV, 83.
57 Works, I, 28.
58 McGiffert, Young Emerson Speaks, p. 144.
He saw many examples of the awareness of analogies in the seventeenth century writers, including Herbert, the poet, and Sir Thomas Browne. He quoted from Sir Thomas Browne a passage that perfectly defined the doctrine.

The several schools shall never laugh me out of the philosophy of Hermes, that this visible world is but a picture of the invisible, wherein, as in a portrait, things are not truly, but in equivocal shapes, and as they counterfeit some real substance, in that invisible fabric.

He copied a poem by John Bunyan into the Journal, illustrating the theme. He quoted Donne to illustrate the doctrine. He recognized the use of the doctrine in Paley.

That he believed Milton anticipated Swedenborg in seeing the analogies between earth and heaven is shown by a comment in the Journal that "Milton anticipated Swedenborg when he wrote in Paradise Lost,"

... what if Earth
Be but the shadow of Heaven, and things therein,
Each to the other like, more than on earth is thought?

In view of the association between Swedenborgianism and the term correspondence, it is significant to note how many other terms Emerson used for the doctrine.

It is quite possible that when a concordance of Emerson's prose is made, it will reveal that he used the term analogy more often than any

60 Journals, IX, 294.
61 Ibid., IV, 367.
62 Ibid., II, 347-348.
63 Works, II, 35-38.
64 Journals, X, 191.
other for the doctrine of correspondences. Other terms that he used were emblem, moral, compend, correlative, allegory, occult relation, "the world ... a mere illustration and fable of the mind," image, symbol, shadow. Occasionally he used the older term "book of nature."

Emerson's first enthusiasm for Swedenborg seemed to be caused by the fact that he believed Swedenborg stated clearly and explicitly, as a law of spiritual and moral significance, what was only implied or assumed by his predecessors. In that enthusiasm he wrote to his brother William in 1826, of Sampson Reed's Growth of the Mind, "which I think one of the best books I ever saw." Probably this encomium was educed because he thought "Swedenborg first put the fact into a detached and scientific statement." As the years passed he decided that Swedenborg was too narrow and too rigid in his symbolism, and therefore he lost much of his enthusiasm for Sweden-

65 Ibid., V, 461.
66 Ibid., II, 301.
68 Loc. cit.
69 Works, I, 31.
70 Ibid., 10.
71 Ibid., 120.
72 Ibid., III, 78.
73 Ibid., I, 26.
74 Journals, III, 224.
75 Ibid., 227.
76 Rusk, Letters, I, 173.
77 Works, IV, 117.
borgianism. Objecting to Swedenborgian rigidity, he wrote, "The slippery proteus is not so easily caught." His final word for Swedenborg was "abnormal." The essay on Swedenborg in Representative Men is far more critical than appreciative.

It seems reasonable to believe that Emerson found the Swedenborgian literature a fresh and stimulating statement of a familiar idea and accepted it with great enthusiasm. His gradual loss of belief in Sampson Reed and in Swedenborg took some twelve years, as Rusk has indicated, but his faith in the doctrine of correspondences probably preceded his interest in Swedenborg, and very obviously continued long after he ceased to believe in the Swedenborgian gospel. It seems probable in any case that Swedenborg merely restated the general Christian idea.

The primary purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate that the doctrine of correspondence was an integral part of the tradition of Christian thought that came to Emerson through the theological works he studied and through the New England tradition. The use he made of imagery is discussed in the analysis of poems in the various categories of his thought; the specific use he made of the imagery will not be discussed here, therefore. There are several aspects of his use of the doctrine of correspondence, however, of interest here.

Blair and Faust in an article defending the organic structure of

\[78\] Ibid., 121.

80 Other criticisms of Swedenborg appear in Journals, IV, 99, 491; V, 142; VI, 220; VII, 123; X, 190; VIII, 72; [Works], IV, 22, 142, 143, 144.
\[81\] Rusk, Life, p. 118.
Emerson's poetry and prose have emphasized the fact that his literary theory was based on the Platonic theory of knowledge.82 This theory divided knowledge into two categories, the category of the visible world, and of the real world. Poetry is especially concerned with the visible world, since its subject matter is the object in the visible world which may be made to point to the real world of ideas. Therefore, his poetry is rich in visual imagery, of the specific and concrete objects of the natural world that Emerson found beautiful.

Emerson felt that only the reason could see the analogies between the physical and the moral universe; the understanding was not able, he thought, to see the relationships.83 This was the essential task of poetry, to find out a "connection between a material image and a moral sentiment."84 In accord with this dicta his poetry is always implicitly moral and religious; he rarely devoted poetry to the glorification of form alone.

The great test of success in writing to him was the image that perfectly united the emotion or moral feeling, or idea, and the object. He felt unable to write at all, unless he could find some "material symbol of my proposition figuring itself incipiently."85

That the poetry must have "message" or "vision", he insisted emphatically.86

83Journals, III, 539.
84Ibid., I, 105.
85Ibid., III, 527.
86Ibid., VI, 190.
I like that poetry which, without aiming to be allegorical, is so. Which, sticking close to its subject, and that perhaps trivial, can yet be applied to the life of man and the government of God and be found to hold. 87

He was aware of the danger of being didactic, and warned against it. His own poetry is certainly not in any simple or derogatory sense, didactic; it is profoundly meaningful. He warned writers, however, against the dangers of didacticism. "Don't set out to teach Theism from your Natural History, like Paley and Agassiz. You spoil both." 88

His interest in clothing ideas in motley appeared in his discussion in various ways. He thought "motley" gave the thought a bite, an effect it did not otherwise have. "The meaner the type by which the spiritual law is expressed, the more pungent it is..." 89

He felt doubt about the value of science because of the separation of the fact from its significance, moral or spiritual. "He who loves a flower, though he knows nothing of its botany or medicine, is nearer to it than one of these catalogue-makers." 90

He continued to be interested in science, but for reasons that ran beyond the scientific.

Shall I say that the use of natural science seems merely ancillary to moral: I would learn the law of the diffraction of a ray because, when I understand it, it will illustrate, perhaps, a new truth in ethics. 91

87 Ibid., III, 544.
88 Ibid., IX, 134.
89 Journals, VI, 24.
90 Ibid., 195.
91 Ibid., III, 343.
In this respect his attitude was the same as that of the seventeenth century Puritans, or of the Cambridge Platonists.

Emerson found the idea of the book of nature, of the analogous relationship between the natural world and the moral world, in the religious traditions of his own culture, and seized upon the Swedenborgian statements with enthusiasm. Apparently he finally felt that the Swedenborgian use of the principle was unsatisfactory. He turned the principle to conscious literary use, in a way not explicitly stated by the Christian tradition of which he was an heir, but in his literary use of the principle he remained consistent with the moral and spiritual attitudes that characterized the use of the principle by his spiritual ancestors.

3. The Value of the Commonplace

Section 2 has shown one use of the objects of the natural world, that is, to enable men to learn something of the nature of the heavenly world. Section 3 is concerned with another implication of the Christian assumption that the world, however temporary and short of heavenly beauty it may be, is derived from God. The implication considered in Section 3 is that the objects of the world, in addition to being channels of truth, are also channels of grace and beauty. The purpose of Section 3 is to demonstrate that Emerson’s attitude toward the commonplace, the ordinary objects and activities of the world, is in agreement with the traditional attitude of Christianity.

The section begins with the origin of the concept in the thought of Augustine. The concept is described as it appeared in the work of the Protestant Reformers. The section demonstrates that the concept appears in the writings, well-known to Emerson, of Jeremy...
Taylor, John Smith, Christopher Sturm, and Isaac Barrow.

The Christian doctrine of creation implied that this world was derived from God, and therefore, that it had a limited or relative kind of goodness. Christians were to live in this world, but to remember that their final home was elsewhere. Augustine proposed a paradoxical approach to this problem with his injunction to procreate without pleasure. This implied a recognition of physical or natural needs but the careful subordination of those needs to an otherworldly ideal. The paradox he proposed of detachment and participation required great self-control of the individual. His solution to the problem of the relationship of the Christian to the world was not adopted by the Roman Catholic Church. Probably as much for institutional as for psychological reasons the official Roman Catholic position became one of two levels. The priesthood were required to live a life of asceticism, in celibacy, while the laity were permitted to indulge themselves in marriage. The ascetic was regarded as the ideal Christian; the worldly person was regarded as living a life of considerably less religious value. The religious person left the world for the love of God.

The Protestant reformers, however, went back to Augustine and adopted the paradox he had proposed, as a solution to the problem of living in this world while preparing for the next. If God is the creator of the world, then it must have some sort of goodness. Moreover the reformers, with their Biblical literalism, took seriously the words in the creation story in Genesis that "God saw everything he had made, and behold, it was very good." They rejected, therefore, the kind of ascetic otherworld-

\[92\text{Genesis 1: 31a.}\]
liness characteristic of Catholicism, and set up ideals that every person was expected to meet. Catholicism had been permissive to the laity. The Reformers made incredible demands of the laity. Man was to live in the world and use freely the goods of the world, but never to allow his affection for the goods of the world to interfere with his love for God.

The Augustinian paradox required man to make his natural affections tools by which he could serve the purposes of God. Instead of escaping the temptations of this world by retreat to the monastery, the Christian was to make this world itself a place of discipline, of religious value. This world itself was deemed to have a certain grace, common to all aspects of the world, smudged by man's fall, but still shining through here and there.

The doctrine appeared in one form or another in all the branches of Protestantism, and had implications for life and literature that cannot be easily estimated. The doctrine distinguished between the relative or limited general grace of God, appearing in the whole creation and in all men, as opposed to the special acts of grace by which individual men are saved. The Calvinist apologist Abraham Kuyper has described the doctrine in this way.

Sin, according to Calvinism, which is in full accord with the Holy Scriptures, sin unbridled and unfettered, left to itself, would forthwith have led to a total degeneracy to human life, as may be inferred from what was seen in the days before the flood. But God arrested Sin in its course in order to prevent the complete annihilation of his handiwork, which naturally would have followed. He has interfered in the life of the individual, in the life of mankind as a whole, and in the life of nature itself by His common grace.93

Common grace was not sufficient for the salvation of an individual,

93Lectures on Calvinism, p. 162.
but it did dignify and elevate the status of men. It was a corrective and balance to the emphasis on man's utter depravity. The Protestant and Calvinistic implication of natural man's ability have largely been forgotten, however, and only the Calvinist emphasis as man's depravity is remembered.

As Perry Miller has shown, the Puritans found difficulty in avoiding the conclusion that common grace alone was enough for salvation, in view of the ability, honesty, and general moral integrity of many who apparently were not among the saints, for example the great figures of classical antiquity. Milton wrestled with this problem in the *De Doctrina Christiana*.

It cannot be denied, however, that some remnants of the divine image still exist in us, not wholly extinguished by this spiritual death. This is evident, not only from the wisdom and holiness of many of the heathen, but also ... [by a long series of Scriptural passages].

There is also a reference to this doctrine in *Paradise Lost*. The relevance of the doctrine of common grace for this thesis is its emphasis on the value of ordinary human activities as a means of moral and spiritual grace. In Kuyper's words,

Wherever man may stand, whatever he may do, to whatever he may apply his hand, in agriculture, in commerce, and in industry, or his mine, in the world of art, and science, he is, in whatsoever it may be, constantly standing before the face of his God, he is employed in the service of his God, he is strictly to obey his God, and above all, he has to aim at the glory of his God.

94 *The Seventeenth Century*, p. 29.
96 *Book III*, 183 ff.
97 *Lectures on Calvinism*, p. 63.
Kuyper asserted that this doctrine explained the excellence of the natural world. It was, in short, an effort to make the secular sacred, and it is a parallel to the doctrine of the priesthood of the individual worshipper. Kuyper has attempted to show some of the implications of the doctrine of common grace in the arts and in education in the years following the Reformation. His description of the changes in church music is cited here as typical of the changed attitude toward the natural world, that he credits to the theory. It is not necessary to grant his claims for the preeminence of Calvinism in order to recognize the implications, generally, of the doctrine of common grace. It is not necessary to assume that this Protestant doctrine was the only agency at work contributing to a sense of the value of the ordinary; it does seem probable that Protestantism did contribute to some degree. The passage is relevant because it shows the result of the doctrine in making the ordinary, music in this case, seem valuable, even sacred.

Even as in the ecclesiastical-aristocratic period it was only the high and the holy that interested the masters of the pencil, so in music the plain chant of Gregory was dominant, which abandoned rhythm, despised harmony, and which according to a professional critic, by its provisionally conservative character barred the way to the further artistic development of music. Far below the level of this stately chant flowed the freer song of the people, too often, alas, inspired by the worship of Venus, which at the times of the so called "donkey-festivals", much to the chagrin of ecclesiastical officials, penetrated even the walls of the churches, and there occasioned those repulsive scenes which the Council of Trent first succeeded in putting under the ban. The church alone was privileged to make music, while that which the people produced was scorned, as being beneath the dignity of the art. Even in the oratory itself, while the people were allowed to listen to the holy music, they were forbidden to join in the song. Thus, as an art, music was almost entirely deprived of its independent standing. Only in so far as it could serve the church was it permitted to flourish artistically. Whatever it undertook on its own responsibility, had no higher call than the popular
use. And as in every department of life, Protestantism in general, but Calvinism more consistently, bridled the tutelage of the church, so also was music emancipated by it, and the way opened to its so splendid modern development. The men who first arranged the music of the Psalm for the Calvinistic singing were the brave heroes who cut the strands that bound us to the Cantus firmus, and selected their melodies from the free world of music. To be sure, by doing this they adopted the people's melodies, but as Douen rightly remarks, only in order that they might return these melodies to the people purified and baptized in Christian seriousness. Music also would flourish, henceforth, not within the narrow limitations of particular grace, but in the wide and fertile fields of common grace. The choir was abandoned; in the sanctuary the people themselves would sing, and therefore Bourgeois and the Calvinistic virtuosi who followed him, were bound to make their selections from the popular melodies, but with this end in view viz., that now the people would no longer sing in the saloon or in the street, but in the sanctuary, and thus, in their melodies, cause the seriousness of the heart to triumph over the heat of the lower passions.98

Probably the interest in the common, or even the commonplace that resulted from the doctrine of common grace must be seen as one form of Plato's doctrine of the plenum. As Lovejoy has pointed out, Plato's answer to the question on "How many kinds of temporal and imperfect beings must this world contain?" was "All possible kinds". This implied "even things paltry or ridiculous or disgusting". In the Timaeus, Plato said that we are not to think that anything incomplete is beautiful. It was necessary to create all possible kinds of beings, if the world was to be beautiful. A partial world could not be beautiful. Therefore, every object has some value in contributing to the beauty of the whole.99

The reformers and their descendants, however, expressed the idea in Scriptural and theological terms. There is much in the New Testament that can be interpreted in this fashion. In practice the doctrine amounted

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98 Ibid., p. 227.
99 Lovejoy, pp. 50-51.
to an assertion of the value and dignity of the common—common men, common occupations, common objects.

Thus far, this section of the dissertation has been devoted to a description of the doctrine of common grace, under the assumption that the Protestant doctrine was the source of Emerson's belief in the beauty of the commonplace. It has been shown that the doctrine of common grace grew out of Augustine's ideas, and was instrumental in the Reformation in causing men to feel that the every-day activities of life were of spiritual and moral value. The implication of this idea for art was to cause men to recognize the value of the every-day, the commonplace, for purpose of art. In the paragraphs that follow, the usage of the doctrine of common grace in the books read by Emerson will be shown, to demonstrate possible channels by which he may have become aware of the doctrine.

Various forms of the idea appear in the work of Jeremy Taylor. Taylor made much of the doctrine in his life of Jesus, with an irony that no doubt escaped the gentle chaplain of King Charles. Taylor said of Jesus, "For he that was Lord of the Kingdom, chose his portion among the poor of this world." The angels, said Taylor, announced his birth to the shepherds, to persons simple, and mean, and humble ... God himself in poverty, comes in a prejudice to them, that love riches, and simplicity is a folly to crafty persons; a mean birth is an ignoble strain. The facts of Jesus' birth provided for many variations on the theme for Taylor. He phrased the facts in this fashion:

Jesus was pleased to be born of a poor mother, in a poor place, in a cold winter's night, far from home, amongst

100 Taylor, Works, II, 126.
101 Ibid., 89-90.
strangers, with all the circumstances of humility and poverty.\textsuperscript{102}

The conclusions that Taylor drew were that "God can ennoble even the meanest of creatures, especially if it be but a relative and instrumental to religion."\textsuperscript{103}

Dowden has indicated the influence of the doctrine in a number of the seventeenth century writers who, along with Jeremy Taylor, were read by Emerson. Dowden says of Thomas Browne:

Chief among his gifts to us is that gift of genius--the quickening of our sense of awe and of solemn wonder in the presence of the familiar phenomena of daily life.\textsuperscript{104}

Dowden reported of Richard Baxter that he

sees the dangers and temptations to which the great ones of the world are exposed, and laments their unhappiness; he values more the life of poor laboring men ...\textsuperscript{105}

The doctrine is to be found in the Select Discourse of the Cambridge Platonist, John Smith. As was previously stated, Emerson knew Smith, but it has been impossible to learn when he read the Select Discourses. Smith wrote,

We have learned to distinguish too subtilely, I doubt, in our lives and conversations inter sacrum et profanum--our religious approaches to God and our worldly affairs--I think a good man should always find himself upon holy ground ...\textsuperscript{106}

In Sturm's volume of daily devotions, used by the Emerson family,

\textsuperscript{102}Ibid., 67.
\textsuperscript{103}Ibid., 65.
\textsuperscript{104}Dowden, p. 55.
\textsuperscript{105}Ibid., p. 227.
\textsuperscript{106}p. 373.
there are several examples of the doctrine of the value of the commonplace. Sturm wrote in a meditation entitled, "Of Seeds," "The hand of the Creator may be seen in everything. Even the smallest works in nature manifest his wisdom and goodness."\(^{107}\) Even noxious plants and animals have some use, said Sturm, though our ignorance may keep us from knowing it.\(^{108}\)

Emerson would have found many other examples of the conviction that the common objects of life have meaning and value in the books that he withdrew from various libraries. The Anglican preacher of the late seventeenth century, Isaac Barrow, stated this idea in a number of ways in the sermons he wrote.\(^{109}\) "No weed grows out of the earth, no insect creeps upon the ground which hath not its elegance, and yields not its profit."\(^{110}\) Moreover, he agreed with John Smith that the separation between secular and sacred was wrong, that all human activity had religious and moral implications. Everyone's vocation should be a means of grace to him. It is quite possible, he said, "to wedge some prayers in your daily business."\(^{111}\) This was written in his sermon, "Of the Duty of Prayer", with the same text that Emerson used in his first sermon, "Pray without Ceasing." While Barrow emphasized attendance on public worship and the importance of the regular use of private prayer, from the Prayer Book,

\(^{107}\)Sturm, p. 130.

\(^{108}\)Ibid., p. 265.

\(^{109}\)Withdrawn from Harvard library by Emerson in 1824. (Cameron, Ralph Waldo Emerson's Reading, p. 55).

\(^{110}\)Barrow, I, 165.

\(^{111}\)Ibid., I, 62.
the idea that the whole of life is morally significant is in the sermon, as it is in the sermon of Emerson. It is not necessary to believe that the sermon by Barrow was a direct source, but it was another possible source for the general idea here discussed.

It has been shown that a number of the books examined by Emerson contained the doctrine of common grace. The dissertation has cited evidence from books written by Taylor, Browne, Baxter, Smith, Sturm, and Barrow to show Emerson’s familiarity with the concept. The purpose of the remainder of this section is to show Emerson’s usage of the concept.

Emerson’s use of the idea appears in the sermons, essays, and poems. He said, correctly, of his sermons,

I have affected generally a mode of illustration rather bolder than the usage of our preaching warrants, on the principle that our religion is nothing limited or partial, but of universal application and interested in all that interests man.112

Thus Emerson announced his purpose in preaching to be the same as the idea stated by Smith, in the passage cited on the previous page. He preached the doctrine to his parishioners at the Second Church, with an application similar to the application made of the idea by John Smith and by Barrow.

For you may constantly be tending towards this your use through all the common occupations and relations of life,—may constantly, by force of will, be bending them to that.113

He expressed the idea much as John Smith had.

And yet who knows not that crowds of men are acting on that error, that their religious character is something separate from their daily actions—quite external—like a dress to wear or a chamber to lodge in, and that trade is to get them

112 Rusk, Letters, I, 257.
113 McGiffert, Young Emerson Speaks, p. 168.
money, and prayers and sermons are to get them virtue, but neither would be hurt by being joined with the other.  

There is an apparent difference between the attitude of Emerson and traditional Christianity in terms of the efficacy of what the older writers had called "common grace." The traditional view had been that common grace was not adequate for salvation, that a special or supernatural grace was necessary for the salvation of man. Calvin said that there was innate knowledge of the existence of God in all men. But this knowledge of God was not strong enough to motivate men to salvation. It took a special act of God. The knowledge of God in each man was adequate to damn him with justice, but not to save him. Something like this appears in several of the writers Emerson read. Robert South, the somewhat acidulous Anglican preacher of the Restoration, whose sermons were read by Emerson at Harvard in 1823, put the matter just as unpleasantly as Calvin had. He discussed natural freedom of the will, which he said all men had. However this natural gift was not adequate without the supernatural gift of grace.

Nevertheless, the will has still so much freedom left as to enable it to choose any act in its kind good, whether it be an act of temperance, justice, or the like; as also to refuse any act in its kind evil whether of intemperance or injustice or the like; though yet it neither choose one, nor refuses the other, with such a perfect concurrence of all due ingredients of action, but that still, in the sight of God judging according to the rigid measures of the law, every such choice or refusal is indeed sinful and imperfect.

And, therefore, if one is to be saved, God must arrange the matter

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114 Ibid., p. 189.
with some supernatural intervention. Emerson was more inclined to believe in general principles by which all might be saved or damned. In other words, he enlarged the doctrine of common grace, and made it all embracing.

Emerson used the term "particular providence" for the act of supernatural intervention that his forebears believed necessary for salvation. He discussed this doctrine in his biographical sketch of Ezra Ripley, and told the anecdote he found in his great-grandfather's diary, of a shay that tipped over. Emerson's ancestor expressed his gratitude that the Lord prevented any injury to himself or his wife. Emerson referred to the "narrowness of . . . those who thought the universe existed only for their church and congregation."117

It seems clear, however, that what Emerson objected to was the unworthiness of the motives that seemed to him to lie behind the belief that common grace was inadequate for salvation. In actuality the doctrine of supernatural intervention is very strongly asserted by Emerson. There are in the Journals many references to the inexplicable movement of the Infinite into his consciousness, which are parallel to the feeling of the Puritans. Emerson thought the Puritan doctrine was the result of selfish motives. In his own case, it is a description of a present reality, not a selfish hope for future salvation. For Emerson, the mystic experience depended solely on the Infinite, and therefore when describing the mystic experience he indicated the necessity of something more than common grace. The necessity of something more, an inexplicable breath from the great Pan that would animate the otherwise lifeless person, is discussed further in the chapter devoted to Emerson's mysticism.

117 Works, X, 38h.
Again and again in the Journal and Works Emerson expressed his sense of the "general grace diffused over nature." Nature, he thought too light a veil; "the glory of the One breaks through everywhere."\footnote{Journals, IV, 250.} It was to be seen in every object. "What is there of the divine in a load of bricks? What is there of the divine in a barber's shop? ... Much. All."\footnote{Journals, III, 321.}

He wrote in words reminiscent of Barrow's,\footnote{See p. 105.} "We doubt not that every weed in our soil hath its uses, and each no doubt excellent and admirable uses, yet how poorly they figure in our Materia Medica."\footnote{Journals, V, 550.} One value of each object, no matter how apparently insignificant, was in its reflecting the whole.

Whosoever, therefore, apprehends the infinite—and everyman can—brings all worth and significance into that spot of space where he stands, though it be a ditch, a potato field, a work bench ... \footnote{Ibid., III, 402.}

This comment probably should be related to the last two stanzas of the poem, "The Sphinx."

\begin{quote}
Uprose the merry Sphinx
And crouched no more in stone;
She melted into purple cloud,
She silvered in the moon;
She spired into a yellow flame;
She flowered in blossoms red;
She flowed into a foaming wave
She stood Monadnoc's head.

Thorough a thousand voices
Spoke the universal dame;
\end{quote}
Who telleth one of my meanings
Is master of all I am.  

Emerson believed the commonplace objects were fit for art.  

Two or three objects, large or small, suffice to genius. Let Dullness work with multitudes and magnitudes. The poor Pickwick stuff (into which I have only looked with no wish for more) teaches this, that prose and parlors and shops and city windows, the tradesman's dinner and such matters, are as good materials in a skillful hand for interest and art as palaces and revolutions.  

He called for an art that would  

Give to barrows, trays, and pans  
Grace and glimmer of romance.  

He, himself, in his own poetry, did succeed in enabling the reader to see the beauty of the otherwise prosaic, as in "Each and All," where he catalogs a list of objects, and makes them come to life.  

The ground pine curled its pretty wreath  
Running over the clubmoss burrs;  
I inhaled the violet's breath  
Around me stood the oaks and firs;  
Pine-cones and acorns lay on the ground;  
Over me soared the eternal sky  
Full of light and deity;  
Again I saw, again I heard  
The rolling river, the morning bird;—  
Beauty through my sense stole;  
I yielded myself to the perfect whole.  

In "Hamatreya" Emerson used a list of the names of the first settlers of Concord, including his ancestor, Peter Bulkeley, and a list of farm products, yet managed to give the lists a significance. They contribute

123 Works, IX, 24-25.  
124 Journals, IV, 436.  
125 Works, IX, 277.  
126 Works, IX, 5-6.
a certain solidity and New England tang to a poem devoted to an old idea, the paradoxical attitude to this world, long taught by Protestantism.

Dulkeley, Hunt, Willard, Hosmer, Meriam, Flint
Possessed the land which rendered to their toil
Hay, corn, roots, hemp, flax, apples, wool and wood.

'This suits me for a pasture; that's my park;
We must have clay, lime, gravel, granite-ledge, 127

The contrast between the philosophic idealism that the poem suggests and the solidity of the objects listed, as well as the solidity of all the images in the poem, contributes to the piquant effect that the poem achieves. It is an interesting example of the conflict in Protestant thought between the value of the objects in the world, (the doctrine of common grace), and the belief that we must never like them too well.

He repeated the experiment of cataloging objects in "The Humble Bee," although to the person who does not know the New England flora, the imagery of this poem may not be as successful as in the poem, "Each and All," or in "Hamatreya" where he used imagery of a more universal nature.

Aught unsavory or unclean
Hath my insect never seen
But violets and bilberry bells
Maple-sap and daffodels,
Grass with green flag half-mast high
Succory to match the sky
Columbine with horn of honey,
Scented fern and agrimony
Clover, catchfly, adder's-tongue
And brier roses, dwelt among; 128

In the poem "Ode to Beauty", he gave the doctrine poetic statement in larger terms than in the previous poems cited.

127 Ibid., 35.
128 Works, IX, 40.
Oft, in streets or humblest places,
I detect far-wandered graces,
Which from Eden wide astray
In lowly homes have lost their way.129

Emerson agreed with the applications of the doctrine of common grace to marriage and home life, and to man's work as fit agents for moral and religious education. The reformers had justified marriage for ministers on the basis that marriage was a test of the person's abilities to meet the problems of life. To Luther marriage was a school for character. Luther remarked that a mother caring for her children and toiling in the home was certainly not irreligious, rather she was developing self-control, consideration for others, and other worthwhile virtues.130 Emerson developed the theme of marriage as a school for character in his essay on "Domestic Life."131 He was always impressed with the discipline of work, whether at home or on the farm or in the market place. In the poem "Saadi," he asserted that the ones who do the ordinary tasks of maintaining the household, are really gods in disguise. Perhaps he meant to imply that none other than gods would have the patience to do, uncomplainingly, the work that the women of the world usually do.

While thou sittest at thy door
On the desert's yellow floor,
Listening to the gray-haired crones,
Foolish gossips, ancient drones,
Saadi, see! they rise in stature
To the height of mighty Nature,
And the secret stands revealed
Fraudulent time in vain concealed,—

129 Ibid., 89.
130 Roland H. Bainton, Here I Stand, p. 300.
131 Works, VII, 101-133.
That blessed gods in servile masks
Plied for thee thy household tasks.  132

The belief in the value of the commonplace, as a microcosm revealing
the beauty and goodness of the macrocosm, as material for use in art, and
as a means of discipline for men, appears throughout the Emersonian corpus.
It need not be further illustrated here, though the belief will be seen
as an element of other aspects of Emerson's thought, for example, his
belief in the infinitude of man.

In view of the similarities which have been shown between the ideas
of Emerson and the ideas of the Protestants who advanced the doctrine of
common grace, and in view of the evidence which has been shown indicating
the availability to Emerson of many books containing the doctrine, it
appears to be a reasonable conclusion that Emerson's belief in the value
of the commonplace was the result of the Protestant doctrine of common
grace.

4. Otherworldliness

The final section of the chapter is intended to show that Emerson
was in agreement with the Protestant attitude toward the attractive
and desirable goods offered by the pageant of this world. This section
of the dissertation describes the paradoxical otherworldliness found in
the religious literature read by Emerson, and shows that that same para-
dox appears in the poetry of Emerson.

The assumption of Augustine that this world contains many goods
which men may have but that there is only one "good", God, appeared very
strongly in the writings of the Protestants of the seventeenth century.

132 Works, IX, 135.
Protestantism, in general, agreed in rejecting an ascetic approach. Men are free to use the creature comforts. Barclay wrote, "For it is beyond question that whatever thing the creation affords is for the use of man . . ."133 Jeremy Taylor wrote, "Call not every temporal end a defiling of the intention . . . For sometimes a temporal end is part of our duty."134

John Smith had a particularly winsome way of describing the goodness of creature comforts. "Every particular good is a blossom of the first goodness; every created excellency is a beam descended from the Father of lights."135

The demand by Protestant preachers that men should live in the world, work, marry, care for their families, but keep their affection primarily for God, and not for their interests in this world, was very difficult to meet. The great danger was that men would make some single good of this world their chief affection; they would be tempted to love wife most, as Adam did, or wealth most, or land most. The theme, therefore, of much preaching and religious literature was the first commandment, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me."

Augustine had said that God gave men desire as a goad to drive them to Him. John Smith's version of this principle indicated the basis for Satan's statement in Paradise Lost that the mind is its own place.

The foundation of heaven and hell is laid in men's own souls, in an ardent and vehement appetite after happiness . . . that

133 Barclay, True Christian Divinity, p. 488.
135 Select Discourses, p. 440.
the Divine love and goodness might unite it to itself. And accordingly when it misseth God, it must feel so much the more the pangs of misery . . .\textsuperscript{136}

If men satisfied their desires by creature comforts, they had committed adultery. "Lust" was a term frequently used by Jeremy Taylor and John Smith for the sin of loving too much the goods of this world, whether gold, land, or women.

Every particular good is a blossom of the first goodness; every created excellency is a beam descended from the Father of Lights; and, should we separate all these particularities from God, all affection spent on them would be unchaste, and their embraces adulterous.\textsuperscript{137}

The great danger was always that the fulfilment of desire for earthly goods would become man's chief end. Thus the preacher was faced with the necessity of insisting on the one hand that men should work and love, but he had to keep inserting a warning that the work and love were never to be taken too seriously. Jeremy Taylor constantly fluctuated between the two injunctions: on the one hand, people were told to work hard. The devil always finds work for idle hands to do. But on the other hand, men must always work with no real concern for the outcome of their work; they must be "deadhearted" to their work. Taylor offered the following sign by which the Christian might determine whether he had properly managed the paradox.

But he that does his recreation or his merchandise cheerfully, promptly, readily, and busily, and the works of religion slowly, flatly, and without appetite, and the spirit moves like Pharaoh's chariots when the wheels were off; it is a sign that his heart is not right with God, but it cleaves too much to the world.\textsuperscript{138}

\textsuperscript{136} Ibid., p. 151.
\textsuperscript{137} Smith, Select Discourses, p. 440.
\textsuperscript{138} Taylor, Works, III, 19.
To Taylor otherworldliness was always a sign of the true faith; the man is safe who is a "stranger upon earth in . . . his . . . affections." The person in danger is the one who "rejoices in gain, and his heart dwells in the world, and is espoused to a fair estate, and transported with a light momentary joy."\(^{139}\) Taylor thought it so important that he listed a series of exercises by which one might subdue his affection for things of this world and increase his affection for the other world.\(^{140}\) Taylor referred specifically to Augustine while discussing the eventual dissatisfaction that comes to those who seek satisfaction anywhere but in God.\(^{141}\)

He quoted him in another place without giving credit.

Since we stay not here, being people but of a day's abode, and our age is like that of a fly and contemporary with a gourd, we must look somewhere else for an abiding city, a place in another country to fix our house in, whose walls and foundation is God, where we must find rest, or else be restless forever.\(^{142}\)

Taylor did not expect people to follow ascetic practices. They were to live in this world, and carry out their daily tasks, whether as laborer, or lord, or priest, but they were to do so with affections "divorced" from "those gilded vanities." This divorced affection must apply to all aspects of life—wealth, position, marital partner, and finally even health and life itself. This state of mind, said Taylor, is "denying our affections nothing but the sin. It enjoys as much of the world as may be consistent with the possibilities of Heaven."\(^{143}\) Taylor phrased the paradox also in

\(^{139}\)Ibid., 147.

\(^{140}\)Ibid., 159 ff.

\(^{141}\)Ibid., 156.

\(^{142}\)Ibid., 276. From *The Confessions*, Book I, Chapt. I.

\(^{143}\)Ibid., II, 173.
this fashion: "It is certain that we cannot be secure, when security is our enemy."\cite{Ibid., 201}

Watts, in his comprehensive versification of the Protestant ideas, expressed in a number of hymns the danger of too great attachment to this world's goods. Hymn XLVIII is entitled "Love to the Creature is Dangerous."

\begin{verbatim}
How vain are all things here below.
How false, and yet how fair
Each pleasure hath its poison too,
And ev'ry sweet a snare.

The brightest things below the sky
Give but a flattering light;
We should suspect some danger nigh,
Where we possess delight.

The fondness of a creature's love,
How strong it strikes the sense!
Thither the warm affections move,
Nor can we call them thence.

Dear Saviour, let thy beauties be
My soul's eternal good;
And grace command my heart away
From all created good.\cite{Hymns, p. 160}

One of the verses of this hymn is especially suggestive of the thesis treated by Emerson in "Give All to Love."

Our dearest joys, and nearest friends,
The partners of our blood,
How they divide our wav'ring minds,
And leave but half for God!

And therefore, in Emerson's words:

When half gods go
The gods arrive.\cite{Works, IX, 92}
\end{verbatim}
Milton gave the idea poetic life in *Paradise Lost*. The poem shows clearly that Milton rejected ascetism for the Protestant paradox that all things are permitted, but that all things must be kept subordinate to God. That the Puritans of New England acted on this basis has been shown by Perry Miller.

The unknowable and inscrutable God has, out of His sovereign liberty, erected a world of certain knowable and circumscribed laws—on the day of His judgment He will roll up the work like a scroll and the laws will be annihilated, but meanwhile they endure. Human beings, as a part of this world, must obey the requirements set them and fulfill the rules of their nature. They must, for example, live in civil societies "as members of this or that City, or Town, or Commonwealth, in this or that particular vocation and calling," and they must live the life of the senses, "by which we eat and drinke, by which we live and move, and have our being." Per se these activities are not unlawful. And also, the God who made men must have made whatever men require in order to live. All that supports life, preserves or restores health, feeds natural hungers, is to that extent good. A thing becomes dangerous when it hinders life or health, when it proves disagreeable to the "nature of Man for whose use it was made." Works of "Necessity and of Compassion" were always permissible on the Sabbath, though there was often difficulty in deciding what was necessary or compassionate. The ultimate purpose of men is the glory of God, but that he may achieve his final end he must also pursue his subordinate ends. Hence he may "lawfully seek his present comfort, and use the approved means for the obtainement of it." No seventeenth century Puritan ever said that food, love, and music were intrinsically bad or that recreation was inherently sinful. On the contrary, he said, "God hath given us temporals to Enjoy . . . We should therefore suck the sweet of them, and so slack our Thirst with them as not to be Insatiable after more." Sin lies not in them but in a sinful use of them, in employing what God has designed for the relief of natural wants merely for their pleasurableness, in eating not to maintain life but solely for the savour of the food, in loving not for procreation but for sensuous gratification, in ruling not to benefit society but from a lust for power. Actions are never sinful simply because they are enjoyable—if their felicity remains subordinate to their utility, they are beyond criticism—they become reprehensible the moment they are practiced for their delectability alone. The people of God are free to use the things of this life, "not only for their necessity, but also for their convenience and comfort; but yet he hath set bounds to this liberty that it may not degenerate into licentiousness." To speak properly, no created
thing and no act of a created being can ever be, in itself, evil. . . . The fundamental constitution of the universe had to be forever good and remain forever inviolate, otherwise there would be a curtailing of the infinite perfection of God.147

It became, therefore, a favorite Puritan theme that men must love the world with "weaned affections." They were in the world, but they were not of it. They could use things but "be not wedded to them, but so weaned from them, that you may use them as if you used them not."148 Miller remarked, "Puritanism sees illusion in the visible universe; it requires men, as long as they are in the flesh, to act as though the illusion were real; it punishes them if they take illusion for reality.149

John Cotton wrote,

There is another combination of virtues strangely mixed in every lively holy Christian, And that is Diligence in worldly business and yet deadness to the world . . . And yet bee a man dead-hearted to the world . . . though hee labour most diligently in his calling, yet his heart is not set upon these things.150

As time passed, it is quite clear that the deadheartedness of later generations was toward the Creator and not the creation. Nevertheless the creedal formulations and public confessions of humility were retained.151 Weber in his The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism has shown how the characteristic virtues of Calvinism were especially compatible with the rise of capitalism. Dr. Channing was hostile toward the philosophical idealism of Calvinism perhaps partly because he realized

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147 The Seventeenth Century, p. 41.
148 Ibid., p. 42.
149 Loc. cit.
150 Miller, The Seventeenth Century, p. 43.
151 Loc. cit.
that the efforts of State Street merchants had come to depend upon a faith in the substantiality of the goods in which they dealt. The eighteenth century merchants had been willing to repeat stereotyped formulas of dead-heartedness on Sunday, although their real faith was in their counting-houses. Channing's generation destroyed the dogmatic formulations, since the life had gone out of the dynamic tension in which the various elements of Calvinism were held.

It is easy to see why the commercial atmosphere of the early nineteenth century turned away from Calvinism, if Watts's hymns are regarded as typical expressions of organized Calvinism's attitude toward wealth. The word "gold" never occurs in the hymns and psalms of Watts except in conjunction with the word "sinner." Two extracts are cited, but many more might be shown.

Why do the wealthy wicked boast,
And grow profanely bold?
The meanest portion of the just
Excels the sinner's gold. 152

Watts assumed, apparently automatically, that the possession of wealth was indicative of sinfulness.

Why doth the man of riches grow
To insolence and pride,
To see his wealth and honours flow
With every rising tide?

(Why doth he treat the poor with scorn,
Made of the self-same clay,
And boast as though his flesh was born
Of better dust than they?)

Not all his treasures can procure
His soul a short reprieve,
Redeem from death one guilty hour,
Or make his brother live.

152 Watts, Psalms, p. 91.

153 Ibid., p. 112.

154 Works, IX, 40.
(Life is a blessing can't be sold,
The ransom is too high;
Justice will never be brib'd with gold,
That man may never die.)\textsuperscript{153}

One of Emerson's chief charges against the society of his day was that it had made a god of gold, that men served things, as he said in the "Ode to W. H. Channing."

Emerson, however, reasserted the idealistic affirmations that were implicit in Calvinism, in contrast to Channing's defense of the substantial reality of the material universe. Emerson's position parallels the Puritan viewpoint rather faithfully. He, too, believed in the goodness of the universe. In Miller's terms, he was a "cosmic optimist." His poetry is full of his awareness of the beauty and goodness of the created universe. Like the Puritans, he was not an ascetic. The first chapter of the book Nature expresses his delight in the universe. Such poems as "Each and All," "Fable," "The Snow-Storm," "The Humble-Bee" and many others express the pleasure he found in the visible world.

His assertion of the goodness of the universe appears in almost every poem he wrote. In "The Humble-Bee" he commends the wisdom of the bee in knowing that the world is good.

\textit{Aught unsavory or unclean}
\textit{Hath my insect never seen;}
\textit{\ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots}
\textit{Wiser far than human seer}
\textit{Yellow-breeched philosopher}
\textit{Seeing only what is fair;}
\textit{Sipping only what is sweet.}\textsuperscript{154}

The disturbance that Uriel provoked in heaven was based on the assertion of the essential goodness of the universe:

\textsuperscript{153}Ibid., p. 112.
\textsuperscript{154}Works, IX, 40.
Line in nature is not found
Unit and universe are not round
In vain produced, all rays return
Evil will bless, ice will burn

The bounds of good and ill were rent
Strong Hades could not keep his own
But all slid to confusion. 155

In "The World Soul" he wrote:

The inevitable morning
Finds them who in cellars be
And be sure the all-loving Nature
Will smile in a factory. 156

He wrote in "Musketaquid",

For there's no rood has not a star above it. 157

The term "rood" is effective here, for it is literally, apparently, the older New England expression meaning one-quarter acre. It also suggests the cross on which Jesus died. The expression is made more suggestive by the double meaning.

Like the Puritans, although he was not an ascetic, Emerson was aware of the danger of attachment to the created world. Like the Puritans, Emerson could excuse himself from a conversation with friends to attend the delivery of some wood with the comment that "We have to attend to these matters just as if they were real." 158 His poetry contains frequently the theme of the danger of attachment to the world. Part of his comfort in "Threnody" grows out of his realization that he has been guilty of a sense of possessiveness, that he has loved too well the

155 Ibid., 14.
156 Ibid., 16.
157 Ibid., 143.
158 Oscar W. Firkins, Ralph Waldo Emerson, p. 321.
finite, instead of subordinating his love for his son to his love for the Infinite.

And thoughtest thou such guest
Would in thy hall take up his rest?
Would rushing life forget her laws,
Fate's glowing revolution pause?
High omens ask diviner guess;
Not to be coned to tediousness,
And know my higher gifts unbind
The zone that girds the incarnate mind.

And many-seeming life is one,—
Wilt thou transfix and make it none?
Its onward force too starkly pent
In figure, bone, and lineament?
Wilt thou, uncalled, interrogate,
Talker! the unreplying Fate?
Nor see the genius of the whole
Ascendant in the Private soul,
Beckon it when to go and come
Self-announced its hour of doom?
Fair the soul's recess and shrine,
Magic-built to last a season;
Masterpiece of love benign,
Fairer that expansive reason
Whose omen 'tis, and sign.\textsuperscript{159}

The Augustinian-Protestant-Puritan paradox of a detached affection, of a weaned affection, or in Platonic terms the injunction not to confuse a love for the part with a love for the whole, appeared in Emerson's poem "Give All to Love." Emerson himself wrote into the Journal an exact description of the Augustinian paradox.

So we demand of men that they should exhibit a conduct which is at once continence and abandonment; "a wanton heed, and giddy cunning."\textsuperscript{160}

There is a paragraph in Taylor's \textit{Holy Living} that Emerson was undoubtedly familiar with that may have been in his mind when he wrote

\textsuperscript{159}Works, IX, 156-157.
\textsuperscript{160}Journals, VI, 203.
"Give All to Love."

Although their mutual endearments are safe within the protection of marriage, yet they that have wives or husbands must be as though they had them not; that is, they must have an affection greater to each other, than they have to any person in the world, but not greater than they have to God, but that they be ready to part with all interest in each other's person rather than sin against God.  

Emerson's poem begins with the affirmation that the successful lover must give all to love.

Give all to love
Obey thy heart
Friends, kindred, days
Estate, good fame,
Plans, credit, and the Muse,—
Nothing refuse.

After thirty lines devoted to this theme Emerson said,

... yet

One word more

Keep thee today,
Tomorrow, forever
Free as an Arab
Of thy beloved

Heartily know
When half-gods go
The gods arrive.

The danger of an undue attachment to this world's goods seemed the greatest form of the danger to Emerson, apparently, for he dwelt on the futility of wealth, the dangers of wealth, far more than on any other aspect of the problem. He apparently felt it to be one of the major aspects of man's sinfulness. His attitude toward the problem of evil is discussed later in the thesis; the failure of men to realize the futility

161Taylor, Works, III, 63.

162Works, IX, 90-92.
of wealth was one of their great weaknesses, he felt.

The Puritan paradox that men are to work in the world, but not let the world become as God to them is implied in the "Ode to W. H. Channing". Reform is futile, he said in the poem, for it would not change the fact that men now worship things; the imagery that associates things with the snake is no doubt derived from *Paradise Lost*.

Boston Bay and Bunker Hill
Would serve things still.
Things are of the snake.

The horseman serves the horse,
The neatherd serves the neat,
The merchant serves the purse,
The eater serves his meat;
'Tis the day of the chattel,
Web to weave and corn to grind,
Things are in the saddle,
And ride mankind.
There are two laws discrete,
Not reconciled,—
Law for man, and law for thing
The last builds town and fleet
But it runs wild
And doth the man unking.163

The comment about "two laws discrete" may be a direct reference to the paradox that, to succeed in the world of things, a man must work with the greatest of diligence; but he must always remember that his primary loyalty is not to a successful dealing with things, if he is to be a Christian.

In the lines which follow, Emerson describes the Puritan conviction that the world's work must be done, but that it must be done in accord with the spiritual nature of the universe.

'Tis fit the forest fall,
The steep be graded,

The mountains tunnelled,
The sand shaded,
The orchard planted,
The glebe tilled,
The prairie granted,
The steamer built.
Let man serve law for man;
Live for friendship, live for love,
For truth's and harmony's behoof.164

He even managed to suggest the traditional Christian doctrine of vocation, that every socially useful task is a calling from God, in the lines which conclude, "Every one to his chosen work."165

The theme of the futility of wealth also appeared in "The World Soul.", "Trade and streets ensnare us."166

The following stanza from "The World Soul" combined an assertion of the ideal reality of the universe ("Thought's causing stream") with an assertion of the lack of permanent value of economic enterprise:

And what if Trade sow cities
Like shells along the shore,
And thatch with them the prairie broad
With railways ironed o'er?--
They are but sailing foam-bells
Along Thought's causing stream,
And take their shape and sun color
From him that sends the dream.167

He also expressed doubt in this poem whether the inventions of modern science will prove of value:

It cannot conquer folly--
Time-and-space-conquering steam--

164Ibid., 78.
165Works, IX, 79.
166Ibid., 16.
167Ibid., 18.
And the light-outspeading telegraph
Bears nothing on its beam. 168

While the problem of scientific materialism had not arisen for the Puritans, Emerson's attitude was essentially in agreement with the Puritan feeling that natural theology cannot afford saving knowledge, and with their feeling that effort applied to the world of space and time may be necessary for living, but it does not contain in itself any principle of salvation.

The fullest poetic declaration of the futility of wealth is in the poem "Hamatreya".

Bulkeley, Hunt, Willard, Hosmer, Meriam, Flint,
Possessed the land which rendered to their toil
Hay, corn, roots, hemp, flax, apples, wool and wood.
Each of these landlords walked amidst his farm,
Saying, "'Tis mine, my children's and my name's.
How sweet the west wind sounds in my own trees!
How graceful climb those shadows on my hill!
I fancy these pure waters and the flags
Know me, as does my dog; we sympathize;
And, I affirm, my actions smack of the soil."

Where are these men? Asleep beneath their grounds:
And strangers, fond as they, their furrows plough.
Earth laughs in flowers, to see her boastful boys
Earth proud, proud of the earth which is not theirs;
Who steer the plough, but cannot steer their feet
Clear of the grave.

They added ridge to valley, brook to pond,
And sighed for all that bounded their domain;
'This suits me for a pasture; that's my park;
We must have clay, lime, gravel, granite-ledge,
And misty lowland, where to go for peat.
The land is well,—lies fairly to the south.
'Tis good, when you have crossed the sea and back,
To find the sitfast acres where you left them.'
'Ahi! the hot owner sees not Death, who adds
Him to his land, a lump of mould the more.
Hear what the Earth says:—

168 Ibid., 160.
Earth-Song

Mine and yours;
Mine, not yours.
Earth endures;
Stars abide--
Shine down in the old sea;
Old are the shores;
But where are old men?
I who have seen much,
Such have I never seen.

'The lawyer's deed
Ran sure,
In tail,
To them, and to their heirs
Who shall succeed,
Without fail,
Forevermore.

'Here is the land,
Shaggy with wood,
With its old valley,
Mound and flood.
But the heritors?--
Fled like the flood's foam.
The lawyer, and the laws,
And the kingdom,
Clean swept herefrom.

'They called me theirs,
Who so controlled me;
Yet every one
Wished to stay, and is gone
How am I theirs,
If they cannot hold me,
But I hold them?'

When I heard the Earth-song,
I was no longer brave;
My avarice cooled
Like lust in the chill of the grave.\(^{169}\)

It is significant that Emerson used the term lust for the sin of avarice or wanting too much land. He followed the practice of the earlier preachers in that respect, as illustrated by the passage cited above from

\(^{169}\)Ibid., 35-37.
John Smith. The origin of the poem "Hamatreya" has been shown by Christy,\textsuperscript{170} and Carpenter,\textsuperscript{171} to be in Hindu sources. The fact of Hindu sources for the poem, "Hamatreya" and the poem, "Brahma," is of less importance, however, than the use to which Emerson put the Hindu material. Christy quoted Emerson’s comment concerning the Hindus in the Journal, "I want not the metaphysics, but only the literature of them."\textsuperscript{172} Christy said of this statement,

The cue should be taken and never forgotten. The Concord men were interested only in the tones and overtones of the literatures of India, China, and Persia.\textsuperscript{173}

Christy said further, "Emerson’s reading seemingly served to confirm or at most to modify lines of thought already discovered rather than to suggest new departures."\textsuperscript{174} Christy believed that Emerson’s attitude toward nature grew out of Western idealism and the Old Testament. Emerson, Christy said, differed from the typical Hindu, because he insisted that the world was good, as did the Creator in Genesis. The Hindu saw in the world the absence of good and so rejected the world.\textsuperscript{175} Carpenter’s conclusion is in agreement with Christy’s. He wrote,

Thus, although many of Emerson’s specific ideas found reinforcement in the Hindu Scriptures, most of them had been originally derived or created from other sources.\textsuperscript{176}

\textsuperscript{170}Arthur Christy, The Orient in American Transcendentalism: A Study of Emerson, Thoreau, and Alcott, p. 162.

\textsuperscript{171}Frederic Ives Carpenter, Emerson and Asia, pp. 97-98.

\textsuperscript{172}Journals, X, 248.

\textsuperscript{173}Christy, p. 9.

\textsuperscript{174}Loc. cit.

\textsuperscript{175}Christy, p. 85.

\textsuperscript{176}Emerson and Asia, p. 154.
Carpenter has shown that Emerson rejected Hindu ideas, and selected what suited his own needs. Carpenter said that the "Hindu philosophy helped him to a wider and richer development of his own thought." A comment from Emerson may serve as a conclusion, "We read the Oriental, but remain Occidental."

That Emerson had the same ideas as expressed in "Hamatreya" before he read the Hindu sources can readily be seen by examining the sermons. The theme of the futility of wealth appeared frequently in his preaching. We go so gravely about our ordinary trifling employment that we are apt to lose the sense of the absurdity of much that we do. We allow, by our acquiescence, a man that has more houses and ships and farms than his neighbors to assume consequence in his manners on that ground; although we know very well when we ponder the matter that if instead of a few thousand acres of land or a score of ships or houses he owned the entire property of the world, he would be as much in the dark, as mortal, and as insufficient to himself as he is now. He could not then solve so much as one word of the vast mystery that envelopes us; he would not have a particle more of real power. In the great All, he would be the insect he is now. Yet the extent and consistency of the world's farce keeps each particular puppet in countenance, and we go on in the universal hunt for station and land and horses and ships and stocks and attentions and compliments,--hiding the inanity of the whole thing in the multitude of the particulars. Is it not as if one should have a nest of a hundred boxes, and nothing in the last box?

It is a fair summary to assert that Emerson restated the Augustinian-Protestant conviction that the world is a place of beauty, fragile and subject to change, in which man has been placed to develop his spiritual abilities through the wise use of this world's goods. But man is ever to keep in mind that his chief duty is to love the realities of the spirit, not the unreal goods provided in the insubstantial pageant of this world.

177Ibid., p. 158.
178Journals, IX, 116.
179McGiffert, Young Emerson Speaks, pp. 205-206.
CHAPTER V

THE INVENTOR OF THE GAME, OMNIPRESENT WITHOUT NAME

The dissertation has traced in detail three major similarities between the poetry of Emerson and the doctrines of Protestantism, concerning the natural world. Chapter V discusses the attitude toward God contained in the poetry of Emerson. The problem is to determine whether, as some critics have charged, Emerson's poetry contained pantheistic ideas. The chapter begins with a definition, then considers the ideas contained in the books read by Emerson, and finally considers the poetry, in an effort to demonstrate that Emerson consistently maintained the traditional Christian paradox of the transcendence and immanence of God.

1. Immanence

The word pantheism is a term of reproach in the history of Christian thought. Like many other terms in religion, it began as an insult, and was applied to Spinoza, for example, as an epithet of invective. From the standpoint of Christianity, pantheism has been disapproved because it identifies the creation with the Creator, because it may destroy the identity of the individual. Yet Christianity had denied, in denying the Manichean heresy that the creation is not ultimately derived from the Creator; and in accepting the Platonic defense of Christianity, it accepted a philosophy that asserted the derivation of the creation from God. The problem was to maintain the relative, or subordinate goodness of the creation, without falling into the Manichean assertion of the creation as an example of active evil or, on the other hand, without identifying
the Creator with creation so that Creator was lost in creation.

The standard solution to this problem was to insist on both the transcendence and the immanence of God. Here again Christianity resorted to paradox to solve a problem it could not otherwise solve. This maintenance of two conflicting ideas, with a consequent tension, is shown in Fulton J. Sheen's description of the transcendence and immanence of God.\textsuperscript{1} His description is a typical statement of the Christian resolution of the problem; he affirmed vigorously both sides of the paradox as completely true. Within the framework of this paradox traditional Christianity has not rejected statements of the immanence of God that would, without the corrective of the other side of the paradox, sound improperly pantheistic. Calvin recognized the possibility of using what might seem to be a pantheistic statement, within what he regarded as the acceptable bounds of orthodoxy. "I admit, indeed, that the expression, 'Nature is God,' may be piously used, if dictated by a pious mind."\textsuperscript{2}

The test of a pious mind is its recognition that while "Nature is God," still God is completely other than Nature. So long as the paradox was maintained, one might speak or write quite emphatically of the presence of God in nature, or of the identification of God and nature. The remainder of the chapter will attempt to demonstrate that Emerson consistently maintained the paradox of immanence and transcendence.

Many of the writers read by Emerson affirm the doctrine of the omnipresence of God. Jeremy Taylor reported the doctrine of the Divine omnipresence very fully. He discussed the manner of the Divine presence, as two fold: God is present by "His essence; which because it is infinite,


cannot be contained within the limits of a place," and God is present by "His power." God's purity cannot be stained by His presence in the unclean because as the sun, reflecting upon the mud of strands and shores, is unpolluted in its beams, so is God not dishonored when we suppose Him in every one of His creatures.

Taylor's statement of the omnipresence through power is so poetically anthropomorphic that it demands to be quoted in full.

He rolls the orbs of heaven with His hand; He fixes the earth with His foot; He guides all the creatures with His eye, and refreshes them with His influence: He makes the power of hell to shake with His terrors, and binds the devils with His word, and throws them out with His command; and sends the angels on embassies with His decrees: He hardens the joints of infants, and confirms the bones, when they are fashioned secretly beneath the earth. He it is that assists at the numerous productions of fishes; and there is not one hollowness in the bottom of the sea, but He shows Himself to be Lord of it, by sustaining there the creatures that come to dwell in it: and in the wilderness, the bittern and the stork, the dragon and the satyr, the unicorn and the elk, live upon His provisions, and revere His power, and feel the force of His almightiness.

It is interesting to observe here, in addition to the unnatural natural history, the doctrine of concursus dei, that creation was not once and for all, but is a continuing process, that God must continue to sustain his creation, or it would lapse into nothingness.

Taylor dwelt at length upon all the possible ways of asserting the Divine presence.

God is in every place: suppose it therefore to be a church. God is in every creature: be cruel towards none. God is especially present in the heart of His people, by His Holy spirit: and indeed the hearts of holy men are temples in the truth of things, and in type and shadow they are heaven itself. God is especially present in the consciences of all men good and bad, by way of testimony and judgement that is, He is there a remembrancer to call our actions to mind, a witness

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3Taylor, Works, III, 23.
4Loc. cit.
5Loc. cit.
to bring them to judgement, and a judge to acquit or condemn. Because men may forget the presence of the Divine, Taylor devoted one section of Holy Living to rules for practising the presence of God. His rules amount to a series of reminders of the Divine Presence, which are to be used as the subject for meditation, and as moral safeguards. One of his reminders expressed the paradox of transcendence and immanence, and related it to St. Augustine.

God is wholly in every place, included in no place; not bound with cords, except those of love; not divided into parts, not changeable into several shapes, filling heaven and earth with His present power, and with His never absent nature: so St. Augustine expresses this article.

One of his comparisons is the figure of the circle, a favorite Emersonian term.

We may imagine God to be as the air, and the sea, and we all enclosed in His circle, wrapped up in the lap of His infinite nature; or as infants in the wombs of their pregnant mothers: and we can no more be removed from the presence of God than from our own being.

Taylor was not the only writer read by Emerson that made use of the doctrine of omnipresence. Dowden pointed out the presence of the belief in the poetry of Herbert. "Herbert felt ... that in Him we live, and move, and have our being:"

Thou art in small things great, nor small in any: Thy even praise can neither rise nor fall. Thou art in all things one, in each thing many: For thou art infinite in one and all.

Dowden found the same idea in Sir Thomas Browne's Religio Medici.

Seeking in all directions for a Divine Presence, unsatisfied until he had found spirit penetrating the whole framework of

7Ibid., 22-23.
8Ibid., 23.
9Dowden, p. 101.
things, and filling all the interstices of existence, Browne loved to trace out the meanders of Providence in what men misname fortune . . . "Whoever feels not the warm gale and gentle ventilation of this Spirit, though I feel his pulse, I dare not say he lives; for truly, without this, to me there is no heat under the tropic, nor any light, though I dwell in the body of the sun." 10

John Smith, with his mystical inclinations, was naturally an enthusiastic rhapsodist of the Divine Presence. His studies in Neo-Platonism gave his discourses a note of enthusiasm and warmth unusual even in that century of religious enthusiasts. Smith was so impressed with the necessity of the inner experience and inner presence of Deity that he would call even the action of God "mechanic" if it moved a person externally.

That is but a mechanic religion which moves us no longer than some external weights and impulses are upon it, whether those be, I think I may safely say from some worldly thing, or from God Himself while He acts upon men from without them, and not from within them. 11

But while God moves us from within, we are always within God. It is impossible, he said, for anything to "get out of the bounds, or to get out of the reach of an Almighty mind . . . " 12 His willingness to draw upon classical and Platonic sanctions for his ideas is seen in this statement of the Divine Presence within us.

. . . the best philosophers have always taught us to inquire for God within ourselves; "Reason in us" as Cicero tells us, being participata similitude rationis aeternae: and, accordingly, some good expositions have interpreted that place in St. John's gospel, "He is that true light which enlightens every man that cometh into the world," which if I were to gloss upon in the language of the Platonists, I should do it thus: . . . "the Eternal Word is the light of souls:" which the vulgar Latin referred to in Psalm IV, 7, Signatum est supra nos lumen vultus tui, Domine as Aquinas observes. 13

10 Ibid., p. 49.
11 Select Discourses, p. 477.
12 Ibid., pp. 136-137.
13 Ibid., pp. 2, 62.
This identification of the reason within man with the Eternal Reason is noteworthy because of its parallelism to Emerson's belief. Coleridge quoted John Smith as a source for his discussion of the distinctions between reason and understanding.\textsuperscript{14}

Deism has its roots in the seventeenth century. Smith could not perhaps have predicted the Deistic emphasis on transcendence, but he wrote words that are emphatically opposed to the spirit and ideas of the next century. God did not make the world, he said,

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as a mere exercise of His Almighty power, or to try his own strength, and then throw it away from Himself without any further attention to it, for He is that omnipresent Life that penetrates and runs through all things, containing and holding all fast together within Himself \ldots He did not look without Himself for some solid foundation that might bear up this weighty building, but, indeed, reared it up within Him and spread His own omnipotence under it and through it \ldots
\end{quote}

It is unnecessary to cite further illustrations from Smith or from the writers of the seventeenth century. The doctrine is to be found in Richard Baxter,\textsuperscript{16} Puritan preacher of the mid-seventeenth century; in the Anglican Isaac Barrow,\textsuperscript{17} in the Anglican Tillotson.\textsuperscript{18} Barclay,\textsuperscript{19} the Quaker, emphasized the Divine presence in terms of the inner light

\textsuperscript{14}Coleridge, Aids to Reflection, p. 323, quoted in Cameron, Emerson the Essayist, I, 125.

\textsuperscript{15}Select Discourses, p. 148.

\textsuperscript{16}Baxter's Treatise of Knowledge and Love Compared was checked out by Emerson from the Boston Athenæum in 1830.

\textsuperscript{17}Theological Works, checked out from Harvard Library in 1824, (Cameron, Emerson's Reading, p. 55).

\textsuperscript{18}Works, checked out from Harvard Library in 1824, (Cameron, Emerson's Reading, p. 56).

\textsuperscript{19}An Apology for the True Christian Divinity, withdrawn from the Boston Athenæum in 1835, (Cameron, Emerson's Reading, p. 56).
and quoted John Smith of Cambridge as a source, "Seek God with thy own soul". Smith's influences are evident throughout the latter part of the century in several works read by Emerson. The Anglicans, Barrow and Tillotson, also indicate knowledge of Smith, as Dowden confirmed.

The writers of the eighteenth century, whether Trinitarian or Unitarian, took the transcendence of God for granted, not his immanence. The Newtonian physics had caught the imagination of the men of that period, and they thought of God as remote from the world, governing it by an automatic mechanism that, once set up, continued without need for further assistance by the Creator. Priestley's famous analogy of the clock, that God had constructed and wound up the mechanism of the world which, once created, would run by its own mechanism in a way determined by its springs and cogs appeared in other writers of the century. Paley's proof of the existence of God, Natural Theology, or Evidences of the Existence and Attributes of the Deity, begins with a comparison of the world to a watch. While the book rests essentially on a detailed demonstration of the teleological argument (that purpose in the world implies a purposer), the spirit of the work is quite deistic, in its faith in the machine-like operation of the world and the absence of the creator. Edward Everett published a recasting of the arguments of Paley in Boston, in 1814, with a similar faith in the absence of God, not his

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20 Ibid., p. 31.
21 Dowden, p. 335.
22 Fuller, A History of Philosophy, II, 181-182.
23 William Paley, Natural Theology, pp. 6-8.
Joseph Butler's Analogy might be cited as another eighteenth century approach to religion by an orthodox Anglican divine that largely eliminated God from the world. Butler saw the world of morality operating by the same inevitability as the law of gravity. His analogy is one that he presumed existed between the laws that governed the physical universe and the laws that governed the moral universe. In this respect the book has much in common with Emerson, who probably withdrew Butler's book from Harvard College Library in 1823 and in 1824. The record is not complete for this book, but he referred to the Analogy in the Journals for 1824, with the remark, "My reasoning faculty is proportionably weak, nor can I ever hope to write a Butler's Analogy or an Essay of Hume ..." Fortunately for the world, he did not write another Analogy, for it has no value, except to the historian of religion. Emerson's approach to the moral laws is similar to Butler's in that both believed the laws self-executing. Butler's influence may be at work in the final sentence of the Divinity School Address where Emerson speaks of the "identity of the law of gravity with purity of heart." Emerson, however, thought of the laws with a sense of piety that links him to the main stream of Christian thought, but that is lacking in Butler's Analogy. There is nothing in Butler remotely like Emerson's line, "And conscious Law is King of Kings." Moreover, Butler, like Lardner and Paley, regarded enthusiasm as a

24 Defense of Christianity.
25 Journals, I, 361.
26 Works, I, 151.
27 Ibid., IX, 59.
menace, while Emerson felt the great weakness of his own time was a lack of religious enthusiasm. As he grew older, there ceased to be any approval of Butler's ideas in the Journal. Instead, he wrote, in 1863, "We do not clearly see what shall be, when religion and enthusiasm are to come to us Americans, which we sorely need."28

Joseph Stevens Buckminster, the popular young minister of the Brattle Street Church, who died in 1811, just before he was to become the first lecturer on Biblical criticism at Harvard, was remembered with a volume of posthumously published sermons.29 The collection is a good illustration of a completely rational and moral approach to religion. The inexplicable, the mysterious, the omnipresence of God, all of these are completely lacking. Buckminster proved the truth of Christianity by the arguments of Paley, and the logic of Lardner. Politeness, respectability, and social acceptance are the virtues he valued most. Oddly enough Emerson spoke of Buckminster with respect for his "philosophic imagination."30 Perhaps his attitude toward the sermons was colored by a poignant memory of the early death of the popular young man, for they give little evidence of having imagination.

Dowden has written a summary of the religion of the eighteenth century that is fairly accurate also for the religious attitudes of Harvard in the third decade of the nineteenth century. The books upon which Dowden based his summary were largely the books used as at Harvard, including

28 Journals, IX, 559.
29 Sermons. The Emerson family withdrew the book from the Boston Library society twice, in 1818 and in 1821, (Cameron, Emerson the Essayist II, 154).
30 Journals, I, 323.
Locke, Paley, Hume, and Butler.

If religion was to hold its own in an age when the understanding became the leading authority, it must be shown to be in harmony with the understanding; religion must be rationalized. The God of nature was seen as the first cause in a vast and orderly chain of causation; He was the President in a constitutional system acting through general laws, which formed, so to speak, his executive. The God of revelation must, if possible, be identified with the God of nature; his methods must bear some analogy to the methods which preside over the constitution and course of nature. The motives to a religious life must be exhibited as addressing themselves to the rational part of human nature, to the intelligence, the common sense, the prudence of men; the temper in which religion is set before men must be a temper of reasonableness and moderation. If the revelation of Christ be an intervention of the supreme Ruler of the world, it must prove its divine origin by evidence establishing at least a strong probability in its favour; miracles and prophecy must be supported by such witnesses or such historical evidence as could be tested in a court of law; Christian doctrine must justify itself as consonant with man's moral nature, and tending to promote his welfare. Christianity must appear as the religion of good sense. "He that takes away reason to make way for revelation," wrote Locke, "puts out the light of both, and does much the same as if he would persuade a man to put out his eyes, the better to receive the remote light of an invisible star by a telescope." In order to retain an enlightened intelligence on the side of Christianity, it might be well to place no emphasis on any distinctive doctrines which seem to be repugnant to human reason . . . so in the eighteenth century an attenuated Christianity was held to be the prophylactic against Deism. It is certain that Deism was deprived of much of its aggressive force by the tendency of Christian writers to pursue a via media."

It would not be accurate to assert that the doctrine of the omnipresence of God was lacking in all of the eighteenth century sermons or religious works available to Emerson. John Logan, whose Sermons were published in Boston in 1804, objected to the watchmaker argument in his sermon "The Lord Reigneth," first on the traditional ground of Christian agnos-

31 Powden, pp. 324-325.

32 Read by the Emersons in 1816, (Cameron, Emerson the Essayist, II, 153).
ticism, (God's methods are incomprehensible, and the world eventually a mystery); and second on the ground that God is omnipresent and continually active. "To what purpose is God everywhere present, if he is not everywhere employed?"

It is not surprising that Logan defended the paradox of immanence and transcendence, for he was a poet and playwright, if minor one, and may be expected to have perceived aspects of reality of which the more completely rational minds of Paley, Butler, Lardner, Buckminster, and the eighteenth century rationalists were not aware.

Another eighteenth century writer who was an exception to the generalization that the eighteenth century was largely interested in the transcendence of God was Newcome Cappa. He was an English preacher in the dissenting parish later held by Thomas Belsham, and so must be regarded as one of the liberal forerunners of Unitarianism. The traditional paradox between the transcendence and the omnipresence of God appears strongly in his writing.

It is obvious in the strict and literal meaning of the phrase, all men are with the omnipresent God, and no one man more with him than another. The reception of favours, or of powers from him may be accompanied with change of place; but this is not at all necessary to it. In this figurative import of the phrase, a man may be with God and in heaven, anywhere. It is equally obvious, that in the same strict and literal meaning of the term, in respect of an invisible and omnipresent God, no man can at any time or in any place, be more with him than he was. In the world to come, and in heaven there may be more liberal and more sensible communications of divine favour, or

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33 John Logan, Sermons, p. 104 ff.

34 The Emerson family withdrew from the Boston Library society Cappa's Critical Remarks . . . on Scripture in 1816 and his devotional Discourses in 1818. (Cameron, Emerson the Essayist, II, 172.) Emerson, himself, checked out the Critical Remarks in 1832 from the Boston Athenaeum. (Cameron, Ralph Waldo Emerson's Reading, p. 63.)
communications of a peculiar kind, which divine wisdom may
see fit to confine to some certain place and period; but in
a future world and in heaven, there can be no more of the real
presence of God with men than on earth, everywhere and at all
times.\textsuperscript{35}

The special form of the doctrine of omnipresence, known as concursus
dei should be mentioned, because of its appearance in Emerson's poetry
and prose. The belief that God must continue his creative activity at
all times or the world would fall into nothingness has already been
pointed out in one of the quotations from Jeremy Taylor.\textsuperscript{36} Perry Miller
has shown that the same article of belief appeared in the Puritan sermons
and writings in New England.

... to them the visible world was not the final or the true
world--it was a creation of God and it was sustained by Him
from moment to moment. Deeper than their belief in the more
obvious articles of their creed lay their sense of the world
as a created fabric, held together by a continuous emanation
of divine power, apt to be dissolved into nothing should the
divine energy be withheld. They fastened with particular
avidity upon the doctrines in which Christian thinkers had
embodied this view. Puritan sermons dwelt incessantly upon
the theme of "concursus dei." The world could not make itself,
so neither could it continue itself in being--if the power
that made all creatures did not preserve them they would
presently return to the first nothingness. "The frame of
nature would be dissolved the next moment, if there were not
an hand of Providence to uphold and govern all." It was not
enough to imagine that God organized a mechanical world and
merely set the first wheel in motion: "As he predetermines
Second Causes, so He concurses with them in their operations.
And this Praedetermination, and Concourse is so necessary, that
there can be no real effect produced by the Creature without
it." God must be more than the original designer of the
creation, He must continually create it anew out of His in-
finite stores of being.\textsuperscript{37}

Miller concluded his description of the doctrine with a quotation

\textsuperscript{35}Newcome Cappe, Discourses Chiefly on Devotional Subjects, pp. 28-29.

\textsuperscript{36}See page 133.

\textsuperscript{37}The Seventeenth Century, pp. 14-15.
that contains an effort to express the idea with a figure of speech. "All Creatures are dead Cyphers, of no signification, except the Influence of God adds a Figure to them." This metaphor may be compared with the comparison of men to the pipes of Pan in the poem "Pan." Emerson's comparison is a more effective method of stating the same idea.

That Emerson must have been aware of the idea of concursus dei cannot be doubted. Many of the books he is known to have withdrawn from the library contained the idea. Some books that he valued highly assert the doctrine frequently. Its presence in Taylor's Holy Living has been pointed out. The doctrine is implied in the passage previously quoted from John Smith's Select Discourses. A clear statement of it is to be found in several places in the book. Smith asserts:

In the next place, we may, by way of further deduction, gather, That that Almighty wisdom and goodness which first made all things, doth continually conserve and govern them, extending themselves through the whole fabric and seating themselves in every finite essence, "lest," straggling and falling off from the Deity, they should become altogether disorderly, "relapsing and sliding back into their first chaos."

The doctrine was apparently a commonplace among seventeenth century religious writers, whether in England or the New World. Emerson would have found it in several of them, including Milton, who defined the doctrine of ordinary providence as that "whereby he upholds and preserves the immutable order of causes appointed by him in the beginning."

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38 Ibid., p. 114.
39 See page 136.
40 Smith, Select Discourses, p. 147. No source given for the quotation.
41 Milton, De Doctrina Christiana, Works, IV, 211-212.
Emerson could have read the doctrine described in ways that made it apply to the mystical experience, in the sermons of the poet-preacher, John Logan, writing in a mood very far from that of his contemporaries of the eighteenth century.

The great Creator hath never withdrawn himself from his works ... The vast universe is one great temple which he fills with his presence. As he is ever present in the world, he is ever employed. The hand that at first stretched out the heavens, still supports the pillars of the firmament ... God still acts through all his works, preserving and upholding the whole system of things, and carrying forward the designs of infinite wisdom and goodness ... As he is employed in the material, so he acts also upon the moral world. The Father of spirits communicates himself to help man, to enlighten their understandings with divine knowledge; by secret ways, at once strengthens and ravishes the mind, and fills them with a conscious sense of his own presence.42

Newcom Cappe's devotional Discourses also contain the doctrine. He wrote, "As my life was originally the gift of God, so it is his providence that continues and sustains it."43 "He has but to speak the word, yea, he has but to withdraw his arm, and our resources fail us, our hopes are blasted, and our blessings vanish."44

The Scotch preacher of Edinburgh, Archibald Alison, writing in the first decade of the nineteenth century, affirmed the doctrine in a way that related it to the problem of evil. God creates us, supports us and finally destroys us, he said in flowery fashion. With an irony that no doubt he was unaware of, in the course of his sermon, he urged men to be grateful, even though they finally die.

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42Logan, Sermons, p. 277.
43p. 91.
44p. 116.
The same power which first called you into being, and spread
the blossoms of your spring, is now, in his great system, con-
ducting you to the termination of your days, and resolving
your material frame into the dust from which it sprung. It
is indeed a season of solemnity, but let it not be to you a
season of gloom;--it is the same goodness which first led you
into life, which is now withdrawing you from it;--it is the
same unwearied care which presided over the hour of your birth
that will finally preside over the hour of your dissolution.\textsuperscript{45}

Emerson would no doubt also have had opportunity to hear the doc-
trine sung in one or another of the hymns of the comprehensive Watts.

\begin{quote}
But 'tis our God supports our frame,
The God who built us first
Salvation to th' Almighty Name
That reared us from the dust.

While we have breath, or use our tongues
Our Maker we'll adore
His Spirit moves our heaving lungs,
Or they would breathe no more.\textsuperscript{46}
\end{quote}

The doctrine of concursus dei is important, not only because of its
appearance specifically in the poem "Pan", but because of the affinities
it has in general with Emerson's self-reliance or God-reliance, and with
his mysticism.

\section*{2. Transcendence}

That the doctrine of the omnipresence of God is to be found in the
poetry and prose of Emerson is probably not denied by anyone. The ten-
dency is to assert that he carried the doctrine to an extreme that is in
sharp variance with the main stream of Christian thought. The charge of
pantheism has been made by many against Emerson. A. H. Strong, the Cal-

\textsuperscript{45}Alison, Sermons, p. 438. The Emerson family withdrew the book
from the Boston Library Society in 1816 (Cameron, \textit{Emerson the Essayist},

\textsuperscript{46}Hymns, No. XIX, p. 138.
vinist theologian, has kept the charge alive in this century.47 It was made repeatedly in Emerson's own life, as Hotson has shown in his article, "Christian Critics and Mr. Emerson."48 Elizabeth Peabody thought an omitted passage from the Divinity School address would have "kept many a weak brother and sister Transcendentalist from going to the extreme of ego-theism."49 The term "ego-theism" catches at the essence of the traditional feeling of orthodoxy that pantheism confuses creature with creator. The charge appeared in the criticisms of Emerson's poetry by his contemporary, Cyrus Bartol, in The Christian Examiner, who said that in the poetry Emerson appeared to recognize no distinction between man and Deity.50

Few commentators have pointed out that there is a continued and emphatic assertion of the transcendence of God in both the prose and poetry of Emerson.

He was deeply convinced that the human mind was incapable of understanding God. In this respect he was perfectly in line with his Puritan forebears, as well as with Christianity in general. There has always been a strong strain of agnosticism in Christianity, which may be traced as far back into the Hebrew literature as the book of Job, whose final word before the world and its problems was a confession of his ignorance. Perry Miller has described the Puritan agnosticism, and the Puritan

47American Poets and Their Theology, p. 63.
49Rusk, Life, p. 269.
50Ibid., p. 322.
inconsistency in believing that one could, after all, describe the attributes of God.

Puritan thinking on the subject of the Deity always confronted the initial difficulty that in one sense thinking about Him was impossible. The Puritan God is entirely incomprehensible to man. The Puritan system rests, in the final analysis, upon something that cannot be systematized at all, upon an unchained force, an incalculable power. God can never be delineated even momentarily in any shape, contour, or feature recognizable to human discourse, nor may his activities be subjected to the laws of reason or of plausibility. He is a realm of mystery, in whom we may be sure that all dilemmas and contradictions are resolved, though just how we shall never in this world even remotely fathom. He is the "reason" of all things, and though men can "explain" the behavior of things, they cannot pretend to expound the reason of reasons.51

The Puritans did, of course, say and write much about God, and as Perry Miller said, some of them, no doubt, paid only lip service to the doctrine of the incomprehensibility of God. Miller cited for example, Cotton Mather, as an exception who

in his heart of hearts never doubted for a moment that the divinity was a being remarkably like Cotton Mather. Yet though individual Puritans might forget its implications, to Puritanism itself the idea was fundamental that God, the force, the power, the life of the universe, must remain to men hidden, unknowable, and unpredictable. He is the ultimate secret, the awful mystery ... He cannot be approached directly; man cannot stand face to face with Him anymore than the stubble or the wax can draw near the fire ... 52

McGiffert has pointed out that Emerson, in his sermons preached at the Second Church, stated repeatedly man's inability to understand God, no matter how pure his mind may be. McGiffert quoted from one of the unpublished sermons, "We feel that our highest theology, i. e. our description

51 The Seventeenth Century, p. 10.
52 Loc. cit.
of God, must be the gropings of infant weakness, when compared with God himself. But McGiffert felt that immanence came to be the predominant aspect of Emerson's theology; he is inclined to support those who accused Emerson of an identification of God with the creation.

There are a number of significant passages written by Emerson, however, that clearly show his belief in the transcendence of God. He wrote his brother Edward at Puerto Rico in 1831,

God is the only unfailing resource—the only good which the first ages described in which the last ages have not exposed any falsehood. And the evidence augments with time—Yet who has found him?—Who seeks him?

One of the earliest passages in the published Journals is a quotation from Plato, copied when Emerson was sixteen years old. "What is God? said the disciples, and Plato replied, 'It is hard to learn and impossible to divulge ..." In 1822, Emerson wrote on the subject of God a long passage in the Journal which begins with a quotation, "Simonides said well, 'Give me twice the time, for the more I think, the more it enlarges.'"

The passages in the early Journals are not insignificant, for they represent forms of an idea that recurs all through Emerson's writings. He remembered the story of Simonides, and referred to him again in 1829.

But when you ask, What is God—I must answer with Simonides: The finite cannot comprize the infinite; we have faculties to

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53 McGiffert, Young Emerson Speaks, p. 23.
54 Rusk, Letters, I, 324.
55 Journals, I, 6.
56 Ibid., 150.
perceive his laws, but himself how obscurely.57

In 1831, he quoted Plotinus's statement of the impossibility of describing the attributes of God.

'It is worth recording that Plotinus said, "Of the Unity of God, nothing can be predicated, neither being, nor essence, nor life, for it is above all these." Grand it is to recognize the truth of this and of every one of that first class of truths which are necessary."

He concluded a long passage in the Journals on the evils of slavery with an expression of agnosticism.

'Confess that there are secrets in that providence which no human eye can penetrate, which darken the prospect of Faith, and teach us the weakness of our Philosophy.'59

In 1835 Emerson wrote,

'I know nothing of the source of my being. . . I know much of it after a high negative way, but nothing after the understanding. . . if they set me to affirm his [God's] character and providence, as I would describe a mountain or an Indian, I am dumb.'60

The omitted passages affirms his faith in God's existence and his willingness to live a moral life, even though he cannot describe him.

There are in the Journals a number of passages indicating the flash of the Divine into his life, through a vision of the beauty and truth of the laws, moral and physical, that govern the universe. The experience was unpredictable. His attitude could be only passive, and he had to wait with patience, until the vision came. His comments concerning this indicate an awareness of his finiteness, and of the otherness, the uncon-

57 Ibid., II, 274.
58 Ibid., 357.
59 Ibid., I, 180.
60 Ibid., III, 517-518.
trolled, unpredicted quality of the experience. This awareness of the ineffability of the mystic experience will be discussed again in connection with his mysticism, but it is another of the evidences of his awareness of the separation between the finite and the infinite.

Ulich has recognized Emerson's assertion of the otherness and incomprehensibility of God. Speaking of Emerson's description of the movement of the Divine into the life of man, Ulich remarked,

However, it is too much the Holy Other to be fully grasped by the insufficient tool we call reason. The "Eternal Whole" appears to us in revelations which are "perceptions of the absolute law," but the moment we begin to analyze and dissect it, it evades us. 61

The same recognition of the otherness of God and of man's inability to understand him is implied, he says, in "Emerson's statement that 'Man is a stream whose source is hidden.'" Ulich said further, "the question as to how the Absolute gains 'access to the private heart' and mind passes understanding." 62

In 1838, Emerson wrote,

I tell men what I find in my consciousness. They answer me, It is wrong; it is false, for we wish otherwise. I report to them from my thought how little we know of God, and they reply, "We think you have no Father, We love to address the Father." Yes, I say, the Father is a convenient name and image to the affections; but drop all images, if you wish to come at the elements of your thought, and use as mathematical words as you can. We must not be so wise. We must not affect, as all mankind do, to know all things, and to have quite finished and done God and Heaven. 63

Emerson felt that on the whole there was a certain danger in speaking

61 Ulich, p. 294.
62 Ulich, pp. 294-295.
63 Journals, IV, 416.
God's name too often and in speaking of God at all. He referred in the Journals to the fact that the Hebrews of the patriarchal times permitted the name of God to be spoken only by the priest, and then only in the sanctum sanctorum, and only at certain sacred times. The commandment, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord Thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain,"64 was correctly understood by Emerson. It does not mean only that we are forbidden to use profane words in the modern secular sense. It meant to the Hebrews literally that no one but the priest was to speak the name of God, and he was only to do so under auspicious circumstances. The name of God was felt to have the same power that, through the ark of the covenant, killed Uzzah, who, when the oxen stumbled kept the ark from falling.

And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah, and God smote him there because he put forth his hand to the ark, and he died there beside the ark of God.65

This story reflects what recent writers have come to call the sense of the "numinous", the uncontrollable power of Deity, that flashes out to destroy what offends it. Something of the power attached to the name; the use of the name must, therefore, be safeguarded by careful regulation.

The danger that Emerson saw in using the name of God was not quite the same as the danger that the Hebrews felt, although both are forms of an awareness of the totaliter aliter, the total otherness of God. Emerson wrote in the Journals in 1845, "You cannot say God, blood and hell too little. Always suppose God. The Jew named him not."66 Emerson wrote in

64Exodus 20: 7.
65II Samuel 6: 7.
1849, "The word God is the algebraic \( \mathcal{X} \) in morals, and the Hebrews with right philosophy made it unspeakable."\(^{67}\) One of the dangers he felt was that the subject was so difficult that it soon ceased to be possible to discuss it with meaning. "Do not speak of God much. After a little conversation on the highest nature, thought deserts us and we run into formalism."\(^{68}\)

The problem of "formalism" was ever a bête noire to Emerson. It is always the worst enemy of faith, for it denies the existence of faith. Those who express the form without the spirit, do not themselves believe in the reality of the spirit, and they teach others to live on the level of form rather than spirit.

Another reason for refraining from writing or speaking much about God is the tendency to systematize and organize. Human limitations prevent any systems of thought from being accurate reports of God's nature. God is, as Perry Miller pointed out, to the Puritan mind, and those like the Puritan, "something that cannot be systematized at all."\(^{69}\) Emerson wrote:

Even Plato and Kant can hardly be trusted to write of God. As soon as one sets out to write in the course of his Book of the Divine Mind, the love of system vitiates his perception. He grows a little limitary.\(^{70}\)

In Emerson's description of the Oversoul, a term which he used less frequently for the Deity than other terms, the contrast between the flowing, animating stream that fills each man with life, and the man himself,
indicates that while the two may be identified for purposes of discussion, there is a vast and far reaching difference between them.

I flow down forever, a sea of benefit to races of individuals. Nor can the stream ever roll backward, or the sin or death of a man taint the immutable energy which distributes itself into men, as the sun into rays, or the sea into drops. 71

A paradoxical form of the relationship between man and Deity occurs in the poetry and in the Journals. The paradox is well illustrated in "Étienne de la Boéce," and in the following comment from the Journals. "Proclus ascribes to the Deity the property of being in contact, and of not being in contact at the same moment of time . . ."72 Usually, however, Emerson stated one side of the relationship of man to Deity on one occasion and the other side on another occasion. It is probable that the periodicity of his life caused this habit. In the periods when he felt the exaltation that he ascribed to the inspiration of the Deity, he spoke with enthusiasm, of the immanence of God. In the periods when the inspiration was absent, the "dark night of the soul," he wrote of the otherness, the difference between man and Deity. To the mystic, the important aspect of life is always the immanence of Deity. Therefore, while there is recognition in the essays and poetry of the otherness, the literature emphasized the immanence. But almost every statement of immanence also states the transcendence of Deity.

Toward the end of Emerson's life the experience of the immanence of Deity apparently began to lessen in frequency, as Carpenter has suggested in his most recent study. Emerson wrote, "The grief of old age is that,

71 Ibid., 535.
72 Ibid., VI, 203.
now, only in rare moments . . . can we attain those enlargements and that intellectual elan, which were once a daily gift.\textsuperscript{73}

It is not surprising therefore, that Emerson complained because of the failure of the Deity to inspire him. Indeed, all of the many references in the Journals to the unpredictable coming and going of Deity must be thought of as statements of the transcendence of the Divine. The following passage occurs twice in the Journals, in slightly different form.

He or That which in despair of naming aright, some have called the Newness—as the Hebrews did not like to pronounce the word—he lurks, he hides, he who is success, reality, joy, power—that which constitutes Heaven, which reconciles impossibilities, atones for shortcomings, expiates sins or makes them virtues, buries in oblivion the crowded historical past, sinks religions, philosophies, nations, persons to legends, reverses the scale of opinion, of fame; reduces sciences to opinion, and makes the thought of the moment the key to the universe, and the egg of history to come.

It is all alike,—astronomy, metaphysics, sword, spade, pencil, or instruments and arts yet to be invented,—this is the inventor, the worth-giver, the worth. This is He that shall come; or, if He come not, nothing comes: He that disappears in the moment when we go to celebrate him. If we go to burn those that blame our celebration, He appears in them. The Divine Newness. Hoe and spade, sword and pen, cities, pictures, gardens, laws, bibles are prized only because they were means He sometime used. So with astronomy, music, arithmetic, castes, feudalism,—we kiss with devotion these hems of his garment,—we mistake them for Him; they crumble to ashes on our lips.\textsuperscript{74}

This passage is a microcosm of all that Emerson ever wrote. An explication of it would cover all the basic Emersonian doctrines. The reader should notice the inconsistent practice in capitalization. Emerson's frequent references to Deity by other terms than the word God, are

\textsuperscript{73}Journals, X, 47, quoted by Carpenter, Emerson Handbook, p. 118.

\textsuperscript{74}Journals, X, 189. A slightly different form occurs in Journals, VII, 159.
not obvious, because of his failure to capitalize.

The assertions of otherness are not absent from the prose that Emerson published. Emerson's habit of stating Biblical and theological ideas in the idiom of nineteenth century New England sometimes defeated the purpose he intended by concealing the ideas. Sometimes, though, he aroused antagonism simply by asserting an ancient Christian belief in such clear-cut modern terms that the import was unmistakable, and he was blamed for what was, after all, a very old idea. Thus, the comment in the American Scholar Address about the one soul that animates all men\textsuperscript{75} is merely a restatement of the doctrine of the \textit{concurrus dei}, and not, therefore, objectionable in any sense to traditional Christianity. The Unitarianism in the Divinity School Address seems to be the only aspect of it that could not be accepted by all the various strands of Protestantism. The storm of disapproval roused by the Address may be explained by a consideration of what Dowden called the "attenuated Christianity\textsuperscript{76} of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The deep devotion that pervades the Address would seem heresy only to men who, in Garnett's words, had reduced Christianity "to something that could be written out in examinations,"\textsuperscript{77} or, as Christy said, to a narrow orthodoxy.\textsuperscript{78}

In the essay "Nominalist and Realist," Emerson stated the paradox of immanence and transcendence, "You are one thing, but Nature is one thing and the other thing, in the same moment."\textsuperscript{79} Shortly after this

\textsuperscript{75}\textit{Works}, I, 108.
\textsuperscript{76}Dowden, p. 325.
\textsuperscript{77}Quoted by Christy, pp. ix-x.
\textsuperscript{78}Christy, pp. ix-x.
\textsuperscript{79}\textit{Works}, III, 236. The italics are Emerson's.
occurs Emerson's statement of the ancient religious idea that a man cannot see God and live, or touch the ark and live, or pronounce the sacred name and live:

If we were not thus infatuated, if we saw the real from hour to hour, we should not be here to write and read, but should have been burned or frozen long ago.⁸⁰

Even in the book Nature, he cautioned the reader in the chapter on spirit that,

Of that ineffable essence which we call Spirit, he that thinks most, will say least. We can foresee God in the coarse, and as it were, distant phenomena of matter; but when we try to define and describe himself, both language and thought desert us, and we are as helpless as fools and savages. That essence refuses to be recorded in propositions ... ⁸¹

The last statement betrays the typical aversion of the mystic to a rational approach to Deity.

While Emerson tried to avoid traditional terminology because he felt the words were timeworn and ineffective, he sometimes resorted to it, as a kind of shorthand, to save explanation. In his lecture on the times he referred to the "supernatural." "For the origin of all reform is in that mysterious fountain of the moral sentiment in man, which amidst the natural, ever contains the supernatural for men," ⁸² In the essay on "Character" he spoke of the contrast between the Eternal and the man. The Eternal is in each man, but the difference between them is indescribable. ⁸³

⁸⁰Ibid., 236-237.
⁸¹Ibid., I, 61-62.
⁸²Ibid., 272.
⁸³Ibid., III, 97-98.
Emerson's attitude toward the question of the personality of God is another reflection of his awareness of the transcendence of Deity. His attitude grew out of two convictions that he held. One of these was of the transcendence of God. The second was his conviction that it was improper to compare human characteristics to God. Thus he came to doubt what he had earlier defended in his sermons, the via eminentia, as a way of knowing God. He questioned this method later, because the gap between the human and the Infinite seemed too great to be covered by abstracting the highest and best human characteristics, as the method of via eminentia proposed, and then applying these to God. He did not entirely abandon the method, for he thought the highest human moral and ethical achievements were dependent upon God, but he felt a great danger in jumping too confidently and securely to convictions about God on the basis of human characteristics.

I deny personality to God because it is too little, not too much. Life, personal life, is faint and cold to the energy of God. For Reason and Love and Beauty, or that which is all these, is the life of life, the reason of reason, the love of love.

In 1840 he wrote,

The objector replies that to represent the Divine Being as an unconscious somewhat is abhorrent, etc. But the unconsciousness we spoke of was merely relative to us; we speak, we act, from we know not what higher principle and we describe its circumsambient quality by confessing the subjection of our perception to it, we cannot overtop, over see it,—not see at all its channel into us. But in saying this, we predicate nothing of its consciousness or unconsciousness in relation to itself. We see at once that we have no language subtle enough for distinctions in that inaccessible region. That aim is too rare for the wings of words. We cannot say, God is

84 McCaffert, Young Emerson Speaks, pp. xxiii.
85 Journals, IV, 416.
self-conscious, or not self-conscious; for the moment we cast our eye on that dread nature, we see that it is the wisdom of wisdom, the love of love, the power of power, and soars infinitely out of all definition and dazzles all inquest.86

The Christian defense of the personality of God was an effort to describe the possibility of a personal relationship between the worshipper and Deity. God seeks the individual, as Augustine asserted, and as Francis Thompson illustrated in his poem, "The Hound of Heaven," and as Karl Barth has more recently emphasized.87 The relationship between man and the universe as described by Newton could never be personal in the Christian sense. One could know a series of abstractions and general laws and mathematical principles as illustrated in the Newtonian concept, but the knowledge is always impersonal. It concerns a mechanical reality, external, always outside the person. It is significant that Emerson defended his rejection of personality in God as he understood it to be taught in the churches of his day, on precisely the grounds that in general Christianity has used to defend the personality of God.

Emerson's mystic experience, like the experience of most mystics, was that of an influx, an inrush, an inspiration. He had to describe God in terms true to his own experience, and that required him to avoid any form of the anthropomorphic fallacy. He wrote in 1838,

What shall I answer to these friendly youths who ask of me an account of Theism, and think the views I have expressed of impersonality of God desolating and ghastly? I say, that I cannot find, when I explore my own consciousness, any truth in saying God is a person, but the reverse. I feel that there

86 Ibid., V, 384-385.
87 Harris Franklin Hall, Christianity, pp. 151-152.
is some profanation in saying He is personal. To represent
him as an individual is to shut him out of my consciousness.
He is then but a great man such as the crowd worships. Yet,
yet, Cor purgat oratio. 88

A careful reading of the Emerson corpus reveals that the terms he
used for God imply the qualities that traditionally have been associated
with a personal definition of God. He spoke of the "super-personal Heart." 89
In the book, Nature, he wrote that "Religion includes the personality of
God, Ethics does not." 90 The term "Over-soul" does not suggest impersonal-
ity. In the Journals, he called God, "the universal mind." 91 In the
poems occurs the sentence "And conscious law is King of kings." 92

It seems to this writer that in actuality Emerson's attitude toward
the personality of God was in line with the main stream of Christian
thought, perhaps closer to the center of the stream than were the eight-
eenth century rationalists. Bailey concluded his discussion of Emerson's
attitude toward the personality of God with a comment that is true for
many aspects of Emerson's thought,

Such a denial of the personality of God is plainly nothing
more than a rejection of a word in order to keep the great
positive fact behind it,—an assertion adequately supported
by the lines called "The Bohemian Hymn." 93

3. The Poet As Namer of the Unnamable

One of the most interesting indications of the transcendence of God

88 Journals, IV, 403.
89 Works, VI, 211.
90 Ibid., I, 58.
91 Journals, IV, 185.
92 Works, IX, 59.
93 Elmer James Bailey, Religious Thought in the Greater American Poets,
p. 51.
in the writings of Emerson is the use of names for the divine power that he felt at irregular intervals flooding his life, and that he identified with the creator of the universe. The problem of religious terminology was one that vexed Emerson all his life. He suggested several alternative solutions to the difficulties he saw, some contrasting, some complementing solutions. He mentioned the problem to his parishioners at Second Church, in a sermon there.

My friends, you are so familiar with the words "faith in God" and so accustomed to hear as things of course what is said in the pulpit, that I hardly can hope to get for this thought that freshness of effect which even the oldest thought will derive from the effort to bring it home to our own mind.94

Here is the note of the mystic, suggesting that vividness of internal experience is an essential part of religion.

One possible attitude suggested by Emerson toward the problem of vocabulary was to regard the names as shorthand for an indescribable X, which lies beyond them, to which they point. An anecdote clearly implies the transcendence of God, in this way.

In speed of conversation L. said, "Poor God did all he could to make them, so they steadily undid," etc. It recurs now as an example of the organic generalization. The speaker casts the apparent or hypothetical order of things into word and names it God; but, in the instant, the mind makes the distinction or perceives the eternal and ever-present of the Perfect, still whole and divine before him, and God quits the name of God, and fills the universe as he did the moment before.95

Emerson sometimes grew weary of the problem and dismissed it.

Now the words "God," "Grace," "Prayer," "Heaven," "Hell," are these barbarous and sacred words, to which we must still return, whenever we would speak an ecstatic and universal

94McGiffert, Young Emerson Speaks, p. 158. See also Journals, V, 135.
95Journals, X, 146.
sense? There are objections to them, no doubt, for academical use, but when the professor's gown is off, Man will come back to them.96

Probably, this statement represents Emerson's own usage upon occasion. He made every effort to use terms that would be cutting and fresh, not dimmed by the handling of many generations. Sometimes, however, "Homer sleeps," and the poet used traditional terminology. He was least likely to do so in the poetry, although even there the traditional terms--God, grace--do appear.

One possible attitude toward the problem of names is to assume that the names differ, but that the reality which underlies the varying names is always the same. At times Emerson accepted this view. Yet he was not always sure that a hasty identification of his terminology with the terminology used by the defenders of orthodoxy in his day was accurate. In 1839, he wrote a comment in the Journal that was probably the result of a conversation with his wife, who had begun to feel disenchanted with the New England transcendentalism, as Rusk pointed out.97

It will not serve any good purpose to avail ourselves of the healing formula with which our wives and the kind-hearted mediate between the truth-speaker and the churchman, and affirming that the difference is merely in terms, that we misunderstand each other, etc., etc., and inferring that our discrepancy is only on the threshold of speculation; that after we have stated our whims of Instinct, of the One Mind, of the potential infinitude of every man, and the like, our doctrines then become identical with all orthodoxy, and differences vanish. But it is not so. It is the peculiarity of Truth that it must live every moment in the beginning, in the middle, and onward forever in every stage of statement. I cannot accept without qualification the most indisputable of your axioms. I see that they are not quite true.98

96 Ibid., VI, 127.
97 Rusk, Life, p. 226.
Emerson was correct in feeling that the gap between himself and the orthodoxy of his day was too wide to be covered by the suggestion that a mere difference of terms separated them. Even when they used the same terms, there were great differences. Thus the word **moral** meant one thing to Emerson and another to the school of Paley and Butler. To that school, the term indicated a cold and passionless abstraction, arrived at by rational processes, and enforced by social pressures. Emerson, however, was intensely enthusiastic about morality. The eighteenth century writers, remembering the English Civil Wars caused by "enthusiasm," were careful to avoid it. But morality always stimulated enthusiasm in Emerson. The word **moral** was ever a glowing and exciting revelation of the nature of the Divine to him. He was always indignant at the phrase "mere morality."

Emerson's belief that the poet should be the namer operated in his mind as he considered this problem. His faith in the ability of the poet to get the right name was a reflection of his intuitive approach and of his interest in the literary craft. The right name would convey the essence of the reality described, and it would effectively move the reader or listener with the quality of that essence. The first half of the task was, of course, impossible, since no name could ever catch reality. Yet the poet must continue to try to do the impossible. To the degree that he succeeded, he somehow brought the value of the reality to the reader.

I don't know but I value the name of a thing, that is the true poet's name for it, more than the thing. If I get the right word for the moon or about it,—the word that suggests to me and to all men its humane and universal beauty and significance,—then I have what I want of it, and shall not desire that a road may be made from my garden to the moon, or that the gift of this elephant be made over to me.99

99Journals, I, 175.
In short, a good name succeeded temporarily in being a channel through which the power of reality came to him. But all channels of reality are soon exhausted by the power of the elan that goes through them. The names are somehow quickly worn out and the poet must forever strive for accurate names for the present moment, the present experience.

Only words that are new fit exactly the thing, those that are old, like old scoriae that have been long exposed to the air and sunshine have lost the sharpness of their mould and fit loosely.100

Since one of Emerson's basic convictions was of the oneness of truth, it was logical for him to conclude that under the widely varying terminology that men used for matters of religion there was, after all, a single reality.

To be at perfect agreement with a man of most opposite conclusions you have only to translate your language into his. The same thought which you call God in his nomenclature is called Christ. In the language of William Penn, moral sentiment is called Christ.101

On another occasion he wrote in the Journal,

Our journey, the journey of the soul, is through different regions of thought, and to each its own vocabulary. As soon as we hear a new vocabulary from our own, at once we exaggerate the differences,—account the man suspicious, a thief, a pagan, and set no bounds to our disgust or hatred, and, late in life, perhaps too late, we find he was loving and hating, doing and thinking the same things as we, under his own vocabulary.102

Emerson's application of the principle that the poet is namer, and that the reality named forever escapes the name, because of its otherness, can be seen at work in his poetry.

100 Ibid., IV, 146.
101 Ibid., II, 478.
102 Ibid., V, 99-100.
The first form of the poem "Pan" appears in the Journals for 1824. The poem is an imaginative realization of the doctrine concursus dei, that creation is a continuous activity, that being continues only so long as God exerts his power and ceases as soon as the power of God is withdrawn.

The first version of the poem was written with the word God for Deity.

O what are heroes, prophets, man,  
But pipes through which the breath of God doth blow  
A momentary music?103

Emerson quoted an imaginary pundit in the Journal:

There, he added, they mistake who seek to find only one meaning in sacred words and images, in the name of gods, as Jove, Apollo, Osiris, Vishnu, Odin; or in the sacred names of Western Europe and its colonies, as Jesus and the Holy Ghost: for these symbols are like coins of differing countries, adopted from some forgotten accident, the name of a consul, or the whim of a goldsmith; but they all represent of the value of corn, wool, and labor, and are readily convertible into each other or into the coin of any new country.104

Emerson was therefore quite willing to equate Pan with God, and the final form of the poem "Pan" appeared with the name Pan instead of God. The classical term offered two values not present in the word God. The comparison between being and the music of a pipe was more consistently developed with the idea of Pan as the piper. Moreover, the word pan has a double meaning; it refers to the familiar figure of mythology, and to the "all," the cosmos. The use of the term Pan then served to broaden the implications of the poem. The two elements of the comparison are being and music. Man is the pipe; therefore, all being is the music of a lovely song, maintained only so long as the musician plays his pipe, having no substantial or real existence but depending entirely upon the

103 Ibid., I, 346.
104 Ibid., V, 551-552.
continued inspiration, the blowing in, of the piper. Life, or being, is like the song, not really to be found anywhere but dependent on the power of the piper. When the piper ceases playing, the pipes lie meaningless and dead, "white hollow shells upon the ocean shore." In comparing life to the breath of God, Emerson was in accord with the Old Testament. The poem is also a statement of the paradox of transcendence and immanence, for life or being is only an aspect of the Divine, "the breath of Pan," yet it is never Pan himself. One particular form is animated by Pan, but only temporarily, and always the Divine is eternal and the finite is limited. "But not the less the eternal wave rolls on."

O what are heroes, prophets, men,
But pipes through which the breath of Pan doth blow
A momentary music. Being's tide
Swells hitherward, and myriads of forms
Live, robed with beauty, painted by the sun;
Their dust, pervaded by the nerves of God,
Throbs with an evermastering energy
Knowing and doing. Ebbs the tide, they lie
White hollow shells upon the desert shore,
But not the less the eternal wave rolls on
To animate new millions, and exhale
Races and planets, its enchanted foam.105

This poem constitutes a poetic statement of the fact that God is responsible for all that happens. The finite can do nothing, the poet asserts; only God acts through us.

Their dust, pervaded by the nerves of God
Throbs with an evermastering energy
Knowing and doing. Ebbs the tide, they lie
White hollow shells . . .

The final comparison, "enchanted foam," is a reminder of the Platonic conviction of the unreality of the present world of time and place; it is

105Works, IX, 360.
a figure that appears elsewhere in the poetry, to refer to the beautiful ephemeralness of the world of illusions in which we live.

The poet at work as namer trying to catch the ineffable essence of reality appears in other of the poems. In the poem "Experience," he abdicates the task, and we may assume that the poet implicitly admits what he had said often in the Journals, that Deity is too great to be named satisfactorily. The poem describes the complexity of life; then the poet speaks of

... the inventor of the game
Omnipresent without name;--106

In the poem "Monadnoc," he tells of his obedience to the great spirit.

I heard and I obeyed,--
Assured that he who made the claim,
Wellknown, but loving not a name,
Was not to be gainsaid.107

Here he apologizes for the poet's failure to name the Deity by asserting that Divinity itself forbids names.

In the poem "Merops," he decided that the poetic function is not as important as the mystic experience. To enjoy God is better than to be a poet. The poem has faintly the tang of sour grapes, and the poet complains because the Deity has permitted him, as he said in the letter to Lidian, to be only a "poet, of a low class."108 He has only one word to say. The somewhat lukewarm preference for the mystical experience is unusual for he usually finds it the sumnum bonum.

106 Ibid., 269.
107 Ibid., 61.
108 Rusk, Life, p. 212.
What care I, so they stand the same,—
Things of the heavenly mind,—
How long the power to give them name
Tarries yet behind.

Thus far to-day your favors reach
O fair, appeasing presences!
Ye taught my lips a single speech,
And a thousand silences.

Space grants beyond his fated word
No inch to the god of day
And copious language still bestowed
One word, no more, to say.109

The fullest poetic statement of the ineffability of God, of man's
inability to describe him occurs in "The Bohemian Hymn." The poem agrees
with the traditional feeling of the mystics that one can only utter nega-
tions of God. The poem does affirm, however, that God is the "great idea,"
and the "Universal Friend."

In many forms we try
To utter God's infinity,
But the boundless hath no form,
And the Universal Friend
Doth as far transcend
An angel as a worm.

The great idea baffles wit,
Language falters under it,
It leaves the learned in the lurch;
Nor art, nor power, nor toil can find
The measure of the eternal Mind,
Nor hymn, nor prayer, nor church.110

In "Woodnotes," Emerson distinguished between the omnipresent Deity,
and his temporary habitation in the earth.

As the bee through the garden ranges,
From world to world the godhead changes;

109 Works, IX, 127.
110 Ibid., 359.
As the sheep go feeding in the waste,
From form to form He maketh haste;
This vault which glows immense with light
Is the inn where he lodges for a night.
What recks such Traveler if the bowers
Which bloom and fade like meadow flowers
A bunch of fragrant lilies be,
Or the stars of eternity.\textsuperscript{111}

Here the godhead is distinguished from the inn which is his temporary hab-
itation.

In the next line is a comment like Jeremy Taylor's that God's purity
cannot be sullied by the uncleanness of the world.

Alike to him the better, the worse--
The glowing angel, the outcast corse.

This couplet is another form of the assertion that all things are good
to God; it appeared in "Uriel" in the passage beginning

Line in nature is not found.\textsuperscript{112}

Both lines imply the final or absolute unity of the world. Since Emerson
was a cosmic optimist, if there is only unity, then the unity must
be of goodness.

The remaining lines of "Woodnotes" consist of a series of images
suggesting the omnipresence of God. These may be contrasted with the
passage cited previously from Taylor; Emerson's are more suggestive, and
both imaginatively and intellectually more satisfying.

The first line contains a suggestion of the Biblical idea that God's
time is not the same as man's. The word "metest" means here "measure."
The Biblical source is the familiar statement that "a thousand years in
thy sight are but as yesterday . . ."\textsuperscript{113} Emerson reversed the Biblical

\textsuperscript{111}\textit{Tbid.}, 59.
\textsuperscript{112}\textit{Tbid.}, 14.
\textsuperscript{113}\textit{Psalms} 90: 4.
statement, however.

Thou metest him by centuries,
And lo! he passes like the breeze;
Thou seek'st in globe and galaxy,
He hides in pure transparency;
Thou askest in fountains and in fires,
He is the essence that inquires.
He is the axis of the star;
He is the sparkle of the spar;
He is the heart of every creature;
He is the meaning of each feature;
And his mind is the sky.
Than all it holds more deep, more high. 114

It is impossible to escape in these lines the varied restatement of the paradox of God present in every item of the universe, yet always fully other than every item of the universe, as the last line reminds the reader. The passage may be called a very successful poetic embodiment of the basic Christian paradox of immanence and transcendence.

In the poem "Etienne de la Boéce" there is another very successful image of the omnipresence of Deity that carefully distinguishes between Deity and worshipper. The basic theme of the poem is self-reliance, or God-reliance; the symbol for Deity is "that world warming spark." Man's task is the evangelical one of bringing all men to the altar. Men are to do this by becoming conductors. By ceasing to be themselves, they become "surcharged," and then

The traveler and the road seem one
With the errand to be done.--115

To the careless reader the poem might seem simply to be an assertion of pantheism. Actually the imagery here carefully distinguishes between man, who is the "road," or the wire of the conductor; and God, who is the

114 Works, IX, 59.
115 Ibid., 82.
"traveler," or source of the power. Moreover, the poem asserts that God, man, and the task to be done are all one, yet separate. When the conductor is charged by the power, then the errand is done. This is the evangelical notion that religion must be caught, that it cannot be taught. Thus the image asserts the identity of God, worshipper, and task, yet never confuses the three elements.

The poem "Brahma" caused much criticism. Christy said the publishers pleaded with Emerson to omit the poem from the selected poems published in 1876, because of the ridicule it aroused. The direct source of the poem has been known for many years to be the Bhagavat-Gita, as Harrison, Christy, and Carpenter have pointed out. Harrison asserted that Emerson used the poem to express Platonic and Neo-Platonic ideas.

Without a knowledge of the Bhagavat-Gita the poem could never have assumed the form it has now. But its doctrines of the soul—immortality and independence of time and space, to which it gives expression, are shared by the Platonist as by the Hindoo. And the sentiment of the third stanza—is that teaching familiar in Greek philosophy from Parmenides through Plato to the Neo-Platons; namely, that the knower and the thing known are one; or as the poem says—"I am the doubter and the doubt." Harrison felt that Platonism was the basic influence operating on the mind of Emerson and that all other systems of thought, Christianity included, were subordinated by Emerson to Platonism. He did not, however, recognize the degree to which Platonism had been made a handmaiden for

116 Christy, p. 166.
117 John S. Harrison, The Teachers of Emerson, p. 278.
118 Christy, p. 176.
119 Carpenter, Emerson and Asia, pp. 97-98.
120 Harrison, p. 278.
Christianity. The intimate welding of Platonism to Christianity by the Augustinian tradition as shown by Perry Miller, McGiffert, and others, was not apparently understood by Harrison.

Carpenter believed that Emerson used the Hindu ideas "as material for his essays and poems, but without accepting their conclusions."\(^{121}\) He said that there were parallels between Emerson's ideas and the teachings of the Hindus, but that Emerson held these ideas before he read in the Hindu literature.\(^{122}\)

There are two problems that the poem provokes insofar as this thesis is concerned. One is the problem of the morality of the poem, the identification of evil with God. That aspect of the poem is discussed in the chapter on the problem of evil. The problem that is relevant to this chapter is whether the poem is pantheistic.

Carpenter thought that "Brahma" expressed the doctrine of "absolute unity."\(^{123}\) However, a careful consideration of the poem will reveal that the poet has successfully maintained the paradox of unity and diversity. The poem asserts both the immanence and the transcendence of the Deity. In this respect, the poem cannot be said to differ from traditional Christianity.

The poem is a monologue; Deity is the speaker; the "I" is God. There are references in the poem to the finite; but Deity is always distinguished from the finite individual. The "red slayer" and Deity are never confused. The red slayer is never able to escape God; the very support of his life

\(^{121}\)Emerson and Asia, p. 111.

\(^{122}\)Ibid., p. 11.

\(^{123}\)Loc. cit.
and actions is God; but the "red slayer" is never called God. Why God supports the red slayer in his work is finally a mystery; the problem is discussed further, in a later chapter. But the diversity and unity are carefully preserved throughout the poem. The last two lines of the poem distinguish between Deity and worshipper.

... thou, meek lover of the good.
Find me...  

The distinction between the two is implied clearly; the whole poem asserts the Christian belief that men must seek God, but they only find Him, if He finds them. This belief appeared constantly in the Journals, in connection with the descriptions of Emerson's mystical experience.

A summary of the logic of this chapter will make explicit the attitude implied toward the poem "Brahma." It has been shown that even Calvin recognized the possibility of a "pious pantheism" and that strong assertions of the omnipresence of the Deity have occurred throughout all the branches of Christian thought, from Roman Catholicism to Unitarianism. It has also been shown that Emerson was thoroughly aware of the transcendence of Deity, and that he did not confuse Creator with creation. Since he recognized and explicitly stated the paradoxical nature of the relationship between Deity and creation, he cannot be called a pantheist, without careful qualification of the term. It seems probable that in his attitude toward the Deity Emerson was in accord with the main stream of Christian thought.

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124 Works, IX, 195.
CHAPTER VI

SELF-RELIANCE

The dissertation has thus far shown that the affirmations contained in Emerson's poetry concerning the natural world and concerning the paradox of the transcendence and immanence of God are in essential agreement with the Augustinian-Protestant tradition. Chapter VI is concerned with the problem of man's relationship to God. Emerson's views of this relationship are caught up in the term "Self-reliance." Chapter VI is devoted to the contention that the Protestant doctrine of the priesthood of the individual is the source of Emerson's concept, self-reliance. The chapter begins with a description of the Protestant doctrine in the work of Martin Luther, relating Luther's work to the ideas of Augustine. The chapter shows Emerson's knowledge of Luther, but emphasises the work of certain English writers of the seventeenth century as the probable direct literary sources for Emerson. The chapter defines Emerson's self-reliance to mean actually God-reliance, and shows the similarities between the doctrine of the priesthood of the individual and the idea of self-reliance. The chapter concludes with an analysis of the effort of Emerson to express the idea of self-reliance in his poetry.

1. The Priesthood of the Individual: Martin Luther

The doctrine of the priesthood of the individual believer is perhaps the most characteristic belief of Protestantism. The doctrine has
its origin in the life and career of the Augustinian monk, Martin Luther. A brief summary of the origin of the doctrine is given here.¹

Born of German peasant parents, Luther was a person of high intelligence, of great vitality and of a deeply serious religious nature. Living in a time when the direct influence of God or the power of devils was believed responsible for the daily happenings of one's life, Luther felt that the basic problems of life were deeply tinged with religious implications. Shortly after receiving his master's degree, he was frightened by a storm and as a result entered an Augustinian convent. The Augustinian order he entered was in the process of a vigorous purification of its life from those evils that are customarily associated with medieval monastic institutions. The order was a studious one, and the monks were encouraged to study the Bible, the works of Augustine, and of the fathers in general. The fact that he entered an Augustinian order, and studied the works of Augustine, is of great significance in the history of Protestantism. There were other influences of significance in the monastic life he led. One of these was acquaintance with German mysticism, which had vigorous development in the Rhine valley in the fourteenth century.

Luther's piety was deeply moral. He sought assurance that God would forgive him for his sinfulness. Like Augustine, he was oppressed by the greatness of the gap between himself and the Holiness of the Other. The question he sought answer to was, "How can I become relig-

¹Summarized from The Reformation, by Williston Walker, pp. 84-119.
ious and do enough to gain a gracious God? His first effort to find an answer lay in a thorough canvassing of all the aids of medieval Christianity, that is, by austerities, fasting, labor, frequently repeated religious devotions, appeals to the Virgin, and to the saints. Luther carried the practice of these austerities and disciplines to great extremes, but did not find the satisfaction he sought. He found in the writings of Augustine a suggestion that frightened him further—the idea of predestination; but he also found there something that was reassuring, that God sends an unmerited grace that freely forgives. Luther also found in the study of the Bible further answers to his question.

Walker has pointed out the essential conservatism of Luther's character. He adopted ideas without realizing the full implications involved and only slowly came to understand them. At some points, he never traveled the full length of the ideas.

It was rather slowly then that he came to his basic conclusion. As Walker described it

... he came to the conviction that these external efforts after rightness in the sight of God were valueless; that no possession or attainment of man gives standing before God; and that justification is a divine gift received through faith alone, the beginning of a new life, an unmerited redemption from the power and consequences of sin. Faith is trust in God's forgiveness, for the sake of Christ. It is the humble renunciation of all personal merit. Faith is itself a divine gift, a making alive of the spirit bestowed without antecedent good works as its natural heritage. What Luther did was to break away from the current conceptions of religion as an obedient conformity to a great corporate system of life and worship and so assert the primal necessity of a new and individual relation of the heart to God, from which the Christian

\[\text{\textit{Ibid.}, p. 84.}\]
virtues would naturally flow.  
Walker asserted that the doctrine of justification by faith alone became so important to Luther that he tested the validity of a church by the clearness of its apprehension of this belief. He even "valued the books of the Scriptures themselves by the relative definiteness with which they taught it."  

To a great degree, Protestantism's attitude toward the Bible had its origin in Luther. Luther emphasized the importance of the Bible by beginning his theological lectures at Wittenberg with the exposition of the Scriptures, instead of lecturing on dogmatic theology, as most professors of theology did. Interestingly enough, he began with the Psalms, later going to the epistles of Romans and Galatians, ever the important books for Protestantism and for Calvinism. Luther's freedom in dealing with the Scriptures is illustrated in several ways. He was never quite as Scripture-bound as the stereotype of the later Protestants would suggest. Here the difference between the leader and the laymen is a factor to take into account. Luther himself, in practice, put his own sense of spiritual judgment above the Scriptures. He remarked once, that he was sorry that the book of Revelation was in the Bible. His translation was free enough to merit question by later scholars, especially his addition of the word alone, into Romans 3: 28.  

It was the sale of indulgences by Tetzel in Germany, forbidden by

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3 Ibid., p. 86.
4 Ibid., p. 87.
5 Ibid., p. 123.
Cardinal Ximenes in Spain, that brought Luther's fundamentally new ideas into open opposition to the papacy. As a result of the debates with Eck and other defenders of orthodoxy, Luther developed the implications of his ideas to their logical results. He wrote a pamphlet in 1520 called An den christlichen Adel deutscher Nation, which was an appeal to the German nobles to reform the church. It is a strong assertion of the priesthood of all believers. He asserted that there was no distinction between the spiritual and the temporal estates. "All Christians are truly of the spiritual estate, and there is no difference among them, save of office alone."6 Religious matters, he contended, are not the concern of one segment of society alone. The practical plan of action he called for included the choice of ministers by the community that they serve; priestly celibacy should end. All aspects of life have dignity and religious value, he asserted.7 Four thousand copies of this pamphlet were sold within a few days after its publication. It had tremendous effect in Germany.

Shortly after the first pamphlet appeared, he wrote The Babylonian Captivity, in Latin, addressed to the clergy. In this he denied the Catholic interpretation and multiplication of sacraments. He reduced the sacraments to two, baptism and the Lord's Supper. Moreover he asserted that there was no quality of opus operatum in the sacrament; that is, the sacrament itself had no value. Walker has pointed out the significance

6Tbid., p. lll.

7This is a form of the doctrine of the value of the commonplace, a very familiar Emersonian contention.
of Luther's attitudes toward the sacraments.

Luther's treatment of the Lord's supper and of orders ... attacked the whole Roman theory of propitiatory masses offered to God by a priest possessing spiritual powers that no layman could share. It challenged not only the most central act of Roman public worship, but the very existence of a priesthood as distinguished from a ministry. It affirmed that preaching is the prime ministerial duty, and that "the sacrament of orders can be nothing else than a ceremony for choosing preachers in the Church."8

In this work of Luther's may be seen the origin of the attitude that culminated in Emerson's sermon on the Lord's Supper.

In the fall of 1520 Luther wrote an explicit statement of the doctrine of the priesthood of the individual worshipper, in the tract De Libertate Christiana, or Concerning Christian Liberty, in which Luther pointed out that man was freed from the law by Jesus Christ.

From his own experience, Luther declared the folly of carrying asceticism to the point of injuring one's body. He insisted on the value of disciplining the body but only for instrumental purposes; the discipline itself was of no value.9

Ceremony is equally futile, he insisted, and warned his readers against "the hardened and obstinate ceremonialists who like deaf adders enjoin and urge on us their ceremonies, as if they could justify us without faith."10 He did not mean that all ceremony was to be eliminated, for this he thought impossible, but men were never "to confuse the scaf-

8Walker, The Reformation, p. 113.


10Ibid., p. 393.
fold with the building.\textsuperscript{11} Ceremony, however, he always recognized as dangerous.

In brief, as poverty is imperilled amid riches, honesty amid business, humility among honours, abstinence amid feasting, purity amid pleasures, so is justification by faith imperilled among ceremonies. Solomon says, "Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned."\textsuperscript{12}

Luther was also aware of the danger of mistaking history for religion.

\ldots
turning to the subject which we had begun, I think it is made clear by these considerations that it is not sufficient, nor a Christian course, to preach the works, life and words of Christ in a historic manner, as facts which it suffices to know as an example how to frame our life, as do those who are now held the best preachers \ldots \textsuperscript{13}

What he was objecting to was any replacing of an inner experience by asceticism, ceremony, or knowledge of history. He thought of religion in essentially mystical fashion, as an inner awareness of God's forgiveness. He was a very practical sort of mystic, and after the years spent in the monastery, worked very actively at the task of reforming the church in Germany; but the requirement of religion as an inner experience was the essence of his term "justification by faith."

His definition of religion as an inner experience may be seen in his description of the true priesthood.

So, too, His priesthood does not consist in the outward display of vestments and gestures, as did the human priesthood of Aaron and our ecclesiastical priesthood at this day, but in spiritual things \ldots He also teaches us inwardly.\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{11}Tbid., p. 397.
\textsuperscript{12}Tbid., p. 395.
\textsuperscript{13}Tbid., p. 376.
\textsuperscript{14}Tbid., p. 373.
The basic idea is repeated many times in the book Concerning Christian Liberty. "Hence all we who believe in Christ are kings and priests in Christ." Anticipating criticism, he wrote, "Here you will ask, 'If all who are in the Church are priests, by what character are they whom we now call priests to be distinguished from the laity?' His answer was that the attributing of such words as clergy or spiritual person has done a great injustice to the remaining body of Christians. "Holy Scripture makes no distinction." Ministers may be employed "to teach the faith of Christ and the liberty of believers." But he adds with sarcasm, that does not make the laity something else than Christian or spiritual.

It is clear that the freedom of the Christian emphasized by Luther is from all ceremonies, obedience to law, or accumulation of merit by good works, or from human ecclesiastics. "From these considerations any one may see how a Christian man is free from all things . . . ."

Freedom is sometimes mistaken for license, as Luther realized, and attempted to guard against, first by the recognition of the importance of discipline, as suggested above. But Luther seemed to feel that freedom was more menaced by ceremony than by license.

Liberty of faith is not an occasion of license . . . . On the other hand they are most pertinaciously resisted by them who strive after salvation solely by their observance of and reverence for ceremonies as if they would be saved merely because they fast on stated days, or abstain from flesh, or make formal prayers, talking loudly of the precepts of the

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15 Trid., p. 376.
16 Loc. cit.
17 Loc. cit.
18 Concerning Christian Liberty, p. 375.
church and of the fathers, and not caring a straw about those things which belong to our genuine faith. 19

There is a note of the pragmatic in Luther, derived no doubt partly from the New Testament, "Prove all things." 20

Christian faith has appeared to many an easy thing: not a few even reckoned it among the social virtues, as it were; and this they do because they have not made proof of it experimentally, and have never tasted of what efficacy it is. 21

This emphasis of the New Testament call to test or examine the proposal by experience, so that one will know from his own experience, is an integral part of the doctrine, and appeared in a number of the writers whom Emerson read, as will be shown in the following section.

Another note in the treatise on Christian liberty reaffirmed an old Christian idea and gave it new impetus, that of "going on to perfection."

As long as we live in the flesh, we are but beginning and making advances in that which shall be completed in a future life... This very faith and abundance ought to increase from day to day. 22

But Luther was capable of stating the doctrine of "going on to perfection" in terms that made regenerated man seem perfect in the here and now.

Thus the believing soul, by the pledge of its faith in Christ, becomes free from all sin, fearless of death, safe from Hell, and endowed with the eternal righteousness, life and salvation of its Husband Christ. Thus He presents to Himself a glorious bride, without spot or wrinkle, cleansing her with the washing of water by the word; that is, by faith in the word of life. 23

19 Ibid., p. 392.
20 II Corinthians 13: 5.
21 Luther, Concerning Christian Liberty, p. 362.
22 Ibid., p. 378.
23 Ibid., p. 371.
It should be observed here that Luther was firmly convinced of the futility of one’s own effort. The regenerating, cleansing perfecting process was done of course by God alone. All of man’s efforts were quite futile. This insistence on the possibility of Christian perfection represented a contrast to the insistence on human inability that Luther and later Protestants affirmed. The possibility of Christian perfectionism has a long history; it should be remembered when studying Emerson’s doctrine of the infinitude of man.

The most frequently quoted statement from the pamphlet Concerning Christian Liberty states the paradox that is involved here. "A Christian man is the most free lord of all, and subject to none: a Christian man is the most dutiful servant of all and subject to every one." The freedom of the Christian is from all human institutions, of religion at least. His subjection is to the demand of love to serve and help all.

The most dramatic illustration of the doctrine of the priesthood of the individual, of the right of private judgment, occurred at the Reichstag of Worms, in 1521, held under the presidency of Charles V. Before the Emperor, the representatives of the Pope, and the German nobles, Luther was shown the books he had written and asked if they were his and if he would recant the very obvious heresies they contained. He asked for a day to consider. His hesitation is not surprising in view of the fact that Huss had been burned to death by a similar council, and in view of the weight of a thousand years of tradition. On the next day, he was reminded that both the Pope and the Council of Constance had condemned the views he had expressed. The Council of Constance was popular in

24Ibid., p. 363.
Germany, for it had been largely made of German ecclesiastics. Neverthe-
less, Luther asserted, in memorable words that resounded through Europe
for many years thereafter:

Unless I am refuted by Scriptural testimony or by clear argu-
ments--for I believe neither the pope nor the councils alone,
since it is clear that they have often erred and contradicted
one another--I am conquered by the passages of Scripture which
I have cited, and my conscience is bound in the Word of God.
I cannot and will not recant anything, since it is unsafe and
dangerous to act against conscience.25

It was immediately after this that Luther cried out, "Here I stand. God
help me. Amen."26

The significance of this assumption of the right of private judgment,
of the belief in the individual conscience as the court of last resort,
has been variously judged. As Walker said,

To half the Christian world the attitude of Luther speaks to
this day but of wilful obstinacy and preference of selfish
opinion to wisdom of the visible Church; but to those who have
entered into the spirit of Protestantism it stands forth a
heroic declaration of spiritual and mental independence, born
of fidelity to God in the use of powers divinely entrusted to
every thinking man, and points out the pathway to that freedom
necessary not only for the highest intellectual enlightenment,
but for the noblest religious development of mankind.

Luther did not, perhaps, live up to the full implications of his
document. He was certainly not democratic in politics. The precedent
he had set, however, and the ideas he had expressed, were swiftly
carried throughout Europe. The second generation reformer Calvin was

26 Loc. cit.
27 Walker, pp. 119-120.
not an original thinker; his chief contribution was to systematize the views of Luther and to give them wider sway.

Emerson read of the period of the Reformation in Milner's history. Chapter IV of Milner's history contains an account of the treatise on Christian liberty written by Luther. His discussion makes clear Luther's distrust of ceremony and of tradition.

If faith be kept out of sight, and human institutions alone taught, pestilent and impious traditions which ruin the soul, will bear all the sway in the church, as is at present the case ... 28

While Milner's account emphasized the fact of salvation by faith rather than Luther's freedom, the idea of the priesthood of the individual is clearly there and explicitly shown in quotations from Concerning Christian Liberty. Emerson also read an account of Luther's life during this same period, while preparing to lecture on Luther in Boston in 1835. The lecture was not published. Cabot's summary says that he spoke of "the extraordinary intensity of" Luther's convictions. 29

Rusk has titled the chapter describing Emerson's resignation from Second Church "Theses Nailed to the Church Door," an implicit suggestion of the influence of Luther. Not quite a week after his resignation, Emerson copied into his Journal the words spoken by Luther at the Reichstag at Worms. 30 He wrote into the Journal later,

29 James Elliot Cabot, A Memoir of Ralph Waldo Emerson, p. 232.
30 Ralph L. Rusk, The Life of Ralph Waldo Emerson, p. 165.
Luther's religious movement was the fountain of much intellectual life in Europe; that is, Luther's conscience animating sympathetically the conscience of millions, the pulse passed into thought, and ultimated itself in Galileos, Keplers, Swedenborgs, Newtons, Shakespears, Bacons, and Miltons.31

Still later he wrote in the Journal a quotation from Luther, "Over the soul can and will God allow no one to rule but Himself alone."32

A summary of the religious experience of Luther will indicate the many aspects of his work that reappeared in the poetry of Emerson. These include the Augustinian piety, the interest in a mystical approach to religion, the strongly moral nature of Luther's piety, the conception of religion as a matter of the individual self rather than a matter of conformity to a corporate system, the belief in the spiritual possibilities of all worshippers, the belief that sacraments or ceremonies are not in themselves effective, the subordination of sacraments to preaching, the subordination of sacraments to the inner experience of the worshipper, the freedom of the worshipper from all human institutions of religion, the pragmatic injunction, and the call to Christian perfectionism. It will be recognized that all of these aspects of Luther's religious experience also characterize the religious experience of Emerson, although Emerson was more consistent in carrying out the implications of the ideas.

It seems probable that Luther's ideas came to Emerson in their most powerful form through the mediation of the Puritan tradition and through the influence of the religious literature written in English that Emerson studied. The second section of the chapter will show that the ideas of Luther thus far described were available to Emerson in a number of books.

31Journals, VIII, 151.
32Ibid., X, 191.
The final section of the chapter will show explicitly how some of Luther's ideas reappeared in Emerson's poetry. Mysticism is treated in Chapter VIII.

2. The Priesthood of the Individual: Seventeenth Century Exponents

Emerson's study in 1823 of Neal's history of the Puritans would have enabled him to learn almost all of the ideas most characteristic of Luther. Neal's history is well designed to show the impact of the ideas of the Reformation upon England during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

In defending the right of private judgment, Neal quoted, in good Calvinist fashion, the verse from Romans 14:5, "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind." This represented essentially an appeal to reason, and Neal was fond of anecdotes that showed the Puritans standing upon their sense of reason as a sanction for violating the law. His anecdotes are quite in the spirit of Luther at Worms, who said that he would recant only if refuted by Scripture or clear arguments. A typical example of the right of private judgment is illustrated by Neal's anecdote of a Mr. White, private citizen of London, who, toward the end of Elizabeth's reign, was arrested for attending private worship and avoiding the parish church. He and the judge argued at length, the judge calling him an anarchist, "You would have no laws." But White took his stand on the laws of God. "Only God and his laws are perfect; all human laws may err." The judge then accused him of being "the wickedest and most

33Daniel Neal, The History of the Puritans, I, 131.
contemptuous person that has ever come before me." To which White replied, "Not so my lord, my conscience witnesseth otherwise. Being thoroughly persuaded in my conscience by the working of the hand of the Almighty..." An interested reader would find many dramatic and moving accounts of the influence of the idea of private judgment on individuals recounted in Neal's history.

Kuyper, the Calvinist apologist, has claimed that it was almost exclusively the Calvinistic tradition that emphasized the priesthood of the individual. This is an exaggerated claim, although it is true that in the English religious literature of the seventeenth century the Puritan and Quaker documents contain more references to the doctrine than do the writings of the Anglicans. W. K. Wright, historian of religion, believed that the Calvinistic strain of Protestantism was characterized by its tendency to produce self-reliant individuals. This is probably a safer statement than Kuyper's since it does not exclude the recognition that other strands of Protestantism also emphasized individual judgment, though Wright suggested that the other strands may not have emphasized it as much as did the Calvinistic.

Calvinism had remarkable influence in developing extreme independence of thought and self-reliance; its adherents, confident of themselves as the elect of God, were bold and courageous fighters for liberty. Independent toward his fellowman, including his rulers, the Calvinist was humble and grateful in his attitude toward God, believing in his own sinfulness and unworthiness, and his complete dependence on divine love and mercy.

Dowden asserted that the chief characteristic of Puritanism was its

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34Ibid., p. 132.

35Abraham Kuyper, Lectures on Calvinism, p. 57.

36William Kelley Wright, A Student's Philosophy of Religion, p. 179.
insistence upon the doctrine of the priesthood of the individual.

To discover the dominant idea of Puritanism we must look beyond dogma to something common to every phase of the great contention. And undoubtedly the unvarying central element was this--Puritanism maintained, as far as was possible, that the relation between the invisible spirit of man and the invisible God was immediate rather than mediate. It set little store by tradition because God had spoken to man directly in the words of revelation. It distrusted human ceremonies, because these stood between the creature and his Creator; the glory of the Christian temple is the holiness of the living temple which rises in the heart of the child of God. The pretensions of an ecclesiastical hierarchy are an estrangement of the adopted son of the Father; every lay Christian is himself a royal priest.37

As will be indicated, even the Anglican Jeremy Taylor, however, held these views; he differed from the Puritans in that they made this idea central, while to Taylor the church tradition had far more importance than it did to the Puritans.

It is safe to say that the doctrine was a commonplace of Protestant theology, appearing in the Quaker, Anglican, and Puritan books read by Emerson, and even in the hymnody of New England. In the book of the Quaker Barclay, the doctrine appears many times, as one would expect. Barclay cited Luther as a source, but carried the idea beyond Luther, even asserting not only that "Every good Christian man is a preacher," but even the women also.38

The idea of the priesthood of the individual is specifically referred to in Watts's hymns a number of times.

Thou hast redeem'd our souls with blood,
Hast set the pris'ner free

Hast made us kings and priests to God,
And we shall reign with thee. 39

Watts even managed to insert in a Psalm a reference to the basic Protestant belief that every person should have a Bible and learn to read it for himself.

O all ye nations, praise the Lord,
Each with a different tongue:
In every language learn his word,
And let his name be sung. 40

There are a number of references to the right of private judgment and of the necessity of obedience to conscience in the sermons of the acid-tongued Anglican defender of restoration orthodoxy, Robert South, whose sermons were checked out of Harvard College Library by Emerson in 1823. 41 South emphasized the necessity of obedience to conscience, without considering how one is to decide what is right. In effect, he took for granted that the traditional church is right, and did not consider the problem of conflict between conscience and tradition.

Jeremy Taylor also asserted the basic idea that each man is able to come to God without the need of any intermediary.

No man can hinder our private addresses to God; every man can build a chapel in his breast, and himself be the priest, and his heart the sacrifice, and every foot of the globe he treads on be the altar, and this no tyrant can prevent. 42

There are other statements of the idea in Taylor, one of which may be quoted because of its similarity to a favorite idea of Emerson's.

Think not thyself better for anything that happens to thee from without: for although thou mayest by gifts bestowed upon thee be better than another, as one horse is better than another, that is, of more use than another, yet as thou art a man, thou hast nothing to commend thee to thyself but that only by which thou art a man, that is by what thou choosest and refusest.\textsuperscript{143}

Many other statements occur in Taylor that remind the reader of the ideas of Emerson. Taylor said that we are to empty ourselves and throw ourselves on God,\textsuperscript{144} using an image much like Emerson's comparison of man to a pipe filled by God, to a vase filled by God, or to a channel filled by God.\textsuperscript{145} Taylor said that true faith is confident and will venture all the world upon the strength of its persuasion. "But he that fears men more than God, believes in men more than he believes in God.\textsuperscript{146}

The Select Discourses of the Cambridge Platonist John Smith are devoted to the theme of attaining the union between God and man, described above by Dowden. Smith began his discussion with a caution that is strikingly Emersonian. Smith, like his contemporary Richard Baxter, was aware of the difficulty of attaining reliable religious knowledge and therefore told his readers not to

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over hastily credere in fidem alienem—subscribe to the symbols and articles of other men. They are not always the best men that blot the most paper: truth is not, I fear, so voluminous, nor swells into such a mighty bulk as our books do... Whilst we plead so much our right to the patrimony of our fathers, we may take too fast a possession of their errors as well as of their sober opinions... We can never be well assured what our traditional divinity is; nor can securely enough addict
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{143}Ibid., III, 70.
\textsuperscript{144}Ibid., II, 395, footnote.
\textsuperscript{145}See pages 212-215.
\textsuperscript{146}Taylor, Works, III, 148.
ourselves to any sect of men . . . "he that will seek truth will seek it with a free judgement and a sanctified mind": he that thus seeks shall find, he shall live in truth and that shall live in him; it shall be like a stream of living waters issuing out of his own soul; he shall drink of the waters of his own cistern, and be satisfied; . . . he will find satisfaction within, feeling self in conjunction with truth, though all the world should dispute against him.\(^7\)

One of the most fully developed statements of the principle of the priesthood of the individual believer appears in a work written by Richard Baxter. Baxter was one who, like Milton, cannot be called a man of any party. He is most closely attached to the Puritan group, however, as Perry Miller has indicated in The Seventeenth Century,\(^8\) and as a reading of his treatise will show. It was his A Call to the Unconverted that John Eliot translated for the benefit of the Indians in Massachusetts. Baxter was the kind of Puritan who, appointed by the Puritan Parliament to Kidderminster Parish, refused to force the incumbent Anglican out of the rectory. Thus he refused the remuneration he might have had in the Puritan regime. Then when the Restoration was safely in power he refused to accept the new conditions and was in disrepute with the Established Church.\(^9\) He was, in short, a completely independent individual, and his interpretation of Christianity shows the same independence.

He was a voluminous writer, but the records suggest that Emerson read only A Treatise of Knowledge and Love Compared. It is significant that Emerson read this work because, while his independence is implied in all that he wrote, Baxter explicitly discusses the problem of acquiring

\(^7\) John Smith, Select Discourses, pp. 12-13.

\(^8\)Page x.

\(^9\)Richard Baxter, Practical Works, I, i-x.
religious knowledge in this treatise. Emerson withdrew the work from the Athenaeum in 1830.50

There are two divisions in the work; in Baxter's own words they are

I. Against hasty judging and False conceets of Knowledge and of necessary suspension.
II. The Excellency of Divine Love, and the Happiness of being known and loved of God.51

The first division begins with the Socratic distaste of pretended knowledge, or of ignorance of ignorance. We are, he thought, to learn all we can, but we must not think too highly of what we know. "Best a Divine should know all things that are to be known."52 The religious person must therefore study all kinds of knowledge.

A wise man may and must make great use of common inferior Kinds of knowledge: especially the true Grammatical Sense of Scripture Words, the true Precepts of Logick, the certain Parts of real Physicks, and Pneumatology: For God is seen in his works as in a Glass; and there to search after him and behold him, a noble pleasant Work and Knowledge.53

But Baxter felt a great distrust of knowledge, in spite of his injunction that Christians are to study diligently. They are never to confuse what they have learned with the nature of reality itself. It continually escapes the student. He warned his readers against the professional theologians, the philosophers, and the historians. He was quite aware of the subjectivity of history and the difficulty of believing history.54

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50 Cameron, Ralph Waldo Emerson's Reading, p. 56.
52 Ibid., p. 500.
53 loc. cit. The reader should note here the seventeenth century formula that Emerson called correspondence.
54 Baxter, IV, p. 504.
He knew also the pitfalls that words could be in the process of acquiring knowledge. Here no doubt he reflects Bacon's discussion of the semantic difficulties involved in knowledge. Part of the reason for man's continuing ignorance is his insistence on thinking that words are knowledge. "And it is sinful Folly to pretend that we truly know or apprehend the Thing or Matter ... merely because we have got the bare Words ..."55 Baxter was not, however, simply a skeptic. His warnings against knowledge were aimed at the puncturing of pride. He wanted to distinguish between human knowledge and that ineffable experience which is the knowledge of God. His attitude toward knowledge is a perfect example of the paradox of otherworldliness in Puritanism. All men are to study hard; he himself was not a university graduate, but he made himself well informed by constant and diligent effort. Yet men are commanded never to think that their hard-earned knowledge is of any real value. The knowledge men gain here may even be a danger because of their pride in what they have learned. He discussed at length the sin of desiring too much knowledge. Here he paralleled Raphael's warning to Adam in Paradise Lost that he must "be lowlie wise," that he is not to be too much concerned in seeking knowledge.

The truth is, it is much to be suspected, lest as an inordinate desire of Creature-Knowledge was a great part of our First Parents Sin, so it hath accordingly corrupted our Nature, with an answerable Vicious inclination thereunto: not that the thing in itself is evil to know God's Works; but good and desirable in its place and Measure; But it is such a good as by inordinacy may become a Dangerous Evil . . . 56

55 Ibid., p. 500.
56 Ibid., p. 529.
As an end in itself, learning is dangerous; it may keep men from worship, make them proud, even be a form of sensuality. It may, however, be a means to the end of Godliness. "... the knowledge of the Creatures, sanctified and made serviceable to God and Holiness, is of great utility, but out of its place, it is Poison, and Perdition."\(^{57}\)

Baxter felt that the unthinking repetition of tradition was a great barrier to genuine religious experience. "When Children come to School, also their Masters teach them as their Parents did... And the Great mischief is that multitudes of those Notions which are taught us are false."\(^{58}\) Teachers are of course necessary, he said, but the teaching process ought to raise doubts, so that people would be more discriminating in their acquiring of knowledge. But this he thought very difficult to do. "Was it not Labour enough to study so many years to know what others say, but they must now undo much of it, and begin a new and harder labour?"\(^{59}\) He doubted whether many would ever accept this process.

And it is so hard a thing to bring men to that Self-denial and Labour, as at Age thoroughly and impartially to revise their Juvenile Conceptions, and for them that learn'd Words before Things, to proceed to learn Things now... not one of a multitude is ever Master of so much Virtue as to attempt it, and to go through with it.\(^{60}\)

The people at whom he aimed his discourse, he said, are those who unthinkingly accept other's ideas.

But abundance take it upon trust from Godly Preachers or Parents and go on without much examining of their grounds... I persuade no man to doubt that which he is certain

\(^{57}\) Ibid., p. 529.
\(^{58}\) Ibid., p. 500.
\(^{59}\) Ibid., p. 501.
\(^{60}\) Loc. cit.
\(^{61}\) Baxter, IV, 536.
of, but not to lie and say he is certain when he is not ...
It is not knowing, but false pretending to know, I am against. 62

He distrusted arguments, or, in short, the rational kind of knowledge that relied on abstractions and logic. "Therefore also trust not the too far artificial forms of argument, especially when the Engine hath many tacklings and the Chain many Links." 63 "Even Ramus," he said, "hath more adversaries than followers." 64

He was a pragmatist, in the sense of wanting knowledge to be useful for religious and moral purposes. "That is Good as a means which doth Good." 65 "Value truth for Goodness, and Goodness above all." 66

As has been already said, Baxter was not a believer in parties; he wrote his objections in words very much like the comment of Emerson that the preacher is not a man, but a retained attorney, who has bound his eyes, so that he can tell no truth. 67 "He that cleaveth too close to any Sect will be carried down the Stream by that Sect, and the reverence

62 Ibid., p. 537. Cf. Emerson's statements: "Persist, only persist in seeking the truth. Persist in saying you do not know what you do not know, and you do not care for what you do not care." (Journals, II, 379.) "The Transcendentalist or Realist is distinguished from the Churchman herein, that he limits his affirmation to his perception, and never goes beyond the warrant of his experience (spiritual and sensuous) in his creed. Whilst the Churchman affirms many things received on testimony as of equal value with the moral intuitions." (Journals, VI, 380.)

63 Baxter, IV, 538.
64 Ibid., p. 504.
65 Ibid., p. 539.
66 Loc. cit.
67 Works, II, 54-55.
of Party will bind his Mind."68 He anticipated the objections of those who felt this would rule out the church, and replied to them simply by a reassertion of the doctrine of the priesthood of the individual. To contradict this doctrine is to be a "Papist."

May not a Man more safely and confidently believe by the church's faith than by his own? that is; take that for more certain which all men believe, than that which I think I see a Divine Word for myself? . . . This is a Popish objection . . . No man can believe by any Faith not his own, any more than understand with any understanding but his own.69

He knew that there were subtle dangers of pride, on the one hand, and of uncertainty on the other, for those who follow the way of private judgment.

There is great uncertainty in matters of private impulse. When a man has nothing to prove a thing to be God's will but an inward Persuasion or Impulse in his own Breast ... it's hard to be sure of it ... That which must be certain must be somewhat equal to Prophetical Inspiration, which indeed is its own Evidence. But what that is no man can formally conceive but he that hath had it. Therefore we are bid to Try the Spirit.70

His last statement is one of the two solutions he had for the problem of acquiring religious knowledge. "Try the Spirit" meant, loosely speaking, the empirical approach. No doubt the beginning of empirical method in Bacon's writings had influenced Baxter. His proposal is essentially the proposal that men are to test the claims of religion by their own experience.

The other solution he proposed was that of the suspended judgment. The injunction to keep one's judgment tentative is a reflection of his

68 Baxter, IV, 541.
69 Ibid., p. 535.
70 Ibid., p. 505.
distrust of rational knowledge, and of tradition, and of parties. "Stop therefore till you have evidence, Follow no Party as a Party in the Dark." \(^71\) "And my repeated Counsel is that you suspend your judgment till you have cogent Evidence to determine it." \(^72\)

What Baxter regarded as "cogent" evidence is discussed in the second section of his treatise, under the heading "true saving knowledge." This is that inner experience of the movement of God into the heart of the believer, that the Protestant reformers of the first generation had said was necessary to insure the salvation of the believer. Miller has described the experience as "Augustinian piety," \(^73\) and Baxter himself recognized Augustine as a reliable describer of the experience. \(^74\) Baxter described it as the "Internal Vital Acts" of God. He regarded it as a kind of knowledge and attempted to distinguish between this kind of knowledge and the knowledge acquired by rational effort, or by empirical means. It is the knowledge of immediate acquaintance, not mediated by senses or by reason.

He knoweth not a Countrey who is only able by the Maps or hear-say to describe it ... so it is of things Spiritual ... He who doth not intuitively, or in Internal immediate perceptions know ... doth not know. \(^75\)

Ralph Barton Perry believed that the knowledge called for in the passage above was one of the essential Puritan characteristics.

Salvation was conceived by the Puritans as an effect of faith and grace rather than works and merit. This may be construed

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\(^{71}\) Ibid., p. 510.
\(^{72}\) Ibid., p. 541.
\(^{73}\) The Seventeenth Century, pp. 3-34.
\(^{74}\) Baxter, IV, 542.
\(^{75}\) Ibid., p. 546.
to mean that the goodness of God has to be known, if it is to be known at all, by him who tastes it for himself. Being untranslatable into concept, it cannot be anticipated or demonstrated by reason. It is as inaccessible to the man without the specific experience as is red to a man who is color-blind.  

The kind of knowledge that Baxter discussed in the second half of his book may be identified as a mild type of mysticism.

To Baxter, the absence of this kind of knowledge seemed hell in the fullest sense, no matter where the person might find himself.

O what a Hell is this dead and disaffected Heart . . . I hate not myself for my Ignorance in the Common Arts and Sciences: but my God knoweth that I ever abhor and loathe myself because I Love and Delight in him no more.  

This is a good description of the pain felt by the mystic in the absence of God, frequently called the dark night of the soul.

Baxter disliked the typical Puritan and Protestant distinction between the visible church of professed Christians, and the invisible church of regenerate Christians. There should only be regenerate Christians, he thought. He was here dealing with the problem that later resulted in the dismissal of Jonathan Edwards from his church at Northampton.

But as Heart-consent and Tongue-consent are Two Things; but the latter required only as the Expression and Profession of the former; so Heart-Consenters and Tongue-Consenters should be the same men; . . . but if the Tongue speak that consent which is not in the Heart, that Person is an Hypocrite . . . they are as traitors in an Army, or as the stricken Eares in a Cornfield.  

Edwards, too, felt that all church members should be people who were able

76 Ralph Barton Perry, Puritanism and Democracy, p. 225.
77 Baxter, IV, 548.
78 Ibid., p. 549.
to unite "tongue-consent" and "heart-consent." And this must be essentially the problem felt by Emerson in connection with the Lord's Supper and the public prayers. He felt no "heart-consent," and so was unwilling to continue with what was a "deadhearted" experience to him.

Baxter's honesty in this respect, his unwillingness to claim a certainty he did not have, has been pointed out by Dowden, who said of him, "In each matter of conscience he tried, with aids of Scripture and much study and prayer, to puzzle out for himself the right or the wrong." It is interesting that along with this conscientious effort to apply his own prescription for getting religious knowledge, there went a certainty that enabled him to withstand the rigors of years of poverty and imprisonment, under the reign of Charles II. He was offered and refused a bishopric by the king. After the Act of 1662, he refused to accede to the requirements of the Established church, and also refused to cease preaching, and so was repeatedly imprisoned by the state. Here again is an example of the paradox that began with Luther, of insistence on man's inability together with an amazing self-confidence.

Milton, undoubtedly the best literary craftsman of the century, was probably the most influential of the proponents of the doctrine of the priesthood of the individual. Bush has described the doctrine as it appeared in Milton.

The source and sanction of Milton's ideas of freedom was the Reformation doctrine of Christian liberty, of which he was in seventeenth century England the greatest among many exponents. This conception is set forth fully in the treatise on Christian doctrine and briefly near the end of Paradise Lost, and it is more or less explicit or implicit in nearly all his

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79Dowden, pp. 216-217.
mature writings. In a word, the Mosaic law was not only posi-
tive and truly religious and moral but also restrictive, and
arbitrary, and ceremonial; it was a precise external code
imposed on man. When Christ came, the Mosaic law was abro-
gated for the law of the Gospel. With his soul illuminated
by a new revelation, man was released from his involuntary
subjection to the Mosaic law and became through divine grace
and his own insight and effort, a free agent, a self-directing
son of God. Regenerate man is in fact freed from dependence
upon and allegiance to all external authorities and institutions.
The seeds of revolution latent in this Protestant individualism
are obvious. Properly understood, the doctrine does not make
man irresponsible; it vastly heightens his responsibility to
God. Over and over again Milton repeats that liberty is not
license, that true liberty can be enjoyed only by the wise and
the good—and they, as he was driven more and more to recognize,
are a minority of mankind.80

It seems probable that the life and writings of Milton were an
important source of Emerson's faith in what he called self-reliance. Every-
thing that Milton wrote stated or implied the doctrine. Milton's tract,
The Reason of Church Government urged against Prelaty, was known by Em­
erson early in his life, with real affection. He wrote of it in the Jour­
nal at least twice, saying on one occasion,

nor can I conceive of any man of sense reading the chapter of
Milton [Book II, Chapter 1, The Reason of Church Government ]
without his heart warming to the touch of noble sentiments;
and his faith in God and in the eternity of virtue and of
truth being steadfastly confirmed.81

The Reason of Church Government is essentially an application of Luther's
argument, turned against the Anglican episcopacy.

It is in this book, in the preface to Book II, that Milton announced
his refusal to enter the ministry, to which, he wrote, he was destined
as a child, by the intentions of his parents and friends. Milton's re-


80 Douglas Bush, Paradise Lost in Our Time, pp. 35-36.
precedent that was probably not forgotten by Emerson.

... till coming to some maturity of years, and perceiving what tyranny had invaded the church, that he who would take orders must subscribe slave, and take an oath withal, which, unless he took with a conscience that would retch, he must either straight perjure, or split his faith; I thought it better to prefer a blameless silence before the holy office of speaking, bought and begun with servitude and forswearing. 82

In the first chapter of the book, Milton contrasts the outer splendor of the prelates with the call of the gospel to a ministry that required one "to take ... the form of a servant."83 The prelates had succumbed, said Milton, because the "world is so potent in most men's hearts."84 He thought that almost no one would understand him when he protested in this way, "for who is there almost that measures wisdom by simplicity, strength by suffering, dignity by lowliness."85 Emerson thought this "prose poem," as he called it, surely inspired. "Nothing of human composition is so akin to inspiration."86

In the De Doctrina Christiana, Milton wrote that each person should trust the Holy Spirit in his own heart. That power and messenger from God is superior "to the Scripture," "to human traditions," "to the opinions of our forefathers," even "to the venerable name of mother church itself."87 These convictions are given poetic life in Paradise Lost.

Milton's attitude toward ceremonies appeared in Paradise Lost.

82 The Prose Works of John Milton, II, 482.
83 Ibid., p. 483.
84 Ibid., p. 482.
85 Loc. cit.
86 Journals, I, 212.
Adam's evening prayer was a spontaneous expression of adoration for God.\textsuperscript{88}

This was all that was necessary, said Milton,

\begin{quote}
\ldots other rites
Observing none, but adoration pure
Which God likes best\textsuperscript{89}
\end{quote}

The morning prayer of the happy couple in Eden was also one that was obviously not dependent on the Prayer Book, but was rather an immediate expression of the worthiness of God.

Lowly they bow'd adoring, and began
\begin{quote}
Thir Orisons, each Morning duly paid
In various style, for neither various style
Nor holy rapture wanted they to praise
Thir Maker, in fit strains pronounc\textsuperscript{t} or sung
Unmeditated, such prompt eloquence
Flow'd from thir lips \ldots \textsuperscript{90}
\end{quote}

In Book XII, Milton specifically declared the right of conscience.

\begin{quote}
\ldots for on Earth
Who against Faith and Conscience can be heard
Infallible? yet many will presume:
Whence heave persecution shall arise
On all who in the worship persevere
Of Spirit and Truth; the rest, farr greater part,
Will deem in outward Rites and specious formes
Religion satisfied \ldots \textsuperscript{91}
\end{quote}

Perhaps the most dramatic illustration of self-reliant confidence based on trust in God is seen in the action of Abdiel in defying Satan. Satan in Book V called his cohorts to the "Quarters of the North" to conspire against the exaltation of Jesus. Only Abdiel had the courage to rely on the truth and defy the sophistry of Satan's arguments. As

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{88}Book IV, 720-739.
\textsuperscript{89}Book IV, 739-740.
\textsuperscript{90}Book V, 144-150.
\textsuperscript{91}Book XII, 528-535.
\end{quote}
C. S. Lewis has pointed out, Satan here resorted to "a ridiculous and incoherent theory that the angels were self begot."\(^{92}\) Abdiel had the courage to stick to the truth, that the angels were not "self-begotten," and that God did have the right to command them. After the debate between Abdiel and Satan, Abdiel left the rebellious angels.

So spake the Seraph, Abdiel faithful found
Among the faithless, faithful only hee;
Among unnumerable false, unmov'd,
Unshaken, undesuo'd, unterrifi'd
His Loyaltie he kept, his Love, his Zeale;
Nor number, nor example with him wrought
To swerve from truth, or change his constant mind
Though single. From amidst them forth he pass'd,
Long way through hostile scorn, which he susteind
Superior, nor of violence fear'd aught;
And with retorted scorn his back he turn'd
On those proud Towers, to swift destruction doom'd.\(^{93}\)

Emerson was probably not aware of the theory which suggests that Satan is really the hero of *Paradise Lost*. That theory makes it difficult to see how Milton glorified obedience and God-reliance in the poem, rather than rebellion against God. The discussions of Bush and of Lewis make it impossible to believe that Satan is the hero of *Paradise Lost* or that he reproduced the experience of Milton himself.\(^{94}\) It seems to this writer that Abdiel is a more faithful reflection of Milton's attitudes and experience, than is Satan. At the beginning of Book VI, Abdiel returns to the presence of the Almighty, who speaks approvingly of his efforts.

Servant of God, well done, well hast thou fought
The better fight, who single has maintained
Against revolted multitudes the Cause
Of Truth, in word mightier than they in Armes;

\(^{92}\)C. S. Lewis, *A Preface to Paradise Lost*, p. 76.

\(^{93}\)Book V, 896-908.

\(^{94}\)Lewis, pp. 92-101; Bush, pp. 64-74.
And for the testimonie of Truth hast borne
Universal reproach, far worse to beare
Than violence: for this was all thy care
To stand approv'd in sight of God, though Worlds
Judg'd thee perverse ... 95

If the passage is not autobiographical, it is certainly descriptive of Milton's own experience. Bush has suggested that "Milton was a rebel like his own Abdiel, the faithful angel whom Satan could not seduce and who received from God noble praise ... 96

In the first paragraph of his essay on "Self-Reliance," Emerson wrote, "The highest merit we ascribe to Moses, Plato and Milton is that they set at naught books and traditions and spoke not what men, but they thought." 97 Emerson believed that Milton had that quality of sincerity that Baxter described as "Heart Consent." "The sentiment which, like Milton's, comes down to new generations is that which was no sham of half sentiment to Milton himself, but the utterance of his inmost self ... " 98

Interestingly enough Emerson ascribes the virtue of humility to Milton. 99 This action will seem inconsistent only to those who confuse self-reliance with egotism.

Late in his life Emerson wrote of Milton a passage probably suggested by Emerson's own cessation of church attendance, apparently because he found the preachers so dull that their sermons were a waste of time. "The most devout man of his time, he frequented no church; probably

95Book VI, 29-36.
96Bush, p. 67.
97Works, II, 45.
99Ibid., 496.
from disgust at the fierce spirit of the pulpits."

In the lecture on Milton Emerson emphasized the fact that "His private opinions and private conscience always distinguish him." Emerson associated this fact with his having been "an apostle of freedom," contending for "civil liberty," "ecclesiastical liberty," "literary liberty," and "domestic liberty." Emerson found the source of his greatness in the fact that "he affirmed the omnipotence of spiritual laws." Moreover he taught that one should expect a "divine leading" both in choice of profession and in choice of marital partner. He illustrated, Emerson thought, the fact that true greatness is true humility.

3. The Priesthood of the Individual: Emerson's Doctrine of Self-Reliance

The effort of this chapter thus far has been to trace the development of the doctrine of the priesthood of the individual on the assumption that Emerson's doctrine of self-reliance is the legitimate issue of that Protestant belief.

The standard criticism of Emerson's belief is that the doctrine of self-reliance, in Whicher's words, amounts merely to "a radical egoistic anarchism". Schneider understood it as simple egoism, a kind of shallow self assertion. Elliott spoke of the "egoism of romantic self-reliance."

100 Works, XII, 270.
101 Works, XII, 266-273.
102 Stephen E. Whicher, Freedom and Fate, pp. 49-57.
103 Herbert Wallace Schneider, The Puritan Mind, pp. 257-263.
These charges against those who defend the Protestant idea of the priesthood of the individual are not new. The quotation cited above by Walker described the feeling of half the Christian world that Luther stood for "wilful obstinancy and preference of selfish opinion."\textsuperscript{105}

Bush remarked that approximately the same charge is made against Milton.

For the modern "liberal" knowing no absolute imperatives, and having no beliefs, in the old meaning of the word, can think of no explanation except arrogant self righteousness for the inward strength, "unshaken, unseduced'\textsuperscript{d}, unterrifi'd," of one to whom life means obedience to God.\textsuperscript{106}

In the seventeenth century Samuel Butler attacked the Puritan as one who, to use Dowden's summary, "falls down in reverence before himself and is guilty of the grossest form of idolatry."\textsuperscript{107}

At this point a defense of the doctrine of self-reliance and of the doctrine of the priesthood of the individual encounters the same problem. In each case, Luther, Milton, Emerson, there is the claim that Deity in greater or lesser degree speaks through the conscience and reason of the individual, and therefore must be obeyed. The problem of the correctness of this claim cannot be solved by the student of literature. The charges of egoism rest on the automatic assumption that it is impossible for these men to have known Deity within them. The truth or falsity of the assumption must be tested by other than literary methods. This thesis will confine itself to demonstrating that Emerson, like Luther and Milton, did claim essentially that self-reliance is a reliance temporary fashion.

\textsuperscript{105}Walker, \textit{The Reformation}, p. 119.

\textsuperscript{106}Bush, p. 68.

\textsuperscript{107}Dowden, p. 294.
Deity, not on the limited and particular abilities of the individual. This approach assumes that the charges made above cannot be satisfactorily answered, except in the realm of faith or religion, and since this thesis attempts to be descriptive, it cannot evaluate the claims made by the defenders of the doctrine of the priesthood of the individual.

Not all scholars charge Emerson with egoism. Cameron used the term "God-reliance" as a synonym for "self-reliance." Elliott, whose article has been previously referred to, believed that self-reliance did occasionally mean God-reliance. He studied the Journals and wrote a discussion comparing the essay, "Self-Reliance" with the poem, "Grace." He concluded that the essay is not a correct reflection of Emerson's own experience, and that the poem indicates his true state of mind as seen in the Journals, better than does the essay. The essay, he thought, except for one paragraph, the twenty-first one, is largely devoted to the "egoism of romantic self-reliance." Elliott's conclusion ignored much material in the essay that does not substantiate the charge of egoism.

There is a paradox in the doctrine of the priesthood of the individual that appears in Emerson's essay. On the one hand, the individual is to recognize that he is nothing; God is all. Yet on the other hand, he must trust himself completely. One resolution of the paradox lies in the belief that the individual is created by God, and therefore, he must trust what God has made. Another resolution lies in the conviction of the immediate presence of God within the individual, in a limited and temporary fashion.

108Emerson the Essayist, II, 424.
The third paragraph of the essay contains both of these resolutions. This is the paragraph beginning, "Trust thyself: every heart vibrates to that iron string." The introductory sentence is so striking that the remainder of the paragraph has no doubt escaped the attention of commentators. The second sentence is essentially a statement of the sovereignty of God, a belief that appears repeatedly in the Emersonian corpus. "Accept the place the divine providence has found for you, the society of your contemporaries, the connection of events . . ." Here the reader is invited to accept the world that God made and placed him in. Whatever the situation is that the person finds himself in, represents the will of God for him.

The third sentence asserts that great men have always accepted reality because they knew that God was in control, that "the absolutely trustworthy was seated at their heart, working through their hands, predominating in all their being."

The final sentence asserts that people are to act as mature persons, not "minors and invalids" or "cowards," who are to be "guides, redeemers, and benefactors," then appears again the claim of inner direction by Deity, "obeying the Almighty effort and advancing on Chaos and the Dark." This paragraph, therefore, with its implication of the sovereignty of God, and its assertion that the Deity is within each man guiding him, if he will only obey, and with its appeal to tradition ("Great men have always done so.") seems to be a restatement of the principles that motivated Luther

\[109\text{Works, II, 47.}\]

\[110\text{That he might have thought of Milton again here is suggested by the final figure in the paragraph, "Chaos and the Dark."}\]
and Milton. There is a final important implication in that the self-reliant are called, not to fulfill their own personalities, or to hide like cowards, but to undertake difficulties for others. Men are to be "guides, redeemers, and benefactors." The passage is a possible allusion to the Sermon on the Mount. The word guide may refer to the New Testament injunction to guide our fellows a second mile; the word redeemer to the injunction to take up our cross; and the word benefactor, to the injunction to do good to those that despitefully use us.111

That Emerson might have had the moral idealism of the Sermon on the Mount in mind when he wrote this essay is further suggested by the next paragraph, in which he used a figure of speech undoubtedly derived from Matthew 6: 22, "The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single thy whole body shall be full of light." The verse is commonly glossed to mean that men must have a single purpose, a single or integrated personality.112 Emerson used the verse to suggest this, in the second and third sentences of the fourth paragraph of the essay.

There are other similarities between the fourth and fifth paragraphs of the essay and the New Testament. In Matthew 18: 3 occurs the statement, "unless you turn and become as little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven." Emerson's two paragraphs describe the calm, unquestioning confidence of children. The theme of childlike faith is a very old one in the Christian tradition. Emerson has drawn upon his own experience to redeem it from triteness and has made it an illustration of the self-reliant person, who is innocently and unself-consciously what

112 The Interpreter's Bible, VII, 317-321.
he is, with no pretence or worry for the future.

There are in the essay other examples of Emerson's ability to put traditional or Biblical ideas into "motley," and so to give them a cutting power they lacked in their traditional form. Incidentally he thereby brought upon himself charges really merited by the essentially revolutionary nature of the traditional ideas he stated. He wrote, "He who would gather immortal palms of goodness must not be hindered by the name of goodness, but must explore if it be goodness."113 This was the course followed by Luther and by Milton. "Try the Spirit," said Baxter.114 John Smith, Jeremy Taylor and many other Protestants urged each person to test the claims of the gospel for himself. It was implied by the action of Protestants in insisting that the Bible be translated into each language, and that each man read it for himself.

The passage "Nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of your own mind,"115 described the attitude acted upon by the Puritans in the many anecdotes related by Daniel Neal.

Another sample of the New Testament in motley is the passage:

your goodness must have some edge to it, else it is none.
The doctrine of hatred must be preached as the counteraction of the doctrine of love, when that pules and whines. I shun father and mother and wife and brother when my genius calls me. I would write on the lintels of the doorpost Whim. I hope it is somewhat better than whim at last, but we cannot spend the day in explanation.116

113 Works, II, 50.
114 Baxter, IV, 510.
115 Works, II, 50.
116 Ibid., 51-52.
The comment about leaving father and mother will be readily recognized. What Emerson objected to is the sentimentalizing of religion into a dishonest emotion of love that "pules and whines." A genuine religion involves sacrifice; one must choose between unimportant relationships and the call of duty. A man's task in the world requires him to abandon family, if necessary. A "goodness with an edge to it" is the kind of goodness called for by Jesus when he said that he came to bring not peace but a sword. He did not mean that men were to get swords and join the army, but that his kind of goodness would not give them peace; it would plunge a sword of anguish into their hearts; or it would cut them loose from their previous affections and force them to adopt a new loyalty. Emerson did not actually believe that this was a whim, but to call it whim saved the time of futile explanations to those who would never understand anyway.

The basic source of Emerson's faith in the doctrine of self-reliance is to be found in the twenty-first paragraph, as Elliotthas recognized. Man is a created being, a product of the source from which all things have their being and life. As such, he is still in contact with the Creator, who is "the fountain of action and thought." All effort on man's part is really only the action of the source of the cosmos, acting through him. Emerson stated positively here what he implied in many other

118 See exposition of "Give All to Love," pages 123-124.
119 Matthew 10: 34.
120 Works, II, 63.
121 Ibid., 64.
We lie in the lap of immense intelligence, which makes us receivers of its truth and organs of its activity. When we discern justice, when we discern truth, we do nothing of ourselves, but allow a passage to its beams.122

In the next paragraph he stated the principle in the most unmistakable Protestant terms. "The relations of the soul to the divine spirit are so pure that it is profane to seek to interpose helps."123

That self-reliance really means abnegation of self and a reliance upon God and God-given powers can be seen from the synonyms for self-reliance that he used in this essay and in the Journals. In this essay he speaks frequently of obedience. Obedience is a primary Christian virtue. C. S. Lewis has emphasized the sin of disobedience as the fault of Adam and Eve.124 The most dramatic portion of the New Testament is the scene in the Garden of Gethsemane, when Jesus said, "Not my will but thine be done." Milton made Jesus's obedience to God in Paradise Regained the central theme. Emerson wrote in the essay: "Who has more obedience than I masters me."125 Earlier in the essay occurs the already cited passage, "obeying the Almighty effort."126 Finally he said, "If we cannot at once rise to the sanctities of obedience and faith ..."127

That Emerson's idea of self-reliance is actually reliance on God may

122 Loc. cit.
123 Works, II, 65.
124 Preface to Paradise Lost, p. 67.
125 Works, II, 70.
126 Ibid., 47.
127 Ibid., 72.
be seen by the imagery he used to indicate man's relation to God. The common characteristic which most of these images have is that of a hollow object, which may be filled with the power of wisdom or goodness of God. The figure of the pipe, which appears in the poem "Pan" is a familiar one in the Journals. Another image in the poem is the "white hollow shells." Emerson wrote that the good carpenter, the good scholar, is the "channel" into which the "wild vigor" of "the mind of the world" enters.128 He said that true greatness "requires a source greater than your tap."129 The wise man has an "open mind."130 "I affirmed that health is as the perfectness of influx and efflux. A man must pump up the Atlantic Ocean, the whole atmosphere, all the electricity, all the universe, and pump it out again."131 He said of Webster, "When shall we see so rich a vase again?"132 There are many other forms of the idea. "We are candidates for ... influences more subtle and more high than those of talent and ambition."133 "The great man will be a channel of law and not of self."134 "But I am nothing else than a capacity for justice, truth, love, freedom, power."135 "This ability shall be your own,—O not; God forbid! not your own, but a vast accession of the Divinity

128 Journals, VIII, 304.
129 Ibid., IX, 551.
130 Ibid., 298.
131 Ibid., 294.
132 Ibid., VIII, 46.
133 Ibid., VII, 137.
134 Ibid., VI, 406.
135 Ibid., IV, 127.
into your trembling clay.\textsuperscript{136} "When we enter upon the domain of LAW, we do indeed come out into light. To him who by God's grace, has seen that by being a mere tunnel or pipe through which the divine will flows, he becomes great and becomes a man,—the future wears an eternal smile, and the flight of time is no more dreadful."\textsuperscript{137} "All wisdom, all genius is reception."\textsuperscript{138} "The greatest man is he that is not man at all, but merges his human will in the divine and is merely an image of God."\textsuperscript{139} "To be isolate, is to be sick and so far dead. That is, the life of the All, must stream through us, to make the man and the moment great."\textsuperscript{140}

There are many other images used to convey the idea that man is himself nothing, until he has made contact somehow with Deity. A favorite one is that of the magnet and filings.

I have seen a skillful experimenter lay down a magnet among filings of steel, and the force of that subtle fluid, entering into each fragment, arranged them all in mathematical lines, and each metallic atom became in turn a magnet communicating all the force it received of the loadstone.\textsuperscript{141}

This figure appears a number of times. One example is this. "By atoms, by trifles, by sots, Heaven operates. The needles are nothing, the magnetism is all."\textsuperscript{142}

Another form of the figure is this: "A man is a battery whose

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{136} Ibid., III, 394.
\item \textsuperscript{137} Ibid., 555.
\item \textsuperscript{138} Ibid., II, 364.
\item \textsuperscript{139} Ibid., 354.
\item \textsuperscript{140} Ibid., IX, p. 174.
\item \textsuperscript{141} Ibid., II, 213.
\item \textsuperscript{142} Ibid., VII, 67.
\end{itemize}
circuit should be complete, like the ball of the earth, which is also a battery; but, for the most part, the circuit is interrupted, and you see only the gear or rigging of the battery.\textsuperscript{1h3}

This selection is only a small part of the imagery describing the relationship of man to God in the Journals. It will be noted that the passages cited range practically across the entire life of Emerson.

The frequency of figures like the ones cited above are further evidence that the doctrine of self-reliance is actually a doctrine of God-reliance, and that Emerson cannot be charged with the sin of pride or hubris. He himself fairly early in his life, while still preaching at the Second Church, considered the possibility and rejected it.

A trust in yourself is the height, not of pride, but of piety, and unwillingness to learn of any but God himself. It will come only to one who feels that he is nothing. It is by yourself without ambassador that God speaks to you. You are as one who has a private door that leads him to the king's chamber. You have learned nothing rightly that you have not learned so.\textsuperscript{1h4}

It was therefore as a result of his assurance that in some sense the divine was guiding him, that he made the break with the Second Church, giving up an assured income, losing the prestige that accrued to the minister, and disappointing his Aunt Mary, for the uncertain future of a literary life. The same calm certainty pervades his address to the Divinity School and enabled him to withstand the furor that followed.

The same certainty and the note of assurance that appears in the work of Emerson illustrates the human side of the paradox of the priesthood of the individual. He is, in Luther's words, "the most free lord

\textsuperscript{1h3}\textsuperscript{Ibid.}, VIII, 280.

\textsuperscript{1h4}\textsuperscript{Ibid.}, II, 409.
of all."¹¹⁵ Being certain that he is in some sense a pipe for the Divine, a channel for powers not of his own making, he is confident in the face of Reichstag or of New England orthodoxy. In each case the certainty is most annoying to the self-appointed defenders of orthodoxy, who, having more awe of public opinion than of the awfulness of Deity, expect all others to fear public opinion. The interchange of letters between Emerson and Henry Ware, Jr., over the Divinity School address illustrates this difference of attitude.¹¹⁶

The human freedom of the self-reliant man is based on several factors. One of these is a conviction of the unity of truth. This doctrine appeared in the seventeenth century as a belief in right reason, a doctrine that occurs in *Paradise Lost*, in the writing of Jeremy Taylor, in the *Select Discourses* of John Smith, and indeed in almost all of the serious literature of the century, as Bush has pointed out.¹¹⁷ Bush described it as so firmly imbedded in the Christian tradition as to be thought a part of it by the seventeenth century, although it was probably of classical origin. The doctrine cannot be adequately summarized briefly, but a few characteristics may be listed, because of their probable influence on Emerson.

Bush described right reason as a concept involving a "faith in the divine unity and order of the world, and the divine unity of all truth, natural and supernatural."¹¹⁸ This part of the concept is closely related

¹¹⁵ Concerning Christian Liberty, p. 363.
¹¹⁶ Rusk, Letters, II, 146-167.
¹¹⁷ Bush, pp. 36-40.
¹¹⁸ Ibid., p. 39.
to the Emersonian doctrine of correspondence. Another element was a
degree of faith "in the essential goodness of man" counterbalanced by
"a Christian awareness of human sin and frailty, and the need of grace."
There was also along with it a strain of mysticism, an emphasis on "life
lived in the world, in terms of a rational and ethical imitation of
Christ."\textsuperscript{149}

Finally, right reason asserted "the absolute values of good and
evil, reason and unreason."\textsuperscript{150} It did not regard nature as evil, nor
as opposed to the restraints of religion and morality. It held that God
and nature are one, though there was no "pantheistic confusion between
creator and creation."\textsuperscript{151} It seems quite probable that Emerson's seizure
of the distinction of Coleridge between reason and understanding\textsuperscript{152} was
prepared for by the doctrine of right reason which he would have known
in Milton and in Jeremy Taylor.

Bush has pointed out the identification of right reason with God,
in Milton's thought. "The supreme manifestation of right reason is God
himself, and what God is in the world, the macrocosm, reason is in the
soul of man, the microcosm."\textsuperscript{153} Something very like this was in the mind
of Emerson, who felt that if each man trusted the truth within, all would
come out at last in very nearly the same way.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{149}\textit{Loc. cit.}
\item \textsuperscript{150}\textit{Loc. cit.}
\item \textsuperscript{151}\textit{Loc. cit.}
\item \textsuperscript{152}Carpenter, \textit{Emerson Handbook}, p. 126; Cameron, \textit{Emerson the Essayist},
I, 186-187.
\item \textsuperscript{153}Bush, p. 46.
\end{itemize}
Henceforward I am the truth's... It is alike your interest and mine and all men's however long we have dwelt in lies, to live in the truth... if we follow the truth it will bring us out safe at last... Besides all persons have their moments of reason, when they look out into the moment of absolute truth; then they will justify me and do the same thing.\textsuperscript{154}

Emerson asserted that by trusting the reason in each man, many of the ills of life might be avoided. Since he believed in the oneness of all truth, he did not believe that self-reliance would produce license or evil. Each man had his own special task, his own special insight, not quite like any other. Each person had something to contribute, and the sum total of contributions, like the various objects in "Each and All," made up the rightness of the whole. Each man had to choose his own vocation, speak his own word, if the supreme will was to be fulfilled.

Yet I do not implore
The wrinkled shopmen to my sounding woods,
Nor bid the unwilling senator
Ask votes of thrushes in the solitudes
Every one to his chosen work.\textsuperscript{155}

Another element of the human freedom of the self-reliant man may be identified as religious existentialism. This is another aspect of the doctrine of self-reliance in which Emerson agreed with his Puritan ancestors. Both they and he felt that whatever is, represents the actual will of God. The statement may seem unnecessary, but apparently Emerson felt with great force, that the existent is valuable. Ulich called Emerson an existentialist and compared him to Kierkegard and Goethe.\textsuperscript{156}

This aspect of Emerson's thought has many implications; it is one of

\textsuperscript{154} Works, II, 72-74.
\textsuperscript{155} Ibid., IX, 79.
\textsuperscript{156} Ulich, pp. 296-297.
the important aspects of his mysticism. It is also related to what this thesis has termed his pious pantheism. Its significance for the doctrine of self-reliance lies in the faith of the worshipper that the present moment, the present events, the present place, the present abilities he possesses are all derived from God, and must be accepted as God-given and trusted as God-given. With this faith, Emerson therefore could rely on his own abilities, live in his own world, and accept the present moment, with an assurance that in all these ways he was relying on God.

Emerson's existentialism contained elements of similarity and dissimilarity with the attitudes of his ancestors, spiritual and literal. His belief that the present moment was God-given and was to be used for the most important purposes possible appears in the poem "Days."

Daughters of Time, the hypocritic Days,
Muffled and dumb like barefoot dervishes,
And marching single in an endless file,
Bring diadems and fagots in their hands.
To each they offer gifts after his will,
Bread, kingdoms, stars, and sky that holds them all.
I, in my pleached garden, watched the pomp,
Forgot my morning wishes, hastily
Took a few herbs and apples, and the Day
Turned and departed silent. I, too late,
Under her solemn fillet saw the scorn.

There are many Biblical sources for the religious use of the carpe diem theme. A typical verse is to be found in Luke 4: 19 in which Jesus asserted that this is "the acceptable year of the Lord."

Watts apparently was moved by the shortness of the "now" and the importance of the use made of the "now," for he dwelt on the various aspects of the theme. There are dozens of passages in Watts's Psalms and Hymns devoted to the use of time. His basic theme is that life is short;
the prize of eternal life is very important; men must seize the now, if
they are to be saved.

Life is the hour that God has giv'n
To 'scape from hell and fly to heav'n;
The day of grace, and mortals may
Secure the blessings of the day.158

Watts was also aware of the illusiveness of time; he felt as the
idealist is always prone to do, that only the present moment of existence
is real. Men have to act in the now, or they never act at all.

Infinite joy, or endless wo,
Attends on ev'ry breath;
And yet how unconcerned we go
Upon the brink of death!159

Jeremy Taylor's first "general instrument of holy living" is devoted
to the use of time. "God hath given to man a short time here upon earth,
and yet upon this short time eternity depends..."160 There is hardly
a sermon of the many volumes of sermons read by Emerson that does not
either imply or state the attitude toward the God-given moment indicated
by Taylor.

Emerson differed from the tradition by making the reward also in
the moment: this was a result of the large emphasis he gave to the mysti-
cal experience. John Smith or Jeremy Taylor or Richard Baxter would have
agreed that the Deity must be "felt" in the present moment, but they talk
about coming bliss, in addition to the sweetness experienced in the present.

But for Emerson, "the moment is all."161 His existentialism appears

158Hymns, p. 73.
159Ibid., p. 166.
161Journals, VI, 44.
clearly in a comment on immortality: "Yet they ask me whether I know the soul immortal. No, but do I not know the Now to be eternal?" This quotation and others like it are the basis for calling him an existentialist in the sense that he felt existence prior to essence. That he felt a sense of the numinous in the day is shown by such quotations as the following: "Look out of the window and it is eternal now." "A moment is a concentrated eternity. All that ever was is now." "God works in moments."

The relationship of his existentialism to the doctrine of self-reliance has been suggested previously. It may be seen clearly stated in his injunction,

Trust thy time also. What a fatal prodigality to contemn our age ... what apology, what praise can equal the fact that here it is ... And doubt not the moment and the opportunity is divine.

Time was only one aspect of Emerson's existentialism; another aspect was the total combination of circumstances that filled the present moment. Emerson's faith in the sovereignty of God was fully as strong as the faith of the seventeenth-century Puritans. He attempted to reconcile necessity with freedom; but that the omnipresent Deity was responsible for the totality of the creation, for the totality of events that occurred in the present moment, he never seriously doubted.

163 Ibid., VI, 143.
164 Ibid., IV, 117.
165 Ibid., 82.
166 Ibid., V, 292-293.
Let us take Duty, this serving angel, for a god in disguise. Without telling us why, he bids us ever do this and that irksomeness. What if it should prove that these very injunctions, so galling and unflattering, are precisely the redemptions of time for us? These books thrust into our hands are books selected for us, and the persons who take up our time are picked out to accompany us? I, at least, fully believe that God is in every place, and that, if the mind is excited, it may see him, and in him an infinite wisdom in every object that passes before us.\textsuperscript{167}

In this respect Emerson was akin to the Puritans. They, too, believed God was in control of the events that filled the present moment. Illustrations of this faith may be seen in the narrative of Mary Rowlandson's captivity, in Thomas Shepard's diary, and in the account of the overturning of the shay from Emerson's great grandfather's diary quoted in the Works.\textsuperscript{168}

The Reverend Thomas Shepard, one of the first ministers at Cambridge, saw the hand of the Lord in every event that happened to him, and wrote that conviction in almost every paragraph of his journal, in such statements as these:

\ldots the Lord having blessed some few sermons and notes to divers in Newcastle \ldots & so the Lord gave us a speedy voyage, from thence to Ipswich \ldots Now here the Lord's wonderful terror and mercy to us did appear \ldots the Lord saw it good to chastize us for rushing onward too soone \ldots and so we came thither thorow many uncomfortable hazards \ldots & \ldots the Lord sent a most dreadful and terrible storm of wind from the West \ldots but here the Lord saw that the waters were not sufficient to wash away my filth & sinfulness & therefore my firstborn child very precious to my soul and dearly beloved of me was smitten with sickness, the Lord sent a vomiting upon it \ldots the Lord would not be intreated for it \ldots at last

\textsuperscript{167}\textit{Ibid.}, IV, 37.

\textsuperscript{168}\textit{Works}, X, 384.
it gave up the ghost—hereby I saw the Lord did come near to me ... 169

The significance of this passage is the calm certainty it shows that God controls the events that constitute experience. The Puritans did not fully realize the distinction implied by the term "secondary causes." For them, the finger of the Almighty was directly at work, taking the life of a child, or preserving the minister and his wife when the shay turned over. Emerson, however, lived in the Newtonian cosmos, and believed in general laws, not in "wonder working providences." But for Emerson the operation of the natural law was not a mechanical and dead process. He felt for it the same awe that the Puritans did for the inscrutable providence that took one child's life, but preserved another child.

The figure he used of the battery and the closed circuit is suggestive. Electricity may be understood as following general laws; it does not therefore lose its power. The operation of natural law to Emerson seemed to him to be imbued with "virtu"; it aroused a sense of the numinous in him, as illustrated in the poem, "Étienne de la Boëce," where he calls men to

... worship that world warming spark
Which dazzles me in midnight dark,
Equalizing small and large
While the soul it doth submerge. 170

To him the moment was always filled with the action of the unmoveable power of the divine. One can rely on the present events because they are

170 Works, IX, 81.
the action of the all powerful, the all wise, the all good.

The human freedom of the self-reliant man is based finally upon discipline and effort.

Milton's conviction of the importance of diligent effort has been well recognized. But the value that Emerson placed on discipline and effort has not been greatly emphasized. Carpenter pointed out that in the essay "Self-Reliance" there is a passage calling for something "God-like" in him "who has ventured to trust himself for a taskmaster." Carpenter emphasized the importance that Emerson attached to discipline.\(^{171}\) Self-reliance requires education and a strict self-discipline. There is in fact in Emerson a strong note of what Ralph Barton Perry called "moral athleticism.\(^{172}\) Yet Emerson did not ever assert that one could storm the gates of Heaven by effort. He was fully in agreement with the traditional idea that one finds God only when God seeks the worshipper. This belief, born out of his own experience, appears very frequently in the reference to his mystical experiences. The severe demands made by the necessities of self-reliance are stated in the essay.

> High be his heart, faithful his will, clear his sight, that he may in good earnest be doctrine, society, law, to himself, that a simple purpose may be to him as strong as iron necessity.\(^{173}\)

Even in discipline Emerson was an individualist. He did not believe in the doctrine of imputed merit. There can be no direct giving of material or metaphysical aid, as of health, eternal youth, five senses, acts of healing, magical power

\(^{171}\)Emerson Handbook, p. 141.

\(^{172}\)Puritanism and Democracy, p. 258.

\(^{173}\)Works, II, 75.
and prophecy. The boy believes there is a teacher who can 
sell him wisdom.174

But Emerson believed one had to acquire his own wisdom. All discipline 
or teaching from the outside he called mechanical, external, and therefore 
fruitless. It is self-discipline that is implied by self-reliance. Emer-
son wanted neither to be a disciple nor to have disciples. He thought 
that each man must work out his own salvation.

In conclusion, it seems probable that Emerson's doctrine of self-
reliance was a later form of the Protestant doctrine of the priesthood 
of the individual, and that the two doctrines were practically identical 
in their reliance on the sovereignty of God. Both doctrines agree that 
all spiritual and mental values come only from the individual's own 
reliance on the God-given reason within him. The individual must use 
diligent effort so that his freedom is based on self-discipline, but he 
is to act in calm certainty that ultimately the truth within him and the 
very effort he makes are from God, not from himself.

4. Poetic Treatments of Self-Reliance

The fullest poetic version of the doctrine of self-reliance, "GNOTH
SEAUTON," appeared in the Journal175 and was never printed in the volumes 
of poetry. Cameron has, however, reprinted it with emendations, from the 
typescript Journals, and with a full set of notes.176 It cannot be called 
a successful poem, perhaps because the idea had not yet clothed itself in

174 Works, IV, 8.
175 Journals, II, 395 ff.
176 Emerson the Essayist, I, 175 ff.
adequate imagery or situation. Emerson never stated the concept of self-reliance fully in a single poem devoted to it. Many poems contain the various elements of the belief, however. There are good poetic embodiments of the concept in the poem "Étienne de la Boéce," and in the poem "Freedom," where he described his inner state of conflict over the reform movement, a conflict that also was responsible for other poems, including the "Ode to W. H. Channing."

The poem "GNOTHI SEAUTON" contains a number of significant statements. One of these is in a passage early in the poem. Emerson asserted as a fact, not to be explained away as metaphor or otherwise, that God is within man.

God dwells in thee.
It is no metaphor nor parable . . . 177

The utter sincerity with which he felt this statement is not made apparent by the baldness of the words. It is, however, an example of his taking literally the traditional doctrine of omnipresence. The striking fact in the religious experience of Emerson, is the audacity of his literal acceptance of religious truths. Possibly it was his advancement of these very old doctrines, with such obvious and genuine sincerity, that aroused the scorn of the professional defenders of orthodoxy, who expected no man to believe, actually or literally.

Emerson advanced another traditional idea in the poem, which is discussed more fully in the chapter on the problem of evil, that evil is caused by wilfulness, or selfishness, in the literal sense of the word.

The clouds that veil his life within
Are thy thick woven webs of sin,
Which his glory struggling through
Darkens to thine evil hue.\textsuperscript{178}

His in these lines referred to Deity and should have been capitalized.

The poem also asserts that self-reliance is really obedience to the inner voice, not an assertion of the finite self.

But if thou listen to his voice,
If thou obey the royal thought
It will clearer grow to thine ear
More glorious to thine eye
The clouds will burst that veil him now
And thou shalt see the Lord.\textsuperscript{179}

The following passage is perhaps the heart of the poem.

The law, the gospel, the Providence
Heaven, Hell, the Judgement, and the stores
Immeasurable of Truth and Good,
All these thou must find
Within thy single mind
Or never find.\textsuperscript{180}

Cameron has written that the terms Heaven, Hell, Judgment, and Providence are used in the passage in a strongly Swedenborgian sense.\textsuperscript{181} If that is so, there is nothing in the poem itself that would indicate it to the uninformed reader. In view of the insistence of Milton that "The mind is its own place," and in view of many similar statements in Taylor and in John Smith, one would with considerable trepidation assert that any one of these is the single source. For the purposes of this thesis, it is not necessary to determine whether the idea came through Swedenborg, Milton, or Taylor. The passage is in any case a typical Emersonian re-statement of the older doctrine of the Protestant reformers that only as the effective grace of God moved in the heart of the individual could he

\textsuperscript{178}loc. cit.
\textsuperscript{179}Journals, II, 396.
\textsuperscript{180}Ibid., 397.
\textsuperscript{181}Emerson the Essayist, I, 177, footnote 202.
be saved. All external aids to salvation were ineffective, the reformers held—sacraments, preaching, or Bible reading—unless the mysterious and effective grace of God moved the heart of the believer.182

A happier rendering of the idea appeared in an untitled poem in the Journal, written in 1833.

I will not hesitate to speak the word
Committed to me. It is not of men;
It is not of myself, no vain discourse
Empty oration, tinkling, soulless talk.
My heart lies open to the universe,
I read only what there is writ. I speak
The sincere word that's whispered in my ear.
I am an organ in the mouth of God,
My prophecy the music of his lips.
Tho' harsh in evil ears, 'tis harmony
To patient, wise and faithful hearts whose love
Cooperates with his
Concord of heaven and earth. Author divine
Of what I am and what I say, vouchsafe
To cleanse me, that my folly may not hide
Thy truth, nor my infirmity disguise
The omnipotence that animates my clay.
Thou, Lord, dost clothe thy attributes with flesh,
And named it man, a morning spectacle
Unto the universe exhibiting,
A manifold and mystic lesson.183

This poem too indicates clearly that self-reliance is the result of
the emptying of self so that the Deity may speak through man. In using
the figure "organ" Emerson has moved closer to a poetic statement of the
idea than he was able to attain in the poem "GNOTHI SEAUTON." He has
related his idea to the Biblical doctrine of prophecy, as Carpenter has
recognized.184 The prophet, in Old Testament terminology, was thought
of literally as one through whom the Deity spoke,185 not a mere predictor

183 Journals, III, 212.
184 Emerson Handbook, p. 110.
185 Exodus 6: 30 to 7: 1.
of coming events. A "prophecy" is not a prediction, but an enunciation of moral and spiritual truths. Emerson has drawn on this conception for the lines

I am an organ in the mouth of God
My prophecy the music of his lips.

Aspects of the faith of the self-reliant man appear in many poems. His belief in the unity of all truth appears in "The Poet."

Yet mark me well, that idle word
Thus at random overheard
Was the symphony of the spheres,
And proverb of a thousand years,
The light wherewith all planets shone,
The livery all events put on,
It fell in rain, it grew in grain,
It put on flesh in friendly form,
Frowned in my foe and growled in storm,
It spoke in Tullius Cicero,
In Milton and in Angelo:
I travelled and found it at Rome;
Eastward it filled all Heathendom
And it lay on my hearth when I came home.186

His faith in the absoluteness of the moral and spiritual laws that made up the content of the reason that was in every man is stated in the untitled quatrains

The rules to men made evident
By Him who built the day,
The columns of the firmament
Not firmer based are they.187

The second section of "Woodnotes" expresses self-reliance in terms of self-renunciation. There is the suggestion of the faith of the child and the statement that in self-renunciation one finds the Deity. It also contains the old idea that men by trying cannot find God. He seeks them.

186 Works, IX, 324.
187 Ibid., p. 358.
Enough for thee the primal mind
That flows in streams, that breathes in wind:
Leave all thy pedant lore apart;
God hid the whole world in thy heart.
Love shuns the sage, the child it crowns,
Gives all to them who all renounce.\textsuperscript{188}

In the lines that follow, there is a series of very good images, implying that one cannot really escape God, but that one only finds him when one ceases trying. Then one is found of God. That the passage has religious implications is suggested by the word eremite, which means a religious recluse.

The river knows the way to the sea;
Without a pilot it runs and falls,
Blessing all lands with its charity;
The sea tosses and foams to find
Its way up to the cloud and wind;
The shadow sits close to the flying ball;
The date fails not on the palm-tree tall;
And thou,--go burn thy wormy pages,--
Shalt outsee seers, and outwit sages.
Oft didst thou thread the woods in vain
To find what bird had piped the strain:--
Seek not, and the little eremite
Flies gayly forth and sings in sight.\textsuperscript{189}

As was previously pointed out, one aspect of Emerson's doctrine of self-reliance was his conviction of the futility of discipleship. That conviction was expressed in the poem "Étienne de la Boéce." Emerson thought that no one could help another or be helped by others. He was glad, he wrote in 1859, that he had no disciples. He said that he wanted not to bring men to him, but to drive them from him. "This is my boast, that I have no school follower. I should account it a measure of the impurity of insight if it did not create independence."\textsuperscript{190}

\textsuperscript{188}Ibid., 56-57.
\textsuperscript{189}Ibid., 57.
\textsuperscript{190}Journals, IX, 189.
The poem "Étienne de la Boëce" is an impressive imaginative realization of the concept of self-reliance, with imagery well suited to the concept.

I serve you not, if you I follow,  
Shadowlike, o'er hill and hollow;  
And bend my fancy to your leading,  
All too nimble for my treading.  
When the pilgrimage is done,  
And we've the landscape overrun,  
I am bitter, vacant, thwarted,  
And your heart is unsupported.  
Vainly valiant, you have missed  
The manhood that should yours resist,—
Its complement; but if I could,  
In severe or cordial mood,  
Lead you rightly to my altar,  
Where the wisest Muses falter,  
And worship that world-warming spark  
Which dazzles me in midnight dark,  
Equalizing small and large,  
While the soul it doth surcharge,  
Till the poor is wealthy grown,  
And the hermit never alone,—
The traveller and the road seem one  
With the errand to be done,—
That were a man's and lover's part  
That were Freedom's whitest chart.i91

The poet asserts that each man is to follow his own quest, that the duty of any prophet is not to win followers, but to point the way to the altar of "the world warming spark." The poem suggests also that all personalities are needed to provide that perfection that the world would not otherwise maintain; each complements the other. The poem ends with a typical statement of Emerson's pious pantheism, expressed in the imagery of God as electricity, "the spark" surcharging each soul. With this image it seems quite logical to think of the worshipper as the conductor of the current. The worshipper as conductor is both "traveller and road."

i91Works, IX, 82.

---Luther, Concerning Christian Liberty, p. 363.

i92Works, IX, 212 ff.
Moreover, if the errand is the duty expressed above of leading all other worshippers to the altar of the "world warming spark," then by acting as conductor, the poet fulfills the errand, in the only way consistent with self-reliance. He ceases to be himself, becomes one with Deity, and the power of Deity through him brings others to the altar. So

The traveller and the road seem one
With the errand to be done,—

And in so doing, the poet has become a free man.

That were a man's and lover's part,
That were Freedom's whitest chart.

The paradox that perfect obedience brings perfect freedom, stated here, is essentially the same as the paradox implied by Luther's statement that "A Christian man's the most free lord of all, and subject to none; a Christian is the most dutiful servant of all and subject to everyone."192

One other aspect of this poem is significant for its revelation of the freedom of the self-or God-reliant man. That is the sentence

... that world-warming spark
Which dazzles me in midnight dark,
Equalizing small and large ... .

Emerson's belief in the essential unity of man is discussed in the next chapter of the thesis. One aspect of the unity of man is the equality of men before God, as suggested by these lines. There are relative differences among men, "small and large." These differences in size, intelligence, skin color, efficiency, morality, piety, or whatever else distinction may be seen, are of no significance before God. The theme of man's equality was developed more fully by Emerson in the poem "Boston"193

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192Luther, Concerning Christian Liberty, p. 363.

193Works, IX, 212 ff.
and in other poems, but here the theological basis for the belief is shown clearly, by the poet's faith that the presence of deity equalizes "small and large."

In the poem "Freedom," Emerson has attempted to describe the operation of the doctrine of self-reliance in his life. He tells of his desire to do something that would help free the slaves, perhaps to write a verse so moving that the slave would be stimulated to snap his chains. But the inner voice said, "No." He was warned not to talk about something so precious as freedom. We are reminded therefore that freedom is one of the components of Deity, of the perfect reason that has made the world. There was the danger of blasphemy if the word were spoken without the inner consent of the heart. It is, said the spirit,

Name not lightly to be said,
Gift too precious to be prayed,
Passion not to be expressed
But by heaving of the breast.194

However the spirit informed him that if he really wanted to find the mountain "where this deity is shrined," he must follow the inner voice.

The poem contains the typical Christian statement that only the movement of God into man redeems him; God must "list," if the miraculous change occurs; man cannot do it.

Who gives to seas and sunset skies
Their unspent beauty of surprise,
And, when it lists him, waken can
Brute or savage into man . . .

The poem contains a brief description of the mystic experience, again with the implication that the experience rests on God's will, not man's.

194 Works, IX, 198.
Or, if in thy heart he shine,
Blends the starry fates with thine,
Draws angels nigh to dwell with thee,
And makes thy thoughts archangels be . . .

The poem concludes with a statement of Emerson's attitude toward reform. Only God can bring men freedom. Nothing can make a man free, but obedience to the inner voice within the man. The poet therefore can free no slaves. It is futile for him to try. He can only reform himself. He must, therefore, follow the doctrine of self-reliance. As Emerson wrote, "the aid we can give each other is only incidental, lateral and sympathetic." 196

Freedom's secret wilt thou know?--
Counsel not with flesh and blood;
Loiter not for cloak or food;
Right thou feelest, rush to do.

195 It is significant to notice that some Puritans of the seventeenth century did not believe in sending out missionaries. A man might preach to the unconverted persons near his church, but he was not to go to foreign lands to undertake the conversion of the heathen. Their logic seemed to be that God would take care of that problem in his own good time and in his own way. John Owen, the Puritan writer, referred to this belief in his book, The True Nature of a Gospel Church and Its Government. "No Church whatever hath power to Ordain Men Ministers for Conversion of Infidels. Since the Cessation of extraordinary Officers and Offices, the care of that Work is devolved meerly on the providence of God, being left without the verge of Church-Institutions." (p. 111) Probably the objection to sending out missionaries grew out of the central doctrine of the sovereignty of God. The Puritans did, however, send Eliot to preach to the Indians. And the Anglicans justified the whole colonial enterprise as a missionary one, as John Donne illustrated in his sermon, "To ... a Virginian Company." (The Works of John Donne, VI, 225.) Emerson's attitude toward reform, as illustrated by the poem "Freedom," seems to be a rationalized and intellectually valid form of the belief that only God can reform the world. Karl Barth, the proponent of neo-orthodoxy, has asserted a similar belief in his objection to the humanistic reform movements of this century.

196 Journals, V, 73.
CHAPTER VII

APPLES OF EDEN

Emerson's attitude toward the problem of evil has aroused widely varying reactions among critics. This chapter of the thesis is devoted to an exposition of Emerson's attitude toward evil, in order to relate Emerson's attitudes to the traditional solutions of the problem of evil, and in order to understand the enigmas that appear in the poetry.

Many critics have charged Emerson with a lack of concern for the tragic side of life. Jorgenson in his article comparing Emerson's attitude with Milton's attitude toward evil has compiled a list of those who felt that Emerson was unaware of the seriousness of evil in life. The list includes Henry James, Paul Elmer More, George Santayana, W. C. Brownell, and Bliss Perry. Since Jorgenson wrote his article, A. C. McGiffert, Jr., has expressed the view that Emerson ignored the problem of evil. It is possible, however, that McGiffert's views represent a restatement of older views rather than the result of careful study of the material on his own part.

2 Partial Portraits, p. 7.
5 American Prose Masters, p. 164.
6 Emerson Today, p. 130.
Jorgenson's article demonstrates conclusively that Emerson was aware of the evil and the tragic in life. Jorgenson listed more than fifty references to the problem of evil in the Works and the Journals. A careful study of the corpus will reveal that Jorgenson's fairly full discussion included only a fraction of the total references. Carpenter's most recent publication is in agreement with Jorgenson's contention. It is clear that in fact Emerson was always perplexed and troubled by the dark side of life. Almost everything he wrote implied or stated his recognition of the problem. It is not surprising that he wrestled all his life with the problem of evil. It is the basic problem of religion, and Emerson was deeply concerned with religion. Moreover, there were pressing personal reasons why Emerson was tragically concerned with the fact of evil in life.

1. The Vein of Iron

It requires little imagination for the reader of the letters written during the early years of Emerson's life to perceive that he was torn by fears for himself, needled by frustrated ambition, anguished by the death of his brothers, by the death of his first wife, Ellen, and by the death of his son, Waldo. He faced severe poverty as a boy, and was subjected to the cutting wounds of charity so severely that all of his life he was unable to receive a gift without unhappiness. After the death of Ellen he had a measure of economic security, but never attained a high enough degree of economic success to enable him to cease worrying about what he called that "deadly pinch called for bread." The letters reveal the inner life much more than do the more inhibited essays written for publication.

7 Rusk, Letters, I, 288.
Emerson's personal solution to the painful circumstances of life was to develop what may be called a kind of stoicism. There was in Emerson's personality a certain harshness, a vein of iron which was the result of his having lived through difficult circumstances. There were times when he did not expect to live, as the Journals for January and February of 1827 show, but having survived poverty, disease, frustrated ambition, and grief, he won through to a high ground, from which he viewed the problems of life thereafter with a certain detachment.

It is possible to exaggerate the degree of detachment which he attained. His stoicism served chiefly to protect him from the observer; it did not keep him from feeling the sting of anguish caused by his sympathy for others. The affair of the Cherokee Indians produced this comment in the Journals, "Then is this disaster of the Cherokees brought to me by a sad friend to blacken my days and nights. I can do nothing. Why shriek? Why strike ineffectual blows?" He did, however, write a letter to President Van Buren, futilely, in an effort to avert the disaster that came to the Indians.

Emerson is popularly supposed not to have been capable of deep sympathy for others. He has been charged with lacking the ability to enter into deep and meaningful human relationships. In part, the New England reserve accounted for the charges. It is, however, quite possible that his desire to avoid hypocrisy led him to put his worst foot forward in a way that exaggerated his weakness.

I shall not draw the thinnest veil over my defects, but if you

8 Carpenter, Emerson Handbook, p. 147.
9 Journals, IV, 424.
10 Cabot, A Memoir of Ralph Waldo Emerson, II, 697-702.
are here you shall see me as I am. You will then see that, though I am full of tenderness, and born with a large hunger to love and be loved as any man can be, yet its demonstrations are not active and bold, but are passive and tenacious. My love has no flood and no ebb, but is always there under my silence, under displeasure, under cold, arid and even weak behaviour.  

He wrote also, "Do not judge the poet's life to be sad because of his plaintive verses and confessions of despair... His speech did great injustice to his thought."  

The poem "Rubies" is a poetic statement of the problem. It may indicate that Emerson realized more sensitively than most the essential solitude of the individual. Perhaps he has intended to convey the desire of all human beings to escape from their finiteness into unity with others. The poem is a very poignant statement of the aloneness of human beings, and of their desire to escape from it. While sexual love rarely motivated his poetry, "Rubies" describes the psychological, though not the sensual, ground of desire.

They brought me rubies from the mine,  
And held them to the sun;  
I said, they are drops of frozen wine  
From Eden's vats that run.

I looked again,—I thought them hearts  
Of friends to friends unknown;  
Tides that should warm each neighboring life  
Are locked in sparkling stone.

But fire to thaw that ruddy snow,  
To break enchanted ice,  
And give love's scarlet tides to flow,—  
When shall that sun arise?

The evidence indicates that Emerson's stoicism never succeeded in doing to him what he thought stoicism tended to do to all men, that is,  

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11 Journals, V, 565.  
12 Ibid., 520-521.  
destroy their sympathy and affection, their sense of kinship with humanity. His mother died,—the only friend he had—
Some tears escaped, but his philosophy
Couched like a cat sat watching close behind
And throttled all his passion.¹⁴

Firkins is probably correct in his assumption of the depth and universal range of Emerson's sympathy. "Many men can die for their families, many for their country, a few for mankind; Emerson could have died for the universe."¹⁵

The welding of stoicism into Christianity is so thorough and so old, that it is difficult to separate the two. Emerson found the stoicism stated in traditional terms in his old favorite, Jeremy Taylor; the Journals and sermons show his conscious appropriation of the Christian stoicism taught by Taylor.¹⁶ Holy Living asserts in many ways the idea that appears frequently in the Journals: "Ne te quæsiverus extra."¹⁷ Taylor emphasized the virtue of living contentedly no matter what might befall a man. The logic in Taylor seemed to be that if one complained, it insulted the goodness and wisdom of God. One must therefore, according to Taylor, accept whatever happens with contentment. Taylor quoted the Stoics to show the general acceptance of Paul's comment, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content."¹⁸ Taylor discussed the subject at length, even listing eight rules for producing contentedness

¹⁴Firkins, Ralph Waldo Emerson, p. 354; quoted in Carpenter, Emerson Handbook, p. 144.
¹⁵Journals, II, 212-213; McGiffert, Young Emerson Speaks, p. 139.
¹⁶Journals, III, 338.
¹⁷Taylor, Works, III, 87.
under distressing circumstances.

Some of Taylor's rules are trite; he advised the reader to see the many who are worse off than he; to count his blessings; to enjoy the present, and to expect the worst. His eighth rule, however, combined the stoic principle with the belief that no harm can come to those who trust God. The passage is also suggestive of the doctrine of self-reliance.

For indeed everything in the world is indifferent but sin: and all the scorchings of the sun are very tolerable in respect of the burnings of a fever or a calenture. The greatest evils are from within us: and from ourselves also we must look for our greatest good: For God is the fountain of it, but reaches it to us by our own hands: and when all things look sadly round about us, then only we shall find, how excellent a fortune it is to have God to our friend; and, of all friendships, that only is created to support us in our needs.\(^{19}\)

Emerson's stoicism was not sufficient to enable him to withstand the painful shock that came at the death of Waldo. "Threnody," written by stages during the years that followed Waldo's death, contains his effort to reconcile the fact of the child's death with his cosmic optimism, and his personal stoicism.

Taylor's discussion of the attitude that Christians should adopt on the death of children is significant in view of the feeling that has been suggested by commentators on "Threnody" that Emerson displayed an incapacity for deep feeling in that poem. Taylor's chief theme is that grief or mourning for the death of our children is a violation of Christian piety. "Whatever God does is for the best."\(^{20}\) Taylor dwelt on the theme in order to remind the reader that, "It is an ill expression of our love to them that we weep for their good fortune."\(^{21}\) That the child has

\(^{19}\)irid., 87.
\(^{20}\)ibid., 107.
\(^{21}\)loc. cit.
received good fortune, Taylor argued at length.

... the child died young, before he knew good and evil ... and it is no small advantage that our children dying young receive, for their condition of a blessed immortality is rendered to them secure by being snatched from the dangers of an evil choice, and carried to their little cells of felicity, where they can weep no more. And this the wisest of the Gentiles understood well, when they forbade any offerings or libations to be made for dead infants, as was usual for their other dead; as believing they were entered into a secure possession, to which they went with no other condition, but that they passed into it through the way of mortality, and for a few months wore an uneasy garment.22

There are in "Threnody" ideas quite consistent with the advice Taylor gave. Taylor wrote that the parent should remember that "my children are not so much mine as God's."23 Emerson in the early part of the poem asked why his child had to die.

Was there no star that could be sent
No watcher in the firmament
No angel from the countless host

Could stoop to heal that only child ... 24

But then he interposes the caution,

Not mine, I never called thee mine ...

It was, he said, because of the general hope that was quenched that he now complains, and he referred to the "flattering planets" that predicted great things for the child. When the poet finished his recital of grief, the "deep Heart answered." The answer will be analyzed later in more detail, but it is significant to note that one of the lessons that the deep heart, or the omnipresent Deity, has taught him is to go

22 Loc. cit.
23 Taylor, Works, III, 105. Taylor's text has Gods with no apostrophe.
24 Works, IX, 152.
past "the blasphemy of grief." Grief, to Emerson, is blasphemy because it questions the goodness of Deity. The worshipper must always rest his will in the will of God, and find contentment there.

The sentimental idea that the depth of affection for the dead can be determined by the visible evidences of grief is quite opposed to the traditional Christian feeling that excessive grief is a complaint against God's goodness. It also implies an attitude opposed to the Christian conviction that a person's deepest affection must be for God; no earthly affections are to be allowed to separate us from the peace that comes from resting in the will of the Divine. All earthly loves are "half-gods" in the language of "Give All to Love." One must not therefore mourn too much for a lost earthly love. The indication of a controlled or restrained grief in "Threnody" is not to be interpreted as evidence of lack of feeling, therefore; it is quite in keeping with the implication of "Give All to Love," and with the injunctions of Jeremy Taylor and of Milton.

2. Mithridates

A Christian stoicism is endurable only when supported by a belief that the universe is reasonable or good. That Emerson was a cosmic optimist is recognized. It is less well understood that his optimism was based on a thorough canvassing of the extent of evil in the world. As a young minister, entrusted with funds for charitable use, he became aware of the extent to which human misery existed in a city like Boston. A reference in a sermon was based no doubt on firsthand knowledge.

We live in a fair city. It is full of commodious and spacious mansions. But the eye that sees the morning sun shine on long
streets of decorated dwellings is apt to forget how many ob­
scure garrets, how many damp basements are here and there found
amid this magnificance, that contain victims of great suffering,
poor men and women reduced by consumption or bedridden with
rheumatisms, or worn with fruitless labors to meet demands the
quarter day.25

He viewed these needy people with no sentimental eye.

But that class of persons who most need the assistance of their
fellow men are commonly unlovely, uneducated, many of them
stupid, often vicious, offensive frequently from the filth of
their habitations, and sometimes more so from loathsome diseases.26

He surveyed the operation of society in all its aspects and found
much that seemed to him to be wrong. His merit as an observer of society
has not been emphasized, though Ulich remarked that "he was one of the
sharpest critics of society."27 The political world he felt continued
disgust for, except perhaps during a brief period during the administra-
tion of Lincoln. In his early life he was conservative in his political
views, but he had no great admiration for the conservative political lead-
ers. He wrote in 1834 a statement fairly typical of his attitude toward
politicians.

Who that sees the spirit of the Beast uppermost in the politics
and movements of the time, but congratulates Washington that
he is long already wrapped in his shroud, and forever safe . . .
And they who survive and love men have reason to apprehend that,
short as their own time may be they may yet outlive the honor,
the religion, yea, the liberty of the country.28

His disgust with politicians was in part based on his anti-slavery
animus; the failure of the politicians to free the slaves was a long

26 Ibid., p. 131.
27 Robert Ulich, History of Educational Thought, p. 309.
continued thorn in his flesh. It was his interest in abolition that caused him to speak approvingly of the Civil War, although, as Carpenter has indicated, he was sorely hurt by the tragedies of the war, and not quite as exuberant about it, as a careless selection of texts from his writing might indicate. His lecture on "The Fortune of the Republic" contains much of his criticism of the society of his day, together with his hope for the future. It is a typical Emersonian lecture in its awareness of the present evil, with a call to Americans to cease from the evil and turn to the good.

His criticism of the church of his day appeared often in his Journal. He felt that ministers were insincere, "paid retainers," who had given up their own minds for a sinecure. Moreover, they had failed in their most important function, to serve as the conscience of society. They approved, for example, of slavery, even justifying it in the name of Christianity. They were, he felt, usually apologists for their society, instead of being moral and spiritual leaders of society.

... all the deacons, ministers, and saints of this church are steering with all their sermons and prayers in the direction of the Trade. If the city says, "Freedom and no tax," they say so, and hunt up plenty of texts. But if the city says, "Freedom is a humbug. We prefer a strong government," the pulpit says the same, and finds a new set of applicable texts. But presently Trade says, "Slavery too has been misunderstood: it is not so bad; nay, it is good; on the whole it is the best thing possible." The dear pulpit and deacons must turn over a new leaf, and find a new string of texts, which they are forward to do... and Andover and Park Street will get up the new march of the Hypocrites to pudding for the occasion.

29 Carpenter, Emerson Handbook, p. 149.
30 Works, XI, 509-544.
31 Journals, III, 146-147.
32 Ibid., VIII, 334-335.
One test of the good preacher he listed in his essay on "The Preacher." "Is a rich rogue made to feel his roguery among divine or literary men? No? Then 'tis rogue again under the cassock."33

He felt that on the whole the preachers also failed to comfort the afflicted, since their chief desire was to gain admiration and applause. If preachers were truly humble, instead of seeking praise, they would speak "to hunger and debt, to lone women and poor boys, to grief, and to the friends of some sick or insane or felonious person ... ."34

He did not, however, despair of preaching. He told the students at the Divinity School toward the end of his life, in a lecture on the preacher, that "The simple fact that the pulpit exists, that all over this country the people are waiting to hear a sermon on Sunday assures ... opportunity that is inestimable ... ."35 His condemnation of the actual preachers was severe, because of the high expectancy he had for the ministry and for preaching.

His attitude toward trade was an illustration of the typical traditional Christian one. This world he spoke of as a place of testing. The goods of the world are to be used for the needs of man, and for the discipline of work and trade. His book Nature illustrated his conviction that nature may be used as a commodity. The good things afforded by nature have their place in life. Emerson was not an ascetic, turning away from natural goods in disgust. He was in essential agreement with the Puritan attitude, as described by Miller.36 But the commodities are

33Works, X, 228.
34Journals, VI, 32.
35Works, X, 230.
36The Seventeenth Century, pp. 44-45.
not good in themselves; they are means to an end. Emerson therefore con-
ccluded his discussion of nature as commodity with the statement that, "A
man is fed, not that he may be fed, but that he may work." He discussed
the typical Christian view that his world is a testing place, a place of
probation, in the chapter in Nature devoted to Discipline. This theme
has been a favorite one of preachers for many generations.

Emerson believed that his forefathers had not allowed trade to be-
come the chief end of man. They had lived in the world, but retained
their integrity. "The merchant was a man," he wrote in the poem "Bos-
ton." They were free because they were not enthralled by Trade.

And where they went on trade intent
    They did what freemen can,
Their dauntless ways did all men praise,
    The merchant was a man.
The world was made for honest trade,--
    To plant and eat be none afraid.

Believing in the good offices of trade, Emerson could speak approv-
ingly of the effects of trade, yet not believe them real; he called them
"foam." But his society had quite abandoned the concept of the essential
insubstantiality of the world. For many people of Emerson's day, trade
was not mere discipline; it was the most absorbing interest of their lives.
It was the chief object of their affections. Emerson surveyed the results
of this commercial and mercenary kind of life, and found it wrong. It
threatened to destroy man's freedom.

A question which well deserves examination now is the dangers
of commerce. This invasion of nature by Trade with its money,
its credit, its steam, its railroad, threatens to upset the

37 Works, I, 14.
38 Ibid., IX, 212.
balance of man, and establish a new universal monarchy more tyrannical than Babylon or Rome.\textsuperscript{39}

He spoke of the power of wealth and the contrast between the outer success and the inner failure. \textldots an immense external prosperity is possible, with pure cowardice and hollowness in all the conspicuous official men.\textsuperscript{40}

Jonathan Edwards had argued in his discussion of the will that the affections control the will.\textsuperscript{41} What a man loves best is what he serves. Men are supposed to love God best, and serve him. But in a society where men love money best, they will serve the god Trade. Emerson felt that his society had turned things into ends, into God, and worshipped them.

\begin{quote}
Boston Bay and Bunker Hill
Would serve things still;--
Things are of the snake.
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
The horseman serves the horse,
The neatherd serves the neat,
The merchant serves the purse,
The eater serves his meat;
'Tis the day of the chattel,
Web to weave, and corn to grind;
Things are in the gaddle,
And ride mankind.\textsuperscript{42}
\end{quote}

Emerson's survey of the various channels of human endeavor was thorough; he examined the way of politics, of religion, of trade, and found that the actual world was one in which there was a vast difference between the actual and the ideal.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{39}Journals, V, 285.
\item \textsuperscript{40}Journals, VIII, 182-183.
\item \textsuperscript{41}Clarence H. Faust and Thomas H. Johnson, eds., Jonathan Edwards, Representative Selections, pp. 267-269.
\item \textsuperscript{42}Works, IX, 77-78.
\end{itemize}
His awareness of the frequency of sin in human life led him to speak of it in a way that implied an attitude much like that of his ancestors. He denied their terms and said that the doctrine of depravity was "profanation." His rejection of the attitude toward sin held by the defenders of orthodoxy of his own day is quite understandable. Haroutunian pointed out that the process of change from piety to moralism was one in which the moralists of Emerson's day attempted to defend the older doctrines from a completely different viewpoint from that held by the Puritans of the seventeenth century. To the seventeenth century the doctrines described experience. In Emerson's century, the doctrines were held for habitual or formal rather than empirical reasons. The terminology of original sin became a "legalistic and dialectical superstructure in a practically alien world."\(^4\)

It is significant that Jonathan Edwards' first defense of the correctness of the doctrine of the depravity of man rested on what he called "The evidence of original sin from what appears in fact of the sinfulness of mankind."\(^4\) In short he thought the doctrine true on the basis of empirical evidence. There are several indications that while Emerson was unwilling to use the term "original sin," or "utter depravity," he felt the same tendency to vice or sin, that struck Jonathan Edwards. If the world is "to make holy or wise or beautiful men, we see that it has not succeeded."\(^4\)

Every loafer knows the way to the rumshop, but every angel does not know the way to his nectar. Why can we never learn our proper economy? Every youth and maid should know the road

\(^4\)Faust and Johnson, p. 317.
\(^4\)Works, I, 201.
to prophecy as surely as the cook-maid to the baker's shop.46

The children of this world are wiser than the children of light. The good cause is always on the defensive, the evil, assailant. Because the unscrupulous cannot only avail themselves of innocent means to their ends, but all evil ones likewise.47

There is, he thought, "a certain fatal dislocation in our relation to nature." "We have violated law on law until we stand amidst ruins."48

These quotations are all evidence that Emerson, like Edwards, was impressed by "what appears in fact of the sinfulness of mankind."49

Emerson thought the story of the fall of man was a parable that was true of every generation, not the first one only. "We say Paradise was; Adam fell, the Golden Age and the like. We mean man is not as he ought to be: but our way of painting this is on Time and we say was."50

Quotations of this sort are to be found all the way through the Journals. In 1822 he wrote,

This fact, that the seeds of corruption are buried in the causes of moral improvement strikes us everywhere in the political, moral, and national history of the world. It seems to indicate the intention of Providence to limit human perfectibility and to bind together good and evil, like life and death, by indissoluble connections.51

By 1864, he no longer refused to use the word depravity.

The obstacle the philanthropic movements meet is in the invincible depravity of the virtuous classes. The excellent women who have made an asylum for young offenders, boys of 10 to (18?)51a years, and who wish after putting them through their school, to put them out to board in good farmers' or

46Journals, VII, 541.
49Faust and Johnson, p. 317.
50Journals, IV, 287.
51Ibid., I, 103.
51aThe parentheses are Emerson's.
mechanics' families, find the boys do well enough but the farmer and the farmer's wife, and the mechanic and the mechanic's wife behave brutally.52

There is no inconsistency between the statements just quoted and Emerson's doctrine of the infinitude of man. He was never guilty of the naïveté of stating that present or actual man was good;53 he did believe that man has tremendous potentialities. His essays were attempts in a variety of ways to call man to a consciousness of his higher self, and challenge him to live on the level of that higher self. He thought the prologue to The Taming of the Shrew was a parable of man, who, usually drunk, might on occasion wake up and find that he is a lord. "... we are poor lords, have immense powers we are hindered from using."54

As Ulich pointed out, Emerson did not believe in racial or social progress.55 What he did believe in was the possibility of the progress of the individual. He had the evangelical attitude. He believed fervently in the possibility of the perfecting of one's own moral and spiritual character; any other kind of moral change he thought impossible. He must be regarded, therefore, as a kind of nineteenth century Wesley, calling men to a new way of life. His call to perfect the moral and spiritual abilities for oneself was no more radical than was the expectation of Luther previously cited, that the believing soul becomes free from all sin, fearless from death, safe from Hell, and endowed with the eternal righteousness, life, and salvation

52Journals, X, 5. See also Journals I, 103, 115; III, 272, 359; V, 6; VI, 296; VII, 153, 223, 541; VIII, 452; Works, I, 201; II, 230-231.
54Journals, III, 34.
55Ulich, p. 309. See also Carpenter, Emerson Handbook, p. 151.
of its Husband Christ.\textsuperscript{56}

It is unnecessary here to trace the history of perfectionism in Protestantism, but the idea persisted, minimized by the Calvinists, and emphasized by the Pietists of Germany and Switzerland and by the Wesleyans in England.\textsuperscript{57} Emerson was a nineteenth century exponent of Christian perfectionism, as Carpenter has said.\textsuperscript{58}

3. Freedom

The great question for Emerson was why men did not fulfill their potentialities. Why did not the drunken sot ever wake up? The question appeared frequently in the poetry, for example in the magnificent line, from Emerson's own experience, which asserted that man was

\textit{Defeated day by day, but unto victory born.}\textsuperscript{59}

The first possible answer lay in the fact of freedom of the will. This Emerson accepted as a partial answer to the question.

A man is a gate between Hell and Heaven. Through his heart streams a procession, when he wills good, of all angels and mights; when he wills evil, of all cattle and devils.\textsuperscript{60}

In giving this answer Emerson was in the main stream of Christian thought; most Christian philosophers of religion have always included this as one of the answers to the question of the problem of evil, as Brightman

\textsuperscript{56}Concerning Christian Liberty, p. 371.
\textsuperscript{57}See Robert Newton Flew, The Idea of Perfection in Christian Theology.
\textsuperscript{58}Carpenter, Emerson Handbook, p. 152.
\textsuperscript{59}Works, IX, 354.
\textsuperscript{60}Journals, V, 552.
indicated. Even Calvin found a place, inconsistent as it may seem, for freedom of the will, although he restricted it to the ordinary activities of life. So far as salvation was concerned, there was no freedom in Calvin's system. Yet the inconsistency is part of a paradox that has long been typical of Christianity. The paradox appeared in the two main Puritan solutions to the problem of evil. Ralph Barton Perry described these solutions in *Puritanism and Democracy.* The Puritan emphasis on the sovereignty of God required God to be responsible for everything. The sovereignty of God carried to its logical conclusion would imply that God was responsible for evil, however. One group of Puritans accepted this logic and held that evil was the necessary precondition for salvation. Perry cited Baxter as one exponent of this view, which subordinated all considerations to the rule of God. Peter Bulkeley of Concord agreed with this ultimate ascription of evil to God.

The Lord saith that He formes light, and greatest darknesse, he makes peace, and creates evill. Sometimes God so creates evill, that if he be asked whence it comes, or what is the originall of it, we must answer, as Isa. l47: 11, we cannot tell whence it cometh, but onely from the Lords immediate hand. The Lord makes it evident that it cometh from him.

A second and larger group of Puritans were inclined, according to Perry, to emphasize man's freedom as a cause of sin. Perry reported that Jonathan Edwards was unable to escape the full force of both sides of the paradox and therefore fell back on mystery and human ignorance to excuse

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62 James Orr, "Calvinism", *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, III, 149.
63 Pages 384-385.
his inability to explain the paradox. Emerson himself also used the argument of human ignorance as a court of last resort.

Emerson combined the assertion of a limited human freedom with the doctrine of the unity of all men, and of the social nature of sin, to produce a striking and vital statement of sin as obedience to society, instead of to God. The traditional Christian doctrine of original sin was based on a belief in the unity of all men. Edwards had firmly asserted this in his defense of the doctrine. Edwards defended the unity of all men in terms of the idea of concursus dei; the continued existence of any object depends on the continued will of God. The continued existence of mankind also depends on the will of God, as the continuity of one moment of time with the previous moment of time is purely in the will of God. Men sin because of their identity with Adam; they cease from sin by being regenerated by God, in short by establishing a relationship to God, not Adam. So long as the relationship of men is solely on the human level, with each other, they remain sinners. But when they forsake their human relationships and look up to the source of being, they may escape sinfulness.

While Edwards was original in his defense of the doctrine, he was not original in holding the idea of the unity of all men. "In Adam's fall, we sinned all," had long been held correct doctrine. John Donne's famous passage is original in form, but very old in content.

No man is an island entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main. If a clod is washed away

65Perry, Puritanism and Democracy, p. 389.

66Faust and Johnson, pp. 323-339.
by the sea, Europe is the less as well as if a promontory were, as well as if a manor of thy friend's or of thine own were. Any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind, and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee. 57

One of the basic scriptural sources of the doctrine, in the New Testament (it is also implied by the story of a single creation) is the verse "And God hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth." 68 This verse was frequently used to justify the doctrine of original sin, as a Biblical statement of the unity of men. Milton proved the doctrine of original sin in this way, in the De Doctrina Christiana. 69

The doctrine of the unity of man was a tool that Emerson used for many purposes. He was sure of the eventual downfall of slavery, because he expected all men finally to feel about slavery as he did. He thought he could read history, and understand it because of the universality of human experience. He described the idea in a variety of ways. One reference has a Biblical ring, "All men have my blood and I all men's." 70

The following version is a typical description.

The mask of Nature is variety; our education is through surfaces and particulars; and multitudes remain in the babe or animal state, and never see or know more: but in the measure in which there is wit, we learn that we are alike; that a fundamental unity or agreement exists, without which there could be neither marriage, nor politics, nor literature, nor science. 71

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69 Milton, Works, IV, 255.
70 Works, II, 71.
71 Journals, IX, 168.
That the doctrine of the unity of man operated effectively in the mind of Emerson, much as it operated in the mind of Edwards or Donne, to create a sense of the way in which all men are bound together, for good or evil, is seen in many passages of Emerson's work. "... the smallest acquisition of truth or energy, in any quarter, is so much good of the commonwealth of souls." He felt that evil was equally a joint reality. In his essay "Man the Reformer," he referred to the social nature of sin, the fact that all persons, the whole of society, must be held accountable.

I do not charge the merchant or the manufacturer. The sins of our trade belong to no class, to no individual. One plucks, one distributes, one eats. Everybody partakes, everybody confesses,—with cap and knee volunteers his confession, yet none feels himself accountable. He did not create the abuse; he cannot alter it. What is he? an obscure private person who must get his bread. That is the vice,—that no one feels himself called on to act for man.

There are other assertions of the joint nature of sin, in the essays, as well as a clear assertion of the New Testament idea that "all have sinned."

If we suddenly plant our foot and say,—I will neither eat nor drink nor wear nor touch any food or fabric which I do not know to be innocent or deal with any person whose whole manner of life is not clear or rational, we shall stand still. Whose is so? Not mine; not thine; not his.

The traditional explanation of the means by which the evil of mankind came to each person was in terms of biology. Although the flaw was a moral one, it was thought that the fact that Adam was the biological father of man was identical with his being the cause of man's sin. Emerson

72 Works, IV, 33.
73 Ibid., I, 233.
74 Ibid., 247.
75 Journals, IV, 489.
76 Works, II, 49.
saw the cause of sin to some degree conveyed by biological powers.

There is a tremendous sympathy to which we were born by which we do easily enter into the feelings of evil agents, of deep offenders in the hour of their temptation and their fall. We catch with intelligent ear the parley between the tempter and the tempted; we measure with sad alacrity the joys of guilt.

This is a part of our condition, a part of our free agency, and necessary to us as moral probationers. Let us, then, since it lies in our power, observe these gradations by which he that stands in his purity suffers himself to decline to his fall.75

He also spoke of the importance of what he called each man's bias, or temperament.76

Primarily, however, Emerson thought sin was the result of the psychological processes by which people feel social pressures. This problem he thought about at great length, in order to understand the cause of the pressure and to understand how to use the conditions of life for good, in place of evil.

Who forbade you to create? Fear. And who made fear? Sin; Inaction; Ignorance. What is this astounding greatness of other men that they should be as god to you? Why it is two things: First, your littleness which makes them seem so large; and, second, your identity with them which makes them delightful to you as the colossal portrait.77

The answer he implies here to the question of sin is the fact of freedom of the will and the fact of human disobedience. The obedient man is reliant on God; "self-reliant" in the Emerson terminology. But the sinful man is disobedient to God, to the voice within; instead he worships false gods, other men. The famous paragraph in the essay "Self-Reliance"78 is an emphatic declaration of the fact that society conspired

75 Journals, II, 156-157.
76 Ibid., III, 210; VI, 12; X, 146.
77 Journals, IV, 489.
78 Works, II, 49.
against the individual by keeping him from God.

Emerson applied the belief in freedom of the will in other ways to explain sin. The implication of "Give All to Love", of "Hamatreya," of the "Ode" to Channing, is in agreement with the basic Protestant assumption that sin is the preference of any earthly love to a love for God. Emerson is fully in agreement with this basic Augustinian definition of sin. He apparently felt, however, that Augustine and Milton were not correct in their belief that the strongest form of the temptation to put human loves before the divine love was in sexuality. Augustine thought that all sin contained an element of concupiscence. Milton's version of the fall of man indicates his agreement with Augustine. Eve's temptation was sensual in nature, and the result of sin in both Adam and Eve was inflamed sexuality. Emerson recognized the possibility that sexual love might become a god to man, witness "Give All to Love" and the passages cited in connection with the discussion of that poem. But apparently Emerson believed that love of possession, or "trade" was a greater menace than sexuality, for he devoted considerably more writing to the sins of trade, than to the sins of sexuality. Emerson also recognized that the love of knowledge might become a god to men that would detach the Creator. It will be seen, therefore, that freedom of the will was an important answer, for Emerson, to the question why men sin. Emerson believed men free to enjoy God, in a world of other men and of very interesting goods. If men chose to put other men, or the love of women, or the love of trade, or the love of knowledge before God, they interrupted the communication between God and self and became "white hollow shells."
4. The Uses of Adversity

A second solution of the problem of evil held by Emerson was to assume that much of the difficulty, of the pain and adversity of life, was necessary discipline. The traditional view had emphasized that this world is a place of testing for the next world. Emerson was in agreement with this view, although he did not emphasize the future state. His existentialism made him value the present moment too much to regard it as only of value for the future. The discipline of the harsh in life must be of immediate value, he thought. It protected the person now, taught the person now, strengthened the person now, and finally forced the person to seek the real source of power, the Deity, in the present moment.

Emerson stated his belief that this world is a place of testing in orthodox fashion early in his life, and never ceased to affirm it in one way or another. After a discussion concerning immortality, written in 1826, he remarked:

This solves the question concerning the existence of evil. For if man is immortal, this world is his place of discipline and the value of pain is then disclosed.79

He wrote in the essay on history,

The world exists for the education of each man.80

Much later he wrote,

Everything is prospective, and man is to live hereafter. That the world is for his education is the only sane solution of the enigma.81

79 Journals, II, 120.
80 Works, II, 8.
81 Ibid., VIII, 334.
He wrote in the Journals in 1836,

The world is the gymnasium on which the youth of the universe are trained to strength and skill. When they have become masters of the strength and skill, who cares what becomes of the masts and bars and ropes on which they strained their muscles.82

In holding this view, Emerson was fully in agreement with Milton who wrote in *Areopagitica*, "I cannot praise a fugitive and cloistered virtue."83 God calls us to temperance, Milton said, but surrounds us with a "profuse-ness of all desirable things."

Emerson was especially impressed by the disciplinary value of poverty. He no doubt remembered his own experience, and felt that all young people needed the virtues taught by poverty. He wrote in the Journal, "Write a sermon upon Blessed Poverty. Who have done all the good in the world? Poor men. 'Poverty is a good hated by all men.'"85 He applied this philosophy to his own experience during the panics and economic depressions of his life. Even when he lost money in a panic, although annoyed by the "burglars"86 of trustees on the railroad who took his money, he spoke of the value of depressions. A depression caused men to question the worldly wisdom they took for granted in prosperous times.87 Poverty, he thought, would produce strong young men. It would also protect

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82 Journals, IV, 127.
83 Coffin and Witherspoon, p. 416.
85 Journals, II, 480.
86 Ibid., IX, 122.
87 Journals, III, 475; IV, 241, 243; VI, 375; IX, 137-139, 411.
them from the "sensual enjoyments which make other boys too early old."88 Chapter V of Nature is devoted to the theme that discipline is a use of nature.

There were other values besides poverty that Emerson felt were disciplinary. The cold northern climate, indeed all adversity, he thought educational or strengthening.

We have scarce a misfortune, a hindrance, an infirmity, an enemy, but it is somehow productive of singular advantage to us. After groaning through years of poverty and hard labor, the mind perceives that really it has come the shortest road to a valuable position, that, though the rough climate was not good for leaves and flowers, it was good for timber. It has been saved from what associations. It has been introduced to what thoughts and feelings. "He knows you not, ye mighty powers! who knows not sorrow." God brings us by ways we know not and like not into Paradise.89

Emerson expressed his faith in the disciplinary value of adversity in several good images. "The Alpine flower that grew in fearless beauty amid storm and cold under the awful shadow of the avalanches will wither and die in the sunny gardens of the plains."90 "Who cares for the summer fruit? Give me the winter apple, the russetin and pippin, cured and sweetened by all the heat and all the frost of the year."91 He quoted Mahomet, to illustrate the point. "Paradise," said Mahomet, "is under the shadow of the sword!"92

Emerson expressed the disciplinary values of evil in the poem "Heroism."

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88 Works, VII, 121.
89 Journals, III, 315-316.
90 Ibid., II, 216.
91 Journals, VI, 26-27.
92 Journals, V, 665.
The poem indicated Emerson's awareness that pain and suffering is essential for the meaningful life.

Ruby wine is drunk by knaves,
Sugar spends to fatten slaves,
Rose and vine-leaf deck buffoons;
Thunderclouds are Jove's festoons,
Drooping oft in wreaths of dread,
Lightning knotted round his head;
The hero is not fed on sweets,
Daily his own heart he eats;
Chambers of the great are jails,
And head-winds right for royal sails.93

Ulich has suggested that Emerson failed to understand one of the essential ideas of Christianity, that he failed "to realize the meaning of the Cross, of death, and of the Christian interpretation of suffering."94 If this criticism means that Emerson did not believe in the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross as a vicarious sacrifice for all men, it is quite correct. If the statement means that Emerson did not believe in the necessity of suffering for each man, it is wrong, as the passages cited indicate.

Emerson was aware that to indicate the value of discipline did not constitute a satisfactory explanation of the existence of pain and suffering in the world. As Brightman pointed out, some pain or adversity may be so great that the person is completely incapacitated to make use of the lesson that the adversity might teach.95 It is hard to see the disciplinary value of the death of infants, for example. Emerson, therefore, qualified his statement of the value of adversity. "In general, every

93 Works, IX, 272.
94 Ulich, p. 314.
95 Brightman, p. 252.
evil to which we do not succumb is a benefactor."

No matter how far Emerson pressed the argument of freedom of will or of discipline, both seemed finally unsatisfactory. There is the question, for example, as to why the discipline comes only through pain. Emerson walked one day to Walden Pond, to pick berries. Later he thought of the implications of his experience and wrote,

... when I came to the blackberry vines, the plucking the crude berries at the risk of splintering my hand, and with a mosquito mounting guard over every particular berry, seemed a little too emblematic of general life, whose shining and glossy berries are very hard beset by thorns.97

5. Two Worlds or One

A possible solution to the problem of evil is the dualistic one. This solution was proposed by Mani and his followers the Manicheans, in the early centuries of the Christian era. The Manicheans believed in two deities, an evil, materialistic one, who had created matter and the world, and a good one, creator of Jesus and of the spiritual world.98 At a fairly early time Christianity rejected the idea of the Manicheans that matter was evil, and that this world was created by a devil.99

Emerson has been called a dualist by Carpenter,100 J. S. Harrison,101

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96 Works, II, 117-118.
97 Journals, IV, 265.
99 Ibid., p. 74.
101 The Teachers of Emerson, p. 131.
Carpenter called Emerson a dualist because of Emerson's awareness of what Harris Franklin Rall called the polarity of life. Emerson himself used the term polarity; it is a more accurate word for Emerson's position because it implies diversity within identity. Duality implies unrelated twoness. Emerson's references to the dualistic experiences of life always implied twoness united in oneness. The polarity of magnetism is a favorite image in the Emersonian corpus, because of its correspondence to all the polarities of life, God and man, God and nature, day and night, man and woman, the actual and the ideal, actual man and potential man, matter and spirit, and appearance and reality.

The search for unity that continued throughout Emerson's life would never permit him finally to accept unrelated twoness, or an absolute dualism. He was aware of the danger of too rapid generalization, but insisted on the necessity of trying to see life finally as a whole, not as two wholes. Speculation, he wrote in his essay on Plato, leads always to unity. Religion also, he thought, tended to unity. The great dangers, he said, were in a "too rapid unification and an excessive appliance to parts and particulars."

103 American Criticism, p. 90.
104 Americans, p. 87.
105 Ralph Waldo Emerson, p. 364.
106 Christianity, p. 83.
107 Works, IV, 51.
108 Ibid., 52.
The doctrine of correspondence rested on the assumption that the same laws applied to all the levels of reality. There are differences of levels, but on each new level, the same old laws appear. The doctrine of correspondence would be false if the world were actually divided into two radically different spheres. Polarity is a figure of speech that reconciles twoness, or difference, with identity, and makes possible the doctrine of correspondence, as Emerson said in the essay on "The Sovereignty of Ethics."

Since the discovery of Oerstead that galvanism and electricity and magnetism are only forms of one and the same force, and convertible into each other, we have continually suggested to us a larger generalization: that each of the great departments of Nature--chemistry, vegetation, the animal life--exhibits the same laws on a different plane; that the intellectual and moral worlds are analogous to the material. 109

There is a passage in the "Ode to W. H. Channing" that is frequently cited as ground for calling Emerson a dualist.

There are two laws discrete,
Not reconciled,—
Law for man and law for thing 110

If the passage does mean a radical dualism, it is one of the very few inconsistencies in an otherwise extremely coherent system of thought, in which almost any paragraph or sentence either contains or implies the whole system. Since the rest of the poem implies the philosophic idealism that was Emerson's considered and fully developed philosophy, it seems very probable that this passage is not a statement of a final dualism, but a statement of the diversity or various levels of life, which the society of his time had failed to reconcile. The merchants had subor-

109 Ibid., X, 183.
110 Ibid., IX, 78.
dinated the higher level, man, to the lower level, things. In this respect, the two laws are not to be reconciled.

There is another passage in "The Sovereignty of Ethics" that indicated the reconciliation that was Emerson's typical resolution of the problem.

Once men thought Spirit divine, and Matter diabolic; one Ormuzd the other Ahriman. Now, science and philosophy recognize the parallelism, the approximation, the unity of the two: how each reflects the other as face answers to face in a glass: nay, how the laws of both are one, or how one is the realization.\[111\]

Emerson himself occasionally used the term dualism as a synonym for the term polarity, as in the following passage:

If as Hedge thinks, I overlook great facts in stating the absolute laws of the soul; if, as he seems to represent it, the world is not a dualism, is not a bipolar unity, but is two, is Me and It, then is there the alien, the unknown, and all we have believed and chanted out of our deep instinctive hope is a pretty dream.\[112\]

There is a long passage indicating the polarity in nature in the essay "Compensation" in which he used the term dualism as a synonym for polarity.

Polarity, or action and reaction, we meet in every part of nature; in darkness and light, in heat and cold, in the ebb and flow of waters, in male and female . . . An inevitable dualism bisects nature, so that each thing is a half, and suggests another thing to make it whole; as spirit, matter; man, woman; odd, even; subjective, objective; in, out; upper under; motion, rest; yea, nay.\[113\]

In spite of all his statements of the polarity in life, Emerson's deepest conviction was that there was an underlying unity that reconciled all diversity. While he was not always able to understand how the differences

\[111\] Ibid., X, 213.
\[112\] Journals, V, 206.
\[113\] Works, II, 96-97.
could be reconciled, his faith was in unity. He admitted his ignorance of the law that reconciled, but rarely doubted that there was reconciliation.

We are sure that, though we know not how, Necessity does comport with Liberty, the Individual with the World, my polarity with the spirit of the times.114

Emerson specifically rejected the solution of the problem of evil implied by a radical dualism of matter and spirit. He wrote in the Journal in 1841,

We are not Manicheans, not believers in two hostile principles, but we think evil arises from disproportions, interruptions, mistake of means for ends.115

Emerson consistently defended this position. His lifelong attitude was the Augustinian and Neo-Platonic one, that evil was the absence of good, and not a principle in itself.

He wrote an objection to a book written by Brownson,

... the question out of Brownson's book, of the positiveness or entity of moral evil; which I gladly and strenuously denied. 116

The address to the Divinity School touched briefly on this point, with impeccable orthodoxy, from the standpoint of the Augustinian tradition.

These facts have always suggested to man the sublime creed that the world is not the product of manifold power, but of one will, of one mind; and that one mind is everywhere active, in each ray of the star, in each wavelet of the pool; and whatever opposes that will is everywhere balked and baffled, because things are made so, and not otherwise. Good is

114 Journals, VII, 91.
115 Ibid., VI, 109. See also Journals, V, 80.
116 Ibid., IV, 166.
positive. Evil is merely privative, not absolute: it is like cold which is the privation of heat. Benevolence is absolute and real.\textsuperscript{117}

6. The Perfect Whole

Emerson applied his conviction of the essential unity of the universe to the problem of evil by adopting the traditional explanation that the whole is good; the partial, the incomplete, seems bad. "We, if we saw the whole, should of course see that it was better so."\textsuperscript{118} When the whole is understood, then it is perceived that the event that seemed bad in the short run, turns out to be good in the long run.

The importance of the whole is an essential part of Emerson's thought. "Each and All" used the whole as a definition of the beautiful. When every object is seen in relationship to the totality of objects, it becomes beautiful. A similar argument about events is used to justify the cosmic optimism that Emerson felt. "... even the tragic and terrible are comely as they take their place in the pictures of memory."\textsuperscript{119} This is the esthetic argument, or the argument of chiaroscuro; there must be shadows to make the high lights of the picture. Various forms of the esthetic argument appear in the Journals and essays; one of the statements reconciles both necessity and freedom, good and evil, by using this esthetic approach.\textsuperscript{120}

\textsuperscript{117} Works, I, 121. See also Works, III, 79; Journals, VIII, 261.
\textsuperscript{118} Works, VIII, 329.
\textsuperscript{119} Ibid., II, 131.
\textsuperscript{120} Melville used a similar image in the chapter on the Matmaker, in Moby Dick.
Shall I say then it were truer to see Necessity calm, beautiful, passionless, without a smile, covered with ensigns of woe, stretching her dark warp across the universe? These threads are Nature's pernicious elements, her deluges, miasma, disease, poison; her curdling cold, her hideous reptiles and worse men, cannibals, and the depravities of civilization; the secrets of the prisons of tyranny, the slave and his master, the proud man's scorn, the orphans' tears, the vices of men, lust, cruelty and pitiless avarice. These make the gloomy warp of ages. Humanity sits at the dread loom and throws the shuttle and fills it with joyful rainbows, until the sable ground is flowered all over with a woof of human industry and wisdom, virtuous examples, symbols of useful and generous arts, with beauty and pure love, courage and the victories of the just and the wise over malice and the wrong.  

It should be noted that this argument makes the evil necessary; evil becomes an essential part of the picture. It is not actually an explanation of the reason for evil; it makes evil good by asserting that for the whole picture, the evil turns out to be good. Lovejoy has shown how the eighteenth century optimists stressed the necessity of evil, as a solution to the great question. The eighteenth century Anglican William King wrote an account of The Origin of Evil, which attempted, according to Lovejoy, to contradict Bayle's dualistic doctrine, and to attribute evil, not—at least primarily nor chiefly—either to the mysterious perversity of man's will or to the machinations of the Devil; he is to show its necessity from a consideration of the nature of deity itself. His undertaking is nothing less than that of facing all the evils of existence and showing them to be "not only consistent with infinite wisdom, goodness, and power, but necessarily resulting from them."  

"Further," said Lovejoy,  

King saw no way of achieving a satisfactory theodicy without showing that not only imperfection in general, but every one of the observable concrete imperfections of the actual world,
ought to have been created . . .

This assertion that in some sense or other God is responsible for all of the concrete evils in the world, made by an orthodox Anglican, is evidence that some Anglicans were capable of emphasizing the sovereignty of God in as thorough-going and consistent fashion as the Puritans ever did. Further, it is significant to relate King's effort to Emerson's poem, "Brahma," where Deity is identified with the "red slayer." In King's theological and abstract language, the fact that God has been held ultimately responsible for each act of murder, of lying, as well as every other actual sin and actual evil in the world is not obvious. But the magic of poetry brings vividly and concretely to the reader Emerson's ultimate ascription of evil and sin in the world to God. The citation quoted above, from the essays, that Necessity had stretched the dark warp of evil across the world, also ascribed all evil in the world to God, but without the vividness of the poem.

The implication of *Paradise Lost* is also that God is responsible for the existence of evil in the world.

So stretched out huge in length the Arch fiend lay
Chain'd on the burning lake, nor ever thence
Had ris'n or heav'd his head, but that the will
And high permission of all-ruling Heaven
Left him at large to his own dark designs.124

Milton realized the implications of these lines and tried to avoid making God the author of sin and evil by the lines that followed, and by a long discussion of the same problem in the *De Doctrina Christiana*. In the poem he asserted:

123Ibid., p. 204.
124Book I, 209-213.
That with reiterated crimes he might
Heap on himself damnation, while he sought
Evil to others, and enrag'd might see
How all his malice serv'd but to bring forth
Infinite goodness, grace and mercy shewn
On Man by him seduc't, but on himself
Treble confusion, wrath and vengeance pour'd.\textsuperscript{125}

The argument here described is the same one that Baxter used to explain the fall of man, that evil is a necessary precondition of salvation; if no one sinned, the world would never know God's "Infinite goodness, grace, and mercy." Milton tried to show in the \textit{De Doctrina Christiana} that God's permission for Satan to tempt man was not really the same as God's causing Satan to tempt man.

But though in these, as well as in many other passages of the Old and New Testament, God distinctly declares that it is himself who impels the sinner to sin, who hardens his heart, who blinds his understanding, and leads him into error; yet on account of the infinite holiness of the Deity, it is not allowable to consider him as in the smallest instance the author of sin . . . For it is not the human heart in a state of innocence and purity, and repugnance to evil, that is induced by him to act wickedly and deceitfully; but after it has conceived sin, and when it is about to bring forth, he, in his character of sovereign disposer of all things, inclines and biases it in this or that direction, or towards this or that object . . . Nor does God make that will evil which was before good, but the will being already in a state of perversion, he influences it in such a manner, that out of its own wickedness it either operates good for others, or punishment for itself, though unknowingly, and with the intent of producing a very different result . . . Or, to use the common simile, as a rider who urges on a stumbling horse in a particular direction is the cause of its increasing its speed, but not of its stumbling,—so God, who is the supreme governor of the universe, may instigate an evil agent, without being in the least degree the cause of the evil.\textsuperscript{126}

Milton insisted on the fact of freedom of the will as freeing God from responsibility, but the passage cited from \textit{Paradise Lost} implied that God

\textsuperscript{125}Ibid., 214-220.

\textsuperscript{126}Milton, \textit{Works}, IV, 202-204.
expected Adam to fall, and that the fall was necessary to enable God to
be gracious to man. That, at least, was Baxter's argument, although Mil-
ton tried to avoid the explicit statement of the implication. William
King did not avoid the explicit attributing of all evil in the world to
God. Emerson has done no more in "Brahma" than make vivid and impressive
with poetic imagery, what was implied in Paradise Lost and stated by
Richard Baxter, Peter Bulkeley and William King.

Another form of the argument that the whole makes the apparent evil
good, hinges on the problem of time. This application of the argument
asserts that human life is too short to enable the individual to see the
whole. Only if one could take the long view, could one see the necessity
of evil, or the real goodness of apparent evil. Man's finiteness makes
his "now" so short that he finds it difficult or impossible to see the
whole "Now." But if he could see the whole from the standpoint of God,
whose "Now" is eternal, he would see that there is really no evil.

The argument depends on faith in God's goodness, and admits man's
ignorance and finiteness. Butler's Analogy contained both aspects of
the idea.

We conclude that virtue must be the happiness and vice the
misery of every creature; and that regularity, and order, and
right, cannot but prevail, finally, in a universe under his
government. But we are in no sort judges what are the neces-
sary means of accomplishing this end. 127

The contrast between God's ability to see the whole picture, and
man's inability was a frequent theme for religious meditations for sermons
and hymns. Watts was stirred by the theme to write many quatrains, like
the following.

127 Joseph Butler, The Analogy of Religion, p. 111. See also pages
151, 153, 185.
While like a tide our minutes flow,
The present and the past,
He fills his own immortal Now,
And sees our ages waste.  

The belief that if man could only take the long view, man would understand, appears frequently in Emerson's work.

Emerson found many applications for the idea. He used it to justify his faith that the abolitionists would win.

But we saw longevity in our cause. It can well afford to wait; for ages and worlds, the stars of heaven and the thoughts of the mind are the editors and vote-distributors of the free soil.

Emerson thought it was a general rule that all moral changes took time.

The condition of influence by virtue is time. To convert a congregation in a four days meeting is possible to a Calvinistic sermon; but to convert one man by the persuasion of your character needs time.

He applied the concept to the healing effect of time.

The compensations of calamity are not to be found by the understanding suddenly, but require years of time to make them sensible. The death of a dear friend, wife, brother, lover, seems an unmixted loss ... What loss like the loss of a bridegroom to a bride? ... Yet come years after, and see self-reliance where there was frailty and tenderness alone, come and see character ...  

He thought that the economy of God must require time to carry out his plans.

And to such an extent is this great statute policy of God carried, that many, nay, most of the great blessings of

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128 Hymns, p. 136.
130 Ibid., IV, 326.
131 Ibid., V, 206-207.
humanity require cycles of a thousand years to bring them to their height.\textsuperscript{132}

His uniting the plea of ignorance with the assertion of the necessity for the long view is well demonstrated in his comment concerning the French Revolution. The reader should note also the suggestion that "evil must needs come." He is here affirming an attitude parallel to the one described by William King in his defense of the necessity of evil.

It needs to say something, they tell me, of the French Revolution. Why, yes, I believe that it has been advantageous on the whole. I very readily seek and find reasons for any such proposition, because whilst I believe that evil is to be hated and resisted and punished, at least forcibly hindered, yet offences must needs come, and out of them comes good as naturally and inevitably as the beautiful flower and the nourishing fruit out of the dark ground. I believe that the tendency of all thought is to Optimism. Now for the French Revolution. I believe, in the first place, that it would be an advantage, though we were not able to point out a single benefit that had flowed thence, and were able to show many calamities. I should still incline to think that we were too near to judge, like a soldier in the ranks who is quite unable, amid the din and smoke, to judge how goes the day, or guess at the plan of the engagement.\textsuperscript{133}

Emerson knew how hard it was for men to take the long view. "But the spasms of Nature are years and centuries, and it will tax the faith of man to wait so long."\textsuperscript{134} Somehow the God-reliant man must weld eternity to the moment. He must live always in the eternal Now of God.

There are merits calculated on shorter and longer periods; better than those of the hour are the Benthamite and the Calvinist, who keep the law all their life for pay; but these dwindle before the incalculable eternity which the lover of virtue embraces in the present moment.\textsuperscript{135}

The most important form of Emerson's faith in the long view as a

\textsuperscript{132}Ibid., II, .12.

\textsuperscript{133}Ibid., III, 448.

\textsuperscript{134}Works, X, 191.

\textsuperscript{135}Journals, III, 456.
solution to the problem of evil was in his mysticism. In the mystical experience, the individual loses his finiteness in the Infinite. He ceases to be time-bound, and becomes a part of the eternal Now of God. He knows by the "heart-consent" of Baxter that God is good, and that the totality of things is good, for he tastes the ichor of heaven and is intoxicated with the presence of Deity. In that state he ceases to be "time's fool", and lives in eternity. He no longer needs to rely on imagery, chiaroscuro, time, or any symbolic attempt to explain the contrast between good and evil. He knows by immediate experience that the cosmos is good. Thus he not only sees the whole and understands the whole, he becomes a part of the whole, "Lost in God, in Godhead found."  

7. The Poisoned Ground

One of the traditional solutions to the problem of evil adopted by the Hebrews was that natural evils were caused by moral evils, or that sin had brought death and woe into the world.

Throughout the Old Testament appeared the conviction that non-moral evils were punishment for moral evils. Thus the drouths, famines, and invasions by their warlike neighbors were regarded by the Hebrews as punishment for their sins of disobedience to God. Job, however, rejected this solution to the problem of evil, as many later thinkers have. It has been objected to the theory that the punishment is unjustly distributed, and that in any case, punishment is a morally repugnant concept.  

136 Works, IX, 158.

137 Brightman, p. 261.
In a larger sense, the doctrine of original sin had implied a disjunction between man and nature, as a result of man's sin. Eve was told in *Paradise Lost* that her natural function, childbirth, would now be painful.

Thy sorrow I will greatly multiply
By thy Conception; Childern thou bring
In sorrow forth . . .138

Adam was told that he must hereafter work for his food, and that the very earth would resist his efforts.

Curs'd is the ground for thy sake, thou in sorrow
Shalt eate thereof all the days of thy Life;
Thornes also and Thistles it shall bring thee forth
Unhid, and thou shalt eate th' Herb of th' Field,
In the sweat of thy Face shalt thou eate Bread,
Til thou return unto the ground . . .

For dust thou art, and shalt to dust returne.139

Emerson restated the belief that man's sinfulness brought natural evils upon him in his essay "Heroism." The essay is significant for its reassertion of the doctrine of original sin as well as for the assertion of the joint nature of sin; all are "stockholders" in the sin, he said. All must suffer, because all have had some share in the sin. Here he restated the Biblical idea that children are punished for the sins of their fathers. Moreover the suffering from natural evils was caused by a "certain ferocity in nature," which "had its inlet by human crime." The complete passage also indicates Emerson's awareness of evil in the world.

Life is a festival only to the wise. Seen from the nook and chimney-side of prudence, it wears a ragged and dangerous front. The violations of the laws of nature by our predecessors and our contemporaries are punished in us also. The disease and


deformity around us certify the infraction of natural, intellectual, and moral laws, and often violation upon violation to breed such compound misery. A lockjaw that bends a man's head back to his heels; hydrophobia that makes him bark at his wife and babes; insanity that makes him eat grass, war, plague, cholera, famine, indicate a certain ferocity in nature, which, as it had its inlet by human crime, must have its outlet by human suffering. Unhappily no man exists who has not in his own person become to some amount a stockholder in the sin, and so made himself liable to a share in the expiation. 110

The first sentence of the passage is an interesting refutation of those who call Emerson a naive optimist. Life is good only to the wise, only to those who are aware of the worst that it has to offer and the best. Having suffered the worst, one can evaluate it more correctly. Another necessary element in the wisdom is an awareness of the activity of the Supreme Goodness at work in the world.

It may be significant that there are relatively few references to the belief that natural evils are caused by sin, in the prose, as compared to the poetry. There are many comments in the poetry about the fatal dislocation between man and nature. In "Woodnotes" Emerson wrote of the beauty in nature. But man somehow is an "orphan and defrauded," no longer "rooted in the mighty Heart." In "The Sphinx" the poet suggested that man's sin has destroyed this relationship to nature, perhaps even ruined nature. The line is reminiscent of the line in Paradise Lost in which Jesus told Adam, "curs'd is the ground for thy sake . . ." 111 Emerson's version of the idea is, "He poisons the ground." 112 There are a number of lines in the first part of "Alphonso of Castile" suggesting that

111 Book X, 201.
112 Works, IX, 22.
nature's deterioration is a part of evil. "Things deteriorate in kind." Kind probably has here the older meaning of nature.

While Emerson advanced occasionally the belief that natural evil was caused by moral evil, the belief was not a prominent part of his thinking.

8. Blessed Are the Pure in Heart

Emerson's ultimate solution of the problem of evil lay in his belief in compensation. The doctrine of compensation is a restatement of two very old Christian ideas. One of these is the idea of rewards and punishments. The other is the belief in the inviolable government of the world by moral laws.

The Beatitudes constitute the clearest New Testament statement that the virtues of Christianity would be rewarded by God, either here on earth or hereafter. The need for such a faith is obvious; Christians were asked to practice virtues that might well keep them from obtaining the satisfactions of this world. The Beatitudes assert that the poor (in goods or spirit, depending on whether one consulted Luke or Matthew) the meek, the merciful, the pure in heart, and the peacemakers would be rewarded. Since the world believed in the early years of the Christian era, as it does still, that these qualities were not virtues, but weaknesses, it was necessary to reassure the followers of the Christian way that there was some kind of reward not recognized by the world. The rewards as described in Matthew were capable of being described as only to be found in the other world, or as fruits of the spirit that might be obtained in this world. Both kinds of rewards have been assumed by

1143 Tid., 25.
preachers and theologians across the years of Christian history.

A belief that there were rewards and punishments has been universally held by representatives of every point of view in Christianity. The deists of the eighteenth century felt that such a belief was a universal aspect of all religion. Practically every book concerned with religion that Emerson had access to discussed rewards and punishments.

Taylor devoted many pages to an explication of the Beatitudes in his life of Christ,144 and said much that Emerson restated in New England idiom. Taylor thought that the benefits would be both on earth and in heaven; Emerson made the doctrine largely, though not completely, a matter of the here and now. For Taylor, as for Emerson, the doctrine was a one way proposition, that is, the rewards were for the good, the punishments were for the evil. The doctrine was not a simple balance; it was loaded on the side of good. The person who violated the spiritual law lost the spiritual goods he might have; the person who obeyed the spiritual law might lose earthly goods, but he gained spiritual. Neither man ever asserted that there was compensation for violation of the law; there were only losses for those who gave up the spiritual goods of life. The doctrine was, to use a favorite Emersonian term, "prospective," and the prospect was upward.

A typical example of the doctrine as it appeared in Taylor may be cited.

The Christian religion, as it chooseth excellent ends, so it useth proportionate and apt means. The most contradictory accident in the world, when it becomes hallowed by pious and christian design, becomes a certain means of felicity and

144Taylor, Works, II, 401 ff.
content. To quit our lands for Christ's sake, will certainly make us rich; to depart from our friends, will increase our relations and beneficiaries; but the striving to secure our temporal interests by any other means than obedient actions or obedient sufferings is declared by the holy Jesus to be the greatest improvidence and ill husbandry in the world. Even in this world Christ will repay us an hundred fold for all our losses which we suffer for the interests of christianity. In the same proportion we find that all graces do the work of human felicities with a more certain power and infallible effect than their contraries: gratitude endears benefits, and procures more friendships: confession gets a pardon: impudence and lying doubles the fault, and exasperates the offended person: innocence is bold, and rocks a man asleep; but an evil conscience is a continual alarm.  

The doctrine appeared in the work of Barclay, who used the term recompense, "we cannot deny but that God, out of his infinite goodness, doth . . . recompense and reward the good works of his children."  

Robert South brought the fact of rewards and punishments frequently into his sermons. There is, he said,

an infinite, eternal, all-wise mind governing the affairs of the world, and taking such an account of the actions of men, as, according to the quality of them, to punish or reward them.  

South delighted in tracing out the punishments. The liar, for example, lost his credit, won the hatred of the deceived, and suffered "the last and utmost reward that shall infallibly reach the fraudulent and deceitful, a final and eternal separation from God . . ."  

John Smith's discussion of the doctrine anticipated Emerson in that he emphasized the compensation in the present. If a man did not know the

145 Ibid., 543.  
147 Robert South, Sermons, p. 269.  
148 Ibid., p. 259.
rewards of virtue in the present, he never would know them, Smith thought.

I wish there be not, among some, such a light and poor esteem of heaven, as makes more to seek after assurance of heaven only in the idea of it as a thing to come, than after heaven itself; which indeed, we can never well be assured of, until we find it rising up within ourselves and glorifying our own souls.  

The doctrine appeared in Milton, who used the term compensation, in the De Doctrina Christiana, "A compensation also is promised." Milton implied the same thing in the statements of Satan that the mind is its own place. This fact is illustrated negatively in a horrible fashion when Satan first entered Paradise. There, in the lovely new Garden of Eden, Satan was still in Hell. If the mind is its own place, then the hellish mind is still in hell when in heaven.

... for within him Hell
He brings and round about him, nor from Hell
One step no more then from himself can fly
By change of place ...  

Here again the doctrine is a one way road; it punishes the bad, and rewards the good; the process is never reversed. The obedient angels are in heaven wherever they are; the disobedient angels in hell wherever they are.

Among the most unpleasant characteristics of the eighteenth century, according to Dowden, was a tendency on the part of some religionists to make religion a matter of selfishness. Goodness was conceived of as insurance against hell. Dowden said that Dr. Harrison, a clergyman in Fielding's novel Amelia, accomplished the conversion of William Booth in

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149 John Smith, Select Discourses, p. 449.
150 Milton, Works, IV, 468.
151 Book IV, 20-23.
the novel by appealing to the selfishness of Booth. Dowden said that Fielding was correct in his comment on the religion of that day, a religion that "chooses rather to rely on its rewards and punishments than on that native beauty of virtue which some of the ancient philosophers thought proper to recommend to their disciples."\(^{152}\) Dowden said of the passage in Fielding, "The utilitarian argument for Christianity was never more nakedly stated."\(^{153}\) That Fielding's comment about the basic selfishness of much eighteenth century Christianity was justified may be determined by examining what has been called the most famous defense of orthodoxy in the eighteenth century,\(^{154}\) Butler's Analogy. It is full of the doctrine of rewards and punishments; the argument contains as much of the awe and mysterium tremendum of religion as a discussion with an insurance agent would. To Butler, by paying the premiums regularly, one might be assured of getting into the place of reward at the end of life. There are aspects of the discussion in Butler that Emerson may have preempted. Butler spoke of the fact that "Virtue must be the happiness and vice the misery of every creature,"\(^{155}\) a statement much like Emerson's "Vice is the soul's suicide."\(^{156}\) Butler believed emphatically in free will; one earned the reward or punishment as the case might be.

That Emerson objected to the eighteenth century interpretation of the doctrine as being basically selfish is indicated by a good deal of


\(^{153}\)Loc. cit.

\(^{154}\)William Kelley Wright, A Student's Philosophy of Religion, p. 188.

\(^{155}\)Butler, Analogy, p. 111.

\(^{156}\)Journals, II, 99.
Dowden related an anecdote from a sermon by Tillotson. The story was of a woman who went about with a pitcher in one hand, and a pan of coals in the other, and being asked what she meant to do with them, she answered, "with the one to burn heaven, and with the other to quench hell, that man might love God and virtue for their own sakes without hope of reward or fear of punishment."  

Dowden spoke of the appeals of the eighteenth century to all that is self-regarding in human nature, and ... their deadness to all that is loftiest in man--his passion for righteousness, his enthusiasm of self-surrender--we may come to regard the poor woman of the story as the genius of heroic piety ...  

Emerson read Tillotson, the source of the story, in 1824; he had withdrawn it from the Harvard library.  

His father had had the works of Tillotson. His father may have told him the story, or he may have read it himself. In any case, he knew the story, for he copied it in the Journals of 1861, with the comment, "My long sought story I find in Joinville, Histoire de Saint Louis."  

That the story described his attitude is seen by the introductory comments of the essay on compensation. He was motivated to write the essay by hearing a sermon. The sermon, as Emerson reported it, was reasonably faithful to the ideas described by Fielding and by Butler in his

157 Dowden, p. 338.
158 Loc. cit.
159 Cameron, Emerson's Reading, p. 109.
160 Cameron, Emerson the Essayist, II, 334.
161 Journals, IX, 339. See also Journals, VI, 209.
162 Works, II, 94.
The essay first described the sense of repugnance Emerson felt to the sermon; then he described the doctrine as it seemed to him. The doctrine of compensation should be understood as the reaction of Emerson's piety and selfless adoration to the selfish development of the doctrine of rewards and punishments in the eighteenth century. Emerson wrote in "The Preacher," "Christianity taught the capacity, the element, to love the All-perfect without a stingy bargain for personal happiness."\(^{163}\)

As always, however, Emerson went beyond. He made the doctrine applicable to the vicissitudes of ordinary life, in meaningful and realistic fashion. Jeremy Taylor had made an effort to do that, but he was not as thoroughgoing as Emerson. Emerson applied the idea to all the areas of life, economic relationships, differences in abilities, the weaknesses all men have, and the suffering of grief.

The second traditional Christian idea that contributed to Emerson's idea of compensation was the conviction that the world was governed by moral laws. Emerson's agreement and differences with Butler concerning the moral laws have been discussed.\(^{164}\) Emerson had profound faith in the self-executing moral laws. He felt the inviolability of the moral laws as firmly as any scientist ever felt the reliability of natural law. The idea of compensation is really an assertion that no man can violate the moral laws without injuring himself, and that no man can observe the moral laws without being spiritually enriched. The fact that the results of obedience or disobedience cannot be seen immediately did not disturb Emerson. The failures that seem to operate in the moral world Emerson

\(^{163}\) Works, X, 228.

\(^{164}\) See page 138.
would have accounted for by man's ignorance, and by the necessity of time to complete the process. He was like the scientist who believes his ignorance accounts for his inability to explain any of the phenomenon of the physical world that are presently unexplained by science.

Believing that the sovereignty of God operated through moral laws, as firmly as ever any Puritan believed in the sovereignty of God, Emerson could then appeal to the doctrine of compensation as an ultimate solution of the problem of evil. In this faith he was quite in accord with Paul who wrote in Romans, "We know that in everything God works for good with those who trust him... If God is for us, who is against us?" 165 Paul's qualification should be noted. Emerson, like Paul, did not believe that things worked for the good for everything, in all circumstances. "To the wise man," said Emerson, "Life is a festival." 166 Emerson's wisdom, as stated repeatedly in his writing, was the doctrine of self-reliance, or God-reliance. To the man who relied on God, all things worked for good. The concluding section of the essay "Compensation" described his conviction that even the death of one's closest intimates worked for good. He could see the value of the death of his brother Charles to the life of the girl Charles had intended to marry, Elizabeth Hoar. The essay described the results for the here and now. He did not know what the results were for Charles in the hereafter, but he was willing to trust the "immense intelligence" in whose "lap... we lie." 167 The attitude here described is surely the basic attitude taught by Christianity.

165 Romans 8: 28, 31.
166 Works, II, 248-249.
167 Works, II, 64.
Whatever the wisdom of the Almighty decrees must be good, even though men cannot understand it. In the words of Job, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him."168

Emerson's forbears had carried this attitude of abnegation before God to the extent of declaring that they would gladly be damned for the glory of God. Emerson himself was capable of expressions of pious devotion, quite as extreme as the statements of his ancestors. There are several passages in the essay, "The Sovereignty of Ethics", of passionate devotion. Here Emerson stated his self-sacrificial devotion almost as vigorously as did his Puritan forbears.

Wondrous state of man! never so happy as when he has lost all private interests and regards, and exists only in obedience and love of the Author.

The fiery soul [Mary Moody Emerson] said: "Let me be a blot on this fair world . . . with one proviso,—that I know it is his agency. I will love him though he shed frost and darkness on every way of mine!"

We perish, and perish gladly, if the law remains. I hope it is conceivable that a man may go to ruin gladly, if he see that thereby no shade falls on that he loves and adores. We need not always be stipulating for our clean shirt and roast joint per diem.169

The most vivid sense of the compensations to those who trust in the "great intelligence" came to Emerson through the mystic experiences that in definite but not extreme fashion, gave him a vivid sense of the presence of the great intelligence. Thus his own experience complemented the attitude taught him by the Christian tradition. He observed the world around him, and concluded that the traditional attitudes were correct, and through his mystical experiences had immediate acquaintance with the

168 Job 13: 15.
source of life.

9. Poetic Treatments of the Problem of Evil

Emerson's concern with the problem of evil appeared in almost every poem he wrote. A number of aspects of the attitude he adopted toward evil have already been illustrated by excerpts from the poetry. He attempted on all of the significant occasions of life to catch the feeling of the moment in poetry. There are a number of poems in the Journals expressing the vicissitudes he experienced. During his stay in Florida, he wrote several poetic fragments expressing his loneliness and his fear of death.\textsuperscript{170} He made several attempts to give his grief for Ellen poetic embodiment;\textsuperscript{171} none of these can be called successful efforts. Probably he was too close to the event.

The poet's awareness of evil, both natural and moral, the fatal dislocation between man and nature appeared in many of the poems. The fact of the sinfulness of all men, that there is no man in the world, is symbolized by the emptiness of the horizon, in "Woodnotes."

\begin{center}
To thee the horizon shall express
But emptiness on emptiness;
There lives no man of Nature's worth
In the circle of the earth;\textsuperscript{172}
\end{center}

The poet finds the contrast between the magnificence of Nature and the worthlessness of actual man hard to accept.

\begin{center}
And to thine eyes the vast skies fall,
Dire and satirical
\end{center}

\textsuperscript{170} Journals, II, 179 ff.
\textsuperscript{171} Journals, II, 367, 394.
\textsuperscript{172} Works, IX, 55.
On clucking hens and prating fools,
On thieves, on drudges and on dolls.
And thou shalt say to the Most High,
"Godhead! all this astronomy,
And fate and practice and invention,
Strong art and beautiful pretension,
This radiant pomp of sun and star,
Throes that were, and worlds that are,
Behold! were in vain and in vain;--
It cannot be,--I will look again.
Surely now will the curtain rise,
And earth's fit tenant me surprise;--
But the curtain doth not rise,
And Nature has miscarried wholly
Into failure, into folly."173

In the poem "Monadnock," the poet complains that living on the mountain
with all the inspiring mountain scenery has not made man good; instead the poet
found in the mountains only men so poor that he exclaimed.

Is yonder squalid peasant all
That this proud nursery could breed
For God's vicegerency and stead?174

If the product of such natural beauty can be no better, the mountains and
the men might as well be destroyed.

... if the brave old mould is broke,
And end in churls the mountain folk
In tavern cheer and tavern joke
Sink, 0 mountain, in the swamp!
Hide in thy skies, 0 sovereign lamp!
Perish like leaves, the highland breed
No sire survive, no son succeed!175

There is a similar note of disappointment with the mountain folk in
the "Ode."

The God who made New Hampshire
Taunted the lofty land
With little men;—176

173 Ibid., 55-56.
174 Ibid., 62.
175 Ibid., 64.
176 Ibid., 77.
The poems suggest the solutions to the problem of evil considered in the prose. The idea of free will appears infrequently in the poetry; it is implied but rarely stated explicitly. Other solutions appear more frequently. The value of adversity, that life is a testing period is a theme that runs through many of the poems. The poem "Heroism" has already been cited. Another short poem devoted to this theme is the quatrain "Northman." It is a vivid illustration of the conception.

The gale that wrecked you on the sand,
It helped my rowers to row;
The storm is my best galley hand
And drives me where I go.177

The quatrain "Power" is another poetic statement of the disciplinary value of adversity.

Cast the bantling on the rocks,
Suckle him with the she-wolf's teat
Wintered with the hawk and fox,
Power and speed be hands and feet.178

He wrote in the fragmentary "The Poet," of the process by which God prepared the poet.

Not his the feaster's wine,
Nor land, nor gold, nor power,
By want and pain God screeneth him
Till his elected hour.179

That poverty has its values, and is a part of the divine plan for men was stated in the couplet from "Woodnotes."

God fills the scrip and canister,
Sin piles the loaded board.180

177Ibid., 293.
178Ibid., 295.
179Ibid., 327.
180Ibid., 49.
He wrote in "Monadnac" lines that combined the disciplinary value of evil, with the necessity of taking the long view, and with the assertion of man's ignorance. "The World-soul knows his own affair." The implication is that men do not; men should not attempt to advise God.

The World-soul knows his own affair,
Forelooking when he would prepare
For the next ages, men of mould
Well embodied, well ensouled,
He cools the present's fiery glow,
Sets the life pulse strong but slow:
Bitter winds and fasts austere
His quarantines and grottoes, where
He slowly cures decrepit flesh,
And brings it infantile and fresh.
Toil and tempest are the toys
And games to breathe his stalwart boys;
They hide their time, and well can prove
If need were, their line from Jove; 181

The necessity of taking the long view, the appeal to time as the great redresser of all wrongs appeared in the couplet:

I will wait Heaven's perfect hour
Through the innumerable years. 182

His faith that the hour would arrive is stated in the poem "Worship."

This is he men miscall Fate,
Threading dark ways, arriving late,
But ever coming in time to crown
The truth, and hurl wrong doers down. 183

The poem reminds the reader of man's ignorance in the phrase "dark ways."

In the poem "Cupido," with an allusion to the blind classical deity, Emerson insisted that the

solid, solid universe
Is pervious to Love; 184

181 Ibid., 65-66.
182 Ibid., 355.
183 Ibid., 280.
184 Ibid., 257.
The poet insisted that the power of love would reconcile "God's and Satan's brood." The poem admits the poet's ignorance, for reconciliation will be done by "mystic wiles." The word mystic here means mysterious, or unknown.

The poem "The Sphinx" is not well unified; it is primarily a consideration of the problem of evil. The poem contains assertions of the goodness of nature in verses three, four, and five. Man, however, is sinful; he has poisoned the ground. A figurative Mother Nature asks, in the poem why man has sinned, "Who... has turned my child's head?" Why is there evil in the world? The poem answers the question first with an assertion of the illusiveness of time and the eventual victory of love.

Deep love lieth under
These pictures of time
They fade in the light of
Their meaning sublime.\textsuperscript{185}

But the fullest answer is contained in the verse that follows. Here the theme is essentially the same as the idea of Plotinus that the chief desire of the emanations that flow from the Creator, is to return to him. The creatures can never be satisfied in isolation from the Creator. O'Neill illustrated this negation in \textit{The Hairy Ape}; even a muscular stoker cannot be happy on the level of animal life. When the stoker tried to return to the animal, the gorilla killed him. Augustine's version of the idea is perhaps the best statement. Augustine said, "Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our souls are restless, until they find their rest in Thee."\textsuperscript{186}

Emerson wrote,

\textsuperscript{185} Ibid., 22.
\textsuperscript{186} The Confessions, Book I, Chapter I.
The fiend that man harries
Is love of the Best;
Yawns the pit of the Dragon
Lit by rays of the Blest
The Lethe of Nature
Can't trance him again,
Whose soul sees the perfect,
Which his eyes seek in vain.187

The imagery used in Francis Thompson's "Hound of Heaven" is similar to the imagery of the first two lines here. Thompson also conceived of God as a fiend pursuing man, in the form of a great hound. In both cases the idea is completely orthodox; all Christianity has assumed that man only finds God when God seeks man.

That man can never be satisfied with natural goods is stated in the lines, "The Lethe of Nature can't trance him again." The vision is an eternal one; it can't be seen with the physical eyes.

There is a reference in the poem to the "fortunate fall" implied by Milton and stated by Baxter.

Pride ruined the angels,
Their shame them restores;
Lurks the joy that is sweetest
In stings of remorse.188

There is an amusing and satirical treatment of the problem of evil in the poem, "Alphonso of Castile." There are several references to the Spanish king in the Journals and Works.189 These suggest that Emerson associated a certain pessimism concerning man with the king. In 1851, he described the low level of the life of his contemporaries, then remarked that, "Alphonso of Castile, it is too plain, was not consulted;

187 Works, IX, 22-23.
188 Ibid., 23.
189 Works, III, 238; Journals, VII, 180.
might have given good advice.\textsuperscript{190} The good advice that the king would have given apparently is that since the earth is overcrowded and excellency too limited, nine men out of ten should be killed. Emerson intimated in the Journals that many men did not deserve to live; "I see persons whom I think the world would be richer for losing."\textsuperscript{191} In the essay on "Fate,"\textsuperscript{192} Emerson wrote that most men and most women are "merely a couple more," that in too many of them "digestion and sex absorb the vital force . . . The more of these drones perish, the better for the hive."\textsuperscript{193}

While Emerson cannot have meant the poem literally, there is an under-current of seriousness. The poem was written with such dry humor and such serious attention to detail that the satirical effect may escape the reader who does not notice the humor under the New England reserve.

That the poem is devoted to a consideration of the problem of evil is indicated by the series of images with which the first section is filled. In addition to the natural discords suggested by the imagery of "Lemons run to leaves and rind," "meagre crops of figs and limes," the weakened sun, blotted by imps with a spot, bleached roses, dry goats and the inferior men, "the pale, scrawny fisher fools," the poet cited the fact that "Lisbon quakes" as a symbol of the problem that the poem will consider.\textsuperscript{194} The Lisbon earthquake was part of the material used in the

\textsuperscript{190} Journals, VII, 180.
\textsuperscript{191} Journals, V, 375.
\textsuperscript{192} Works, VI, 1 ff.
\textsuperscript{193} Ibid., 11.
\textsuperscript{194} Ibid., 25.
great series of debates in the eighteenth century over the goodness of God, participated in by Leibnitz, and Voltaire.

The poet then considered a possible solution to the question using his favorite imagery of influx. In this poem the conveyer of the animating and vivifying "virtu" is water. The poet asks, "Say, Seignors, are the old Niles dry?" The question is appropriate, since if God is the source of power, man's lack of it must somehow be caused by God. In view of the "general debility," the poet says that man is

Immensely curious whether you
Still are rulers, or Mildew.

With his usual carelessness in the use of capitals, Emerson capitalized the wrong word, for the term "rulers", indicating Deity, not the word "Mildew", or the absence of power, should have been capitalized.

The poet then indicates, through the king of Spain, appropriate concern on the part of the earthly ruler of Spain for the eternal Ruler.

I, a king, for kings can feel.

With immense irony the poet indicates that the king of Spain feels that the king of the universe needs some advice. He has long pondered the problem. Since he is called Alphonso the Wise, he doesn't hesitate to give advice to the eternal Masters. "Ye shall not fail for sound advice."

"I have thought it thoroughly over."

His advice consists of the warning that apparently the masters of the universe have tried to cut too large a swath, and exceeded their power.

Hear you then, celestial fellows!
Fits not to be overzealous.

Since the immortal sources of vivifying power seem to be running dry perhaps the nameless powers ought to plant a smaller crop. Then it would
not need so much juice to irrigate it and keep it alive.

Men and gods are too extense;
Could you slacken and condense?
Your rank overgrowths reduce
Til your kinds abound with juice?

Since the crop is already planted and not doing too well, perhaps the
great planter ought to thin out the excess.

Earth crowded, cries, 'Too many men!'
My counsel is, kill nine in ten,
And bestow the shares of all
On the remnant decimal.

If each man had ten times the power, ten times the length of life, then
he might cope with the "labors he must dare." And then, triumphantly,
the king of Spain tells the eternal kings,

So shall ye have a man of the sphere
Fit to grace the solar year.

The poem has several significant implications. It is another re-
assertion of the shortcomings of actual man, his "fatal dislocation" from
nature. On this level the poet is half serious in his feeling that many
men do not deserve to live. It is also, perhaps subconsciously, an accusa-
tion that Deity is weak. Deity is held responsible for the "pale scrawny,
fisher fools."

The poem is also a recasting of the Job myth. Here is another example
of traditional and Biblical ideas clothed in motley, or in Ulich's words,
the poem is an effort to restate the old Hebrew myths in a modern idiom.¹⁹⁵
Job's questioning of God was quite sincere; Job insisted that God had not
dealt with him justly. He protested his innocence, and the lack of justice
in the treatment that God had given him, very vigorously. Perhaps sub-
consciously, Emerson has written a Job-like questioning of God's power.

¹⁹⁵Ulich, p. 314.
The second section of the poem constitutes a direct accusation that God no longer has the power to maintain men.

Say Seignoors, are the old Nile dry,
Which fed the veins of earth and sky . . .

The last two lines of the section contain perhaps his greatest impertinence, in the question whether God is still ruler or mildew. The questioning of God, however, is softened by being cast in the form of satire, so that the poet points out the stupidity of any person, king or ordinary mortal, thinking he is wise enough to counsel God. In this respect the poem is another form of Emerson's distrust of rational approaches to religion. It is an assertion of the doubtful wisdom of any effort to explain the problem of evil.

The poem "Threnody" contains Emerson's statement of his grief and of his sense of reconciliation for the death of his son, Waldo. It has already been shown that certain aspects of the poem are in accord with the ideas expressed by Jeremy Taylor. Here the poet's consolation may be discussed, in order to see the poem's many parallels with orthodox Christianity.

After an extended statement of the poet's grief at the loss of the child, the comforting voice of "the deep Heart" spoke to him. The first comment made by the voice is that the child's death was for the best.

Worthier cause for passion wild
If I had not taken the child.

Taylor had insisted that a parent must not grieve for a dead child because the Christian must assume that death is best for the child.

196 Works, IX, 148-158.
197 See pages 239-242.
In the lines that follow there is apparently a reference to Milton, and the lesson learned from the blind poet.

Taught he not thee—the man of eld,  
Whose eyes within his eyes beheld  
Heaven's numerous hierarchy span  
The mystic gulf from God to man?\(^{198}\)

The lesson taught by the "man of eld" is that the world is full of love, "worlds of lovers hem thee in," and that in the final "tomorrow" when all the masks of illusion fall, the "pure shall see."

There is a reference to the ineffable experience of the mystic,

I taught thy heart beyond the reach  
Of ritual, bible, or of speech;\(^{199}\)

The experience cannot be described; it is the "incommunicable," "past utterance and past belief."

The voice agrees with the grieving father that the child was indeed a child of God, with "joyful eye," "Innocence," and "lovely locks." The voice warned the poet that he should not have expected such a guest to live with him forever. Each personality must obey the law of its own development.

Would rushing life forget her laws  
Fate's glowing revolution pause?\(^{200}\)

As Jeremy Taylor had suggested, God must intend good to those who die. The voice reminded the poet that the "higher gifts" require death. The implication seems to be the standard Christian one, that souls never arrive at perfection here; the highest development can only come in the

\(^{198}\) Works, IX, 154.  
\(^{199}\) Ibid., 155.  
\(^{200}\) Ibid., 156.
other world. A faith that death brings good to those who die requires a "diviner guess." With that "diviner guess", a kind of heavenly wisdom, or the reason, the father can be sure that:

... my higher gifts unbind
The zone that girds the incarnate mind. 201

When the possibilities of human development are exhausted,

When the scanty shores are full
With Thought's perilous whirling pool;
When frail Nature can no more, 202

then comes death. Nature should probably not have been capitalized here, since it refers to human nature, not God, and not to the sum total of all created things.

The speaker, Deity in actuality, but unnamed, announced that it had been his servant, Death, who had come for the child. To assume that God was the cause of the death of the child was simply to express the conviction of Christians of almost every point of view. Passages have been cited from the works of Thomas Shepherd,203 Jeremy Taylor,204 Peter Bulkley,205 and Archibald Alison,206 illustrating this conviction.

In the lines that follow the poet is audacious enough to assert that the action of God in causing the child to die had been the action of Love.

Wilt thou freeze love's tidal flow,
Whose streams through Nature circling go?

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201 Loc. cit.
202 Loc. cit.
203 See pages 222-223.
204 See pages 210-211.
205 See page 252.
206 See pages 144-145.
The poet is then reprimanded by God for his effort to restrict the plans and love of God to finite human flesh.

Wilt thou transfix and make it none?
Its onward force too starkly pent
In figure, bone, and lineament?

The poet is reprimanded further in words reminiscent of Job, who had the effrontery to question God.

Wilt thou, uncalled, interrogate
Talker! the unreplying Fate?207

He is told to wait to see the "genius of the whole," not to beckon God when to come and go. The body is fair, but "magic built." In Christian terms the body was made out of nothing, ex nihilo; or in Platonic terms, the body is illusion, fading as quickly as a lovely rose. But in contrast to the reason that dwells in the body, the body ceases to be important.

Fair the soul's recess and shrine
Magic-built to last a season;
Masterpiece of love benign
Fairer that expansive reason
Whose omen 'tis and sign.208

It is interesting to notice that the poet then appeals to tradition; all human experience teaches, he said, that the good is eternal. Here Emerson stated the basic faith of Christianity, that God is the creator and continued conserver of all that is deemed good. Brightman asserted his conviction that the basis of all religion is the axiom of the conservation of values.209 Thus, Emerson's catholicity reached beyond the

207 Works, IX, 157.
208 Loc. cit.
209 Brightman, p. 81.
Christian to include the first article of belief of all religion.

Verdict which accumulates
From lengthening scroll of human fates
Voice of earth to earth returned
Prayers of saints that inly burned,—
Saying, What is excellent,
As God lives, is permanent;
Hearts are dust, hearts' loves remain;
Heart's love will meet thee again.210

In the concluding passage of the poem, Emerson struck briefly a note that characterized the last line of Milton's Lycidas,210a

Tomorrow to fresh Woods, and Pastures new.

A death cannot be allowed to prevent one from continuing his usual responsibilities. One must "Revere the maker;" the "blasphemy of grief" must cease. Heaven is built, not of "adamant and gold" but of "virtue reaching to its aims."

The poem concludes with a statement of one of the unifying themes of the Old Testament, that God is actively at work in the world, redeeming it from sin and evil—"Broadsowing, bleak and void to bless". There is the familiar note of man's ignorance, "Silent rushes the swift Lord;" men do not hear him. There is a final reference to Paradise Lost or to the Old Testament, and the concluding line is a statement of the piety that this thesis has called Augustinian. The poem rises to its emotional and intellectual climax in the affirmation of faith in the conservation of the good. After a brief injunction that men must continue to work in the face of sorrow the poet concludes with an affirmation of faith in the work of God; the final note is a reminder that one day the poet and all men will die. That day is not to be dreaded; it will bring union with God.

210 Works, IX, 157.
Silent rushes the swift Lord
Through ruined systems still restored
Broadening, bleak and void to bless,
Plants with worlds the wilderness;
Waters with tears of ancient sorrow
Apples of Eden ripe tomorrow.
House and tenant go to ground,
Lost in God, in Godhead found.211

"Uriel" was apparently a poetic version of Emerson's experience as a result of giving the Divinity School Address.212 That the poem was in part influenced by Paradise Lost is corroborated by the notes to the poem made by Edward Emerson, who said,

From boyhood, Emerson was familiar with Paradise Lost, and Uriel, the bright Archangel of the Sun, who could best see the vast orbits, the returns and compensations, the harmony and utter order of the universe,—God in all.213

Edward Emerson was not always a reliable commentator; he believed that to assert that good comes out of evil is to assert a heresy, from Christian standards.214 He was, however, surely right in seeing Paradise Lost as a contributing influence to "Uriel." Jorgenson has asserted that Emerson's attitude toward the problem of evil was practically identical with the attitude adopted by Milton. Jorgenson believed that Emerson and Milton held fundamentally the same attitude toward the beneficence of the universe, toward the omnipotence of God, and toward freedom of the will in man. Jorgenson concluded his discussion by saying,

In summary fashion, then it is my belief that Emerson's attitude toward evil has been shown to resemble essentially that

211 Ibid., 158.
212 Editor's note on "Uriel," Works, IX, 408-409.
213 Loc. cit.
214 Works, X, Note, p. 553.
of Milton... Milton and Emerson believed in a Beneficent Deity whose unchanging laws lead to happiness if obeyed, and those laws if transgressed bring immediate retribution, that evil results from a disproportion of passion in life, private or politic, and thus is fragmentary and privative, and that man has freedom of will to choose between this life of reason and the lure of the senses, the resultant being a clash between the two principles and a continual struggle for inner repose. This aspiration of Milton and Emerson to ascend to an inner heaven of peace and serenity is forever the driving force which motivates mankind... 215

The evidence accumulated in this thesis indicates the accuracy of Jorgenson's conclusion. It is possible that Emerson grew less sure of the extent of man's freedom as the years passed, as McGiffert pointed out. 216 Probably Emerson was less impressed by the fact of man's freedom than by the fact of the omnipotence of God. Milton probably was more convinced of the place of freedom than was Emerson. It is, however, the moralist who is most impressed by man's freedom. The mystic is more impressed by God's power; it seems probable that the mystic took precedence over the moralist in Emerson.

The poetry that seemed by the attention it won to be the most powerful, is devoted to the omnipotency of God's goodness, not to the possibilities of human development. Emerson, like Milton, was impressed by the horror of sin and evil; it is unnecessary to labor the point further. But he was convinced, like Milton, that though the devil was loose in the world, his best efforts would produce only his own confusion.

215 Chester E. Jorgenson, "Emerson's Paradise under the Shadow of the Swords," Philological Quarterly, XI (1932), 274-292. Carpenter dissented from Jorgenson's conclusion. Carpenter's discussion is brief and not entirely consistent. He said, however, that Emerson's interpretation of evil was not orthodox. (Emerson Handbook, p. 147).

216 McGiffert, Young Emerson Speaks, p. 253, n. 10.
The passage in "Uriel" that has occasioned most difficulty is cited here.

Line in nature is not found;
Unit and universe are round;
In vain produced, all rays return
Evil will bless, and ice will burn.217

Emerson here expressed his faith in a monistic universe. The unity of the world is a unity of truth, goodness and beauty. The overflowing godhead who creates the world does so, out of his never ending creativity. But all rays return, all souls return, are driven back by the ardor of their desires to Godhead. They were produced in vain, for they are restless till they return. In this unified world of truth, goodness, and beauty, all things work together for good. The devil's efforts only serve to bring, in Milton's words,

   Infinite goodness, grace, and mercy shewn
   On Man by him seduced ... 218

Most firmly convinced of this, Emerson, therefore, asserted that;

"Evil will bless, ice will burn."

The poem "Brahma"219 stated the ultimate resolution of the mystic who seeks to be united with "the Best." The poem demonstrated Emerson's ability on occasion to use traditional forms and rhyme scheme; its imagery is the most striking part of the poem. The poem asserts that all that happens is finally the result of God's will. It was traditionally accepted that every act of man was enabled to be successfully carried out,

217 Works, IX, 116.
219 Works, IX, 195.
whether for good or evil, by the strength afforded him by God. This was the doctrine of *concursus dei*. It should be noticed that the speaker in the poem is not man, but God.

If the red slayer think he slays,

God may well say in great irony to a murderer, You may think you are doing your will; actually you are carrying out my will. Milton made God speak with irony of Sin and Death in *Paradise Lost*, after they had made the broad way from Hell to earth.

See with what heat these Dogs of Hell advance
To waste and havoc yonder World, which I
So fair and good created, and had still
Kept in that state, had not the folly of Man
Let in these wasteful Furies, who impute
Folly to mee, so doth the Prince of Hell
And his adherents, that with so much ease
I suffer them to enter and possess
A place so heav'ny, and conniving seem
To gratifie my scornful Enemies,
That laugh ............... .

And know not that I call'd and drew them thither
My Hell-hounds, to lick up the draff and filth
Which man's polluting Sin with taint hath shed
On what was pure ....... 

In the next line of the poem, there is an assurance of immortality,

Or if the slain think he is slain,

The second couplet of the first stanza strikes the note of human ignorance, and of the mysterious ways in which God works his wonders.

They know not well the subtle ways,
I keep and pass and turn again.

How a murder turns out to be good, men do not know. But Emerson's faith in the sovereignty of goodness was so great he had no doubts.

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221 Book X, 616-626, 629-632.
The second verse reminds the reader that all time is present time to God, that all space is immediately present to God. He is omnipresent; His eternity is always Now. Just as time and space are human illusions so are fame and shame. Human wisdom is folly to God; God laughs at the "vanished gods" of men.

Far or forgot to me is near;
Shadow and sunlight are the same;
The vanished gods to me appear;
And one to me are shame and fame.

The third verse reaffirms the omnipresence; the very strength for Satan's rebellion came from God, as C. S. Lewis has remarked. "Throughout the poem (Paradise Lost) Satan is engaged in sawing off the branch he is sitting on . . . a creature rebelling against a creator is rebelling against the very source of his own powers—including even the power to revolt." 222

They reckon ill who leave me out;
When me they fly, I am the wings;
I am the doubter and the doubt,
And I the hymn the Brahmin sings.

The final verse contains a reference to Hindu mythology; its chief significance is the promise of the immediate presence of God to those who seek him. Here again is a note of Emerson's rebellion against eighteenth century religious selfishness. Men are not to be good in order to get into heaven. They are to be good in order to enjoy the immediate presence of God. Virtue was always to Emerson an aspect of Deity that aroused his deepest emotions. He believed literally that only the pure in heart would see God; they did not need to wait till after death for that experience. Goodness in the here and now was to him the only mean-

222 C. S. Lewis, A Preface to Paradise Lost, p. 94.
ingful kind of goodness. In a way he was like Jeremy Taylor, who did not believe in the efficacy of deathbed repentance. Taylor thought the person must find God in the now; if he waited until his deathbed, Taylor thought he never would be united with the Deity. The last lines of the poem are a parallel to the story told by Tillotson, of the woman who wanted to get rid of heaven and hell, so men would be good for love of virtue's sake. In short, Emerson here affirmed that one need not rely on promises of future bliss; one could find heaven in the here and now.

But thou, meek lover of the good!
Find me and turn thy back on heaven.

The chapter has shown Emerson's own personal acquaintance with evil, and the strength he developed as a result of his experiences. It has also shown that Emerson accepted the standard Christian solutions to the problem of evil. He believed that sin was caused by man, the result of his having been created with freedom to serve God, or to serve the lesser deities of self, sex, money or knowledge. Much of the natural evil in the world seemed valuable character training to Emerson. But he believed that man's ignorance and the shortness of man's life kept him from understanding the necessity of what seemed, in the short run, to be evil. Emerson felt that possibly man's sinfulness was responsible for natural evil, the disjunction between man and nature. In the last analysis, however, life was not tragic to him; the Divine Goodness, he felt, was unconquerable. One could know that Goodness here by being good. To the man who tasted that immortal liquor, all earthly troubles faded into oblivion.
1. Definition and Distinction

A discussion of Emerson's mysticism should begin with a definition of the term mysticism. While the term mystical is used frequently as a synonym for the mysterious or the occult, in philosophy of religion it is used to refer to the claim of an experience of the immediate presence of God. Brightman defined it in these words, "By mysticism is meant the direct experience of what is believed to be divine reality, as contrasted with intellectual belief in religion, or moral devotion to religious causes."¹ Brightman accepted William James's description of the traits of the mystical experience. These are (1) Ineffable, that is, it cannot be described in words. In this, it is like such sense qualities as yellow or sweet. (2) Noetic, that is, it is a knowledge claim, affirming insight or illumination. (3) Transient, with an inevitable sense of unhappiness at the cessation of the experience. The dark night of the soul is the term used by mystics to describe the experience of separation from the Deity. (4) Passive. Although the mystic may follow a more or less rigorous preparation, the experience itself brings the sense of being grasped by an external power. "The swift Lord rushes on," said Emerson.

Pratt, author of one of the standard textbooks in psychology of religion, defined mysticism in agreement with Brightman, but made explicit

¹A Philosophy of Religion, p. 69.
an important distinction between the mild form of this experience and the extreme form.² St. Theresa was an example of a mystic falling into the extreme category, according to Pratt. Pratt believed that the mild form of the experience is more prevalent than the extreme form. He listed as typical examples of mild mystics St. Augustine and Francois de Sales.

The mild form of the experience may be described as the more or less emotionally intense awareness of the immediate presence of some overwhelming beauty or goodness or truth, which is so immediate and convincing that the subject abandons himself to the values which he is experiencing. The experience combines emotional gratification with the fact of a claim to knowledge. Whatever has been experienced is known as self-authenticating. The beauty or goodness or truth is not dependent on logic or external moral standards.

2. Historical Sources

The fountainhead of mysticism in the Christian world is the New Testament; Rufus Jones's article in the Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics contains an excellent summary of the nature of mysticism as it appears in the New Testament. Christ's own personal experience, as depicted in the Gospels, is "the supreme model of true mystical experience."³ Among the aspects of Christ's experience as Jones described it were the "warmth and intimacy of direct fellowship with God," and the fact that

²The Religious Consciousness, pp. 337-362.
³Rufus M. Jones, "Mysticism (Christian, NT)," Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, IX, p. 89.
his ethical ideals were "inherently bound up with his prayer experience." In view of Emerson's Unitarianism it is significant to note that Jones's summary is consistent with the possibility of regarding Jesus as a model, or example, rather than mediator.

Jones has pointed out that mysticism is found in the letters of Paul. Paul was led, according to Jones, by the mystical strand in Christianity to expect a direct personal experience of the divine Presence. For him, "To live is Christ," which means, according to Jones, that to live a "life of real spiritual significance is to partake of the divine nature, appropriate it in formation of a 'new Man,' and live, both in joy and in suffering, a kind of life, which, like Christ's, reveals God."5

Jones believed that the Johannine literature was more influential in maintaining the mystic element in Christianity than any other New Testament material. The influence of the Johannine literature was great because John, not personally as mystical as Paul, did give specific theological formulation to the mystical impulse. He did this by adopting the Platonic metaphysics, and by affirming that in Christ is the life of real and eternal order. The invisible world, in short, became the "true," or "real" world.

The fundamental metaphysics, therefore, upon which Christian mysticism is founded, according to Jones, is "the Greek rationalistic metaphysics formulated by Socrates and his great successors, Plato, Aristotle, and Plotinus."6 The chief characteristic of that metaphysic, Jones thought,

4 Loc. cit.
5 Loc. cit.
was "the Oneness and Changelessness of God," a fact that could not be seen, felt, known, or named; it was somehow experienced as something divine in the human soul, and given many names.\(^7\)

The conscripting of Greek thought to the service of Christianity has already been shown. Clement and Origen are regarded by the writer of Catholic mysticism, J. Chapman, as among the traditional mystics and teachers of mysticism. Augustine, however, is the most important of the church fathers, as a source of mysticism, as Harnack has suggested.\(^8\)

Augustine's influence was great both because of his use of the Platonic metaphysics, and because of his own mysticism, as shown in the Confessions.

His spirit sways the pietists and mystics of those ages, St. Bernard no less than Thomas à Kempis . . . without him, Luther is not to be understood.\(^9\)

Luther's revival of Augustinian ways of thought as a major strand of Protestantism need not be restated. That Luther was a source of mysticism in Protestantism has been pointed out frequently. Ralph Barton Perry quoted an expression of Luther's that contains the theological basis of mysticism in the Protestant tradition.

No one can understand God's word, unless he has had it directly from the Holy Spirit and no one has it unless he experiences and is conscious of it.\(^10\)

This meant, according to Perry, that the religious experience of the individual became of first importance. "Rare moments of mystical exaltation were not reserved for the elite," but were to be in the everyday

\(^7\)Loc. cit.

\(^8\)Adolf Harnack, Monasticism, p. 120.

\(^9\)Ibid., p. 124.

\(^10\)Ralph Barton Perry, Puritanism and Democracy, p. 89. See also J. L. Neve, A History of Christian Thought, II, 47.
religion of the common man.  

Chapman made a useful distinction between the mystical experience and the doctrines of mysticism. This distinction is useful; as Jones indicated, the most influential literature concerning mysticism may not have been compiled by a mystic. Martin Luther's religious experience had a strong mystical element. Calvin originated nothing; he transmitted and systematized the ideas developed by Luther. It is ironic that Calvin, the legalist, should have transmitted a system of thought that was inherently mystical.

Emerson's knowledge of the literature of mysticism was thorough. He knew the Bible, Platonic and Neo-Platonic thought, the history of Christianity, and much of the literature produced by the mystics themselves. He probably knew Clement and Origen only through the lives of the fathers; he had read Augustine, however, and quoted him and referred to him in the Journals and Works. His knowledge of Luther has already been pointed out.

Emerson had read of and appreciated Jacob Boehme, the early seventeenth century German mystic. Christy recognized the influence of Boehme and Eckhart on Emerson, and said, "Christian mysticism did emphatically influence Emerson." Emerson knew of Pascal, the seventeenth

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11 Perry, pp. 89-90.
12 Chapman, loc. cit.
13 Works, II, 106, 301; Journals, V, 199; VI, 218.
14 See pages 184-185.
15 Journals, III, 524-525.
16 Christy, The Orient in American Transcendentalism, pp. 79-84.
century French philosopher, mathematician, and mystic, and quoted a significant statement concerning religion made by him. Emerson's version is influenced by his distinction between the reason and the understanding but he is essentially in accord with Pascal's idea. Pascal said, "the heart has its reasons which reason does not know." In his essay on worship, Emerson wrote as a quotation, without giving the source, "The heart has its arguments, with which the understanding is not acquainted."

Patrick F. Quinn, in an article denying that Emerson was a mystic, did express his recognition that Emerson knew the literature of mysticism. The mystics gave Emerson, however, according to Quinn, only a number of metaphors, not mysticism. It is possible to teach the doctrines, and use the terminology of mysticism, without being a mystic. However, Christy and Carpenter have defended forcefully the assertion that Emerson was a mystic. Carpenter quoted an unpublished doctoral dissertation demonstrating that Emerson was a mystic; the thesis, said Carpenter, indicated the parallelism between Emerson's experiences and those of the traditional mystics.

18Works, VI, 217.
20Quinn, loc. cit.
21Christy, pp. 79-84.
24Carpenter, Emerson Handbook, p. 117.
Emerson had access to a fairly complete discussion of mysticism in the Reminiscences of Charles Butler. Emerson withdrew the book from the Harvard Divinity School Library in 1828. It was written by an English Roman Catholic, Butler, who defended the Roman position politely, but vigorously, in a reply to the anti-Catholic Book of the Church, by Southey. Butler discussed a number of English divines from his point of view, including Barrow, Taylor, and others.

Butler's definition of mysticism is a typical one; it indicates a Roman Catholic precedent for Emerson's speaking of the self as becoming God. "Mysticism is defined to be, an union of the soul with God; so intimate, that its essence is, in a manner, transformed into the essence of God." Butler discussed mysticism in the New Testament, in the lives of the early fathers (Ignatius, Clement, Dionysus the Areopagite, St. John) and medieval mystics (Bernard, Aquinas, Tauler, commended by Luther, St. Theresa, St. Francis of Sales, and Fenelon). Butler discussed Protestant mysticism sympathetically; he described as English mystics Jeremy Taylor, Henry More, and John Norris. Butler cited as a typical mystical passage the following from Jeremy Taylor.

It is a prayer of quietness and silence and a meditation extraordinary, a discourse without variety, a vision and institution of divine excellencies, and immediate entry into an orb of light, and a resolution of all our faculties into sweetness, affections, and gazings upon the divine beauty: and is carried on to the ecstasies, raptures, suspensions, elevations,

25 London, 1824.
26 Cameron, Emerson's Reading, p. 62.
abstractions, and apprehensions beatifical.\(^{28}\)

Butler quoted Mosheim's *Ecclesiastical History*, a book familiar to Emerson, while discussing Quaker mysticism. The quotation would have lent further weight to Emerson's conviction concerning the unity of all men. That "there is concealed in the minds of all men, a spark of the same wisdom that exists in the Supreme Being... is... the fundamental doctrine of Quakerism."\(^{29}\)

3. Emerson's Mysticism

Emerson's knowledge of mysticism is shown by many passages in his writings. There is a striking reference to mysticism in "The Oversoul" where he gives an accurate description of the experience.\(^{30}\) In this passage he distinguished between the mild and extreme forms of the experience. He criticized the extreme mystics for their "tendency to insanity," a sound criticism of the delusions that sometimes accompany the extreme form of the experience. The essay on Swedenborg contains further criticism of the abnormality that accompanied extreme mysticism.\(^{31}\) Emerson felt, however, that the milder form of the experience, which he called a "tendency to enthusiasm" was a widespread characteristic of religion, and one that was essential for meaningful religion. The passage also related mysticism to Socrates, Plotinus, Porphyry, Paul, Behmen, Fox and Swedenborg, as well as to the revivals of Calvinistic churches and to the


\(^{29}\)Quoted by Butler, *Reminiscences*, p. 185.

\(^{30}\)Works, II, 281-282.

\(^{31}\)Works, IV, 91-116.
"experiences" of Methodists. The whole passage is consistent with the definitions of mysticism of William James, Brightman, the English Catholic Butler, and James Bissett Pratt. The passage is repeated here so that the reader may determine for himself the accuracy of the comparison.

Every moment when the individual feels himself invaded by it [the divine mind] is memorable. By the necessity of our constitution a certain enthusiasm attends the individual's consciousness of that divine presence. The character and duration of this enthusiasm vary with the state of the individual, from an ecstasy and trance and prophetic inspiration,—which is its rarer appearance,—to the faintest glow of virtuous emotion, in which form it warms, like our household fires, all the families and associations of men, and makes society possible. A certain tendency to insanity has always attended the opening of the religious sense in men, as if they had been "blasted with excess of light." The trances of Socrates, the "union" of Plotinus, the vision of Porphyry, the conversion of Paul, the aurora of Behmen, the convulsions of George Fox and his Quakers, the illumination of Swedenborg, are of this kind. What was in the case of these remarkable persons a ravishment, has, in innumerable instances in common life, been exhibited in less striking manner. Everywhere the history of religion betrays a tendency to enthusiasm. The rapture of the Moravian and Quietist; the opening of the eternal sense of the Word, in the language of the New Jerusalem Church; the revival of the Calvinistic churches; the experiences of the Methodists, are varying forms of that shudder of awe and delight with which the individual soul always mingles with the universal soul. 32

The essay "The Over-Soul" is explicit in its indication both that Emerson knew the teachings of the great mystics and that he himself, in mild, but definite fashion, had experienced the fact. The theme of the essay is that the mystical experience is the primary source of authority in religion.

There are passages of very traditional terminology in Emerson's description of the mystic state in the essay.

He that finds God a sweet enveloping thought to him never counts his company. When I sit in that presence, who shall

32 Ibid., II, 281-282.
dare to come in? When I rest in perfect humility, when I burn with pure love, what can Calvin or Swedenborg say?\textsuperscript{33}

In "The Transcendentalist" Emerson suggested that the mystic state came to all the Transcendentalists. Emerson wrote that if he asked one of his fellows of their faith, they answered,

... mine is a certain brief experience, which surprised me in the highway or in the market, in some place, at some time,—whether in the body or out of the body, God knoweth,—and made me aware that I had played the fool with fools all this time, but that law existed for me and for all; that to me belonged trust, a child's trust and obedience, and the worship of ideas, and I should never be fool more.\textsuperscript{34}

It is probable that this was primarily a record of Emerson's own experience, although probably it is also true that other of the Transcendentalists were mystics, as Goddard has said.\textsuperscript{35}

There are many other passages in Emerson's works indicating that he knew the experience as well as the literature of mysticism. The descriptions range from fairly full accounts to rather brief allusions. There are references in the letters, the Journals, the essays, and the poetry; they cover all the years of his life, though with diminished frequency in the latter years.\textsuperscript{36}

The familiar passage in \textit{Nature} beginning, "Crossing a bare common

\textsuperscript{33}Ibid., 295.

\textsuperscript{34}Ibid., I, 352.

\textsuperscript{35}Harold C. Goddard, "Transcendentalism," \textit{The Cambridge History of American Literature}, I, 335.

... I have enjoyed a perfect exhilaration," ends with the attribution of the experience to Deity. "I am nothing; I see all; the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part or parcel of God." Quinn described this passage as merely an "experience of nature ecstasy, which may be analogous but is still quite another matter." Since, however, all the definitions of mysticism agree that mysticism is the claim to union with Deity, and since Emerson has made that claim in the most unmistakable and clearcut fashion in this passage, it is quite difficult to see how it can be denied the term mystical. Emerson did not claim here to become part of Nature. He did not even claim that an attractive natural setting was necessary. He asserted that the experience had come to him while crossing a "bare common, in snow puddles, at twilight, under a clouded sky," and that he had become part of "God." Quinn apparently did not recognize or chose to ignore the many other full accounts of a mystical experience that came to Emerson.

The foundation upon which the Divinity School Address rested was the subordination of all other aspects of religion to the mystical. The passage beginning "The perception of this law of laws" introduces his defense of the mystical experience as the ultimate sanction of religion.

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37 Works, I, 9-10.
38 Quinn, loc. cit.
39 Works, I, 9.
40 The book Nature contained one other brief reference to the experience. "The best moments of life are these delicious awakenings of the higher powers, and the reverential withdrawing of nature before its God." (Works, I, 50.) Here it is clearly shown that there can be no confusion of nature with God. See also footnote 36 on the preceding page.
41 Works, I, 124.
He emphasized the moral aspect of the experience, but also the sense of the numinous, that the moral laws have for the one who perceives them. The passage makes clear the beauty that the moral laws held for Emerson, as well as the fact that the moral laws were the fabric of Deity to him. The perceiver of moral laws experienced the immediate presence of Deity. He was charmed and commanded by that power, when it seized him, and it made man's "highest happiness." He believed that it was possible for all men to become an "inlet for that deep of Reason." He thought the great significance of Jesus for mankind was because he had succeeded perfectly in emptying himself to be filled with "the subtle virtue of this infusion."  

In the essay on "The Method of Nature" there is a full description of the mystical experience. It begins with a statement of the ineffable source of the experience.

I conceive a man as always spoken to from behind, and unable to turn his head and see the speaker. In all the millions who have heard the voice, none ever saw the face.

The experience will come to all men, the voice speaks "in all languages." It requires obedience; it will not be subordinated to practical activities, or the "thing to be done." It will make the man healthy and bring him ecstasy at last.

If the man will exactly obey it, it will adopt him, so that he shall not any longer separate it from himself in his thought; he shall seem to be it, he shall be it. If he listen with insatiable ears, richer and greater wisdom is taught him; the sound swells to a ravishing music, he is borne away as with a flood, he becomes careless of his food and of his house, he is the fool of ideas and leads a heavenly life.

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42 Works, I, 126.
43 Ibid., 209.
This description bears all the earmarks of having been Emerson's own experience. It is quite in accord with the descriptions of the experience of the traditional mystics.

Emerson felt that the health and greatness of all men depended to some degree upon their experiencing this "ecstatical state."

His health and greatness consist in his being the channel through which heaven flows to earth, in short, the fulness in which an ecstatical state takes place in him.\(^4\)

Emerson was even willing to forgo being an artist, if "by forbearing to be artists we might be vessels filled with the divine overflowings, enriched by the circulations of omniscience and omnipresence."\(^4\) He emphasized in the essay the importance of self renunciation. Only as the poet became "the mouth of divine wisdom" was he great. All health consisted in the "fulness of reception"; his synonyms for reception are piety, veneration, and enthusiasm.\(^4\)

Emerson warned in the essay against the enchantments of the natural world. They must not be allowed to prevent the worshipper from entering into the ecstasy of possession by the divinity. The essay states the paradoxical Protestant attitude toward nature.

There is no office or function of man, but is rightly discharged by this divine method, and nothing that is not noxious to him if detached from its universal relations.\(^4\)

Science, trade, pleasure, all have their place, but none are the chief end of man. Man must beware lest "these beautiful basilisks set their

\(^{4\text{i}}\)bid., 210.
\(^{4\text{ii}}\)Loc. cit.
\(^{4\text{iii}}\)Loc. cit.
\(^{4\text{iv}}\)Works, I, 211.
brute glorious eyes on the eye of every child, and if they can, cause their nature to pass through his wondering eyes into him . . .”

To guard against this, man must ever watch out for this "cup of enchantments," nature, and "must look at nature with a supernatural eye."50

Quinn made much of the fact that Evelyn Underhill described the states of the mystic experience in five terms--Conversion, Self-Knowledge, Illumination, Purgation, and Union.51 Quinn concluded that

It is generally agreed, in short, that there is a system of some kind to the mystic's life. It has its own pattern and logic that distinguishes it from other modes of and philosophies of life.52

It is, however, highly doubtful whether any effort to describe with precision the mystic life in terms of various stages can be successful. Butler pointed out that the descriptions of the stages by mystics range from three stages recognized by early Christian mystics--the purgative, the illuminative, and the contemplative--to a series of fifteen stages described by the English mystic John Norris.53 Since the mystics all insist that the experience is ineffable, there is doubt as to the validity of the descriptions of the stages of the experience. Jones, himself a Quaker mystic and student of mysticism, recognized the futility of attempts to describe the experience with precision.

The attempts to formulate mysticism into a fixed doctrine or

49Ibid., 212-213.
50Ibid., 213.
52Quinn, loc. cit.
systematic description of the spiritual life are necessarily only partially successful and the carefully labelled stages of the "mystic way" only loosely sum it up... 54

It is probable, however, that the characteristics of the religious mystic may be defined clearly enough to distinguish the mystic from the person whose experience of religion is based on other sanctions than the mystic's. The distinction made by Pratt, who argued that there are four typical aspects of religion, or four temperamental kinds of religion--the traditional, the rational, the practical or moral, and the mystical--55 is useful while discussing Emerson's religious experience. It is not necessary to argue that Emerson's mystical experience was as extreme as Boehme's or St. Theresa's; it is possible to recognize that his religious experience had more in common with the mystical temperament than with any of the other temperaments described by Pratt.

Emerson's distrust of a purely traditional justification of religion, his distrust of a religion which derived its truth from the authority of the past, "from parents, teachers, traditions, the church"56 is well known. His distrust of theological formulations, of a creedal, argumentative basis for religious belief, is well attested by the writings, as for example in the letter to Henry Ware, Jr.57

It does not follow that he was irrational; he felt respect for knowledge. But knowledge alone had a limited value to him. The intellect separated from the affectional side of life seemed a danger to him. "In-

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54 Jones, "Mysticism", Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, IX, 8h.
55 Pratt, p. 121.
56 Ibid., p. 1h.
57 Rusk, Letters, II, 166-167; see also Journals, III, 210; McGiffert, Young Emerson Speaks, p. xx.
tellect is void of affection and sees an object as it stands in the light of science, cool and disengaged.\textsuperscript{58}

He objected to a theological, or creedal, or doctrinal approach to religion for reasons suggested by the foregoing citations. Religion reduced to creed was religion stripped of its most important aspect. The passage in "Spiritual Laws" describing original sin and predestination as the "soul's mumps and measles and whooping coughs"\textsuperscript{59} was not an indication of his disinterest in those problems, for they appear throughout his writing. It was a typical statement of the mystic's distrust of reality reduced to formula. His depreciation of theology contrasted with the opportunity of the immediate experience of God is seen in the following statement:

\ldots how impertinent seem the controversies of theologians. God is before us and they are wrangling about dead gods.\textsuperscript{60}

A statement very similar in implication to the mystical Whitman poem, "When I Heard the Learn'd Astronomers," appeared in the Journal for 1842.

In the fields, this lovely day, I was ashamed of the inhospitality of disputing. Very hoarsely sounds the parlor debate on theology from the lonely sunny hill \ldots \textsuperscript{61}

The conflict between the mystic and the moralist in Emerson has been discussed previously. It seems probable that the mystic tendency was stronger than the moral or practical impulse to rush into world-changing action. His best reconciliation of the two is seen perhaps in the poem

\textsuperscript{58}\textit{Works}, II, 326.
\textsuperscript{59}\textit{Ibid.}, 132.
\textsuperscript{60}\textit{Journals}, III, 434. See also \textit{Works}, II, 79, 329; \textit{Journals}, VI, 202, 220; IX, 16.
\textsuperscript{61}\textit{Journals}, VI, 202-203.
"Freedom" or the poem "Etienne de la Boéce." In each of these poems he asserted that by becoming a passive agent of the divine, one could best help the world.

4. Characteristics of Emerson's Mysticism

A. Prerequisites

In spite of Quinn's comment that he could not detect any of the traditional stages of the mystic way in Emerson, the prerequisites of the experience are clearly described by Emerson. One of the requirements was solitude,62 another was silence.63 Still another was virtue. Emerson was fully in agreement with the tradition that only the pure in heart could see God.64 "Holiness is the only stair to the mount of God."65 He said in "The Over-Soul," that the Divinity would come only on terms of complete possession. It would brook no competition with other gods. Therefore the person must practice self-denial. "It comes only to the lowly and simple; it comes to whomsoever will put off what is foreign and proud..."66 He spoke often in the Journals of the importance of humility and obedience. "Humility, patience, abstinence, mortification, nakedness (stripping off these clothes of law, custom, fortune and

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62 Works, II, 294.
63 Ibid., 311.
64 Journals, III, 211; V, 289.
65 Ibid., V, 554.
66 Works, II, 289.
friends ..."67 "Obedience is the only ladder to the throne."68

Emerson agreed with Plotinus that esthetic experience is the highest rung of the ladder of the earthly disciplines, from which the soul takes its flight to the Alone. To Plotinus, esthetic experience was the highest human aid.69 Emerson wrote in his essay on "Circles,"

... we value the poet. All the argument and all the wisdom is not in the encyclopedia, or the treatise on metaphysics, or the Body of Divinity, but in the sonnet or play.70

Emerson attempted to preserve the great experiences by recording them. He thought perhaps literature might be a means of tiding the person over the dark moments, when the divine presence was not immediately guiding him. The address, "The American Scholar,"71 indicates how much he expected from books. He wrote in the essay on compensation

It appeared moreover that if this doctrine could be stated in terms with any resemblance to those bright institutions in which this truth is sometimes revealed to us, it would be a star in many dark hours and crooked passages in our journey ..."72

That books were frequently a star in a dark hour for him is obvious. Yet in the last analysis, the book was never able to catch the mystic experience. "Wise moments are years, and light the countenance ever. They are the good moments ... They refuse to be recorded."73 Frequently as

67 Journals, V, 554.
68 Ibid., VI, 221; Works, X, 198.
69 Fuller, A History of Philosophy, I, 328-329.
70 Works, II, 312.
71 Works, I, 91.
72 Ibid., II, 93-94.
73 Journals, III, 231.
a result of a moment of exhilarated confidence he wrote a passage in the Journals. Later in a depressed period he read the passage and it seemed quite dead.

I am made happy by a new thought. . . . While this thought glitters newly before me, I think Wall Street nothing. I accurately record the thought, and think I have got it. After a few months, I come again to the record, and it seems a mere bit of glistening tinsel, and no such world wisdom. In fact, the universe had glowed with its eternal blaze, and I had chipped off this scale, through which its light shone, thinking this the diamond, and put it in my jewel box, and now it is nothing but a dead scale.74

B. Ineffable

Emerson recognized as clearly as any mystic ever did, the impossibility of describing the experience of mystical exaltation. "Do you think ecstasy is ever communicable?"75 He said in the essay on self-reliance,

And now at last the highest truth on this subject [God-reliance] remains unsaid; probably cannot be said; for all we say is the far-off remembering of the intuition.76

In the essay on the Over-soul there is a long passage devoted to the ineffableness of spiritual realities.77 The effort to describe the movement of Deity into one's life Emerson thought sacrilegious. "But we must pick no locks. We must check this low curiosity."78 Emerson used a figure similar to the one Baxter had used to convey the ineffability of the

74 Ibid., VIII, 278.
75 Ibid., VII, 522.
76 Works, II, 68.
77 Ibid., 283-284.
78 Ibid., 283.
experience.  

Do not require a description of the countries to which you sail. The description does not describe them to you, and tomorrow you arrive there and know them by inhabiting them.  

The theme of ineffability appeared frequently in the essay on the Oversoul.

Ineffable is the union of man and God in every act of the soul. The simplest person who in his integrity worships God, becomes God; yet for ever and ever the influx of this better and universal self is new and unsearchable.

Like the mystics of every generation and religious background, Emerson felt the impossibility of describing the Deity. The fact of the transcendence of the Deity has already been discussed, but that ineffability was an essential part of Emerson's experience. The theologian is calmly certain of his abilities to describe in rational and systematic fashion the attributes of the Deity. But to Emerson, the systems were meaningless.

I am struck with ... the depth of obscurity in which the Person of God is hid. From month to month, from year to year, I come never nearer to definite speaking of him. He hideth himself. I cannot speak of him without faltering. I unsay as fast as I say my words. He is, for I am. Say rather, He is. But in the depth inaccessible of his being he refuses to be defined or personified.

C. Noetic

A description of the content of the state of ecstasy in Emerson's

79 See page 197.
80 Works, II, 283.
81 Ibid., 292.
82 See pages 145-159.
83 Journals, III, 526.
mysticism should emphasize the noetic aspect.

The experience seemed to Emerson to be an awareness of the laws that governed the world. These laws were thought of as moral or spiritual in nature, and the immediate experience of them was very "sweet." It gave him emotional gratification of great intensity. Since the laws were moral, and since the experience was one of great beauty to him, it seemed to him that he had literally known that truth, goodness, and beauty were one.

He thought that all of the great discoveries of law were mystical experiences to the discoverer. He wrote in the Journal,

Eminent experiences. 

Eras. When the Kepler laws were learned; when the 47th proposition of Euclid was issued; when the Idealism was known; the doctrine of like to like; the doctrine of compensation; the doctrine of symbols and correspondence. 84

He may have come to the conclusion that all great discoveries were mystical experiences because to him any new generalization had the quality of the inrush of Divinity. "Generalization is always a new influx of the divinity into the mind. Hence the thrill that attends it." 85

His descriptions of the mystical state were frequently in terms of an awareness of knowledge. "A rush of thoughts is the only conceivable prosperity that can come to me." 86

It would be wrong to describe the experience simply as thinking, however. Ordinary thought seemed to him detached; the mystical impulse united thought with morality and beauty. "Intellect always puts an

84 Id., VII, 68.
85 Works, II, 309.
86 Journals, IX, 331.
interval between the subject and the object. Affection would blend the two.  

That he meant something more than the usual sense of the word when he referred to "thoughts" is indicated by such passages as the following:

"But who can be misled who trusts to a thought? That profound deep whereunto it leads is the Heaven of Heavens. On that pillow, softer than darkness, he that falls can never be bruised."

After a coach trip, he described his awareness of a new explanation for the value of the intellectual life as a mystical experience. "I had another experience in the coach, if I can recall it, that the reason why a man becomes intellectual ..."  

The moral nature of the ideas that came to him in his mystical ecstasy are indicated in many places.

"There is an elevation of thought from which things venerable become less, because we are in the presence of the Source. When we catch one clear glimpse of the moral harmonies which accomplish themselves throughout the everlasting Now and throughout the omnipresent Here, how impertinent seem the controversies of theologians. God is before us, and they are wrangling about dead gods."

Because the knowledge that he claimed to have learned in his mystic experience was moral in nature, he was greatly annoyed by the phrase "mere morality." Since he felt that he had known God's nature immediately, and since he learned thus that that nature was moral, in a sublime and

87 Ibid., VI, 242.
88 Ibid., 107.
89 Ibid., VII, 135.
90 Journals, III, 333-334. See also Works, I, 56; II, 275; VI, 217; VIII, 317; X, 184-185, 194; Journals, II, 170; III, 303-304, 413, 517; V, 248; IX, 489, 500.
awesome purity, he identified God and morality. The word moral had for
him the same sense of awe that the Deity had. It was impossible for him
to separate the two concepts. He wrote in the Journals, "They have said
in churches in this age, 'Mere Morality.' O God, they know thee not who
speak contemptuously of all that is grand." He said in the essay "Wor-
ship," "Men talk of 'mere morality'--which is much as if one should say,
'Poor God with nobody to help him.'" He wrote in "The Sovereignty of
Ethics," "'Mere morality' means--not put into a personal master of morals."

Brightman summarized the knowledge that the mystics claim to have
learned through their experience in these three terms: (1) Epistemolog-
ical immediacy. The mystics declare that the experience itself is knowl-
edge and that God himself is actually present in the soul, so that what
is human and what is divine in the experience are indivisibly one and
indistinguishable. (2) Optimism. "... not in the sense of denying
all tragedy or evil." (3) Monism. "... not necessarily monistic in
the sense of pantheism or absolutism, but... in the sense of being a
vision of the world's unity." It is evident that Brightman's summary
correctly describes the basic attitudes held by Emerson, resting ulti-
mately on his mysticism.

D. Transient

An important characteristic of the psychology of the mystic is the

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91Journals, III, 424.
92Works, VI, 215.
93Ibid., X, 202-203.
periodicity of his conscious experience. Periodicity, or the rhythmic alternation of emotional tone is probably characteristic of the experience of all people, but it is more important to the mystic than to persons of other religious temperaments. If the authority of religion rests upon rational formulations, or upon the authority of the church or tradition, or upon the necessity for carrying out some moral task, the fact of changing moods would be immaterial. The non-mystical sanctions do not vary in importance with the varying moods of the individual.

To the mystic, life consists of a rhythm between the transient moments of exhilaration or consciousness of the divine presence, and the periods of "dryness" or absence of the sense of the presence of the divine. The term "dark night of the soul" has been used traditionally for the periods of absence of Deity. Charles Butler called it the "spiritual night."95

Emerson's Journals show clearly a rhythm of exhilaration and depression. Emerson was conscious of the periodicity of his life, and complained about the futility of his efforts to achieve the moments of exhilaration. They seemed to him to come in accordance with principles he could not understand or describe. His awareness of this appeared in the Journal for 1823.

I have often found cause to complain that my thoughts have an ebb and flow. Whether any laws fix them, and what the laws are, I cannot ascertain. I have quoted a thousand times the memory of Milton and tried to bind my thinking season to one part of the year, or to one sort of weather; to the sweet influence of Pleiades; or to summer reign of Lyra. The worst is, that the ebb is certain, long, and frequent, while the flow comes transiently and seldom.96

95Butler, Reminiscences, p. 172.
96Journals, I, 284.
He wrote in 1826,

At sea a fortnight elapses in which I always remember myself to have been, in times past, a channel through which flowed bright and lofty thought... Now suppose it should never return; the causes are concealed, the sun and moon are hidden which affect the ebbs and flowings of the intellectual tides. They are determined by something out of me, and higher than me. If the virtue that is gone out of me be withheld, I have parted with what in life is best... 97

Throughout his life, he felt the rhythm of inspiration coming and going in unpredictable fashion, enabling him to write by a law "which I see, and then lose, and then lose again." 98 The rhythm affected conversation, "In conversation there are tides..." 99 The periodicity was true of activity and passivity.

At one time I am a Doer. A divine life, I create scenes and persons around me and for me and unfold my thought by a perpetual, successive projection... but presently I return to the habitual attitude of suffering... I await; I wonder; where is my godhead now? 100

By 1869 Emerson thought the fact of periodicity was true of all life.

The same periodicity--shall I say--reigns in fable, and brings the wildest curve round to a true moral, and works in electricity, gravitation, and the crystal.101

There is, in addition to the recognition of the periodicity of life in the Journals, much material produced by the state of depression. Such passages are evidence that Emerson felt the absence of the sense of inspira-

97 Ibid., II, 136.
98 Ibid., IX, 468.
99 Ibid., IV, 225.
100 Ibid., 248.
101 Ibid., X, 298. See also Journals, II, 502-503; III, 304; 499-500, 526; IV, 225; V, 51, 103, 275-276; VI, 161; VII, 103; VIII, 273; Works, II, 267; III, 247; VII, 273.
tion that traditionally was called the dark night of the soul.

The nature of the depressed period as Emerson knew it is described by a passage written in 1827.

A child in a vessel thinks the shores remove when the ship leaves the shore. When the affections depart from God, God appears to depart from the soul. His image fades fast from his sanctuary and when he ceases to be seen he is thought to cease to be.102

The passage in "The American Scholar" about books being for the scholar's idle times, described the experience of "spiritual night" in almost traditional terms.

Books are for the scholar's idle times. When he can read God directly, the hour is too precious to be wasted in other men's transcripts of their readings. But when the intervals of darkness come, as come they must,—when the sun is hid and the stars withdraw their shining,—we repair to the lamps that were kindled by their ray, to guide our steps to the East again, where the dawn is.103

There are expressions of Emerson's depressed conviction that life was not worthwhile that appear in the Journal. On February 4, 1841, he wrote entries into the Journal with a note of disgust at the recent experiences of his life; they were nothing to him, he wrote. He thought perhaps a writer ought not to be married, because the household chores interfered with his writing.104 These complaints should not be taken too seriously, other than as an example of the unfortunate fact that if truth is judged by its attraction in periods of exhilaration, then the truths that the mystic is most firmly devoted to may be doubted in periods

102 Journals, II, 156.
103 Works, I, 91.
104 Journals, V, 516-517.
Emerson recognized the danger of doubting in moments of depression what were his most firmly held convictions. This doubt is the cause of the mystic's spiritual depression. If his faith is based on moments of self-authenticating belief in truth, goodness, and beauty, his moments of doubt might logically seem to be of equal evidence on the other side. The mystic distrusts that logic, however. Emerson wrote, "Our low and flat moments have no right to speak of what is sacred."106

E. Passivity

The authority that the intuitions of truth held for Emerson is well described in the opening sentences of "The Over-Soul."

There is a difference between one and another hour of life in their authority and subsequent effect. Our faith comes in moments; our vice is habitual. Yet there is a depth in those brief moments which constrains us to ascribe more reality to them than to all other experiences.107

The authority came both from the vividness and self-authenticating quality of the experience, and from the conviction that the experience had its source in an Other outside and above Emerson. Emerson's belief in the distinction between Deity and worshipper has already been shown. The essay "The Over-Soul" insists that the faith of the mystic in the experience is because the experience is from the outside.

Man is a stream whose source is hidden. Our being is descending into us from we know not whence . . . I am constrained every

105 Other examples may be seen in Journals, V, 93, 405, 488-489, 569-570; VI, 86; VIII, 13.

106 Journals, VI, 49.

107 Works, II, 267.
moment to acknowledge a higher origin for events than the will I call mine. 108

As has been shown, Emerson's mystical experience had a large knowledge content. The knowledge content seemed also to come to his mind from the outside.

As with events, so is it with thoughts. When I watch that flowing river, which, out of regions I see not, pours for a season its streams into me, I see that I am a pensioner; not a cause but a surprised spectator of this ethereal water; that I desire and look up and put myself in the attitude of reception, but from some alien energy the visions come. 109

Since Emerson was completely passive in the process of apprehending the great moral truths, their dependability did not rest on his limited abilities. They were God given, and hence utterly reliable.

There was another aspect of the passivity of the experience that was depressing, that was the inability of the worshipper to gain contact with the divine power. That power seemed to come only when it "listed." When it did not "list," the individual had to pass the time as best he might.

It does not seem worth our while to toil for anything so pitiful as skill to do one of the little feats we magnify so much, when presently the dream will scatter and we shall burst into universal power. The reason of all idleness and all crime is the same. Whilst we are waiting we beguile the time, one with jokes, one with sleep, one with eating, one with crime. 110

Emerson was thoroughly orthodox in his assertion that the very power to become a channel must itself come from Deity. Here he turned away from the Arminian to the Calvinist position. Only God can give one the power to accept God.

108 Ibid., 268.
109 Loc. cit.
110 Journals, VI, 50.
If you say, 'The acceptance of the vision is also the act of God:'--I shall not seek to penetrate the mystery, I admit the force of what you say.\textsuperscript{111}

The results of the mystical experience were of great significance in Emerson's life. All paradoxes, all conflicts, all diversity were finally reconciled in the vision of the world's unity that came to him in the moments of exaltation. He rose above time, and ceased therefore to be "time's fool." He recognized the illusoriness of the "solid-seeming" world of matter around him. His philosophical and moral idealism were bulwarked and strengthened by the mystical experiences that taught him of the ideal nature of the world, and of the sovereignty of goodness. Immortality seemed no longer a vexing question, for he lived, briefly to be sure, but none the less with certainty, in eternity, in the here and now. All the pain, unhappiness, and apparent evils of the world were lost in the overarching certainty that "lost in god," he was "in Godhead found."\textsuperscript{112}

5. The Mystic as Poet

Emerson's mysticism runs through much of the poetry. Many of the poems already discussed represent an effort to describe the mystical experience, or its results for the individual. The comment in "Uriel" that "all rays return" is a form of Plotinus's belief that all created beings desire intensely to return to the Creator. All of the poetry devoted to the theme of the union of worshipper with Deity is mystical. "Brahma" is the most striking example, but other poems of similar nature

\textsuperscript{111} Works, I, 221-222.
\textsuperscript{112} Ibid., IX, 158.

The final line of "Threnody" is a classic expression of the faith of the mystic.

The various aspects of the psychology of the mystic are recorded in the poems. The familiar complaint about the periodicity of the visits of the spirit, the complaint growing out of the spiritual night of the worshipper was expressed in "The Poet."

Suns and stars their courses keep,
But not angels of the deep:
Day and night their turn observe,
But the day of day may swerve.
Is there warrant that the waves
Of thought in their mysterious caves
Will heap in me their highest tide,
In me therewith beatified?
Unsure the ebb and flood of thought,
The moon comes back,—the Spirit not.\textsuperscript{113}

The poet has compared the regularity of the astronomical motions with the irregularity of the Spirit, that occasionally in a flood of thought enables the poet to feel "beatified." The poem is another example of Emerson's description of the mystic experience in terms of thought. The expression "day of day" is a reference to the mystic experience. There is the day, caused by sunlight, and the day of life, caused by the sunlight of the Spirit. The same expression occurs in "Two Rivers" with the same denotation.

The poem "My Garden" affirmed both the transiency of the experience of the mystic and the ineffability of the experience. There is also a suggestion of the evangelistic compulsion to speak the good news. The\textsuperscript{113}Ibid., 319.
poet must speak, even though he knows his efforts will be but feeble reports of the news of the goodness of the universe.

Ever the words of the gods resound;
But the porches of man's ear
Seldom in this low life's round
Are unsealed, that he may hear.

Wandering voices in the air
And murmur's in the wold
Speak what I cannot declare,
Yet cannot all withhold.\textsuperscript{114}

The contrast between the state of exhilaration and the state of de-
pression occurs in the poem "The Day's Ration." There is also in this poem the note of resentment that the experience is transient.

And all the following hours of the day
Drag a ridiculous age.
\ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots
Nor gives the jealous lord one diamond drop
So to be husbanded for poorer days.\textsuperscript{115}

That the experience is passive is indicated by the poet's calling for the wine that will make the experience possible. The poem as a whole is an invocation, a calling in, of the powers that can possess the poet and free him from his finiteness. The poem is a prayer for the desired state of being. That Emerson was aware of the passivity of the experience is indicated also in the last lines of the first section of "Merlin."

There are open hours
When the God's will sallies free,
And the dull idiot might see
The flowing fortunes of a thousand years;--
Sudden, at unawares,
Self-moving, fly-to the doors,
Nor sword of angels could reveal
What they conceal.\textsuperscript{116}

\textsuperscript{114}Tbid., 231.
\textsuperscript{115}Tbid., 138-139.
\textsuperscript{116}Tbid., 122.
The lines in "Worship"

This is Jove, who, deaf to prayers,
Floods with blessings unawares\textsuperscript{117}
also indicate passivity.

The consolations afforded by the richness of the loss of self in the Infinite are lovingly suggested in the poem "The Nun's Aspiration," in which Emerson, using in part the words of his Aunt Mary Moody Emerson, wrote an epitaph and promise for her.\textsuperscript{118} The poem described touchingly the aspects of sadness in his aunt's life, along with her effort to apply the injunction of Augustine and Dante that we must find our rest in His will.

Ah me! it was my childhood's thought,
If He should make my web a blot
On life's fair picture of delight,
My heart's content would find it right.\textsuperscript{119}

The poem contains the Christian paradox that in death men find life, "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it, but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it."\textsuperscript{120} The poem makes "Godhead," not Christ, the object of adoration, however. The idea is stated in Platonic terms; living on earth is dreaming; real life, after death, is "to be."

On earth I dream:--I die to be.\textsuperscript{121}

But the speaker hastens to assure the listeners, whoever they may be, that

\textsuperscript{117}Ibid., 280.
\textsuperscript{118}Ibid., note on p. 490.
\textsuperscript{119}Ibid., 253.
\textsuperscript{120}Luke 9: 24.
\textsuperscript{121}Works, IX, 254.
she seeks death, not because of age, or earthly cares, or love, or hatred of the climate, but because she tired of "sham." Only God is real; all else is illusion. She wants to be immersed in reality.

I tire of shams, I rush to be: 122

The remaining lines of the poem attempt to describe the indescribable, the life lived in the Godhead.

The speaker mocked Time. She was going into realms infinite in extent where Time ceased to be.

Aeons which tardily unfold
Realm beyond realm, --extent untold;
No early morn, no evening late, --123

Not only would Time be powerless in her new state; Fate also would lose its power.

Realms self-upheld, disdaining Fate,
Whose shining sons, too great for fame,
Never heard thy weary name ... 124

In that state, there will be no poets to ridicule her further with taunts about the foolish part she played in Time.

The poem "Two Rivers" is an extended simile, of remarkable unity, comparing the river that flows "through Concord Plain" with the river of life that flows through the cosmos. Emerson used an image here of the same general nature that occurs frequently in the writings. The flowing current, of electricity, or of water, filling temporarily the vessel, man, seemed best to represent the experience of the mystic as Emerson knew it.

The river, Musketaquit, with its narrow banks, finite and limited,
is contrasted with the river of being, unbounded, that

Through flood and sea and firmament;
Through light, through life . . . forward flows.
Through years, through men, through Nature fleet,
Through love and thought, through power and dream.125

The fourth stanza of the poem described the earthly river as a "goblin strong," making jewels of shard and flint. The earthly river comforts those who hear his song; Emerson gave the river high praise by calling the comfort afforded by the river the "day of day."

But in contrast with the earthly river, the other stream has eternal values. Emerson used the Biblical image in John 4: 13-14 to intimate that the unseen river is the river of the spirit. "But whosoever drink-eth of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

So forth and brighter fares my stream,—
Who drink it shall not thirst again . . . 126

The poem concludes with a reference to the unsullied purity of the omnipresent Deity. The stream of animating life cannot be darkened by the darkness of the world. There is also a reference to the contrast between time in its human sense, and the ongoing eternity of the Divine. Time falls like rain into the eternity of God.

No darkness stains its equal gleam
And ages drop in it like rain.127

The poem "Bacchus" is a magnificently successful celebration of the

125 Works, IX, 218.
126 Loc. cit.
127 Loc. cit.
mystic ecstasy. The assumption about the reserve and lack of spirit that is popularly supposed to be true of Emerson is strikingly contradicted by the references to ecstasy that characterize his description of the mystic state.

Such an unsympathetic and generally unperceptive critic as the Calvinist theologian Strong called Emerson the "God intoxicated poet."\textsuperscript{128} Kreymborg also spoke of him as intoxicated.\textsuperscript{129} Kreymborg said that his poetry represents the moment caught in absolute ecstasy. It is significant how frequently Emerson refers to wine, in his poems. In "Bacchus" he calls for a wine, not from grapes, that will so intoxicate him that he "may float at pleasure through all nature."\textsuperscript{130} The poem reminds us that in primitive religions the wine that caused drunkenness was supposed to be of divine origin, because it caused the individual to lose himself in frenzy or passion. In similar fashion the prophets of the early Old Testament history were men who fell to the ground in an ecstasy of delight caused by a frenzy of possession assumed to be by the power of the Divine.

In the intoxication that comes from the wine of nature

\begin{verbatim}
Whose ample leaves and tendrils curled
Among the silver leaves of heaven
Draw everlasting dew;
Wine of wine
Blood of the world,
Form of forms and mould of statures,\textsuperscript{131}
\end{verbatim}

the poet becomes one with nature:

\textsuperscript{128} Strong, American Poets and Their Theology, p. 63.
\textsuperscript{129} Alfred Kreymborg, "The Intoxicated Emerson," Our Singing Strength, pp. 67-83.
\textsuperscript{130} Works, IX, 125.
\textsuperscript{131} Loc. cit.
That I intoxicated

May float at pleasure through all natures;
The bird-language rightly spell,
And that which roses say so well. 132

In this state of intoxication, time ceases to be a barrier, and the poet is able to understand clearly its illusory nature. He rises above time and his comprehension broadens immeasurably so that past and future all seem immediately present.

That I, drinking this,
Shall hear far Chaos talk with me;
Kings unborn shall walk with me;
And the poor grass shall plot and plan
What it will do when it is man.
Quickened so, will I unlock
Every crypt of every rock. 133

The poet also becomes aware of the continuity of being. It is being that is real, not the apparently real solids that are found in space. He sees the solid objects of the earth and the apparently solid conventions of society melt and flow into other forms. The solidity of the visible universe is only illusion. "Seeming-solid walls of use" has remarkable economy and great suggestiveness.

Winds of remembering
Of the ancient being blow,
And seeming-solid walls of use
Open and flow. 134

In the last stanza the poet calls for the wine to so intoxicate him that he will lose himself in the great source of being. This stanza includes a short statement of the Platonic doctrine that birth is a sleep and a

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132 Ibid., 125-126.
133 Ibid., 126.
134 Ibid., 126-127.
forgetting. To be born is to be lost from the Godhead. Therefore the poet says,

Pour, Bacchus! the remembering wine;
Retrieve the loss of me and mine.135

The "remembering wine" helps the poet to remember the former time when he was united with the source of being; it causes the poet to lose the partial self, the earthbound self, the finite self, in the whole, the infinite. So the poet calls for a wine that will be an antidote for the lotos of forgetfulness, which has quenched the "memory of ages." In the final lines the figure of speech changes as the poet hopes that this intoxication will provide immediate access to the source of all being.

The poem "Bacchus" is worth considering in the light of James's description of the mystic experience. Since the experience that the poet wishes to describe is ineffable, he has to use metaphors to indicate the nature of that experience. Give me wine, he cries, but not the wine that comes from grapes. The beverage he wants is not a visible one, that he says is a "diluted wine." Then he resorts to another form of the figure, using the favorite metaphor of the mystics, light from the sun, to suggest the process by which being emanates from its source.

Wine that is shed
Like the torrents of the sun,
Up the horizon walls . . .136

He also uses the metaphor of music, "Music and wine are one," which reminds us of the loss of self that music can afford. He uses the language of the Lord's Supper:

135 Ibid., 127.
136 Ibid., 126.
Water and bread,
Food which needs no transmuting,
Wine which is already man.¹³⁷

These lines remind us that the traditional doctrine of transubstantiation affirms that the communicant by partaking of the bread and wine which is transmuted into the body and blood of the divine Saviour, becomes himself divine and thus able to attain immortal life. Since the Saviour is believed divine, by becoming identified with Him, the communicant becomes divine and immortal. Thus the suggestion of these lines also contributes to a description of the desire of the mystic to lose himself in Deity.

The poet also claims to gather knowledge from this experience, although that knowledge may in part also be ineffable, for how can anyone explain "that which roses say so well"? But the poet also learns that he can "the bird-language rightly spell." He has the knowledge of immediate acquaintance, as he "May float at pleasure through all natures." The poet says that the kind of bread and wine he wants, which needs no formal transmutation by a priest at an altar, is "wisdom-fruiting." The poet learns of the illusory nature of time and of the illusory nature of apparent solids of the visible world. He says

I thank the joyful juice
For all I know...¹³⁸

Thus this poem illustrates the typical mystic claim to have knowledge of immediate acquaintance, as opposed to knowledge about something. The mystic's knowledge is not derived from logic, or scientific processes; it is face to face knowledge, or even more intimately, the knowledge that

¹³⁷ Loc. cit.
¹³⁸ Loc. cit.
comes from being one with the known, so that the knower and the known become identical.

That the experience is transient is indicated in the last stanza by the contrast between the unhappiness of the state of sobriety and the exhilaration of the state of intoxication. He refers to "the old despair," to "Reason the faculty that enables the poet to see the whole in Nature's lotus drenched," to "The memory of ages quenched," to "the infection," to "the faded tints," to "the aged prints"; all of these figures of speech for the present unhappy state of separation from the source of being are contrasted with the freshness of inspiration

Which on the first day drew,
Upon the tablets blue,
The dancing Pleiads and eternal man. 139

The chapter has attempted to demonstrate that Emerson knew the literature of Christian mysticism and that he had experiences which he described in the language of traditional mysticism as union with God. The chapter has attempted to show that Emerson's description of mystical experiences fulfill the definitions by recognized authorities on the subject. It has finally shown that much of Emerson's poetry may be interpreted as the expression of a mystic. The psychological characteristics of the mystic appear in the poetry. Finally, the three claims that result from the noetic characteristic of the mystic experience are evident in the poetry. The poet asserted epistemological immediacy, that is, oneness with Deity; he asserted an optimism based on a knowledge of the worst as well as of the best that life has to offer; and he claimed to have a vision of the world's ultimate unity.

139 Works, IX, 127.
CONCLUSION

The thesis has attempted to show that the attitudes that Emerson affirmed in his poetry were consistent with the main stream of Protestant thought. Emerson accepted the Augustinian, Protestant attitude toward the insubstantial pageant of this world, with its charming, but fragile and shortlived goods. He repeated the Christian paradox of immanence and transcendence. He accepted fully the doctrine of the priesthood of the individual, and defined it in traditional terms as obedience to God. He himself knew the evil of life in all its aspects, personal and social. He passed through his own valley of the shadow, but caught gleams of an eternal light, that seemed adequate recompense to him for the pain he suffered. He adopted philosophical explanations of evil that are the traditional Christian answers. They seemed to him validated by his own experience. He was a mystic and experienced the ravishing sense of possession by Deity, the brief flashes of an incommunicable ecstasy.

Since the thesis approached the subject from a conceptual rather than denominational point of view, the relationship of Emerson's ideas to the various denominations has been discussed only incidentally. The major affirmations that were discussed have been advanced by all the Protestant denominations. Emerson differed from the great majority of Protestants only at one point, that of Christology. While that is a major difference, Emerson's affirmations concerning the paradox of immanence and transcendence, concerning the problem of evil, and concerning mysticism are in general agreement with Catholicism also.
it does not affect the religious significance of his poetry, or prose, either, since they were devoted to presenting the great affirmations that he found true. It seems probable that Emerson was closer to the essential ideas of Protestantism than were the defenders of orthodoxy of his own day. That this judgment is correct is suggested by the influence of Emerson on Protestantism, as shown by Mead.\(^2\) A highly influential channel by which Emerson’s thinking has been transmitted to the Protestant thought of the present century is the sermons and books of Harry Emerson Fosdick.

It seems probable that Emerson will increasingly be recognized as a nineteenth century addition to the parade of God-intoxicated men whose writings have influenced the Western world. He belongs in the class of those whose outstanding characteristics were a sense of dependence on God and great literary skill. The class includes the writing prophets of the Old Testament—Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, and Jeremiah; Augustine, among the church fathers; Milton, Herbert, John Smith, and Jeremy Taylor in the seventeenth century. Through Emerson, America has contributed another book to the accumulating Bible of Christian devotion.

\(^2\)Edwin D. Mead, *The Influence of Emerson.*
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The Relationship of Christian Theology to the Idea Content of Emerson's Poetry is a doctoral dissertation devoted to the relationship of certain aspects of Christian theology to the ideas that appear in Emerson's poetry. The purpose that motivates the thesis is an effort to relate the affirmations of the poetry to the Christian attitudes toward nature, toward Deity, toward man's relationship to Deity, toward the problem of evil, and toward the mystical experience of union with Deity.

The thesis is divided into two parts. Part One describes the channels by which Emerson became acquainted with the New England religious tradition, and with the wider tradition of Christianity in general. Part Two relates Emerson's attitudes to the attitudes of traditional Christianity. Since the thesis is primarily concerned with Emerson's poetry, it is restricted to the affirmations that appear there. It discusses only incidentally, therefore, Emerson's Christology, his rejection of the traditional doctrine of vicarious redemption.

Part One asserts that through the influence of family religious training, Emerson had the opportunity to learn thoroughly the New England religious tradition. The thesis defines this tradition as basically Calvinistic, although the term Calvinism is recognized as a convenient shorthand for a tradition originated by Augustine, revived by Martin Luther, systematized by Calvin, and transmitted to the New Englanders through William Ames, William Perkins, John Preston, Richard Baxter, John Owen, and others.
The thesis points out that through the private practices of piety in his home, including prayers, Bible reading, memorizing of hymns and the Catechism, and through reading sermons and attending church services, Emerson was given direct opportunity to know both the devotional and the moral side of the traditional religion of New England. Through the personal piety of his father and mother, of his stepgrandfather, Ezra Ripley, and of his aunt, Mary Moody Emerson, Emerson was subject to the kind of influence that is powerful in molding religious attitudes.

Emerson's preaching career was an important factor in developing further his knowledge of religion, historic and contemporary. It afforded him occasion for study of the literature of Christian thought, in its historical development and across the gamut of theological opinions. It also gave him opportunity to study the religious attitudes and characteristics of his contemporaries.

His study of the literature of Christian thought, begun early in his life, continued through his college years, through his preaching career, and throughout his life. The thesis points out his knowledge of the influential authors whose books helped shape the climate of opinion for religion in New England in the early part of the nineteenth century, i.e. Paley, Butler, Locke, Hume, Lardner, Belsham, Channing, and many others. The thesis demonstrates Emerson's eventual repudiation of the rational approach to religion represented by Paley and Butler.

The thesis suggests that Emerson left the Second Church because his approach to religion was that of a mystic, and he could not therefore accept an institutional or traditional or formal definition of faith. Religious experience to Emerson was not acceptable unless it had a certain
"heart warming" quality. He felt it was dishonest, or insincere, to take part in ceremonies unless there was an inner accompaniment of exaltation. He could not therefore officiate at sacraments or offer prayers merely to meet institutional requirements.

His sense of mission did not end with his resignation from the Second Church. His literary work was motivated by the same prophetic and ethical impulse that characterized his preaching.

Emerson suggested that the literary supports of Calvinism were the King James version of the Bible, Milton's Paradise Lost and his other writings, the Westminster Catechism, and Watts's hymns. These were the literary agencies that conveyed the Christian ideas to New England. The thesis demonstrates Emerson's knowledge of these works of literature, and asserts that Emerson's literary career was devoted to restating the older ideas in the idiom of New England in the nineteenth century.

Part Two begins with an assertion that Emerson's attitude toward the natural world was in agreement with the attitude adopted by Christianity and made explicit by the use of Platonic metaphysics by Clement, Origen, and by Augustine. This attitude asserted that the world was created by God. As a created reality, the world was an inferior kind of reality, made ex nihilo in Christian terms, or of an illusory nature, in Platonic terms. But since the world was created by God, or derived from the other world, in Platonic terms, this world has a limited, subordinate kind of goodness. In adopting the Platonic metaphysics, Christianity rejected Manichean dualism, which asserted that the world was created by an evil principle of deity.

The Christian doctrine of creation, bulwarked by the Platonic meta-
physics, suggested that something of the nature of God could be learned from the "book of nature." This Christian doctrine of natural theology was the forerunner of Emerson's doctrine of correspondences.

The Christian doctrine of common grace asserted that the fall of man had not entirely removed the grace with which the creation was originally endowed. This doctrine of common grace reappeared in Emerson's assertion of the value of the commonplace.

The Augustinian attitude toward the goods of the natural world was a paradoxical one. It avoided the ascetic extreme of renouncing the world as basically evil. It insisted that the world was good, but that the goodness was limited and subordinate to the Goodness of God. The paradox insisted that men could enjoy the natural goods, but they were never to confuse this world's goods with the Good. The thesis asserts that Emerson restated this paradoxical approach to this world of marriage, work, and trade.

Christianity has always assumed the paradox of the immanence and the transcendence of God. The thesis asserts that while Emerson stated his belief in the omnipresence of God in vigorous and poetically striking fashion, he did not ever fall into the pantheistic error, from Christian standards, of identifying Creator with creation. Emerson was always conscious of the transcendence of God, and insisted on the mysteriousness of the Divine will, and the impossibility of the human understanding fathoming the mind of the Divine. Emerson's assertions of the immanence of the Divine were always accompanied with assertions of the transcendence of Deity. In short, he restated the traditional Christian paradox of immanence and transcendence.
The thesis asserts that the Emersonian doctrine of self-reliance is a restatement of the Protestant doctrine of the priesthood of the individual believer. This doctrine asserts that men are completely dependent on God, but in matters of religion completely independent of other men.

The charge that Emerson was an egoist, was the same charge that was brought against Luther and Milton. The charge is refuted by the claim of Emerson and Luther and Milton that they were acting on the direction of Deity. The thesis does not attempt to evaluate this claim; it asserts that Emerson's doctrine of self-reliance is actually a doctrine of God-reliance and rests on the same philosophical and theological doctrines as does the Protestant doctrine of the priesthood of the individual worshipper.

The thesis asserts that Emerson was conscious of the problem of evil; he experienced it personally, and labored with it in his literary productions throughout his life. He surveyed the extent of evil and of sin in life thoroughly and adopted the traditional Christian explanations. He believed that men had a limited freedom to live in the world and enjoy its goods; men were however to make God their primary loyalty. Emerson felt that much sin and evil grew out of the abuse of freedom; instead of obeying God, men obeyed other men. He thought that the world was a testing place to develop spiritual abilities; therefore he thought much of the so-called evil was really a good, in the form of discipline or training. He rejected the Manichean assumption that the world is evil; he was a monist, although he confessed his ignorance of the means by which the apparent duality was to be reconciled. He thought that if men could see
the whole picture, they would understand the necessity for what seemed evil. He sometimes agreed with the Old Testament belief that man's sin had brought natural evils upon him. His ultimate solution to the problem was in the doctrine of compensation. This doctrine was a restatement of the idea of the Beatitudes; obedience to spiritual laws would bring spiritual enrichment; disobedience to spiritual laws would bring punishment. The greatest compensation was in the experience of the mystic, who in becoming part of the whole, enjoyed God forever. Emerson's conclusion was that life is ultimately victorious over death, that good is ultimately victorious over evil.

The thesis asserts that Emerson was a mystic. There is in the writing of Emerson both the traditional doctrines of mysticism, and the claim to immediate union with God. Emerson's mystical experiences were characterized by the traditional aspects of mysticism. They were ineffable, noetic, transient, and passive. The knowledge claims made by Emerson as a result of his experiences were the claim of optimism, of the essential goodness of the world, of monism, the essential unity of the world, and the claim of immediate knowledge of God.

The thesis concludes that in the areas discussed Emerson restated the Augustinian, Protestant, Puritan traditions.
Lee Allan Burress, Jr., was born at Wichita, Kansas, January 20, 1918, the son of Bertha Lovell Davis Burress and Lee Allan Burress. He was educated in the public schools of Wichita and Mulvane, Kansas. He received the A. B. degree from the Municipal University of Wichita in 1942. He attended Garrett Biblical Institute, Evanston, Illinois, from 1942 to 1944. From 1944 to 1946, he was the pastor of the Methodist Church, Birmingham, Iowa. He taught psychology and English at Wichita University from 1946 to 1948. In 1949 he received the degree of Bachelor of Divinity at Garrett and was ordained into the Methodist ministry. He was Assistant Professor of Philosophy and Religion at Wichita University from 1949 to 1951. He was a resident candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the department of English at Boston University from 1951 to 1953. While at Boston University, he was pastor of the Methodist Church in Nantucket, Massachusetts. During the year 1953-1954 he taught English at Southwestern College, Winfield, Kansas. In September of 1954 he was appointed Chairman of the Division of Language and Literature at the College of Emporia, Emporia, Kansas.
Lee Allan Burress, Jr.