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Household Gods: creating Adams family religion in the American Republic, 1583-1927

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HOUSEHOLD GODS:

CREATING ADAMS FAMILY RELIGION IN THE AMERICAN REPUBLIC, 1583-1927

by

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this work to L4C.

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Recently I unearthed an early graduate-school relic, a computer file that I labeled "Grand Untitled Project," composed of a single line: "history of one American family's religion." As that project wraps up several years later, I have many people to thank for its progress. I am deeply grateful to family, friends, and colleagues for their unwavering support of my research adventure. Philip and Susan Georgini, Jenevra Georgini and Steve Macy, and Dorothy Korchinsky, were ready resources of moral strength and delicious care packages. As the proud daughter of a social worker and an art historian, I had unique guidance in ways to look at the religious and aesthetic journeys of an American family. Jenevra's legal insight still helps to me think like a colonial lawyer. At a key moment in this project's genesis, my late grandmother reminded me to refine my historical synthesis. After enduring my whirlwind monologue about archival treasure, she smiled gently and said, "Yes, but what's it all *about*?" To her credit, I'll ask that on every future project.

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ABSTRACT

Over the course of the long nineteenth century, American Christianity changed dramatically, leaving lasting imprints on how families lived, worked, played, and prayed. As America's prolific "first family," the Adamses of Massachusetts were key interpreters of the place of religion within a rapidly changing American republic facing denominational turf wars, anti-Catholic violence, a burgeoning market economy, Civil War, shifting gender roles, and the collapse of providentialism. Constant globe-trotters who documented their cultural travels, the Adamses developed a cosmopolitan Christianity that blended discovery and criticism, faith and doubt. Claiming Puritan ancestry and the supremacy of a Unitarian covenant with God, the family was unusually forthright in exploring a subject as personal and provocative as faith.

This dissertation shows how they interpreted religious ideas and rites in America over three centuries of civic service. I argue that the Adamses' cosmopolitan encounters led them to become leading lay critics of New England religion, even as they marshaled Christian rhetoric to sustain American democracy. While scholars of American religion have relied on "fringe" groups to explain the growth and democratization of American

Christianity, little has been studied of seekers like the Adamses, transnational agents of American thought and culture who sought avidly among other faiths yet chose to stay within the mainline fold. My study offers a new perspective on the political dynasty, by mapping the religious journeys of Americans who looked for God in eclectic places and then made their return, greatly changed, to the family pew.

INTRODUCTION

John Quincy Adams, busy packing up Bibles and letterbooks for his new mission as American minister to Britain, rushed through Napoleon′s Paris on last-minute errands. By 10 May 1815, the 48 year-old diplomat and his wife Louisa longed for a fresh start in London and for a happy family reunion with all three sons, after nearly six years apart.[1] Darting down a side street, John Quincy paused at the studio of Antoine-André Ravrio, bronze-worker to the newly reinstated emperor.[2] There, Adams purchased six small busts of Cicero, Homer, Plato, Virgil, Socrates, and Demosthenes. They traveled to his White House mantel, then to the east study and writing-chamber of the family's ancestral home in Quincy, Massachusetts, and, finally, through the colonial garden where his mother Abigail's pink-white roses bloomed, to line the Stone Library's walls. The statues passed from him to son Charles, then grandson Henry. John Quincy and his well-traveled heirs always referred to the set as the "household gods," republican talismans that they could carry away with them, like Aeneas, at a moment's notice.[3] His grandson Brooks hurried Jazz Age tourists right up to that mantel; a century on, he believed that the household

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[1] John Quincy Adams, 10 May 1815, Diary, Adams Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, Mass. A modern genealogical chart appears in the Appendix (C.F. Adams Charitable Trust).

[2] Ravrio (1759-1814), designed ormolu clocks, lamps, and bronze ornaments for Napoleon's châteaux at Saint-Cloud, Compiègne, and the Tuileries; his adopted son Louis Stanilas Lenoir continued the firm. According to John Quincy's Diary, he visited the studio a few months after Ravrio's death. At the time, the bronze-maker's will was the talk of Paris. Ravrio had bequeathed a prize of 3,000 francs to the inventor of a patent to gild bronze without mercury, as a way to save workmen dying from the fumes. On Ravrio, see Glenn Campbell, ed., *The Grove Encyclopedia of Decorative Arts* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); and Edouard Foucaud, *The Book of Illustrious Mechanics of Europe and America*, trans. John Frost (New York: D. Appleton, 1846), 229-232.

[3] Aida DiPace Donald and David Donald, eds., *The Diary of Charles Francis Adams*, 8 vols. (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1964-1986), 5:vii, 124. See also Laurel A. Racine, *Historic Furnishings Report: The Birthplaces of Presidents John Adams and John Quincy Adams*, 10 vols. (Charlestown: Northeast Museum Services Center, National Park Service, 2001), 8:723-744.

gods handpicked by John Quincy—always guarding the Adamses' cache of Bibles and letterbooks—best symbolized the family legacy of Christian service and civic sacrifice.[4]

A closer look at the Adams family's multigenerational archive demonstrates how pivotal Christianity—as the different generations understood it—was in shaping their decisions great and small about the course of the American republic that they served for three centuries. Christianity was the *lingua franca* that Abigail Adams used to interpret her husband John's political setbacks. Scripture armed their son John Quincy to act as parent, statesman, and antislavery advocate. Unitarianism gave Abigail's Victorian grandson, Charles Francis, the "religious confidence" to persevere in political battles on the Civil War home front. By contrast, *his* son Henry found religion hollow and repellent when he compared it to the purity of modern science. Finally, Christianity was the missing link that explained world economic ruin to Abigail's great-grandson Brooks, a Gilded Age critic of capitalism and the lay prophet of two world wars. Constant globe-trotters who documented their religious travels in words and images that total 300,000 manuscript pages in the Adams Family Papers alone, over time the Adamses managed to create a cosmopolitan Christianity that blended discovery and criticism, faith and doubt.

The Adamses were key interpreters of religious culture within a rapidly changing American republic facing denominational turf wars, anti-Catholic violence, a burgeoning market economy, the Civil War, and shifting gender roles. Over the course of the long nineteenth century, personal and public Christianity changed dramatically, leaving lasting

[4] Wilhelmina S. Harris, *Adams National Historic Site: A Family's Legacy to America* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Dept. of the Interior, National Park Service, 1983), 1-64. For Harris, who was Brooks's social secretary and the Adams National Park's first superintendent, see Chapter 5.

imprints on how families lived, worked, played, and prayed. For most American families, Christianity was the cultural framework that they used to explore notions of a special destiny for the new nation, as promised by an omniscient Providence, and of their share in realizing that prophecy. The Adams family's multigenerational history of religion provides a unique window into that evolving project.

Asked for a religious affiliation, many Americans now begin their reply with, "Well, I was *raised*…" but individual family stories of religious life in American history are curiously rare.[5] Yet, as the Adamses knew it for 300 years, at the center of American life lay the Christian family, constructed as a microcosm of national peace, stability, and godliness.[6] By using religious biography to frame one influential family's conversations on faith and doubt, my dissertation makes three contributions to the fields of American intellectual and cultural history. First, I use this set of profiles to capture changes in family worship over time and thereby illuminate greater structural changes in the development of American religion during a turbulent period of revolution, urbanization,

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[5] The few works that exist on multigenerational family religion have significantly broadened scholarly understanding of how Americans have dealt with intellectual crisis and cultural change; some of these historians have also offered new insights regarding religion's effect on family structure. Spanning a dozen Beechers (or more) who lived from 1738 to 1907, Lyman Beecher Stowe's *Saints, Sinners and Beechers* (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1934) chronicled family history in a light, conversational manner that avoided deep theological waters. As a counterpoint, Marie Caskey's latter approach to the same subject, *Chariot of Fire: Religion and the Beecher Family* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), demonstrated the dilemmas that religion caused for the family's intellectual growth. A more substantial effort at incorporating family history came with Emily Bingham's *Mordecai: An Early American Family* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2003). Bingham follows three generations of Jewish immigrants in North Carolina, describing the "protective covenant" of "bourgeois domesticity, intellectual cultivation, and religious liberalism" that grounded the family's newly acquired American patriotism. And for a very different take, on how religion can rupture the family bond, see Craig Harline, *Conversions: Two Family Stories from the Reformation and Modern America* (Ann Arbor: Sheridan Books, 2011).

[6] Colleen McDannell, *The Christian Home in Victorian America, 1800-1940* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994).

and industrialization. By doing so, I personalize the working narrative of religious history in America stretching back to the first stages of settlement, harvesting the private records of individual religious experience as fresh evidence of large-scale social change. What did it mean for the Adamses of Massachusetts to be "raised" Christian in young America?

Second, I expand on the theme of the American family as a site for marking transformations in religious culture, in step with scholars' recent interest in family history as a lively platform for intellectual discourse.[7] In describing American religious change and identifying major intellectual networks, scholars have often looked to mainline denominations, iconic preachers, and voluntary associations, but the family remains a surprisingly understudied sphere for the development of faith. Throughout the generous timeline covered here, American religion remained, as modern scholars have shown, "an expression of family or political life, and a change in the latter was reflected in a change in the former."[8] Given the numerous sermons preached to guide family life since the nation's founding, it is worth investigating how one American family actually received, interpreted, and challenged those instructions. I argue here that family history is a vital primary source for intellectual and cultural historians, since the home is a place where

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[7] In intellectual biographies and cultural studies, many scholars have employed family history to tell a larger story. Notable examples are: F.O. Matthiessen, *The James Family* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1947); John Demos, *A Little Commonwealth: Family Life in Plymouth Colony* (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1970); Phyllis Cole, *Mary Moody Emerson and the Origins of Transcendentalism: A Family History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998); George Howe Colt, *The Big House: A Century in the Life of an American Summer Home* (New York: Scribner, 2003); Paul Fisher, *House of Wits: An Intimate Portrait of the James Family* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 2008); Annette Gordon-Reed, *The Hemingses of Monticello: An American Family* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2008); Emma Rothschild, *The Inner Life of Empires: An Eighteenth-Century History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011); and Jehanne Wake, *Sisters of Fortune: America's Caton Sisters at Home and Abroad* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2011).

[8] Ronald A. Simkins and Gail A. Risch, eds., *Religion & the Family* (Omaha: Creighton University Press, 2006), ix.

religious ideas are inherited, debated, discarded, reinvented, or renewed.[9] Families archive signs of faith and pass along religious memories in a way that even churches and clergy cannot record or control. In the period studied here, the home was still the primary site for cultivating the education and devotion of religious sentiment. An "interior" subject as sacred and sensitive as religion was an open topic in Adams family letters, something that parents and siblings frequently used to signal personal or political growth.

Finally, this dissertation reintroduces some very well-known historical actors through the genre of religious biography.[10] For the nineteenth century's prolific "first family," the famous Adamses of Massachusetts, the domestic discourse describing *how* they "lived religion" was particularly dynamic and well-documented.[11] As cosmopolitan

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[9] On the significance of using family history to tell the American story and the methodological challenges of constructing that narrative, see: Michael Grossberg, *Governing the Hearth: Law and the Family in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985); John Demos, *Past, Present, and Personal: The Family and Life Course in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); Tamara K. Hareven and Andrejs Plakans, eds., *Family History at the Crossroads: A Journal of Family History Reader* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), vii-xxi; Elisabeth Donaghy Garrett, *At Home: The American Family, 1750*-1870 (New York: H.N. Abrams, 1990); Jean E. Hunter and Paul T. Mason, eds., *The American Family: Historical Perspectives* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1991); Gerald F. Moran, *Religion, Family, and the Life Course: Explorations in the Social History of Early America* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992); Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Christianity and the Making of the Modern Family* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000); Annette Atkins, *We Grew Up Together: Brothers and Sisters in Nineteenth-Century America* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001); James Volo and Dorothy Denneen Volo, *Family Life in 17th- and 18th-Century America* (Westport: Greenwood Press. 2006); Marilyn Coleman et al., *Family Life in 20th-Century America* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2007); and C. Dallett Hemphill, *Siblings: Brothers and Sisters in American History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

[10] These religious biographies served as models: Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967); Edwin S. Gaustad, *Sworn on the Altar of God: A Religious Biography of Thomas Jefferson* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Pub., 1996); Jon F. Sensbach, *Rebecca's Revival: Creating Black Christianity in the Atlantic World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005); David Hempton, *Evangelical Disenchantment: Nine Portraits of Faith and Doubt* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008); and Catherine A. Brekus, *Sarah Osborn's World: The Rise of Evangelical Christianity in Early America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013).

[11] On the significance of family discourse and the development of American Christianity, see David D. Hall, ed., *Lived Religion in America: Toward a History of Practice* (Princeton: Princeton University Press,

men and women operating at the heart of American power, the Adamses knew that prevailing notions of Christian citizenship laid out duties for them to fulfill, and they repeatedly sought out God for help. Religion served as a kind of moral shorthand or social technology, informing their intellectual and cultural contributions. At critical moments in American history, when they served at the forefront of social change—colonial settlement, the Revolution, the Civil War, the dawn of modern mass culture—the Adamses turned to religion to make sense of new norms, to guide diplomacy, and to adapt Christian ethics for civic duty.

A distinctively American form of Protestant Christianity, one born of a dissenting heritage and political disunion from England, was the first lens that most Adamses reached for in order to view the world, which meant that they centered their energies on keeping it sharp enough for long-term use. In this way, John's and Abigail's descendants operated, along with their well-educated American peers, as liberalizing Protestants. Biblical inquiry, comparative religious studies, philanthropic efforts, and an inner drive to reconcile the goals of church and state all steered their lives. Claiming Puritan ancestry and preferring to practice a liberal form of Unitarianism, the Adamses were unusually forthright in their exploration of a subject as private and provocative as personal faith. Like many American Victorians, most Adams family members accepted organized

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1997), and Laurie F. Maffly-Kipp et al., *Practicing Protestants: Histories of Christian Life in America, 1630-1965* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006).
This project draws mainly on the Adams Family Papers held at the Massachusetts Historical Society (Boston, Mass.). With material dating from 1638 to the present, the collection includes family correspondence, letterbooks, diaries, literary manuscripts, speeches, legal and business papers, photographs, and other documents. A modern genealogical chart appears in the Appendix.

Christianity as a public good. But, increasingly, they filled letters and lives with the effort to answer one query: What was it good *for*?

As longtime servants of the state and elite critics of culture, the Adamses worked to raise America's standing in the world, drawing criticism and praise for their wide-ranging efforts. In tandem, the Adamses and their Harvard-educated peers drove the complex process of "unbecoming British," placing themselves within a longer historical tradition that tied together American Protestant worship and rational inquiry with human progress.[12] These twin projects required a regular, full-scale review of the Christianities that the family might leverage in order to condition moral behavior, support democracy, and ensure the fulfillment of God's special plan for the "chosen" nation.

The spur of constant travel stimulated the family appetite to sample new religions. The Adamses were exceptionally privileged observers of foreign culture, and they knew it. Such a remarkable head start inspired (and burdened) them to share the knowledge they acquired abroad. As a young John Quincy packed up for Harvard, Abigail tartly reminded her eldest son that he had never been denied a book nor missed a chance to mix with great thinkers on two continents, and thus: "How unpardonable would it have been in you, to have been a Blockhead."[13] Diplomatic missions sent them far and wide, and most of the Adamses, conscious of their joint legacy as history-makers, took care to write down and transmit what they experienced of the world's religious cultures. Encounters

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[12] Kariann Yokota, *Unbecoming British: How Revolutionary America Became a Postcolonial Nation* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

[13] Abigail Adams to John Quincy Adams, 21 July 1786, in *Adams Family Correspondence*, 12 vols., eds. L. H. Butterfield et al. (Cambridge and London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1963—), 7:276.

with Old World religion and New World practice appear throughout their extensive diaries, letters, literary efforts, photographs, and historic homes. Whenever John Adams and his descendants turned to survey the American past, they had a unique family archive of religious data to consult. The Adams family prayed—and told.

At first glance, the intellectual and cultural history of Adams family religion seems to be quintessentially nineteenth-century New Englander in scope: Puritans ceding to Congregationalists, a bend toward Unitarian ideology at mid-century, capped by Victorian neurasthenia and the angst of modernity. Showcasing three generations of American statesmen's religious behavior and study, this dissertation argues that cosmopolitan travel encouraged the Adamses to develop religious tolerance by bringing them in close contact with foreign cultures. Drawing on their cosmopolitan encounters, which blended worldliness and critique, this study explores how one American family interpreted diverse creeds of religion over roughly three centuries of civil service. As diplomats who acclimated to new rites with every mission, the Adamses learned that respecting religious differences was key to early American statesmanship. Yet the Adamses' experiences also led them to become leading lay critics of New England religion, as they struggled to find the social "place" of Protestant Christianity within an American republic troubled by slavery, market politics, and the death of providentialism.

Faith and cosmopolitan travel are twin themes that many Adams biographers have touched on but never treated fully. Avowedly Unitarian, the Adamses were constantly on the move *toward* Christianity, but *away* from their home church in Quincy. What sort of Christian inheritance did they claim as Americans abroad? When did religious expression

or exploration raise the stakes intellectually, presenting new choices for them to make? And what was the role of religion, foreign and familiar, in forming what the critic Henry Adams casually referred to in conversation with his brother Brooks as "the family mind"?

One effect of the Adamses′ constant travel was to sharpen their thought on the quality of *American* religion, once home. Like most of their nineteenth-century peers, they shook off the last restraints of Calvinism, explored foreign faiths, dabbled in biblical exegesis, and rejected theological hermeneutics in favor of aesthetic pursuits that infused Christian precepts and personalities into an emergent canon of national arts and letters. Few families, however, purposefully created a working archive of intellectual culture like this one. Generations read, reread, and edited each other's writings for publication. They created and catalogued several libraries' worth of religious literature and art. Innate filiopiety concerns guided their projects, reminding them at every step that being part of a presidential family was, as one biographer noted, "both inspiration and obstacle."[14]

Overall, the dilemma of what it meant to be Christian (and famous) in America marked every stage of the Adamses' well-traveled lives, especially once the market revolution entrenched the once-navigable sins of wealth and worldliness. Often, the religious dilemmas that the Adamses faced centered on how they should operate in a community of believers who oscillated between religion "of the heart" and "of the head." As modern scholars of American religion have reconstructed the nineteenth century, a wild and unpredictable pulse of emotion moved the Victorian American soul. Laity

[14] Martha Banta, "Being a 'Begonia' in a Man's World," in *New Essays on the Education of Henry Adams*, ed. John Carlos Rowe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 53.

sought to institutionalize successive (and often conflicting) impulses and innovations, yielding in turn a dramatic landscape of religious roads for the Adamses to explore.

The dynamic coexistence of Protestant duty and theological innovation set the fast pace of American religious life, leading to the establishment of the nation's blossoming networks of education, culture, and reform.[15] Old Puritan rites, like fast and thanksgiving days, appeared on the American calendar but, increasingly, families like the Adamses observed them with little real fervor.[16] The polymath John Quincy Adams even worried that he had taken biblical exegesis to a sinfully indulgent level, stuffing his journal with a potentially "vicious excess" of religious sentiment.[17] Seeking a balance between a

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[15] Many important works exist to outline the momentous shifts in religion and culture that the Victorian Adamses experienced and reflected upon, including R.W.B. Lewis, *The American Adam: Innocence, Tragedy and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955); D. H. Meyer, *The Instructed Conscience: The Shaping of the American National Ethic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1972); Clive Bush, *The Dream of Reason: American Consciousness and Cultural Achievement from Independence to the Civil War* (London: Edward Arnold, 1977); Harold P. Simonson, *Radical Discontinuities: American Romanticism and Christian Consciousness* (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1983); David Morse, *American Romanticism, Volume 1, From Cooper to Hawthorne* (Totowa: Barnes & Noble Books, 1987); Conrad Edick Wright, ed., *American Unitarianism, 1805-1865* (Boston: The Massachusetts Historical Society and Northeastern University Press, 1989); Lewis Perry, *Boats against the Current: American Culture between Revolution and Modernity, 1820-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); Anne C. Rose, "Religious Individualism in Nineteenth-Century American Families," in *Perspectives on American Religion and Culture*, ed. Peter W. Williams (Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 1999); James E. Block, *A Nation of Agents: The American Path to a Modern Self and Society* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002); John Gatta, *Making Nature Sacred: Literature, Religion, and Environment in America from the Puritans to the Present* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2004); Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); Paul E. Johnson, *The Early American Republic, 1789-1829* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); and Lorman Ratner et al., *Paradoxes of Prosperity: Wealth-Seeking Versus Christian Values in Pre-Civil War America* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009).

[16] On the Puritan roots and the un-Puritan manifestations of civil religion in the early republic, see William De Loss Love, *The Fast and Thanksgiving Days of New England* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1895), and David Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes: The Making of American Nationalism, 1776-1820* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997). The comprehensive account of the era's plague remains Charles E. Rosenberg's *The Cholera Years: The United States in 1832, 1849, and 1866* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962).

[17] John Quincy Adams, Diary, 31 December 1812, Adams Papers.

religion "of the heart" and "of the head," American Christians legitimated and made both personal experience and the claims of science more central to their theological proclamations. Innovative laity competed to claim the American mind with new doctrines like Mormonism and Christian Science. They founded utopias, promoting the communal ownership of goods and plural marriage, in the backcountry of New York, Indiana, Missouri, and New England. Aided by clergy, some turned away from biblical inerrancy. They opened seminaries and burned convents. They funded foreign missionary societies meant to spread a new, global Christianity. Armed with Gospel rhetoric, they advocated for temperance, women's rights, and the abolition of slavery. Along the way, they learned that the process of combining "heart" and "head" Christianity was rarely peaceable, or easy. Rediscovering the Puritan intelligentsia at mid-century, Protestant laity lit up the public sphere with liturgical controversies and sectarian feuds that mirrored or offset their equally ambitious displays of party politics. This was the hothouse of American religious culture in which the Adamses thrived, and moved through, always taking notes.[18]

Contemporary scholars of American religion have reconstructed the lives of seekers who departed mainline denominations, focusing on "fringe" groups to explain the

[18] Explorations of American Victorianism and the intellectual legacy of the Civil War also round out the story of the Adams family's religious development, including William G. McLoughlin, *The Meaning of Henry Ward Beecher: An Essay on the Shifting Values of Mid-Victorian America, 1840-1870* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1970); Geoffrey Blodgett, ed., *Victorian America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1976); Irving H. Bartlett, *The American Mind in the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (Arlington Heights: H. Davidson, 1982); Burton Raffel, *American Victorians: Explorations in Emotional History* (Hamden: Archon Books, 1984); Thomas J. Schlereth, *Victorian America: Transformations in Everyday Life, 1876*-1915 (New York: HarperCollins, 1991); Steve Ickingrill et al., *Victorianism in the United States: Its Era and Its Legacy* (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 1992); and Anne C. Rose, *Victorian Americans and the Civil War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

growth and democratization of American Christianity.[19] But little has been written about seekers like the Adamses, who sought avidly among other faiths, yet chose to stay within the mainline Protestant (and mostly Unitarian) fold. My study offers a new perspective: it reminds readers of the American Victorians who sought God in eclectic places and then made their return, greatly changed, to the family pew. Just as evangelical factions, functioning as "self-conscious shapers of society and opinion" sought to implement reform by subjecting "social institutions and standards to divine judgment," so too did their liberal Unitarian peers.[20] As new religions multiplied, the overarching Protestant mission to articulate "true" faith encouraged the Adamses to take the priesthood of all believers to a new level, by arguing with "their" God and society about what constituted true piety.[21] Any construction of national or self-identity began by asking Providence: "Am I what I should be?"[22]

As prominent Unitarians acknowledged, the eighteenth-century heritage of American religion, which yoked together evangelical fervor, Scottish common-sense philosophy, and scientific reason, presented a few shortcomings to the nineteenth-century

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[19] See, for example, Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), and Leigh Eric Schmidt, *Restless Souls: The Making of American Spirituality* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2005).

[20] Daniel Walker Howe, "The Evangelical Movement and Political Culture in the North during the Second Party System," *The Journal of American History* 77 (1991): 1216-1239.

[21] E. Brooks Holifield, *Theology in America: Christian Thought from the Age of the Puritans to the Civil War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003).

[22] Charles Francis Adams, 19 August 1832, in *The Diary of Charles Francis Adams*, 8 vols., eds. Aida DiPace Donald and David Donald (Cambridge and London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1964—), 4:348-349.

Adamses.[23] Enduring waves of national expansion and internal fracture, American congregations spent much of the Victorian era (1830s-1900) struggling with the old colonial directive that "good Christians make good citizens."[24] Though they gained political independence in the eighteenth century, Protestants like the Adamses really "made" America in the nineteenth century, embedding broadly Christian values into a usable national culture. I show that their efforts to do so reflect the consolidation of lay leadership, one of American religion's most distinctive characteristics. Throughout the nineteenth century, the church remained a key site for liberalizing Protestants to reevaluate religion's functionality in fostering improvement and growth. At century's end, this line of thinking led Protestant-raised critics like Henry and Brooks Adams to make new "Christian" arguments about the nature of progress in the industrial era.

As they used Christian language to criticize government and culture, Victorian Protestants turned inward, questioning how to cultivate piety. Like the Adamses, many rejected conversion as a primary goal. They embraced pluralistic journeys through other faiths, largely as a method of courting and overcoming doubt.[25] Their relationship with

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[23] For this synthesis of American religion, see Mark A. Noll, *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

[24] On the parallel paths of Christianity and democracy in America, see Sidney E. Mead, *The Lively Experiment: The Shaping of Christianity in America* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963); Jon Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990); Mark A. Noll, *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); Mark A. Noll and Luke E. Harlow, eds., *Religion and American Politics: From the Colonial Period to the Present* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); James H. Hutson, *Church and State in America: The First Two Centuries* (New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); and Andrew R. Murphy, *Prodigal Nation: Moral Decline and Divine Punishment from New England to 9/11* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

[25] David W. Mislin, *Saving Faith: Making Religious Pluralism an American Value at the Dawn of the Secular Age* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015).

God became more intimate, as they pushed past clergy for a closer communion with holy precepts. Just as the Adamses did, many families picked through a catalogue of Protestant traditions and compiled an admixture of ideas and practices that felt most "American," often through a lifelong process of trial and error. As Reconstruction-era waves of immigration and change swept through the nation, lay seekers added Catholic, Jewish, and Eastern rites to the list. Charles Francis Adams's sons, Henry and Brooks, dissenting from the "numb deism" in which they were raised, easily justified "crossing but not dwelling" on the doorstep of foreign faiths like Catholicism, Hinduism, and Buddhism.[26]

Christianity, as American Victorians like the Adamses came to interpret it, shaped individual and national identity, but in ways that no single Protestant sect could either anticipate or claim to master fully. Again, the Victorian Adamses' shift in religious behavior echoed a greater social change; to most Americans, it seemed less vital to maintain orthodoxy in an era marked by events that did not synchronize with biblical predictions or platitudes. Throughout the long nineteenth century, Protestants made and remade American religious identity, exhibiting a spectrum of feeling and scientific inquiry that challenged their forebears' providentialist plans for nationhood. The revised rites of modern Christianity, glimpsed here from the family's eye view, bear the marks of that struggle. Henry Adams' self-inflicted tragedy of an *Education*—in which he replaced

[26] Thomas A. Tweed, *Crossing and Dwelling: A Theory of Religion* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006).

the dead pulpits of New England Christianity with a mash-up of scientific Buddhism and medieval Catholicism—resonated with his generation of American seekers for a reason.[27]

The American elite's struggle to balance sacred and secular duties, as personified by the Adamses, offers a key case study in how religious change played out in the public and private spheres of nineteenth-century American life. The Adams women ran the estates and speculated in bonds (Abigail), hosted salons in Washington, D.C., and on the continent (Louisa Catherine), widened the family's networks beyond Unitarian circles (Abigail Brooks), and experimented with new media like photography (Marion Hooper, "Clover"). In keeping with the "first family" pedigree, Adams men followed a fairly common program of attending Harvard and suffering through early careers in law before turning to the farm, the state, the military, or private enterprise to foster reform. More

[27] For Henry's and brother Brooks's roles as prominent Victorian intellectuals, the genesis of cosmopolitan critique, and the cultural complexity of administering meaningful social reform in the Gilded Age, see Paul A. Carter, *The Spiritual Crisis of the Gilded Age* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1971); William R. Hutchison, *The Modernist Impulse in American Protestantism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976); T.J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981); idem, *Rebirth of a Nation: The Making of Modern America, 1877-1920* (New York: HarperCollins, 2009); John N. Ingham, *Assault on Victorianism: The Rise of Popular Culture in America, 1890-1945* (Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press, 1987); Mark C. Carnes and Clyde Griffen, eds., *Meanings for Manhood: Constructions of Masculinity in Victorian America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990); Leslie Butler, *Critical Americans: Victorian Intellectuals and Transatlantic Liberal Reform* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); David A. Hollinger, *Postethnic America: Beyond Multiculturalism* (New York: Basic Books, 2000); idem, *Cosmopolitanism and Solidarity: Studies in Ethnoracial, Religious, and Professional Affiliation in the United States* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006); Louis Menand, *The Metaphysical Club* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2001); John Carlos Rowe, "Nineteenth-Century United States Literary Culture and Transnationality," *PMLA* 118 (2003): 78-89; Tom Lutz, *Cosmopolitan Vistas: American Regionalism and Literary Value* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004); Gerard Delanty, "The Cosmopolitan Imagination," *Revista CIDOB d'Afers Internacionals* 82/83 (2008): 217-230; Mark Rennella, *The Boston Cosmopolitans: International Travel and American Arts and Letters* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); and Nicola J. Watson, ed., *Literary Tourism and Nineteenth-Century Culture* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

than anything else, it was each generation's sustained commitment to government service and social improvement that brought about their phases of personal religious change.[28]

For three centuries, the Adamses chose Protestant Christianity as their main spiritual path, but later and more liberal descendants also attempted important surveys of Catholicism, atheism, and non-Western religion. From John Adams through his grandson Charles Francis, the Adams family creed was conventionally Unitarian. They believed in a guiding Providence, and that human will empowered them to freely accept or reject God's grace. They rejected miracles and revelation, preferring biblical criticism and lay inquiry to broaden the mind beyond the passive reception of dogma. Acknowledging Jesus as a "master workman" and gifted moral teacher, they grew fuzzy about his divinity, opting instead to scrutinize his teachings and doctrines as they related to contemporary culture. In line with their Protestant peers, most Adamses mistrusted the sensory emphasis and hierarchical nature of "Romish" Catholicism but revered historical Judaism as a source of lawmaking and ethics. Less sure-footed in their understanding of non-Western religion and fascinated by foreign rites, the Adamses were eager to interact with new faiths. Whether traveling for pleasure or to negotiate treaties, they were sensitive that they represented a Christian nation. Shipwrecked in northwestern Spain for Christmas 1779, young John Quincy jotted down his confusion at Catholic observance: "They dress up and go to mass but after that's over all is. So if they call this religion I

[28] With *Sword of the Spirit, Shield of Faith: Religion in American War and Diplomacy* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012), Andrew Preston has analyzed the relationship between American diplomacy and Christian doctrine, but more scholarship is needed on the role of religion in foreign policy formation during the early national era.

wonder what is not it; after Mass, almost all the Shops in town are open'd." Then the budding diplomat hauled himself up short. "But stop. I must not say any thing against their religion while I am in their country but must change the subject."[29]

In tackling such a sprawl of chronology and subject, my focus stays on those Adamses who left behind the greatest archival evidence for religious biography. In order to frame the family's story of faith within that of the nation, I situate the Adamses' beliefs within the religious doctrines and behaviors of several eras. The analysis begins with (another) Henry Adams's departure from the religious chaos of late Stuart-era Somerset, England, to the new world of Puritan Massachusetts Bay, and it ends with Brooks Adams's early twentieth-century critique of that same Christian civilization. This arc covers the Adams family's experience of English persecution, early Congregationalism and town governance, Enlightenment-era education of men and women, biblical poetry and Christian patriotism, Victorian fascination with the "visual religion" of churches, the cosmopolitan Christianity of Gilded Age culture, and the use of faith and the "household gods" to assess modernity. In treating these topics, I draw mainly from the diaries, letters, miscellany books, photographs, and related resources of the Adams Family Papers at the Massachusetts Historical Society and the Adams National Historical Park in Quincy. The comprehensive nature of this family archive, which features the public and private papers of more than ten generations, provides a unique opportunity to offer a new narrative of how and why Americans conduct the "lively experiment" of religion in a democracy.

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[29] John Quincy Adams, 25 December 1779, in *The Diary of John Quincy Adams*, 2 vols., eds. David Grayson Allen et al. (Cambridge and London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1981), 1:18.

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CHAPTER ONE

The Providence of John and Abigail Adams

In early winter 1823, elderly President John Adams came out to honor the family's dead. Emerging from years of rural semi-retirement in Quincy, Massachusetts, Adams proudly marked the completion of his last great family project, to commission and place new granite headstones on his ancestors' graves in Hancock Cemetery. Many of his forebears were buried there, directly across from the First Parish Congregational Church where John prayed twice each Sunday, just as much of his family had done since the community regathered as an independent church in 1639.[30] The largest monument he created was for Henry Adams, the English emigrant who arrived in 1638, fleeing the "Dragon persecution in Devonshire" with his wife "and eight sons." John Adams drafted the text to carve into the native stone, "placed in this yard, by a great-great grandson, from a veneration of the Piety, humility, simplicity, prudence, patience, temperance, frugality, industry and perseverance, of his Ancestors, in hopes of Recommending an imitation of their virtues to their posterity."[31] Some of the historic plaque later proved to be a bit hazy—scholars have never found a "Dragon persecution;" Henry Adams came from Somerset, and the eight sons were really seven, plus a daughter—but far more

[30] Gathered by Puritans in 1636 and established as an independent Congregationalist church in 1639, the Adams family church became Unitarian in 1750; it has been Unitarian Universalist since 1961. By "Unitarian," I refer to the church's liberal Congregationalist (Arminian) theology and cultural attitudes throughout the eighteenth century.

[31] Henry Adams monument, John Hancock Cemetery, Quincy, Massachusetts; John Adams, "Inscription on the tombstone of Henry Adams," [*March?*] 1822, Adams Papers.

indelible was John's articulation, etched for public and posterity, of the Adams family values that he was charged to maintain.[32]

The monument's inscription and placement echoed an intellectual ideal that Americans before and after the second president struggled with throughout their lives, in public and private discourse: Christianity as *the* key to implementing duty and reform. This chapter introduces the first Adamses within their native religious ecosystems and their guiding ideology of Christian providentialism, the belief that God spoke through historical events and intervened in individual lives to fulfill a predestined plan.[33] Like many colonists, the Anglo-American Adamses fought to thrive within the cultural and intellectual boundaries of a "double scope, mans good, and Gods honour."[34] Identifying and tracking "providences," or signs of divine will, filled their days.[35] In order to perceive how the Adamses and their fellow New Englanders first connected Christianity

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[32] Various scholars and Adamses, including John Adams, have conducted genealogical research on the family's Anglo-Welsh origins. See, for example: Andrew N. Adams, *A Genealogical History of Henry Adams, of Braintree, Mass., and His Descendants; Also John Adams, of Cambridge, Mass., 1632-1897*, 2 vols. (Rutland: The Tuttle Co. Printers, 1898); Daniel Munro Wilson, W*here American Independence Began: Quincy, Its Famous Group of Patriots; Their Deeds, Homes, and Descendants* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1902); J. Gardner Bartlett, comp., *Henry Adams of Somersetshire, England, and Braintree, Mass.: His English Ancestry and Some of His Descendants* (New York: Privately printed, 1927); Henry Adams, *John Adams's Book: Being Notes on a Record of the Births, Marriages & Deaths of Three Generations of the Adams Family, 1734-1807* (Boston: Boston Athenaeum, 1934); and Hugh Brogan and Charles Mosley, *American Presidential Families* (New York: Macmillan, 1993). A modern genealogical chart appears in the Appendix (C.F. Adams Charitable Trust).

[33] Here I rely on the definitions of historical, national, and personal providentialism outlined in Nicholas S. Guyatt, *Providence and the Invention of the United States, 1607-1876* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 2-6. See also Sacvan Bercovitch, *The Puritan Origins of the American Self* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975); E. Brooks Holifield, *Theology in America*; and Harry S. Stout, *The New England Soul: Preaching and Religious Culture in Colonial New England* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

[34] John White, *The Planter's Plea; or, The Grounds of Plantations Examined, and Usuall Objections Answered* (London: William Jones, 1630), 3.

[35] David F. Holland, *Sacred Borders: Continuing Revelation and Canonical Restraint in Early America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 40-43.

with American culture and why congregationalism shaped them for political participation, I trace the providentialism that led them out of England, through the American Revolution, and, fitfully, into the early republic. The men and women of John's generation honed their political arguments for independence by invoking the Congregationalist tradition of claiming liberty and articulating dissent.[36] They were less successful, however, in mustering that providentialist rhetoric to address the needs of the new nation. In order to understand how John and Abigail Adams used New England Christianity to navigate the world—then returned to Quincy as cosmopolitan critics of that same faith—it is worth recovering the family's earliest roots in American religion.

I. Henry Adams in Flight

In family memory, the figure of Henry Adams (1583-1646) remained forever in flight. Even within the nineteenth-century family circle, no one agreed on the finer points of the English emigrant's tale. The two Adams presidents, father and son, sparred over Henry's origins story. John asserted that Henry came from Bristol in 1640, while John Quincy upheld an Adams attachment to Reverend Thomas Hooker's Braintree contingent from Essex County in 1650.[37] Both of the amateur genealogists tried—and failed—to pinpoint the number of Henry's children (eight) who ended up in New England pews. Paying his respects at the Adams cemetery monument in 1824, the Harvard senior

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[36] James F. Cooper, Jr., *Tenacious of Their Liberties: The Congregationalists in Colonial Massachusetts* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); and Michael P. Winship, *Godly Republicanism: Puritans, Pilgrims, and a City on a Hill* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002).

[37] John Adams, "Genealogical Note," 7 August 1773, in *The Papers of John Adams*, 17 vols., eds. Robert J. Taylor et al., (Cambridge and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1977—), 1:351-352; *idem*, "Ancestry," 5 October 1802, in *The Diary and Autobiography of John Adams*, 4 vols., eds. L. H. Butterfield et al. (Cambridge and London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1961-1966), 3:253-257.

Charles Francis reckoned that he marked "the seventh generation since we have been in the new world. In the old we have no traces."[38] As late as 1853, most Adamses claimed a vague link to the Welsh baronial clan of ap-Adams in County Devon.[39] So murky were Henry's Puritan roots that his latter heirs considered hiring a private detective to scour the Anglican parish churches of Bath and Wells for clues. His Victorian namesake, who labeled the Puritans an admirable but "intolerant" class of newcomers to New England, shrugged off the family's storied past: "I know nothing about the genealogy, and do not invest in it."[40]

One reason for the family's constant mythmaking was that Henry Adams made for a difficult research topic. Like other elusive Puritan progenitors who were remodeled by their elite Unitarian heirs, the first Henry Adams left no clear paper trail explaining his abrupt decision, at 55 years old, to replant the family in Quincy (then Braintree).[41] Little historical residue of the Puritan progenitor remained, beyond his signature on a few wills, deeds, and church records. It was far easier, as time went on, for Adams family members

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[38] Charles Francis Adams, 26 May 1824, in *The Diary of Charles Francis Adams,* 8 vols., eds. Aida DiPace Donald and David Donald (Cambridge and London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1964—), 1:158-159.

[39] Bartlett, *Henry Adams,* xiv-xv.

[40] Henry Adams to Charles Francis Adams, Jr., 24 January 1894, in *The Letters of Henry Adams,* 6 vols., eds. J.C. Levenson et al. (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1982-1988), 3:11-12 4:158.

[41] For liberal Protestants' manifold reinterpretations and eventual rejection of "Puritan" ideals and rhetoric, see Jan C. Dawson, *The Unusable Past: America's Puritan Tradition, 1830 to 1930* (Chico: Scholars Press, 1984); Dean Hammer, *The Puritan Tradition in Revolutionary, Federalist, and Whig Political Theory: A Rhetoric of Origins* (New York: P. Lang, 1998); and Elizabeth A. Clark, *Founding the Fathers: Early Church History and Protestant Professors in Nineteenth-Century America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011).
On nineteenth-century Americans' interest in genealogical research as the "social glue" needed to reify or to "reproduce contemporary power relations relating to class, gender, and race," see Francesca Morgan, "A Noble Pursuit?: Bourgeois America's Uses of Lineage" in *The American Bourgeoisie: Distinction and Identity in the Nineteenth Century,* eds. Sven Beckert and Julia B. Rosenbaum (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 135-151.

to paint Henry's portrait in broad strokes of good Protestant virtue. Exhibiting a vaguely Anglo-American dissenter's pedigree helped three generations of Adams statesmen and their wives to blend in at foreign courts. En route to the Paris peace talks with England in 1779, John Adams gently refuted the claim of one Spanish official who hoped that the American minister might be of Catalan descent: "I thought these questions very whimsical and ridiculous, but I determined to keep my Spanish gravity and answered them civilly and candidly that I was born in America, and so was my Father and Grandfather, but my Great Grandfather and Great Great Grandfather came from England, where their Ancestors had lived for any Thing I knew, from the Days of the first Adam."[42]

A maltster by trade, Henry Adams brewed good beer, read widely, and married well.[43] The Puritan-era Henry's daily experience revolved around the three institutional markers of town life that his American descendant John Adams most prized: the meetinghouse, the militia field, and the schoolroom.[44] Growing up in the southeastern portion of Somerset, Henry worshipped at the cramped church in Barton St. David; the population has hovered around 500 since his time. The fifteenth-century church cemetery, oriented around a weather-beaten statue of St. David collecting alms, held no Adams gravestones, but the family's Protestant affiliation there was multigenerational, even in Henry's day. He attended Sunday service in a 63-foot-by-17-foot chapel with

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[42] John Adams, 19 December 1779, *Diary*, 4:209-210.
[43] The clearest genealogical information about Henry Adams and Edith Squire Adams Fussell, and the family's life in rural England and early Braintree, Massachusetts, appears in Bartlett, *Henry Adams*, 10-13, 28-35, 38, 46-73.
[44] John Adams, 21 July 1786, *Diary*, 3:195-196.

Saxon arches. A set of four church bells pealed out on the holy days of the Anglican calendar or to summon his father, a parish tax-gatherer and constable, to muster drills with the local militia. As American descendants claimed, Henry and his Somerset friends were "persons in humble but respectable Stations of Life. Not illiterate or uneducated, nor yet of learned professions."[45] Henry's signature on his father's 1604 will and, five years later, on his marriage bond, shows the round, Italian-style penmanship of a well-educated Elizabethan youth. Over time, Henry acquired a core library of "ould books" that he willed to his daughter and sons.[46]

Between duties as a copyhold (tenant) farmer, Henry evidently found time to read, write, and master the math needed to trade goods in England's developing market towns. The nearest city was Glastonbury, six miles away. Yet Henry would have understood that his ancient church functioned as the true cultural and economic heart of the region. Frequently, Henry and his fellow tradesmen pooled their profits in order to hire popular traveling preachers for lectures on Sunday afternoons and market mornings. Adams and his neighbors regularly tithed to raise the £10 annual salary needed for a permanent pastor.[47] The steady presence of a vicar in Barton St. David linked it to hamlets like Charlton Mackrell, Keinton Mandeville, Charlton Adam, and Kingweston. It was likely through that church connection that Henry met Edith Rosamund Squire (1587-1673), a blacksmith's daughter and the granddaughter of William Squire, rector of Charlton

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[45] John Quincy Adams to Edward H. Adams, Washington, D.C., 3 December 1843, Schaffner Collection, Harvard College Library, Cambridge, Massachusetts).
[46] Henry Adams, Will and Inventory of Estate, Braintree, Mass., 8 June 1647, Adams Papers.
[47] Fueling criticism of the Church's bureaucratic woes, Barton St. David's vicar of 1668 earned the same salary as his predecessor of 1535, for which see Margaret Steig, *Laud's Laboratory: The Diocese of Bath and Wells in the Early Seventeenth Century* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1982), 125-127.

Mackrell. When he married Edith in October 1609, Henry acquired a generous share of her family's glebe (church) lands, which he used to set up a brewing business spread over 47 acres.[48] Between Sundays, Henry and Edith spent their time farming and following the seasonal tasks of a seventeenth-century rural distillery: harvesting barley or oats to dry on a kill floor for malting, then soaking grains in a wooden mash tub with sugar, adding hops to the "wort" liquid in a copper keeler as it boiled, and, finally, transferring the English ale to barrels for sale.[49] The Adams family's fortune—and likely their prayers—swung from harvest to harvest.

At first, Henry's native landscape was relatively untroubled by tides of religious dissent. Aside from some clerical redistricting, the Protestant Reformation took root easily in Somerset, and Henry's village followed the standard liturgy and devotional practice of the Church of England.[50] Henry Adams's evolution into Puritan émigré, therefore, largely happened due to the storm of episcopal reforms that swept through English religious life in the 1630s. In 1633, the Church disciplinarian and radical reformer William Laud (1573-1645) was named Archbishop of Canterbury. Within months, the look and feel of Anglican religion changed dramatically. The anti-Calvinist Laud's overarching vision of the Church was "to make the laity dependent on the clergy,

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[48] Carl Hamilton, *Some Account of the Parishes of Charlton Adam and Charlton Mackrell* (Taunton: Privately printed, 1961), 3, 10, 11, 16.
[49] Pamela Sambrook, *Country House Brewing in England, 1500-1900* (Rio Grande: Hambledon Press, 1996); Peter Dyer, "Randle Holme and 17th Century Brewing, Malting and Coopering Terminology," *Journal of the Brewery History Society* (2007): 62-73.
[50] Robert Dunning, *A History of Somerset* (Guildford: Biddles Ltd., 1983), 54-55; 60-61; Phyllis M. Hembry, *The Bishops of Bath and Wells, 1540-1640: Social and Economic Problems* (London: The Athlone Press, 1976), 42-78.

and the clergy upon themselves."[51] He centered power in the bishops. He required churchwardens to submit annual conduct reports on the behavior of parishioners like Edith and Henry. Tightening his surveillance one notch more, Laud mandated that churchwardens, ministers, and schoolmasters must report on each other. Laud's dreaded "interrogatories" meant that Henry could be accosted at any time with an impromptu quiz: Did he remember to bow at Jesus's name, and to kneel when receiving the sacrament of Holy Communion? Did a mother of nine like Edith Adams don a modest veil, each time she returned to the Church after childbirth?[52] Nasty lawsuits between neighbors flourished and, quite naturally, grew. To the sizable number of clergy and laity who flouted his crusade for ceremonial conformity, the archbishop meted out excommunication, imprisonment, and deprivation of land. For Henry and Edith, a new symbol of religion took shape on Somerset roads: the white-robed penitent newly released from 30 days of jail, bearing a white wand and heading toward Barton St. David to pay a hefty fine.[53]

Laud's economic reforms—standardizing tithe rates in London and improving the professional salaries of rural preachers—reshaped how the Somerset laity lived their religion.[54] Adams family profits, for example, changed after Laud reinstituted support for

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[51] For the connections, made here and below, between the Laudian reforms, lay persecution, and Somerset dissent, as well as American emigration, see Henry B. Bell, *Archbishop Laud and Priestly Government* (London: A. Constable, 1905), 134-161; Stieg, *Laud's Laboratory*; Leo F. Solt, *Church and State in Early Modern England, 1509-1640* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); Alison Games, *Migration and the Origins of the English Atlantic World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 18-20, 132-162; David Underdown, *Fire from Heaven: Life in an English Town in the Seventeenth Century* (London: HarperCollins, 1992); Dunning, *History of Somerset*; and Hembry, *Bishops of Bath and Wells*, 220-221.
[52] Stieg, *Laud's Laboratory*, 358-373.
[53] Bell, *Archbishop Laud*, 138-139.
[54] Solt, *Church and State in Early Modern England*, 178-182.

Sunday sports and ale-feasts. Despite the extra income, the marketplace of religious ideas for the Adamses contracted, after Laud terminated the townsmen's privilege to select and employ itinerant pulpit talent. Acting on Laud's orders, ministers and churchwardens could rifle the contents of Henry's private library whenever they chose, reporting him for punishment if they deemed his reading material immoral. Laud's next move—to transform the Reformation-era "communion tables" into fenced, railed altars suitable for genuflection—met with widespread resistance. To Henry's generation, re-enshrining "God's residence on earth" was not only expensive but also a treacherous omen that Protestants now favored the same idolatrous adoration as did the Roman Catholic Church. In Somerset, they balked at moving the altar. Henry's Puritan peers struck back with a few reforms of their own, banning post-church revels and ale feasts. Laud retaliated with royal force. Though he lacked firm ecclesiastical or legal reasoning for initiating such severe reforms, the archbishop denounced Henry Adams's dissenting neighbors as unchristian Englishmen, who, having turned against the Church, might revolt next against their monarch.

Given Henry's need to sell ale and his background as a longtime Anglican, it is hard to know how "Puritan" he really was. Here it is worth emphasizing that many encountered Puritanism through their existing webs of kinship, and that, rather than functioning as a monolithic structure, Puritanism spread largely *because* it operated as a "multilayered system out of which the clergy and the laity could each select motifs or

symbols."[55] Family history reveals that Henry mixed easily with Puritan clergy and their ideas, especially those of the Reverend John White, an influential advocate of American colonization. The Adams children's schoolmaster and uncle was Aquila Purchase, a prominent parishioner at White's Holy Trinity Church in neighboring Dorset.[56] Henry and Edith likely attended a few services there; certainly, they heard White's emigration sermons repeated and debated at home. White (1575-1648), a moderate Puritan and the "patriarch" of the Dorchester Company's efforts to land colonists at Gloucester, Massachusetts, dabbled in joint-stock ventures. In 1629 he helped to obtain the £3,000 capital from London merchants that funded the Massachusetts Bay Colony's royal charter.[57] He never left England, but White's zeal led the Adamses to join the estimated 21,000 colonists who made the "Great Migration" to America between 1629 and 1640.[58] Fueling entire families with "godly" goals by enunciating the "cluster of doctrines" that constituted Puritanism, White leveraged two themes in his lectures: the power of

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[55] David D. Hall, "Narrating Puritanism," in *New Directions in American Religious History*, eds. Harry S. Stout and D. G. Hart (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 51-83.

[56] Underdown, *Fire from Heaven*, 113, 140. Aquila Purchase (1589-1633) wed Edith Adams's sister Ann Squire (later Oliver, 1591-1662), for which see Clarence Almon Torrey, *New England Marriages Prior to 1700* (Baltimore: Genealogical Pub. Co.,1985), 607.

[57] Virginia DeJohn Anderson, *New England's Generation: The Great Migration and the Formation of Society and Culture in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 38-45; David Hackett Fischer, *Albion's Seed: British Folkways in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 13-42; Darren Staloff, *The Making of an American Thinking Class: Intellectuals and Intelligentsia in Puritan Massachusetts* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 3-4; John White, *Directions for the Profitable Reading of the Scriptures* (London: s.n., 1647), 1-338; and Frances Rose-Troup, *John White, The Patriarch of Dorchester and The Founder of Massachusetts, 1575-1648: With an Account of the Early Settlements in Massachusetts, 1620-1630* (New York and London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1930).

[58] On the range of statistics and motives associated with the Great Migration, see Francis J. Bremer, *The Puritan Experiment: New England Society from Bradford to Edwards* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1995), 39-47; David Grayson Allen, *In English Ways: The Movement of Societies and the Transfer of English Local Law and Custom to Massachusetts Bay, 1600-1690* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1981); and Bernard Bailyn, *The Barbarous Years: The Peopling of British North America: The Conflict of Civilizations, 1600-1675* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012), 365-416.

Providence to induce emigration and the mission of Anglo-American colonization as a way to salvage western Christianity from the meddling attacks of both Archbishop Laud *and* a host of insurgent Roman Catholics.[59]

John White's widely circulated pamphlet of 1630, *The Planter's Plea*, furnished Henry's peers with a providentialist schematic for rationalizing Protestant emigration to the New World. According to White, English families like the Adamses formed the "pettie Colonies" needed to restore and replant Christianity in the new Jerusalem of New England. The act of settling "new States requireth justice and affection to the common good," White preached, stressing colonization's power to refine faith through trial.[60] He enumerated the mission's well-publicized perils (snow, serpents, famine) and acknowledged its related costs. He needled his readers that French and Dutch émigrés had managed to flourish there. Then, White warned that it would be worse for a Christian to stay and root in England's rotten moral climate, growing nearer to "cou[v]etousnesse, fraud, and violence" and, thus, farther from heaven.[61] John White's America held new paths to spiritual and temporal profits, along with a native "heathen" populace ripe for conversion.[62] White used historical providentialism to drive home his final point. Providence had appointed England for the task, White argued, since it boasted the *only* surplus of "reformed" believers capable of such a quasi-biblical, millennialist undertaking. "It seems, this end, in plantation, hath beene specially reserved for this later

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[59] Bailyn, *The Barbarous Years*, 379-383; Guyatt, *Providence and the Invention of the United* States, 28-31; White, *The Planter's Plea*, 1-84.
[60] White, *The Planter's Plea*, 3, 5.
[61] White, *The Planter's Plea*, 5.
[62] White, *The Planter's Plea*, 8.

end of the world," he wrote.[63] Henry's brother-in-law Aquila was one of the first to agree. In 1633, he and wife Ann sailed for Massachusetts on the *Mary & John*.[64]

Over the next five years, religious and economic conditions darkened in the Adams household, and, as with many other Puritans, kinship networks tugged them toward America.[65] Letters from the Purchases to the Adamses probably carried conflicting accounts of New England's climate, resources, and landscape. But for Henry and Edith, as scholars of early Anglo-American migration have shown, "each scrap of news contributed to a larger mosaic of family information" about the kinds of investments and liberties that they might reap from a reunion in the "American cornucopia."[66] In Somerset, by contrast, Laud's decrees meant extra scrutiny and restriction; the archbishop condemned Puritanism as "a wolf held by the ears" that might lunge to kill the "divinely appointed" Charles I.[67] Between 1634 and 1640, the king took the unusual and urgent step of implementing the ship-money tax in peacetime, extending his collection beyond coastal towns and into inland communities like Barton St. David. Generally used to equip warships, Charles's decision to levy the tax without Parliamentary support—issuing three writs in the first two years alone—imposed heavy

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[63] White, *The Planter's Plea*, 10.
[64] Burton W. Spear, *Search for the Passengers of the Mary & John, 1630*, 27 vols. (Toledo: B. W. Spear, 1985), 17:7, 124.
[65] Roger Thompson, *Mobility and Migration: East Anglian Founders of New England, 1629-1640* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1994); Scott Rohrer, *Wandering Souls: Protestant Migrations in America, 1630-1865* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 8; Fischer, *Albion's Seed*, 36-49.
[66] David Cressy, *Coming Over: Migration and Communication between England and New England in the Seventeenth Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 1-36, 74-106, 213-234, 263-291; Malcolm Gaskill, *Between Two Worlds: How the English Became Americans* (New York: Basic Books, 2014), ix-xi.
[67] Rebecca Fraser, *A People's History of Britain* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2003), 327-331.

debt on rural laborers like the Adamses, and invigorated the popular mistrust of the monarchy that would lead to Charles's execution in 1649.[68] A wave of poor harvests caused the Adams brewery to fail, and Henry's license was revoked in 1637.[69] Anxious to leave Laud's persecution and to seek out profitable farmland, the Adamses followed their Providence to New England, arriving in Quincy (then Braintree) in the fall of 1638. Like many Puritan family reunions, their welcome to the new "Zion" was bittersweet.[70] Aquila Purchase had died at sea in 1633, and Edith's sister Ann had remarried the surgeon Thomas Oliver, a founding elder of Boston's First Parish Church.[71]

For the Adamses, bits of John White's vision held true.[72] To Puritan émigrés like Henry and Edith, a Calvinist form of Christianity functioned to regulate town government and to inculcate a communal ethos of what constituted "good" behavior.[73] Operating beneath a watchful Providence, they nourished a colonial (though not yet *American*) life of profit in the New England wilderness. In February 1639, Henry was granted 40 acres

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[68] Alvin Rabushka, *Taxation in Colonial America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 84-87. Laud was imprisoned in the Tower for treason in 1641, and stood trial in 1644. Despite the lack of a verdict and a subsequent royal pardon, Parliament passed a special bill of attainder to sanction Laud's beheading on 10 January 1645. The longtime Puritan nemesis was buried in the crypt of nearby All Hallows Barking Church, where Henry's Unitarian descendant John Quincy Adams wed Louisa Catherine Johnson in 1797, for which see Chapter 2.

[69] Andrew B. Appleby, "Grain Prices and Subsistence Crises in England and France, 1590-1740," *The Journal of Economic History* 39 (1979): 865-887; Bartlett, *Henry Adams.*

[70] Cressy, *Coming Over*, 263-291.

[71] William Richard Cutter, *Genealogical and Personal Memoirs Relating to the Families of Boston and Eastern Massachusetts*, 4 vols. (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1908), 1:823-824.

[72] Mark A. Noll, *The Old Religion in a New World: The History of North American Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 29-32.

[73] Joseph A. Conforti, *Saints and Strangers: New England in British North America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006); Virginia DeJohn Anderson, *New England's Generation: The Great Migration and the Formation of Society and Culture in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991); David D. Hall, *Puritans in the New World: A Critical Anthology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004); and Alden T. Vaughan, ed., *The Puritan Tradition in America, 1620-1730* (Hanover: University Press of New England, rev. ed., 1972).

of land "at the Mount," near Mount Wollaston, a property cache that the family owned and farmed well into the nineteenth century.[74] Adams built a malt-house on the northern tip of present-day Elm Street, and reestablished his brewing business. On Sabbath-days, Henry and his family headed along unfinished trails to reach the center of town, where a two-tiered wooden structure sealed with mud corners served as their new Puritan meetinghouse, municipal hall, and emergency fort.[75]

Once again, the Adamses experienced a seismic shift in their modes of religious practice. The Puritan meetinghouse, later known as the First (Parish) Church, became the Adamses' home church for the next three centuries. It sat at a key fording point between two brooks. When local residents constructed a "country highway" in 1648, they built it around the "chapell of ease," so that parishioners traveling from opposite corners of Dorchester and Weymouth converged *in* the house of prayer to address the sacred and secular duties that Providence prescribed for them to share.[76] In this way, Henry's Anglo-

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[74] John Adams, *Diary*, 3:254, 257; Topical Supplements: Wills and Deeds, Adams Papers.

[75] The major historical surveys of what became the United First Parish Congregational Church of Quincy—and served as the Adamses' home church for the next three centuries—are Sheldon W. Bennett, *Freedom, Friendship, and Faith: A Noble Heritage through 350 Years* (Quincy: United First Parish Church [Unitarian], 350th Anniversary Booklet, 1989); Peggy A. Albee et al., *United First Parish Church (Unitarian) Church of the Presidents Historic Structure Report* (Lowell: Northeast Cultural Resources Center for National Park Service); Charles Francis Adams, Jr., "A Church's Retrospect," *The New England Magazine* 7 (1889): 263-265; *History of Braintree, Massachusetts (1639-1708): The North Precinct of Braintree (1708-1792) and the Town of Quincy (1792-1889)* (Cambridge: The Riverside Press, 1891), 129-157; *Three Episodes of Massachusetts History: The Settlement of Boston Bay; The Antinomian Controversy; A Study of Church and Town Government*, 2 vols. (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, & Co., 1892); and William P. Lunt, *Two Discourses, Delivered September 29, 1839, on Occasion of the Two Hundredth Anniversary of the Gathering of the First Congregational Church, Quincy: With an Appendix* (Boston: James Munroe and Company, 1840), 1-147. For Charles Francis Adams, Jr.'s work as a church historian in comparison to that of his younger brother Brooks, see Chapter 5.

[76] Charles Francis Adams, Jr., *History of Braintree*, 12-22.

American neighbors reified the Puritan tenet that "a church was a social concept—a covenanted body of people gathered to practice Christian teachings."[77]

Flags of red bunting or solo drumming, not bells, now signaled the Adamses to service. Few descriptions of the First Church's predecessor survive, but in tandem with other Puritan meetinghouses of early New England, it likely "resembled an oversized, well-lighted, one-room schoolhouse with poor acoustics."[78] The unheated interior was plainer and grittier than that of Barton St. David. Henry and Edith may have added chairs from home to line their pew, and they received Holy Communion from a small, hinged table that dropped down from the deacon's pew. With regular maintenance paid for by precinct taxes, the meetinghouse doubled as a site for trials, elections, medical surgery, concerts, and gunpowder storage. Outside the meetinghouse doors stood a stark reminder of those who shunned the lessons of Providence: the pillories and stocks.[79] Inside, as Charles Francis Adams, Jr. sketched in his 1892 church history, prayed a "devout and expectant" laity whose Puritan pastors actually did very little to "restore theological tranquillity" for newcomers like Henry and Edith.[80] Unwittingly, Henry Adams had traded one scene of religious turmoil for another.

The Braintree meetinghouse was the fifteenth congregation founded in Massachusetts Bay, and Puritans were already familiar with the price of dissenting from

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[77] Peter Benes, *Meetinghouses of Early New England* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012), 2.
[78] Benes, *Meetinghouses*, 13.
[79] Benes, *Meetinghouses*, 13-28. The Adams family church was a longtime venue where sinners made public confessions and "suffered the law"; the last such confession (for leading "an unchristian life") took place there on 20 January 1740, for which see Charles Francis Adams, Jr., *History of Braintree*, 144-157.
[80] Charles Francis Adams, Jr., *Three Episodes*, 517.

mainline traditions. As the first generation of American Adamses soon realized, the religious ideas that they carried over—notably, the disciplinary doctrine of spiritual preparation for salvation, and an abiding belief in an omnipotent Providence—now faced new challengers from within the fragile community.[81] When Henry arrived in late 1638, the fledgling Puritan municipality was rebuilding in the wake of the "Antinomian Controversy."[82] Swirling around the teachings of radical prophetess Anne Hutchinson, the debates splintered the covenanted community over questions of whether she and others had gone "against the law" in contesting notions of the "right" path to heaven. For Hutchinson, sanctification emanated from direct, inner contact with God, not through the outward show of good works nor via any adherence to the social constructs and institutions of moral law—a clear departure from orthodox Puritan thought. Hutchinson and a band of followers, including her brother-in-law John Wheelwright, were brought to trial. She was convicted, banished, and subsequently excommunicated. Wheelwright, whose 16 January 1636 fast-day sermon had particularly riled the orthodox magistrates, found himself cast out of Boston.[83] In a series of widely publicized twists and turns, the

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[81] Andrew Delbanco, *The Puritan Ordeal* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989); Jon Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 26-66; Francis J. Bremer, ed., *Puritanism: Transatlantic Perspectives on a Seventeenth-Century Anglo-American Faith* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1993); Philip F. Gura, *A Glimpse of Sion's Glory: Puritan Radicalism in New England, 1620-1660* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1994); and George Macgregor Waller, ed., *Puritanism in Early America* (Boston: Heath, 1950).

[82] David D. Hall, ed., *The Antinomian Controversy, 1636-1638: A Documentary History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990), i-xvii; Timothy D. Hall, "Assurance, Community, and the Puritan Self in the Antinomian Controversy, 1636-38," in *Puritanism and Its Discontents*, ed. Laura Lunger Knoppers (Newark : University of Delaware Press, 2003), 197-209.

[83] John Wheelwright preached from Matthew, 9:15: "And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast." While it does not appear to be a particularly pointed sermon, Wheelwright's staging of it before the royal colonial audience—just as social support for

inaugural controversy exposed a significant reason for transatlantic Protestantism's jagged growth in early America: Replanted nonconformists did not bond into an instant community.

Several of Anne Hutchinson's supporters, like Wheelwright, fled Boston and found new havens where they struggled to sustain dissenting views. Shortly after the Massachusetts General Court found Wheeelwright guilty of sedition, the Adamses' First Church briefly welcomed the controversial clergyman (ca. 1592-1679) as pastor. On his arrival in Braintree, the fiery sermon-giver continued to teach that a covenant of grace—rather than a covenant of works—empowered individuals to secure their own salvation. Wheelwright told worshippers that the real "children of God" looked beyond the "gifts of his Spiritt" to find godly strength. "They doe not seeke only to know the Lord by fruits & effects, but looke upon the Lord wth a direct eye of faith they seeke his face, and this is the generation of seekers spoken of" in Scripture, Wheelwright preached.[84] Braintree worshippers tolerated Wheelwright's sermons, but the Massachusetts Bay magistrates were not ready to welcome his brand of theology, and Wheelwright was banished in late 1637. He went on to found settlements near Exeter, New Hampshire, and in Wells, Maine.[85]

Hutchinson began to sour—fueled growing complaints and brought him before the Puritan magistrates. See *John Wheelwright, His Writings, Including His Fast-day Sermon, 1637, and His Mercurius Americanus, 1645, with a Paper upon the Genuineness of the Indiana Deed of 1629 and a Memoir, by Charles H. Bell, A.M.* (Boston, Prince Society, 1876); and Sargent Bush, Jr., "John Wheelwright's Forgotten Apology: The Last Word in the Antinomian Controversy," *The New England Quarterly* 64 (1991): 22-45.

[84] Wheelwright, *Writings*, 158.

[85] Wheelwright's banishment was later lifted, but he never returned to Massachusetts. His daughter Esther continued the practice of religious dissent, rising to become Mother Superior of the Ursuline convent in Quebec, Canada.

When Henry and Edith Adams arrived in Braintree in late 1638, then, the local Puritan community was emerging from a period of crisis and attempting to forge ahead without a pastor. To do so, the émigré congregants renewed their joint pledge with a new First Church covenant. Its language reflected the vulnerabilities that came with following Providence's hazy roadmap to the colonies. Under the direction of pastor Henry Flynt, they signed a new promise to God on 16 September 1639. Henry's peers professed to be "poor unworthy creatures, who have sometime lived without Christ and without God in the world…being called of God out of this world to the fellowship of Christ by the Ministry of the Gospel."[86] In this way, the First Church parishioners had begun grafting their Anglo-American odyssey onto notions of what Providence planned next, and speculated how Protestant piety might aid them in meeting those goals. Henry endured eight winters in the wilderness of the New England fellowship, and died in 1646. Edith remarried a neighbor, and the young Adams siblings set up a string of farms across Massachusetts Bay.[87]

From Somerset persecution to Massachusetts Puritanism, the Adamses' saga of migration and resettlement reinforces the local church's agency as a key actor in early American life. It tells us why they left behind Barton St. David, and what Henry and Edith lived *for* in Braintree. Imagine entering a roomful of refugees and dissenters, seats

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[86] Most of the First Parish Church records predating the tenure of Rev. John Hancock (1671-1752) are no longer extant, but Hancock drew on them for his centennial sermon, for which see William Parsons Lunt, *Two Discourses, Delivered September 29, 1839: on Occasion of the Two Hundredth Anniversary of the Gathering of the First Congregational Church, Quincy; with Appendix* (Boston: James Munroe and Company, 1840). Hancock served as pastor from 1726 to 1744.

[87] Andrew N. Adams, *Genealogical History of Henry Adams;* Wilson, *Where American Independence Began;* Bartlett, *Henry Adams;* and Henry Adams, *John Adams's Book.*

shoved together to accommodate strangers, friends, or criminals—however the community commanded the needs of the day. This was the chaotic First Church experience that Henry and Edith shared with their fellow colonists. For the early Adamses, the echo of John White's glowing reiteration of "the gift of the earth to the sonnes of man" likely faded a bit after battling New England famines and frosts. Christianity helped Henry, Edith, and their children to cope with waves of colonial hardship. And, once the seventeenth-century Adamses had established a toehold in the new country, they pivoted to please God through multigenerational bouts of service to the Braintree congregation, always a short ride away. After the founding generation of Henry and Edith, the following decades marked an era of steady, rapid growth in the regathered First Church, which transitioned to Congregationalism in the early part of the eighteenth century along with the rest of the region.[88] Flynt held the pulpit for nearly 30 years, and he counted 204 adult members in the pews. His successor Moses Fiske was equally successful.[89] In 1666, the meetinghouse was rebuilt in stone and enlarged, then capped with a steeple bell.[90] Within the next quarter-century, bureaucracy formalized and

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[88] Francis J. Bremer, *The Puritan Experiment: New England Society from Bradford to Edwards* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1995); Conforti, *Saints and Strangers*, 178-199; and Mark A. Noll, *The Old Religion in a New World: The History of North American Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 37-55.
[89] Charles Francis Adams, Jr., *History of Braintree*, 145.
[90] Wilhelmina S. Harris, "The Association of the Adams Family with the Stone Temple" (transcript of presentation at United First Parish Church, Quincy, Mass., 19 November 1972, Adams Papers Editorial Files). For Harris, who served as Brooks Adams's longtime social secretary and, subsequently, as the first superintendent of the Adams National Historical Park, see Chapter 5.

produced the first sacramental records.[91] By 1732, the congregation was able to fund another expansion and upgrade under the stewardship of the Reverend John Hancock.

Among Hancock's 558 parishioners were two future signers of the Declaration of Independence—his own son and John Adams, baptized months apart.[92] The Adamses were one of eleven families who installed a private pew, although they remained land-rich and cash-poor. The second president's father (John, 1691-1761) was a cordwainer (shoemaker) who served as a deacon, town selectman, and militia captain. On his father's will, John Adams scribbled that he had been ever "a Man of Strict Piety and great Integrity: much esteemed and beloved, wherever he was known, which was not far, his Sphere of Life being not extensive."[93] Deacon Adams, through his covenanted service to God and God's Braintree version of "a city upon a hill," taught his son that Christianity illuminated a family path of duty and dissent. At the same time, it inspired the younger Adams's quest to expand his religious horizons beyond the Braintree limits.

What did the Puritan experience of Henry and Edith Adams "teach" their descendants of religion and rebellion? For the Anglo-American Adamses, Christianity was both a means of attaining the grace of salvation and an interpretive tool that helped them to mold New England to suit God's plan. In history and literature, illustrating lessons drawn from the Puritans' ordeal thus became vital to crafting American destiny as

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[91] Inventory of UFPC Safe Deposit Box, 21 November 2006, Memorandum, UFPC Records. Two volumes of records, from 172 to 1856, are extant offsite. To reconstruct the church's earliest history, I have relied on the UFPC transcriptions as well as Lunt's 1839 bicentennial sermon, which covered a few record gaps. See also note 44, above, for related sources.
[92] Charles Francis Adams, Jr., *History of Braintree*, 145.
[93] "Will of Deacon John Adams, with Comments by His Son John," 8 January 1760-29 April 1774, in *Papers of John Adams*, 1:34-36.

revolutionary sentiments grew throughout the eighteenth century. The men and women of John Adams's generation nurtured a culture that obsessed over the various providentialist ideas that the Puritans had sacrificed—or fumbled—by challenging major ecclesiastical policies and dissenting from royal restraints.[94] Intent on building a reasonable, "essential self," the prototypical New England worshipper, as Andrew Delbanco has observed, exhibited the "inevitable recourse of a culture that has continually renewed itself through the *topos* of immigration, the experience of coming out of history into a place where time begins again, where the accretions of Old World culture can be burned away, and the unrestrained self can freely emerge in all its strident divinity."[95] John Adams's attempt to embed his ancestral backstory in the broader sweep of American history, issued in a revolutionary-era series of popular newspaper essays, offers one example of this large-scale intellectual struggle.

When John Adams drafted his *Dissertation on the Feudal and Canon Law* in the summer of 1765, it was the idealized memory of Puritans like his great-great grandfather that guided his pen. He had only a vague guess at where Henry hailed from, but John was confident that his Puritan ancestor exemplified what any good colonist could dare when acting in concert with God's will. By mapping the outer contours of the Puritan trial—especially the suppression of religious and political liberties at the corrosive hands of the Church—John embraced the providentialist rhetoric that served the revolutionaries whom he later met in America and Europe. Providence, John thought, had blessed Henry

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[94] Sacvan Bercovitch, "How the Puritans Won the American Revolution," *The Massachusetts Review* 17 (1976): 597-630; Winship, *Godly Republicanism*; McKenna, *Puritan Origins*; and Noll, *America's God*.
[95] Delbanco, *The Puritan Ordeal*, 240; 235-254.

Adams to live in an era when access to "general knowledge" generated opportunities for education and dissent. God then "raised up the champions, who began and conducted the reformation," John wrote, and from this intellectual wellspring came men like Henry. Sensible that religious persecution was a moral wrong, Puritans seized on American emigration as a way to dissent from the established Church and secure new streams of revenue. For John, the Puritan ordeal held valuable lessons in legal precedent, too. Henry's evasion of Charles I's ship-money tax resonated with John's contemporary Boston readers, groaning under the Intolerable Acts of George III. It was Henry and Edith whom John Adams pictured when he wrote that the "desperate" and "vexed" Puritans, a "people tortured by the powers of those days, for no other crime than their knowledge, and their freedom of enquiry and examination…at last resolved to fly to the *wilderness* for refuge, from the temporal and spiritual principalities and powers, and plagues, and scourges of their *native* country."[96]

It was best, his descendants agreed, that Henry Adams invoked an automatic mention when they retold the heroic American past—to children, to voters, to Harvard scholars. Why? First, the family's continual reinvention of their Puritan roots conditioned their historical understanding of Christianity's movement into colonial America. Second, the chance to claim a foundational part in a larger, providentialist narrative endowed Adams statesmen with a glossy "status" history worth advertising in the political arena. Third, Puritan genealogy underlined the family's longtime commitment to religious

[96] John Adams, "A Dissertation on the Canon and the Feudal Law, No. 1," [12 August 1765], in *Papers of John Adams*, 1:112-115.

nonconformity. Henry Adams's extreme expression of liberty, in John's mind, was what religion meant to the first Adamses who left England: the chance to choose *American* Christianity. Providence had led Protestants to seed the New England plantations, as John's generation believed, and would therefore also guide the colonies to independence and prosperity. While they ratified and amended Protestantism for the new nation, many, like the Adamses, wrestled with a fractious political scene and kept up the practice of dissent. Increasingly, they explored faiths that lay beyond small-town lines. But, as John and wife Abigail learned, applying New England lessons of Providence to American goals would prove difficult—even dangerous—in the stormy era of party politics that followed revolution.

II. An Education: How to Be a "Church-Going Animal"

John Adams was, in his own words, "a notorious…church-going animal."[97] Although scholars harbor an ongoing interest in linking the founders and popular ideas of God's "special" design for America, surprisingly few have focused on John Adams's religious journey.[98] Yet the cultivation of a Christian conscience, to be used in the service

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[97] John Adams to Dr. Benjamin Rush, 28 August 1811. Benjamin Franklin Papers, Yale University Library.
[98] Of the numerous biographies of John Adams, the key surveys are Gilbert Chinard, *Honest John Adams* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1933); Zoltán Haraszti, *John Adams & the Prophets of Progress* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952); Page Smith, *John Adams* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1962); Ralph A. Brown, *The Presidency of John Adams* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1975); Peter Shaw, *The Character of John Adams* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1976); John E. Ferling, *John Adams: A Life* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1992); Joseph P. Ellis, *Passionate Sage: The Character and Legacy of John Adams* (New York: Norton, 1993); C. Bradley Thompson, *John Adams and the Spirit of Liberty* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1998); David G. McCullough, *John Adams* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001); John P. Diggins, *John Adams* (New York: Times Books, 2003); and James Grant, *John Adams: Part of One* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005).

Several recent works on the founders' religiosity (as a group) exist, but few feature Adams's development in depth. See, for example: David L. Holmes, *The Faiths of the Founding Fathers* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); Gary A. Kowalski, *Revolutionary Spirits: The Enlightened*

of American interests, shaped the lives of John (1735-1826) and his wife, Abigail Smith Adams (1740-1818). Tracking through nearly two centuries of settlement in July 1812, John Adams pored over the family archive and identified Christianity as his family's intellectual constant in weathering periods of change. Despite the political turbulence that he faced, Adams believed that cementing Protestant Christianity as a social institution laid the best route to achieving individual and national success. "What has preserved this race of Adams's in all their ramifications, in Such Numbers, health peace Comfort and Mediocrity?" he wrote to old friend Dr. Benjamin Rush. "I believe it is Religion. Without which they would have been Rakes Fops Sots Gamblers, Starved with hunger, frozen with Cold, Scalped by Indians &c &c &c been melted away and disappeared."[99] Far from disappearing, the Adams family contributed significantly to the intellectual ventures and cultural opportunities of the new nation. In order to understand how and why they have done so for three centuries of American life, we take up John Adams's cue to follow the family history of religion.

His first real brush with Providence came in 1753, when God called him *away* from pulpit service and prodded him *toward* learning law—or so John Adams recalled in his diary.[100] Like most Harvard seniors, John investigated the traditional New England

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Faith of America's Founding Fathers (New York: Bluebridge, 2008); Gregg L. Frazer, *The Religious Beliefs of America's Founders: Reason, Revelation, and Revolution* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2012); and Daniel L. Dreisbach and Mark David Hall, eds., *Faith and the Founders of the American Republic* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

[99] John Adams to Dr. Benjamin Rush, 19 July 1812. Alexander Biddle Papers, Boston Public Library.

[100] John Adams, *Diary*, 3:262. For an excellent analysis of how John Adams's diary-writing exemplified the wider religious shift of a culture moving from a Puritan habit (of self-perfection) to an Arminian task (of enlightened inquiry), see C. Bradley Thompson, "Young John Adams and the New Philosophic Rationalism," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 55 (1998): 259-280.

career paths of medicine, ministry, and law. The shoemaker's son, conscious of the family's strain to fund his college education, veered away from seeking out a trade apprenticeship.[101] He weighed and rejected the "infinite toil" of a physician's life.[102] Again in step with his peers, John Adams spun next to preparing for a life in the Congregationalist ministry. Between 1751 and 1753, John oriented all of his spare reading time at Harvard to theological debates and divinity studies. And, by his account, *this* was the moment when Providence intervened and assigned him new purpose. A simmering crisis at his home church in Braintree, now led by the Reverend Lemuel Briant (1721-1754), altered John Adams's choice of profession and solidified his belief in Providence. Briant and Adams were close in age and theological perspective; and so the impact of this small-town controversy on Adams's long-term religious growth makes it worth reappraisal here.

Lemuel Briant, a 24 year-old rookie preacher from Scituate, was, when he came to the Adamses' First Church in 1745, off to a promising start with a congregation still basking in its centennial glow. Briant had been the unanimous choice for pastor, in no large part because he agreed to a lower salary (£50 a year on credit, plus firewood) than his predecessors.[103] John characterized him as "a jocular and liberal scholar and

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[101] Deacon John Adams attended Harvard, and sold 10 acres of land in Braintree so that his son John could do the same. The younger Adams entered his Harvard class at a high rank thanks to the socioeconomic influence of his mother, Susanna Boylston Adams Hall (1708-1797). See John Langdon Sibley and Clifford K. Shipton, *Sibley's Harvard Graduates*, 18 vols. (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1873-1999), 13:513-520.

[102] "Introduction," *The Earliest Diary of John Adams*, eds. L. H. Butterfield et al. (Cambridge and London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1966), 37.

[103] For the biography of Lemuel Briant and his short but tumultuous career, see Clifford K. Shipton, *New England Life in the Eighteenth Century: Representative Biographies from Sibley's Harvard Graduates* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1963), 449-455; Duane Hamilton Hurd, ed.,

divine."[104] Briant ably led the flourishing and prosperous congregation, and John Adams's teenaged memories of his sermons capture the first traces of the radical theology that Briant brought to publication in 1749.[105] In his sermon on moral virtue, printed that year, Briant made some divisive claims about the erosion of good New England preaching. He openly derided Calvinist ideals in favor of an Arminian approach to salvation.[106] By Briant's account, Providence made available a path to grace. In turn, pious congregants like the young John Adams could exercise the free will to accept or reject it. For example, Briant preached that Scripture demonstrated a "gracious Influence that the Spirit of God has upon every well disposed Mind in forming it to the same Image; so the Effects of Operations which we sometimes call the Graces, and sometimes the Fruits of the Spirit are nothing else…than moral Virtues."[107] Overturning several generations of Puritan tenets with his preaching, Briant surged ahead with an even bolder set of religious ideas. Practicing a Christian life, Briant advised, was more vital to salvation than adhering to the old Calvinist dogma about predestination. In his stab at articulating these ideas, Briant came very close to anticipating the Unitarian notions that William Ellery Channing and his circle would champion a century on—or so John later observed. For some, Lemuel Briant was *too* far ahead of his time. His wounded peers

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History of Norfolk County, Massachusetts, with Biographical Sketches of Many of Its Pioneers and Prominent Men (Philadelphia: J.W. Lewis & Co.), 291-293; Charles Francis Adams, Jr., *Massachusetts: Its Historians and Its History, An Object Lesson* (Boston and New York, Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1893), 98-99; and Bennett, *Freedom, Friendship, and Faith*.

[104] John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, 19 April 1817, Thomas Jefferson Papers, Library of Congress.

[105] *Ibid*.

[106] Lemuel Briant, *The Absurdity and Blasphemy of Depreciating Moral Virtue: A Sermon Preached at the West-Church in Boston, June 18th. 1749* (Boston: J. Green, 1749).

[107] Briant, *Moral Virtue*, 18-19.

fired back in print. At the height of the debate, Briant's wife suddenly left him, charging him with "several scandalous sins," and thereby fueling the complaint that Briant lacked any hold on Christian morality.[108] Briant battled on. "He was young, it was true," one of his latter biographers recalled, "but his church was with him, and he had a vigorous pen."[109]

Not *all* members of Briant's church were behind him, and soon theological rancor spilled over into the heart of the Adams household. Once again, adding the family dimension to the national religious narrative offers a new window on the reception history of American religion. Scholars examining the "shattered synthesis" that described the transition from Puritanism to Congregationalism have observed that the evangelical revivals of the early eighteenth century, along with local mainline scandals like Briant's, exposed the many different stripes of "Protestant temperament" in New England's religious palette.[110] Those changes left lasting marks within the household. "I may say I was born & bred in the centre of Theological & Ecclesiastical controversy," Adams observed of the Briant affair. "It broke out like the eruption of a volcano and blazed with portentious aspect for many years."[111] It was a troubled time for the faithful in the Adamses' hometown, with Episcopal clergy squaring off as well in a separate theological

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[108] James Levernier and Douglas R. Wimes, *American Writers before 1800: A Biographical and Critical Dictionary*, 3 vols. (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1983), 1:208. Briant married Abigil Barstow, and in 1753, had two young sons.
[109] Hurd, *History of Norfolk County*, 292.
[110] See, for example: James William Jones, *The Shattered Synthesis: New England Puritanism before the Great Awakening* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973); Philip J. Greven, *The Protestant Temperament: Patterns of Child-Rearing, Religious Experience, and the Self in Early America* (New York: Knopf, 1977); and Perry Miller, *Errand into the Wilderness* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1956).
[111] John Adams to Aaron Bancroft, 21 January 1823, printed in *The Massachusetts Spy*, 23 April 1823, Worcester, Massachusetts.

arena. Between 1749 and 1753, as the pamphlet wars raged on, one of Briant's youngest and more vocal supporters, John Adams, left to begin studies at Harvard. There, the young divinity student kept close tabs on the "hot controversy," mainly through family letters and frequent trips home.

Local families like the Adamses fractured along lines for or against Briant. These signs of how theological dissent encroached on private life radically changed John Adams's future plans. His father, Deacon John, backed Briant; but his uncle Ebenezer did not. A series of ecclesiastical councils, held in the Adamses' cramped saltbox cottage throughout 1753, led to a congregational vote of support for Briant. John Quincy, the grandfather of Abigail Smith Adams, presided over the meetings, and authored the final report largely exonerating Briant in April 1753.[112] Briant's health failed, and he retired before suffering an early death a year later. Aside from Briant's frenetic effort to introduce proto-Unitarian ideas to the sons and grandsons of Puritans, the controversy had a singular impact on John Adams's decision to pursue a law career. For the tone of the debates that he overheard at the family hearth—brimming with an ugly "Spirit of Dogmatism and Bigotry"—persuaded him that a career in the pulpit meant signing on to a life of thwarted intellectualism. Studying theology, Adams decided, would "involve me in endless Altercations and make my Life miserable, without any prospect of doing any good to my fellow Men."[113] Overall, John Adams believed that Providence had intervened in Braintree to show that liberal-minded Protestants must weather strong

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[112] John Adams, *Earliest Diary*, 37.
[113] *Ibid*.

criticism and challenge long-standing cultural views, especially in order to better their odds of salvation. Adams graduated Harvard in 1755. After an unhappy stint teaching at a boys' school in Worcester, he moved on to study law. By 1762, when he began courting the clergyman's daughter in the next town, John was sure that institutional religion perpetuated a quagmire of theological debates that stagnated inquiry and progress. High theology, even for the good Christian citizen, was a speed bump best avoided.

The provincial lawyer married Abigail Smith in the late autumn of 1764. Abigail, the middle daughter of a prominent Weymouth pastor, served as a second mother to her two sisters, an alcoholic brother, and her parents' slaves.[114] The Reverend William Smith ran a blossoming suburban parish, performing roughly 20 to 30 marriages a year and hundreds of baptisms during his veteran tenure, which lasted from 1734 to 1783.[115] Like John, Abigail's appreciation for Christian sentiment was colored by her experience of growing up in a home that doubled as the venue for settling major church-town disputes. As a teenager, she watched her father wrangle successfully with the town over church property rights. She helped to rebuild the Weymouth religious community after a catastrophic fire. When farm tasks allowed, young Abigail, too, indulged widely in modes of Protestant self-education. Equipped with a smattering of self-taught French and

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[114] Abigail has drawn an equal share of biographers' attention. The key surveys are Charles W. Akers, *Abigail Adams, an American Woman* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1980); Phyllis Lee Levin, *Abigail Adams: A Biography* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987); Edith B. Gelles, *Portia: The World of Abigail Adams* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992); Woody Holton, *Abigail Adams* (New York: Free Press, 2009); G.J. Barker-Benfield, *John and Abigail Adams: The Americanization of Sensibility* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010); and Joseph J. Ellis, *First Family: Abigail and John* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010).
[115] *Ibid.*

her brother's Harvard reading lists, Abigail Adams gathered her knowledge of Christian precepts from a rich and innovative blend of Sunday sermons and literary classics.[116]

Abigail's sense of Providence was highly attuned to the act of interpreting the linked social worlds—daughter, sister, wife, mother, eventually First Lady—that she moved through. From her earliest days of Christian life, Abigail Smith Adams trained a providentialist lens on events within the family circle, giving a precise emphasis when literature supplemented or explained happenings that Scripture did not. Like other elite women of the revolutionary era, Abigail read whichever tracts and literary offerings were left at home; her father loaned out his books daily.[117] Free to enjoy his well-stocked library of Anglo-American radicals, Abigail's reading ran the gamut of nonconformists: Pierre Bayle's *Historical and Critical Dictionary* (1697), John Tillotson's 12 volumes' worth of sermons (1742); Philip Doddridge's *Course of Lectures on Pneumatology, Ethics and Divinity* (1763); Jonathan Edwards's *A History of the Work of Redemption* (1774); and Gilbert Burnet's *The History of the Reformation of the Church of England* (1697).[118] Abigail quoted the ribald verse of Lawrence Sterne in letters and she, too, proved to be a "church-going animal" once John's diplomatic career sent the family to Europe. Abigail's religious world was one where Providence focused the finer brushstrokes of the arts. She saw God in history, literature, and art in a way that John did

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[116] "Diaries of Rev. William Smith," *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society* 42 (1909): 444-470.
[117] "Reverend William Smith's Inventory of Property, 1784." Suffolk County Registry of Probate, Vol. 83:724; Doc. 18039, Boston, Massachusetts; "William Smith Diaries, 1728-1778," *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society* 42 (1908-1909): 444-470. For the long pulpit career of Smith (1707-1783), see First Church (Weymouth, Mass.) Records, 1724-1839, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, Massachusetts; and Sibley and Shipton, *Harvard Graduates*, 7:588-591; John Adams, *Diary*, 2:72.
[118] *Ibid.*

not always mirror. There was little religion in the courtship notes that "Portia" and her "Lysander" had first exchanged in 1762. Steadily, Abigail's and John's correspondence grew to nearly 1,200 letters over the course of their marriage, peaking during his difficult stint in the Continental Congress from 1774 to 1777.

When war separated the family—John heading off to persuade representatives of the need for independence and Abigail left with four small children to endure a city besieged by the British and smallpox—they relied on Christianity and used religious rhetoric to make sense of events.[119] New Englanders like the Adamses were certain that Providence still held them in favor; every affliction signaled a divine lesson or a future reward. The revolutionary generation that (initially) favored John Adams's political rise drew on historical, national, and private forms of providentialism to interpret the war's episodes of crisis and change. Seen in family letters, the Adamses' joint construction of Providence reveals how this intellectual project really worked. For John and Abigail, Providence was a close and powerful force. So, too, was the experience of detecting "providences" or signs of God's will at work in the world. God hovered over the pages of history, pushing their Puritan forebears to emigrate and establish American Christianity. The Adamses believed that God governed their fate, and guided the mismatched neighbors who now united in a defiant bid for liberty from Britain.[120] "Certainly, There is a Providence—certainly, We must depend upon Providence or We fail," John wrote home in 1775. "Certainly the sincere Prayers of good Men, avail much. But Resignation

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[119] These were the four children who survived to adulthood: Abigail 2d (Nabby, 1765-1813), John Quincy (1767-1848), Charles (1770-1800), and Thomas Boylston (1772-1832).
[120] Guyatt, *Providence;* Bercovitch, *Puritan Origins;* Holifield, *Theology in America*; and Stout, *New England Soul*.

is our Duty in all Events."[121] When Abigail replied, listing losses at the Battle of Bunker Hill in June 1775, she offset the worst news with the reassuring warmth of Scripture: "God is a refuge for us.— Charlstown is laid in ashes."[122]

As the British burned and looted Boston, John Adams tried to replenish his Christianity. On the road between Quincy and Philadelphia for congressional duties throughout the 1770s, Adams searched for signs of faith. He believed that an omniscient (if distant) Providence carved out the landscape where he walked and generated all reasons to journey beyond it. Encountering new American iterations of Christianity, then, intrigued him. The "church-going animal" craved religious experience, foreign or familiar. When he traveled, it was with the tacit acknowledgment that religion had a taste, a touch, and a feel that he *must* record and share. Like other eighteenth-century Americans and Europeans, a special mixture of wonder, history, sense, and sensation informed his course of Christian self-education. As a New Englander, John Adams inherited a distinctive set of religious memories. His local reference points for understanding Christianity's impact included a range of actors: Puritans who waged war on Indians and executed witches, Anglicans who vied with Congregationalists for social power and fought off the "popery" of Catholic newcomers, and evangelicals who

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[121] John Adams to Abigail Adams, 8 May 1775, in *Adams Family Correspondence*, 1:195-196.
[122] Abigail Adams to John Adams, 18-20 June 1775, in *Adams Family Correspondence*, 12 vols., eds. L. H. Butterfield et al. (Cambridge and London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1963—), 1:222-224. In this letter, Abigail announced the death of General Joseph Warren, the family physician, in battle. She quoted from Ecclesiastes 9:11: "I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race *is* not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all."

amplified the religious voices of women and blacks.[123] As he traveled through the colonies, physical markers and cultural echoes of New England Christianity permeated John's daily landscape. The sight of swaying locust trees, planted in memorial at Salem's "Witchcraft Hill," reminded him of "that memorable Victory over the Prince of the Power of the Air."[124] The scent of Catholic incense, by contrast, left him half-blind and gagging in a Philadelphia side street. Though he embraced religious tolerance as a concept, like many of his generation, John was never entirely prepared to welcome other forms of belief.[125] He found the sensory impact of "Romish" rites too robust. American Catholicism's lavish ritual and ornate appeal made him suspect that its practitioners lacked piety.[126] The "Grandmother Church" flaunted "Every Thing which can charm and bewitch the simple and ignorant," John wrote to Abigail from Congress. "I wonder how Luther ever broke the spell."[127]

If the Revolutionary War strengthened John's and Abigail's Christian resolve, then the difficult peace that followed with Great Britain gave them new cause to put it on public display. John was appointed an Anglo-American peace commissioner in 1778 and then minister to the Netherlands and Great Britain shortly thereafter. Trading the relative

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[123] John Adams, *Diary*, vols. 1-3, *passim.*
[124] John Adams, [7/14] August 1766, in *Diary*, 1:319.
[125] See, for example: Chris Beneke and Christopher S. Grenda, eds., *The First Prejudice: Religious Tolerance and Intolerance in Early America* (Philadelphia and Oxford: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011); Eric R. Schlereth, *An Age of Infidels: The Politics of Religious Controversy in the Early United States* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013); Marilyn J. Westerkamp, *Women and Religion in Early America, 1600-1850: The Puritan and Evangelical Traditions* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999); and John Corrigan and Lynn S. Neale, eds., *Religious Intolerance in America: A Documentary History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010).
[126] Jenny Franchot, *Roads to Rome: The Antebellum Protestant Encounter with Catholicism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).
[127] John Adams to Abigail Adams, 9 October 1774, in *Adams Family Correspondence*, 1:166-167.

quiet of Quincy for cosmopolitan Europe throughout the 1780s, the Adamses joined the first wave of "full" Americans who journeyed off in safer, faster packet ships to sample Old World culture. Long before the federal Constitution was written or ratified, these itinerant diplomats, artists, thinkers, and writers experimented with creating a "national" identity as they made use of expanding routes and reasons for transatlantic travel. As Daniel Kilbride has shown, "adventurous souls" like the Adamses, eager to "make cultural peace" with Britain, had to adapt or liberalize their Protestant habits to fit with the European (and mostly Catholic) practices that they encountered.[128] "Tho Seas Mountains and Rivers are geographical boundaries," Abigail wrote home in 1786, "they contract not the benevolence and good will of the Liberal mind which can extend itself beyond the limits of Country and kindred and claim fellowship with Christian jew or Turk."[129]

Reading Scripture until they could employ it to report revolutionary events—even after a spate of local theological disputes—comprised the first part of the Adamses' religious education. Regional roots in Congregationalist communities and controversies had molded John and Abigail for wider political participation. Diplomatic work in Europe now enabled them to represent American Christianity to a world curious about the piety of God's "chosen nation." In an era when Christianity remained vital but "fragmented" by a host of new denominations, John and Abigail Adams joined other Americans in presenting a united front of middle-class gentility. Abroad in Holland,

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[128] Daniel Kilbride, *Being American in Europe, 1750-1860* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), 2-8.
[129] Abigail Adams to Elizabeth Smith Shaw, 21 November 1786, in *Adams Family Correspondence*, 7:392.

France, and England from 1780 to 1788, they learned that regular Christian devotion connoted universal respectability, no matter their country of origin.[130] Acting like good Protestants made "being American" slightly more palatable to European courtiers and kings.

John's diplomatic work shuttled them around the world, but it was Abigail who ran the households in Quincy, London, and Auteuil; led the children's religious instruction at home; and served as John's savviest political confidante in Protestant and Catholic courts alike. Abigail's religious travels were indicative of other revolutionary-era women whose "religious autonomy made them agents of religious change" *and* "forces of stability in their families."[131] The key difference was that Abigail Adams operated on an international scale. As the prototypical "republican mother" tasked with the moral education of her children, Abigail threaded her letters of instruction with mashups of Scripture and popular poetry.[132] At home, she centered the family's life on

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[130] Gordon S. Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1992), 331-334; Richard L. Bushman, *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities* (New York: Knopf, 1992), 401-448; Butler, *Critical Americans*, 3-8; Caroll Smith-Rosenberg, *This Violent Empire: The Birth of an American National Identity* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 1-44; and Yokota, *Unbecoming British*, 8-12.

[131] Joan R. Gundersen, *To Be Useful to the World: Women in Revolutionary America, 1740-1790* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 118-119.

[132] For key surveys of the social, economic, and political opportunities for women in the early republic, see: Linda K. Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* (New York: Norton, 1986); Jeanne Boydston, *Home and Work: Housework, Wages, and the Ideology of Labor in the Early* Republic (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); Mary Beth Norton, *Liberty's Daughter's: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women, 1750*-1800 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996); Nancy F. Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780-1835* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997); Bruce Burgett, *Sentimental Bodies: Sex, Gender, and Citizenship in the Early Republic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998); Joan R. Gundersen, *To Be Useful to the World: Women in Revolutionary America, 1740-1790* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006); and Rosemarie Zagarri, *Revolutionary Backlash: Women and Politics in the Early American Republic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007).

Christian tenets. Abigail's mulberry-and-ivory Delft tiles bordered the fireplace in Biblical scenes, designed at a child's height so that John Quincy and his siblings could visualize Christian morals long before they could read the Bible—a common feature in the early American household where Christianity (literally) governed the hearth and nurturing family piety foreshadowed a reunion in heaven.[133] In keeping with Lemuel Briant's call, Abigail clung to the idea that inculcating a broad Christian character was a defense against damnation. To her mind, reinterpreting the Scripture and experimenting with new rites bolstered her innate sense of faith.

Abigail Adams savored her sudden cultural flight from the New England countryside. Living in Auteuil and London from 1783 to 1788, and briefly reunited with the whole family, she dug into the local varieties of Old World Christianity. Observing Anglo-French ritual, in particular, changed Abigail's aesthetic response to worship and stirred her appetite for testing out new theological ideas at home and abroad. She praised the rhetorical skill of the universalist preachers in London's Hackney Street, making the six-mile carriage drive each Sunday through muddy London roads. She dragged Thomas Jefferson to hear a royal *Te Deum* sung at the Cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris. She marveled at the soaring Gothic arches and puzzled over the propriety of whispering

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Increasingly, scholars have focused on recovering and documenting the range of educational opportunities available to Abigail Adams and her early American peers, for which see Margaret A. Nash, *Women's Education in the United States, 1780-1840* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); Mary Kelley, *Learning to Stand and Speak: Women, Education, and Public Life in America's Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006); and Lucia McMahon, *Mere Equals: The Paradox of Educated Women in the Early American Republic* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012).

[133] Horace Townsend and The Metropolitan Museum of Art, "Early Dutch Tiles," *Art & Life* 11 (1919): 253-261; Colleen McDannell, *The Christian Home in Victorian America, 1840-1900* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986); Elisabeth Donaghy Garrett, *At Home: The American Family, 1750-1870* (New York: H. N. Abrams, 1990).

through a confessional grate to absolve sins. Surprised to find French churches open all day, Abigail returned again and again, polishing her criticism of Catholicism's sensory impact. She disliked the hard lockstep of schoolboys pacing through the pews and chanting hymns. She disapproved of the casual way in which worshippers shuffled in at midday, "clattering" to their knees before the altar. Worse, the dank and drafty air of grand cathedrals left her sick: "their Churches seem rather calculated to damp Devotion than excite it," Abigail wrote to her brother-in-law John Shaw, a Calvinist minister in New Hampshire.[134]

Throughout the 1780s, Abigail gradually came to reconceive of high-Church worship aesthetics as legitimate manifestations of real faith, even when delivered in a foreign tongue. Hearing European church music became, for example, a potent luxury to seek out and enjoy. In letters home, the Yankee clergyman's daughter rhapsodized about the "Solemnity and dignity" of hearing George Frideric Handel's "Sublime" *Messiah* sung in Westminster Abbey, June 1785.[135] "When it came to that part, the Hallelujah, the whole assembly rose and all the Musicians, every person uncoverd," Abigail informed her niece back home. "Only conceive six hundred voices and instruments perfectly chording in one word and one sound! I could scarcly believe myself an inhabitant of Earth. I was one continued shudder from the begining to the end of the performance."[136] At their office/home, the Grosvenor Square legation, she stocked the diplomatic dinner

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[134] Abigail Adams to John Shaw, 18 January 1785, in *Adams Family Correspondence*, 6:62-64, 491. With Jefferson, husband John, and the Lafayette family, Abigail attended the 1 April 1785 *Te Deum* celebrated in honor of the 27 March birth of Louis Charles, second son of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette.
[135] Abigail Adams to Thomas Jefferson, 6 June 1785, in *Adams Family Correspondence*, 6:171-172.
[136] Abigail Adams to Elizabeth Cranch, 2 September 1785, *Adams Family Correspondence*, 6:328-329.

table with nonconformist ministers like Richard Price and Joseph Priestley. John and Abigail became especially fond of Priestley. "Tho far from being an orator, his words came from the Heart and reached the Heart," she wrote. "So Humble, so diffident, so liberal and Benevolent a Character does honour to that Religion which he both professes and practises."[137]

When Abigail Adams documented the joys and rigors of diplomatic life, she divulged how elite American women refashioned religious sensibilities and juggled the duties of a much-prescribed "Christian family" constantly on the go. Overall, Abigail's travels led her to reinforce the New England Congregationalism that she so clearly missed. Upon learning that Congress could not fund the construction of a chapel at the first American legation in, Abigail berated their powerful set of political friends at home. "Do Congress think that their Ministers have no need of Grace? Or that Religion is not a necessary article for them," she chided.[138] Finding Providence, Abigail saw, meant shoving aside any lingering sectarian interests. On their return trip to Boston in the spring of 1788, John and Abigail served as a favorable test audience for one of the few passengers also aboard the *Lucretia*: the Reverend John Murray, a denominational founder of American Universalism and a strident anti-Calvinist. Murray taught that universal union with Jesus meant greater chances for laity like the Adamses to attain their

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[137] Abigail Adams, "Diary of Her Return Voyage to America, 30 March–1 May 1788," in John Adams, *Diary*, 3:214-216. Later, the Adamses distanced themselves from Priestley due to his support of the French Revolution during the Terror.

[138] *Ibid.* For Shaw, a Congregationalist clergyman who tutored John Quincy for Harvard admission, see Chapter 2.

salvation.[139] Shipboard, Murray frequently rose to preach without notes, delivering the sermon in "a familiar talking without any kind of dignity yet perhaps better calculated to do good to such an audience." The Weymouth clergyman's daughter endorsed the more inclusive aspects of Murray's theology of salvation, but the more cosmopolitan Abigail Adams doubted his ability to translate a Sunday performance into lasting literature, and thereby achieve any permanent traction in the greater field of American religious culture. "I like to hear a discourse that would read well," she wrote.[140]

Armed with a renewed commitment to Christianity and to the American republic, the Adamses made their odyssey back to Massachusetts. Recalled home in order to serve eight years as vice president under George Washington, John was elected to a single, fraught term as chief executive from 1797 to 1801. Cosmopolitan experience significantly sharpened their critiques of American Christianity. The intellectual heft of a sound sermon—no matter the minister's denomination—drew John's scholarly attention in his diary, with notes on rhetoric and oratory. But if clergymen spotted the celebrated John Adams in a front pew, and ventured into pulpit commentary on matters of state, then he tuned them out. "The clergy are too little acquainted with the world and the modes of business, to engage in civil affairs with any advantage," Adams once observed. "Those…who are really men of learning, have conversed with books so much more than men as to be too much loaded with vanity to be good politicians."[141] Joining John in the

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[139] For John Murray, a founder of American Universalism and later minister of the Church of Christ in Gloucester, Mass., see E. Brooks Holifield, *Theology in America*, 221-226; Richard Eddy, *Universalism in America: A History*, 2 vols. (Boston: Universalist Pub. House, 1884-86).
[140] Abigail Adams, in John Adams, *Diary*, 3:214-216.
[141] John Adams to Abigail Adams, 17 September 1775, in *Adams Family Correspondence*, 1:280-281.

critic's perch, Abigail rarely shirked an occasion to praise or pan local preaching—their longtime rector in Quincy, Anthony Wibird, had only ten sermons, she sniffed. She was more interested in nursing piety—to see what holiness *felt* like—than in parsing theology. In the religious reminiscences scattered across her letters, Abigail mixed religious sensation and scientific reason. As she later lectured her daughter-in-law Louisa Catherine: "I do not profess to be a theologian. I never would puzzle my head with their disputes; but I have endeavoured to exercise my own understanding: *What can we reason, but from what we can know*?"[142]

Despite all the "founders"-related mythmaking that swiftly enveloped John and Abigail Adams, it is important to recall that they resembled other rural New Englanders who struggled to harmonize Enlightenment-era Christianity with the mysterious sovereignty of Providence over their lives.[143] They wanted to reconcile sensations of faith and doubt with what they heard or read of Scripture and science. They seized on clues that Providence cared about America's plight. They audited events in the family circle and in political life, monitoring the moments when divine interference finalized new treaties, tempted away suitors, or comforted them after the death of a child. In their speeches and letters, John and Abigail turned to Providence for aid, or to burn off their sinful anger over (real and perceived) political slights. At home and abroad, they scanned the Bible seeking lessons of martyrdom and revelation to put to use in their "new

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[142] Abigail Adams to Louisa Catherine Adams, 14 April 1818, Adams Papers.
[143] Donald H. Meyer, *The Democratic Enlightenment* (New York: , 1976); Patricia U. Bonomi, *Under the Cope of Heaven: Religion, Society, and Politics in Colonial America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); Guyatt, *Providence*.

Israel."[144] Sampling literature, travel, and biblical criticism made the Adamses into cosmopolitan Christians. A close look at how this famous family employed Christian rhetoric, in turn, supplies an elite view of providentialism as a malleable ideology that drove colonial America through independence and into the antebellum era. It also reveals how Providence "disappointed" them.

Prestigious diplomatic missions ripped away the chance to parent at close quarters, a circumstance that caused John and Abigail to agonize over the moral instruction of their faraway children. In events of great loss, they reminded each other that the whole family would meet again in heaven. An omniscient Providence, Abigail thought, engraved the "terms of existence" for humanity in Scripture, prizing endurance and piety above all. Prompted by prayer, Abigail avowed that a real Christian knew to search times of trial for eternal reward. John and Abigail, cast in the roles of President and First Lady, became the most prominent American Christian couple of the post-revolutionary era. Diligently, they kept up their proper Protestant profiles. From his executive pulpit, John fretted that the country's emergent institutions of commerce, government, and faith were all susceptible to "seed plots" of factionalism and division.[145] Like other liberalizing Protestants who applied reason and the truth of personal experience to religious doctrine, John and Abigail had explored other faiths but still saw congregationalist Christianity as *the* catalyst of self-education and social change.[146] As

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[144] James P. Byrd, *Sacred Scripture, Sacred War: The Bible and the American Revolution* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).
[145] John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, February 1814. Thomas Jefferson Papers, Library of Congress.
[146] Holifield, *Theology in America*, 197-219; Conrad Edick Wright, ed., *American Unitarianism, 1805-1865* (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society and Northeastern University Press, 1989); and J. D. Bowers,

the eighteenth century waned, the Adamses had sought to reinforce and "Americanize" faith through the labor of Christian statesmanship. Yet by upholding *his* Providence, John Adams may also have forfeited his legacy.

III. The President's Providence

Throughout the 1790s, elite New Englanders like John and Abigail Adams forged and maintained high social standards for Protestant piety. On ready display in the public sphere and in national newspapers, they came across as generous, curious, communally minded Christians. John and his peers heard fast-day sermons in April and sang thanksgiving psalms in December. Abigail and her friends slipped stray shillings into the deacon's bucket for the evangelization of Neponset Indians. When winter blizzards blew mounds of snow into the First Church, they left their farms and shoveled out the pricier pews.[147] Like other Congregationalists descended from the Puritans, who were "more Protestant than most," they thought their religious ecosystem served as an ideal for national life: a "democratic and decentralized congregation" enabling inquiry and progress.[148] It helped that New England Christianity, with its core of Harvard and Yale-trained pulpit talent, attracted a feisty, knowledgeable congregation. [149] John rarely missed reading Harvard's annual Dudleian Lectures on natural religion, and he defended

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Joseph Priestley and English Unitarianism in America (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2007), 1-27.

[147] On colonial worship habits, see Bonomi, *Under the Cope of Heaven*; Stout, *The New England* Soul; Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith*.

[148] David D. Hall, *Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment: Popular Religious Belief in Early New England* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989), 10; Cooper, *Tenacious of Their Liberties.*

[149] Hatch, *Democratization of American Christianity*, 15.

the Puritans in print.[150] When she considered the rise and formation of young America, Abigail at first perceived a providential design, strongly ingrained among the New England families whom she worked the land alongside. What she came to believe, after a lifetime of shouldering political burdens, was that God made all earth a mere "state of trial" for professing Christians to endure.[151] The Adams family's choice to root in Massachusetts foretold a long and complicated relationship with faith, and underlined a multigenerational, transatlantic commitment to nonconformity. Their regional ties in some ways prevented them from achieving real popularity in the national political arena. Asked to evaluate American prospects in the Napoleonic age, John confessed: "My spirit of prophecy reaches no farther than New England *guesses.*"[152] For as John and Abigail discovered in the late 1790s, American voters were less willing to corroborate their providentialist views.

A political crisis rattled John's and Abigail's abiding belief that providential Christianity still resonated with the rest of the country. On 23 March 1798, in an effort to soothe concerns about the collapse of Franco-American relations, President John Adams proclaimed that "all Religious congregations" should observe a "day of Solemn Humiliation, Fasting and Prayer" on 9 May.[153] Colonial governors and clergy had

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[150] See John Adams, *A Dissertation on the Canon and the Feudal Law, No. 2,* [19 August 1765], in *Papers of John Adams,* 1:115-118.
[151] Abigail Adams to Ann Harrod Adams, 16 February 1806, Adams Papers.
[152] John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, 2 February 1816. Thomas Jefferson Papers, Library of Congress.
[153] "Proclamation," 27 March 1798, *Gazette of the United States*; Charles Ellis Dickson, "Jeremiads in the New American Republic: The Case of National Fasts in the John Adams Administration," *The New England Quarterly* 60 (1987): 187-207. On the decline of Franco-American relations and the public blow-up of the XYZ Affair, see Thomas M. Ray, "'Not One Cent for Tribute': The Public Addresses and American Popular Reaction to the XYZ Affair, 1798-1799," *Journal of the Early Republic* 3 (1983): 389-412; William Stinchcombe, *The XYZ Affair* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1980).

regularly called for days of fast and thanksgiving, often held on Wednesdays and Thursdays in April and December. On fast days, congregants attended a double church service, refrained from eating and all forms of labor, and mourned their sins.[154] This presidential proclamation was a striking, *federal* reinvention of the Puritan rite. John Adams's act of "recommending" national religious observance marked a new use of executive power. It also implied that the president was keyed in to a direct dialogue with the workings of Providence—exactly the sort of personal intimacy with holy power that had endangered Anne Hutchinson and other would-be community leaders. Exhorting Americans to heed the "loud call to Repentance and Reformation" occasioned by divine judgment, Adams wrote that the United States was "placed in a hazardous and afflictive situation, by the unfriendly Disposition, Conduct and Demands of a foreign power."[155] A key problem with the proclamation, in his detractors' view, was that he gathered citizens in special worship to resolve a foreign policy crisis. Did the president believe he had a divine right to do so, like the English king that they had thrown off? Outraged citizens thought President John Adams's "New England manners" and providentialist rhetoric signified not godly republicanism but the act of a republican who fancied himself God.

Adams's resurrection of a New England rite reserved for afflictions like war, drought, and cholera—but this time as an event of national penance—ignited controversy and incensed the Democratic-Republican opposition. To Adams's mind, it was the innate function of a shared cultural habit (Protestant Christianity) that informed his diplomatic

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[154] William DeLoss Love, *The Fast and Thanksgiving Days of New England* (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin, 1895); David Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes: The Making of American Nationalism, 1776-1820* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997).
[155] 27 March 1798, *Gazette of the United States*; Dickson, "Jeremiads in the New American Republic."

policymaking, and therefore, it seemed to be the right way to invoke his domestic leadership, too.[156] Critics, however, felt that John's proclamation was too high-handed. They sneered that the phrasing of his text bordered on a "death bed repentance." Adams was lampooned in popular caricatures. Newspaper squibs mocked his piety.[157] In the opposition press, the Virginia Senator David Brent sniped that he "would not fast a day to save John Adams from an appopletic fit…that he would on that day rather introduce a dance."[158] Some ministers, like Adams's ally and prominent Massachusetts Congregationalist Jacob Norton, crafted strong sermons meant to manufacture political support. "I know not what can excite their Wrath to such a degree," Abigail complained to her sister of the fuss, "but that they think there is yet some Religion left in the Country and that the people will have some respect to it, & to those Rulers who acknowledge an over Ruling Providence."[159]

One spring night in Philadelphia, the protesters brought their quarrel to John Adams's front door. Much later, when he reflected on the 1798 fast day controversy in an 1813 letter to Thomas Jefferson, Adams recalled a more violent set of events. "I have no doubt you was fast asleep, in philosophical Tranquility, when ten thousand People, and perhaps many more, were parading the Streets of Philadelphia, on the Evening of my Fast Day," he wrote. As Adams remembered it, angry men thronged Market Street. The mob

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[156] On religion as a "cultural habit" that informed John Adams and other early American diplomats, see Andrew Preston, *Sword of the Spirit, Shield of Faith: Religion in American War and Diplomacy* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012).
[157] Dickson, "Jeremiads in the New American Republic."
[158] 30 March 1798, *Porcupine's Gazette*.
[159] Abigail Adams to Mary Smith Cranch, 31 March 1798, in *Adams Family Correspondence*, 12:470-472. Norton married Abigail's niece, Elizabeth Cranch, in 1789.

assembled on his doorstep, where they were held back only by his "Domesticks in Phrenzy, determined to Sacrifice their lives in my defence." Through "bye Lanes and back doors," John called for "Chests of Arms from the War Office," and the rioters subsided.[160] Evidently undeterred by the dissenters' rage, on 6 March 1799 Adams called another fast day for 25 April; his unpopularity grew. Party politics baffled and disgusted him. A quasi-war with France, the Alien and Sedition Acts, and the rise of electioneering forced John (and Abigail) into early retirement at the "Peacefield" farm in Quincy.

From his Massachusetts haven, Adams griped to Benjamin Rush that the fast day debacle had cost him the presidential pulpit and his rightful place in God's unfolding history of America. In John Adams's view, an anti-Federalist sect of critics had wrongfully charged him with "an hypocritical, Machiavellian, Jesuitical, Pharisaical attempt to promote a national establishment of Presbyterianism in America, whereas I would as soon establish the Episcopal Church, and almost as soon the Catholic Church."[161] John regarded his failure to translate New England Christianity to the national stage as one in an epic series of setbacks that plagued his family circle. His zeal to apply providentialist guidelines and to align Americans with the practices of godly republicanism had, in Adams's mind, triggered his descent from political grace. Like other colonists who relied on a near-mythic sense of Christian unity to solder the revolutionary cause with providentialist meaning and fervor, John realized that many

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[160] John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, 30 June 1813, in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, Retirement Series, 9 vols., eds. J. Jefferson Looney et al. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004—), 6:254-255.
[161] John Adams to Dr. Benjamin Rush, 28 August 1811. Benjamin Franklin Papers, Yale University Library.

different Christianities were developing in the new nation.[162] This blossoming sectarianism, and the way that it paralleled party politics' growth, troubled him. "There is no such Thing as human Wisdom," John Adams wrote in 1779 as he sealed the American peace with Britain. "All is the Providence of God."[163] Now, at nineteenth century's dawn, Adams was less sure about Christianity's social "place" in the new republic.

Conclusion: Adams and Jefferson on the Nile

The period from 1798 to 1813 encapsulated what American preachers would have called a "school of affliction" for John and Abigail Adams. After departing the Capitol in 1801 with a tarnished legacy, the first family experienced a wave of tragedies, personal and political, that strengthened John's and Abigail's inward turn to Christianity. When she sat down to address her youngest granddaughter in 1808, Abigail had only one real lesson to impart. "Every moment should be devoted to some useful purpose, that we might ask the moments as they passed, what report they bore to Heaven," she wrote.[164] The eternal gaze of Providence, as Abigail and many early Americans thought, was fixed firmly on their mission of nation-building. Stepping back from public life cemented Abigail's view of the unfolding family events that she catalogued as the "allotments of Providence."[165] John called it a "pretty large dose…of distress and pain."[166] Brutal party wars "divorced" John from longtime compatriot Thomas Jefferson and they severed all ties for a decade. A new historical narrative of the Revolution, crafted by (sometime)

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[162] Brent Gilchrist, *Cultus Americanus: Varieties of the Liberal Tradition in American Political Culture, 1600-1865* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2006), 219-254.
[163] John Adams, 13 February 1779, *Diary*, 2:354.
[164] Abigail Adams to Catherine Smith, 24 January 1808, Adams Papers.
[165] Abigail Adams to Abigail Adams 2d, 21 February 1791, in *Adams Family Correspondence*, 9:193-194.
[166] John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, 3 May 1816. Thomas Jefferson Papers, Library of Congress.

friend Mercy Otis Warren, notably excluded John. The sudden death of their alcoholic son Charles, occurring just as Adams left office, dealt an extra blow. Their daughter Nabby (Abigail 2d) underwent a radical mastectomy (without anesthesia) and died of breast cancer in 1813. Another son, Thomas Boylston, rode the court circuit as a Massachusetts chief justice and oversaw the family estate, while battling alcoholism.[167] The most promising Adams scion, John Quincy, aggravated his father's Federalist cronies by championing Jeffersonian policy and fled to Russia in semi-exile in 1809. Shortly after, when John Adams wrote to tell Dr. Rush—Nabby's doctor in her last days—that Christianity was the force that preserved the Adams "race" in all its glory, it was probably more to remind himself that Providence might heal his mounting afflictions.

The renewal of correspondence with Jefferson in 1812 and an impulsive academic hunt into the study of comparative religions (1812-1816) brightened John Adams's remaining years. Theological disputes he still found to be petty and pedantic, worth little more than idle sport. "These things are to me the Marbles and Nine Pins of old Age;" he quipped, "I will not Say the Beads and Prayer Books."[168] But in his scholarly excursions into Jewish and Egyptian customs, Adams was exceptional—comparative religious studies would not fully emerge as a discrete, normative study in American institutions of higher education for another half-century or more. Religious headlines annoyed the

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[167] For general biographies of the family, see Adams, *The Adams Family*; Brookhiser, *America's First Dynasty*;
Homans, *Education by Uncles*; Nagel, *Descent from Glory*; Rothman, *The World of the Adams Chronicles*; Russell, *Adams: An American Dynasty*; Roof, *Colonel William Smith and the Lady*; and Shepherd, *The Adams Chronicles: Four Generations of Greatness*.

[168] John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, 18 July 1813. Thomas Jefferson Papers, Library of Congress.

elderly president. On the national stage, doomsday prophets frequently sputtered on and off, exhorting that the end of the world was near. John Adams watched in chagrin as popular interest surged around itinerant soothsayers ranging from Nimrod Hughes to the Shawnee prophet Tenskwatawa.[169] Caught between mediocre clergy and false prophets, Adams and his New England friends struggled to reaffirm congregationalist authority despite widespread pushback from evangelical and Catholic fronts. To Jefferson, he ranted that "Sober and sincere Christians" would diagnose the "impious" nature of such prophecies, which threatened "political safety" and undermined faith. "For nothing is clearer from their scriptures than that their prophecies were not intended to make us prophets."[170] Adams traded this and other thoughts on faith with his longtime friend and former rival. And, at Jefferson's request, John Adams whittled down his final religious credo to four short words: "Be Just and Good."[171]

Occasionally, the Quincy congregationalist tweaked the Virginia deist with pointed Scriptural allusions. He told tales of reading outside the usual roads of Protestant enlightenment. "I have been a diligent Student for many years in Books whose Titles you have never Seen," Adams wrote from *his* estate of "Montezillo" to Jefferson's

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[169] On prophecy and antebellum Bible readership, see Holland, *Sacred Borders*; and Susan Juster, *Doomsayers: Anglo-American Prophecy in the Age of Revolution* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003).

[170] John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, 10 February 1812. Thomas Jefferson Papers, Library of Congress. For a representative sample of these exchanges, see also Bruce Braden, ed., *"Ye will Say I Am No Christian": The Thomas Jefferson/John Adams Correspondence on Religion, Morals, and Values* (Amherst: Prometheus Books, 2006).

[171] John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, 12 December 1816, *Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, Retirement Series, 10:573.

Monticello.[172] At the end of his life, the Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount summed up Adams's entire creed, he wrote. The elderly "ex-President Adams" also joined many other Christian republicans who broadened their search for morality far past the pages of instruction preserved in the Bible. With Scripture in hand for his proof, John stood by the same concept of Providence that he sketched as a young man: "From a sense of the Government of God, and a Regard to the Laws established by his Providence, should all our Actions for ourselves or for other men, primarily originate."[173] The Bible was key to absorbing God's plan for America, Adams thought, but it was not the *only* sacred book worth a gloss. Understanding how others prayed—and familiarizing himself with other dissenters in other lands—became John Adams's intellectual finale. Overall, John's wide-ranging course of reading had confirmed his perch on the religious spectrum between liberal Congregationalist and Unitarian-adjacent. Adams's annotated books at the Boston Public Library show some of his livelier marginalia related to faith. Next to an image of ancient Egyptian ships conducting a ritual, he scribbled, "Is this Religion? Good God!"[174] Adams was more respectful toward Islam and owned an 1806 edition of the Koran.[175] Again in conversation with Jefferson, he speculated on the historical parallels between the biblical exodus of the Jews and the contemporary

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[172] *Ibid.*
[173] John Adams, 14 June 1756, *Diary*, 1:34.
[174] See John Adams's copy at the Boston Public Library of Jacob Bryant, *A New System, or, An Analysis of Ancient Mythology* (London: T. Payne, 1775-1776).
[175] *Catalogue of the John Adams Library in the Public Library of the City of Boston* (Boston: Published by the Trustees, 1917).

migrations of Native American tribes.[176] John Adams yearned for "translations into English and French and Spanish and German and Italian of the Sacred Books of the Persians, the Chinese, the Hindoos &c. &c. &c.," he wrote to a friend in 1815. "Then our grand Children and my great grand Children may compare Notes, and hold last all that is good."[177]

The loss of Abigail in 1818 from a bout of typhoid fever that rendered her speechless for days led to John's decline. Briefly finding her voice in her final hours, Abigail stated that her dying wish was to reprise the last thanksgiving day celebration—nine of fourteen grandchildren crowding the Quincy table for the feast—then the former First Lady paused, proclaiming that she knew a full family reunion awaited her in heaven.[178] John died eight years later.

By investigating what John labeled the Christian "constitution" of human nature, this chapter has charted how colonists-turned-citizens restructured Christian behavior within a new republican model, a distinctive challenge of American religion.[179] As the founders' generation died out, antebellum thinkers grappled with the question that sparked the last exchange of John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, who debated whether "the Christian Philosophy" was "the most sublime and benevolent, but the most perverted

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[176] See, for example, Thomas Jefferson to John Adams, 11 June 1812, in *Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, Retirement Series, 5:122-125.
[177] John Adams to David Sewall, 4 November 1815, Adams Papers. For further analysis of how the subsequent Adams generations read the Bible, see especially Chapters 2, 3, and 5.
[178] Harriet Welsh to Caroline de Windt, [*1?*] November 1818, Adams Papers.
[179] John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, 13 July 1813, Thomas Jefferson Papers, Library of Congress; Hatch, *Democratization of American Christianity*, 3-16, 180-182, 210-219.

system that ever shone upon man."[180] The question turned on the use of New England providentialism, a Puritan intellectual relic that did not die with Henry Adams, in a public sphere dominated by the broader language of Christian republicanism. John Adams's own memorial hangs in proof of the struggle. After 4 July 1826, when John was "summoned To the Independence of Immortality, And to the Judgment of His God," his political heir, John Quincy, spent months drafting his father's honorary church plaque. Omitting Puritan ideals, the younger Adams took on an assertive tone of Christian citizenship: "This House will bear witness to his Piety: This Town, his Birth-Place, to his Munificence: History to his Patriotism: Posterity to the Depth and Compass of his Mind."[181] In an era when most congregations heard that "good Christians make good citizens," church and state were culturally bound together. For John and his "dearest friend" Abigail, the providentialism of New England Christianity offered the clearest language to reconcile their overlapping duties to family, nation, and God. To be Christian *and* American was the defining challenge of their lives. By freezing the Adamses' Puritan heirs in midflight, and then tracking through John's and Abigail's busy biographies, this reception history of Anglo-American religion reveals how complex it was for one family to interpret Providence for two centuries.[182] "The duties of a son, brother, a father, a neighbor, a citizen, I can see and feel," John Adams wrote in late 1813, as his eldest son

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[180] John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, 16 July 1813. Thomas Jefferson Papers, Library of Congress.
[181] John Adams plaque, United First Parish Church, Quincy, Massachusetts.
[182] Solomon Williams, *Three Sermons, Preached at Northampton, on the 31st of March—The Other Two on the Annual State Fast, April 4, 1805* (Northampton: William Butler, 1805), 35.

raced ahead to begin an even bolder plan of Christian inquiry. “But, I trust the Ruler with the skies.”[183]

[183] John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, 15 September 1813. Thomas Jefferson Papers, Library of Congress.

CHAPTER TWO

John Quincy and Louisa Catherine Adams at Prayer

Privately, his faith was shaken. Preparing to argue the case of the *Amistad* captives before the U. S. Supreme Court in 1840, former President John Quincy Adams prayed in the pages of his diary, anxious for the "mercy of Almighty God, so to controul my temper, to enlighten my Soul, and to give me utterance that I may prove. . . equal to the Task."[184] Publicly, he had never appeared so firm in his convictions and so eager to broadcast Unitarian values to his fellow Americans. That same day, Adams embarked on a winter lecture tour to share his views "On Faith." Drawing on his "intercourse with the world," he described the "many liberal minded and intelligent persons—almost persuaded to become Christians"—whom he had met.[185] For the 73 year-old Congressman, once called the "greatest Traveller, of his Age," it was an arduous trek.[186] And, for a layman who held public office, it was a curious odyssey to undertake. So powerful was Adams's religious message that when his son Charles encountered it years later, he docketed it: "Two sermons / JQA." The unpublished speech, delivered from Boston to Salem and Hartford to Brooklyn, laid out the formation of Adams's own faith. For throughout the life that he led on the world stage, John Quincy Adams had struggled

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[184] John Quincy Adams, 27 October 1840, Diary, Adams Papers.
[185] John Quincy Adams, *On Faith*, draft in Adams's hand, listing lecture dates from 27 October 1840 through 20 November 1840; reprised on 24 March 1841 and 1 [2?] November 1842, Adams Papers. Docketed by Charles Francis Adams: "Two Sermons / J.Q.A. / 1825 / not printed."
[186] John Adams to Abigail Adams, 26 July 1784, in *Adams Family Correspondence*, 12 vols., eds. L. H. Butterfield et al. (Cambridge and London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1963—), 5:399-400.

to reinforce his native Unitarianism by widely chronicling people, places, and religions like no other American statesman of his era.

"Faith must have its bounds, and perhaps the most difficult and delicate question in morals is to define them clearly," Adams told the standing-room only crowds. "But allow me to say that this unbounded freedom of religious faith, far from absolving any individual from the obligation of believing, does but impose it upon them, with a tenfold force."[187] This insight was especially true of Adams's own itinerant history of religion. Seeking among other faiths cemented his Christian identity and echoed antebellum Americans' desire to meld Scripture with inner spirituality.[188] This chapter shows how a president's intense engagement with the world's believers and skeptics mirrored his generation's shift from rigid Calvinism to a more liberating Arminianism. Essentially, that theological transition widened the path to salvation for Adams and others, as they

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[187] John Quincy Adams, *On Faith*.

[188] Many excellent works exist to outline the shifts in antebellum religion and culture that John Quincy and Louisa Catherine Adams experienced and reflected upon, including R.W.B. Lewis, *The American Adam: Innocence, Tragedy and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955); Clive Bush, *The Dream of Reason: American Consciousness and Cultural Achievement from Independence to the Civil War* (London: Edward Arnold, 1977); Harold P. Simonson, *Radical Discontinuities: American Romanticism and Christian Consciousness* (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1983); David Morse, *American Romanticism, Volume 1, From Cooper to Hawthorne* (Totowa: Barnes & Noble Books, 1987); Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989); Conrad Edick Wright, ed., *American Unitarianism, 1805-1865* (Boston: The Massachusetts Historical Society and Northeastern University Press, 1989); Lewis Perry, *Boats against the Current: American Culture between Revolution and Modernity, 1820-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); James E. Block, *A Nation of Agents: The American Path to a Modern Self and Society* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002); John Gatta, *Making Nature Sacred: Literature, Religion, and Environment in America from the Puritans to the Present* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2004); Leigh Eric Schmidt, *Restless Souls: The Making of American Spirituality* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2005); Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); Paul E. Johnson, *The Early American Republic, 1789-1829* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); and Lorman Ratner et al., *Paradoxes of Prosperity: Wealth-Seeking Versus Christian Values in Pre-Civil War America* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009).

moved from a model that favored *only* God's predestined elect, to one where all freely accepted or rejected God's grace, progressing to heaven through faith and good works. Adams's religious curiosity, and his lifelong cultivation of it, reflected the individualistic drive of market society, which, as scholar Charles Sellers has noted, "muffled calculating competition and Unitarian rationalism in spiritualized nature, domestic sentimentality, and transcendental idealism."[189]

This chapter reconsiders America's sixth president as he moved through diverse circles of prayer, and identifies the new religious poetics that John Quincy used to narrate his pilgrimage. I focus on John Quincy's three main challenges to antebellum Christianity as a cultural institution: his youthful education in the limits of Christian republicanism; his midlife mission, in Russia and elsewhere, to record foreign religions and promote Christian statesmanship; and the literary crusade he undertook when elderly to embed Protestant values in American minds. Along with other Americans, John Quincy Adams moved from a theological system that emphasized an elect community of the "saved," to one favoring experiential, individualistic works of grace, born of free will, as the key to salvation.[190] Over time, John Quincy cared less about using religion for self-perfection and far more about harnessing its social power to defeat "national sins" like slavery. A

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[189] Charles Sellers, *The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America, 1815-1846* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 363-365; Daniel Walker Howe, "The Market Revolution and the Shaping of Identity in Whig-Jacksonian America," in *The Market Revolution in America: Social, Political, and Religious Expressions, 1800-1880*, eds. Melvyn Stokes and Stephen Conway (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1996), 259-281; Mark A. Noll, ed., *God and Mammon: Protestants, Money, and the Market, 1790-1860* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

[190] On the decline of American Calvinism and the subsequent, widespread transition to Arminianism, see E. Brooks Holifield, *Theology in America: Christian Thought from the Age of the Puritans to the Civil War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003); Mark A. Noll, *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

lifelong Unitarian, he set aside demands for evidence of miracles and cautiously embraced the notion of a "superhuman"—but not necessarily divine—view of Jesus.[191] The chapter ends with a glimpse of the curious afterlife that American religious culture assigned to Adams—a legacy that John Quincy's Victorian heirs seized on with filiopietistic fervor.

John Quincy Adams's life was filled with unique trials—children and siblings horribly lost, friendships worn thin by his political principles, and a vicious election race—but in terms of religion, he remained both curious and firm. Eager to explore faiths beyond his Unitarian comfort zone, he embodied the civic humanism that piloted the post-Revolutionary generation.[192] Adams believed in sacrificing self-interest for the greater national good and that "a man without religion can never have a very strong feeling of humanity, nor can one truly be religious without it."[193] Gaining God's forgiveness, and doing so in the eyes of his constituency, became Adams's paramount goal as a Christian patriot. Issues relating to doctrine and denominational identity receded from significance. Religion, Adams declared, was "one of the *wants* of human nature—an appetite which must be indulged, since without its gratification human existence would be a burden rather than a blessing…I cannot reject a doctrine merely because my reason will not sanction it."[194] By joining John Quincy on his tours of religion, we can

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[191] John Quincy Adams, 13 March 1828, Diary. As John Quincy told his son, George Washington Adams: "I believed the nature of Jesus Christ was superhuman; but whether he was God or only the first of created beings was not clearly revealed to me in the Scriptures."
[192] Mark A. Noll and Luke E. Harlow, eds., *Religion and American Politics: From the Colonial Period to the Present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 27.
[193] John Quincy Adams, 12 July 1812, Diary.
[194] John Quincy Adams, 12 April 1812, Diary.

see why antebellum Americans exchanged Calvinism for experimentation, how a president applied Protestant ideals to civic duty, and what his generation learned from sampling a spectrum of religious experience.

I. The Religious Journeys of John Quincy and Louisa Catherine Adams

Often, John Quincy self-identified as the friendly American stranger in a foreign pew, eager to "cheerfully join in social worship with all others willing to receive me in Communion with them."[195] Frequent travel led John Quincy (1767-1848) and his wife Louisa Catherine Johnson Adams (1775-1852) to develop a distinctively cosmopolitan Christianity, but religion remains an understudied aspect of their half-century of life together.[196] The eldest son of John and Abigail, John Quincy was groomed to perform the duties of a Christian patriot from an early age. Thanks to a peripatetic childhood, Adams acquired his cosmopolitan outlook on religion in the 1780s, dividing his youth between

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[195] John Quincy Adams to Reverend Alvan Lamson, 25 September 1846, Adams Papers. Lamson (1792-1864) was the longtime minister of First Church (Congregational) in Dedham, Massachusetts.

[196] The classic biography is Samuel Flagg Bemis's two-volume work, *John Quincy Adams and the Foundations of American Foreign Policy* and *John Quincy Adams and the Union* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1949, 1956). Paul C. Nagel's biography, *John Quincy Adams: A Public Life, A Private Life* (New York: Knopf, 1998) blames John and, in particular, Abigail Adams for overburdening their sons with lofty political expectations. More succinct summaries of Adams's career appear in two other fine works, by Lynn Hudson Parsons, *John Quincy Adams* (Madison: Madison House, 1998) and Robert V. Remini, *John Quincy Adams* (New York: Times Books, 2002), but they, too, offer only glancing mentions of religion as a shaping factor in the president's thoughts and actions. In *Cannibals of the Heart: A Personal Biography of Louisa Catherine and John Quincy Adams* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1980), Jack Shepherd offers a richer discussion of the statesman's marriage and the religious reflections of his wife.

Despite the intriguing opportunity to show *how* a president prayed for national and personal salvation, most biographers have approached Adams's religious life gingerly, generally, or not at all. Instead, scholars have chided John Quincy for his "Puritan" habit of declining opulent gifts amid the diplomatic revelry of foreign courts. They have used his Unitarianism as moral shorthand to explain his antislavery stance, and glossed over his ultra-Romantic (and markedly less successful) effort at writing popular religious verse like "The Wants of Man." They are even more reticent on the topic of Louisa's religious convictions, which often wavered between her high-Church, Episcopal disdain for Unitarianism and her guilty fascination with Roman Catholicism. Two new biographies provide fuller portraits: Fred Kaplan, *John Quincy Adams: American Visionary* (New York: Harper, 2014) and Margery M. Heffron, *Louisa Catherine: The Other Mrs. Adams* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014).

the austere wooden pews of his parents' First Parish Congregational Church of Quincy, Massachusetts, and the grand cathedrals of Europe, where he acted as his father's diplomatic attaché. At the age of thirteen, he traded revolutionary Boston for the revolutionary Continent, spending his formative years in Paris, Amsterdam, and Leyden.

For the budding diplomat, accessing knowledge of local religions became a vital key to understanding national character and relating New England faith to that of the Old World. Adams used his diary, which eventually spanned 51 volumes over 68 years, to chronicle thick descriptions of religious practice. Touring the Renaissance humanist Erasmus's hometown of Rotterdam in 1780, for example, the teenager recorded the religious panorama with the same forensic detail that he used to quantify its population, canals, and local government.[197] With his father, John Quincy worshipped in a series of Protestant churches, including one Presbyterian parish where he was surprised to hear the sermon delivered in English.[198] When he could not make new religious knowledge compute, Adams found another method of capturing religious experience. On a weekend jaunt to Sweden in late 1782, John Quincy did not understand a word of the sermon, so he doodled throughout the service. His entry for that day—5 December 1782—bears in the margin his sketch of the minister's pulpit harangue. Even if the message sounded foreign, Adams seized on what felt familiar: the planted stance of a clergyman bent over the congregation, mid-lecture, with his brows furrowed in devout concern for their

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[197] For the significance of the Dutch republican example to American revolutionaries like John Adams, see Simon Schama, *Patriots and Liberators: Revolution in the Netherlands, 1780-1813* (New York: Knopf, 1977).

[198] John Quincy Adams, in *The Diary of John Quincy Adams*, 2 vols., eds. David Grayson Allen et al. (Cambridge and London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1981), 1:41, 71, 73, 76, 80, 86-87. He made note of, but apparently did not attend, the two Roman Catholic churches then extant in Rotterdam.

welfare.[199] Adams could have easily drawn the same eighteenth-century scene from the comfort of his Quincy pew.

Returning to Boston in 1785, John Quincy followed the piety and practices of his New England forebears, taking sermon notes twice on Sunday and studying history, sacred and profane, during his whirlwind education at Harvard. John Quincy's religious education, like that of his revolutionary-peers, was homemade and interlaced with literary pursuits—at times, Virgil's verses, or even *Tristram Shandy*'s directive to answer the "great ends of existence" guided Adams just as much as did the family Bible.[200] Legal apprenticeship followed John Quincy's graduation in 1787, and the young, single attorney spent much of the next decade indulging a mild bout of intellectual crisis. John Quincy Adams spent mornings bored at his Boston law office, flipping through a stack of weighty classics meant to refine his powers of oratory.[201] Frustrated with the dryness and dimness of reading canon law after a dazzling adolescence abroad, Adams initiated a brief, self-taught course in the literature of antiquity.[202] He lost his first court case but won minor fame for a string of pseudonymous newspaper editorials. His long, contemplative walks in the mall brought "low spirits." Mostly, the eldest and arguably the most promising Adams son sounded lost, and (somehow) overlooked by Providence.

Around John Quincy, the post-revolutionary glow of excitement had sputtered out. American preachers of the 1790s stepped up to their pulpits intent on reenergizing themes of millennial faith and unifying Protestants in missionary societies and

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[199] John Quincy Adams, 5 December 1782, *Diary*, 1:163.
[200] John Quincy Adams, 16 May 1792, Diary.
[201] John Quincy Adams, 4 May 1792, Diary.
[202] John Quincy Adams, 14 April 1792, Diary.

philanthropic efforts to counter suspected threats of religious infidelity.[203] The melancholy John Quincy, often napping through such sermons in a fine family pew, would have made a prime target for their verbal jabs.[204] Friends married, moved, had children—and Adams remained a half-day's ride from his Braintree relations, eager for the "smiles of Providence" to elevate his public role and yet fearing what that ambition might also bring. For John Quincy, his father's political trajectory expressed an ugly truth—even Providence could not control party and press. The 25 year-old John Quincy Adams felt "as obscure as unknown to the world," a man whom Providence neglected in order to bless his contemporaries with wealth and success. Late in May 1792, Adams recalled some advice from a family favorite, Laurence Sterne's bawdy bestseller *Tristram Shandy.* Speculating on his "future Fortunes in Life," Adams declared that he would "adopt some Resolutions, and prescribe…some regulations which may enable me as uncle Toby Shandy said of his miniature sieges, *to answer the great ends of my existence.*"[205] Four more years passed, quietly.

In 1796, while his parents battled through party politics in the Capitol, Adams accepted his first serious diplomatic post as minister to the Netherlands, and the following year he married Louisa Catherine Johnson, the sociable daughter of a Maryland tobacco merchant living in London. John Quincy's wife claimed a different religious

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[203] Ruth H. Bloch, *Visionary Republic: Millennial Themes in American Thought, 1756-1800* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 117-149; Bush, *Dream of Reason,* ix; Richard W. Pointer, *Protestant Pluralism and the New York Experience: A Study of Eighteenth-Century Religious Diversity* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 74-144.
[204] John Quincy Adams, 23 March 1794, Diary: "Mr. Clark A.M. Mr. Thacher P.M. Funeral Sermon. I slept, was it my fault? Walk with Frazier, over Cambridge bridge, in the Mall &c. Evening at Mr. Gore's; and very pleasant. T. Amory quite facetious. Welles in Spirits &c."
[205] John Quincy Adams, 16 May 1792, Diary.

heritage; their interfaith union echoed a transitional moment in American Christianity's wary embrace of pluralism in an age of disestablishment. Louisa's parents were nominally Unitarian but were hardly regular churchgoers, and her religious background was broad. She had been raised first as an Anglican and then tutored at a Catholic convent school in Nantes.[206] Louisa's initial encounter with faith, formed in the grim shadow of the London Tower, was at the ancient Anglican parish of All Hallows Barking. As a girl growing up in the lower- to middle-class neighborhood of Tower Hamlets, Louisa admired the church's seventh-century Saxon arch, rebuilt in Roman tile, and its plain aura of Gothic grit. Triggered by her father's bankruptcy and the global aftershocks of American independence, the family's abrupt exodus to France in 1778 introduced Louisa to the mysteries of Catholic devotion. [207] One of her earliest religious memories was kneeling before "the Image of the tortured Jesus and the horror I felt at the thought, of mixing with hereticks."[208]

A few years later, Louisa came back to London and made a rocky return to Protestant ritual at the Unitarian meetinghouse and school in the northeastern borough of Hackney. When her governess instructed the 8 year-old Louisa to kneel and pray "among the *hereticks*" she "fell as it were dead upon the floor." After a two-month reprieve, Louisa returned with "strict orders from my parents that I should not be harried or urged

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[206] Louisa Catherine Adams, "Record of a Life," and "The Adventures of a Nobody," in *The Diary and Autobiographical Writings of Louisa Catherine Adams*, 2 vols., eds. Judith S. Graham et al. (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2013), 1:1-356.
[207] For the bankruptcy of U.S. consul and Maryland entrepreneur Joshua Johnson's tobacco firm, see Edward C. Papenfuse, *In Pursuit of Profit: The Annapolis Merchants in the Age of American Revolution, 1763-1805* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975), 53, 73-75, 93, 108, 234.
[208] Louisa Catherine Adams, "Record of a Life," *Diary*, 1:3-4.

too much upon the subject of going to Church…I was to be accustomed gradually to the prayers of the school, until my fears wore off." A second fainting fit ensued. Thereafter, Louisa committed to the plan and "quietly conformed to the usages and forgot insensibly all the prejud[ic]es which I had so early and so strongly ~~acquired~~ imbibed."[209] Louisa cherished hazy memories of All Hallows during her Ursuline education, and so it became the site where she married the American president's son in the summer of 1797.[210]

When the two expatriates—Unitarian New Englander and Anglican Southerner—wed in an ancient London church, their diverse religious backgrounds were not, surprisingly, at issue.[211] In an era of American Christianity when "celebration of individualism turned out to be a virtual recipe for increasing diversity," John Quincy and Louisa participated in a new wave of interdenominational marriage, a cultural route that many antebellum citizens took without rupturing their households.[212] They adapted the family unit to a radical style of religious individualism that would have jarred ancestral sensibilities. Parents occasionally prayed at different churches, but they still raised their children, tended house, and made or lost money together. By the time John Quincy met

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[209] Louisa Catherine Adams, "Record of a Life," *Diary*, 1:7.

[210] Certificate, 26 July 1797, Marriage Register, All Hallows Barking Parish, London, England. Documentation of the wedding, witnessed by John Quincy's brother Thomas Boylston, is on permanent display in the crypt museum near the remains of clergy executed at Tower Hill, including the Catholic Bishop John Fisher, the Puritan Adamses' nemesis William Laud, and the Renaissance humanist Sir Thomas More. I am grateful to Angie Poppitt, Vicar's Assistant and Finance Manager, for sharing records as well as her expert knowledge on a tour of All Hallows.

[211] Louisa bore the brunt of the press attacks on her marriage throughout John Quincy's career—mainly, allegations that she was a money-hungry foreigner who ensnared the president's son in marriage to resolve her father's debt. The greater religion-related scandal for the Adamses in this period was the political fallout from President John Adams's 23 March 1798 fast day proclamation, which exacerbated the XYZ Affair mess, for which see Chapter 1.

[212] Dickson D. Bruce, Jr., *Earnestly Contending: Religious Freedom and Pluralism in Antebellum America* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2013), 9-31.

Louisa, Americans had figured out how to detach piety from kinship and thereby loosen the old New England bonds of orthodoxy that once soldered church to home.[213] Adams did not care if he married outside of his denomination, and he put little pressure on Louisa to convert. Her mother-in-law, First Lady Abigail, balked only at her half-British pedigree, proclaiming to John Quincy that she hoped "the siren is at least *half blood*."[214]

Like her late contemporary Louisa May Alcott, Mrs. John Quincy Adams's "religious thinking reveals not a nebulous mish-mash of Protestant ideas but rather a distinct and heterodox if personal theology."[215] Privately, in her diary pages, she needled her new "Yankee Unitarian" kin, calling them a "sect enveloped in a cloud of Mist."[216] Yet when Louisa sat down to write her memoirs in the late 1820's, becoming the *first* First Lady to do so, she recalled a husband for whom she had willingly sacrificed her own mixed set of creeds, so confident and appealing was his outlook on faith. "I likewise joined in the Duties of his religious exercises as a tribute of respect to him, and as an example to my little ones," she wrote.[217] The statesman's wife drafted Scriptural reflections and composed religious poetry. In sync with other antebellum readers, she consumed the growing denominational periodicals of the day, which replaced Calvinism

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[213] Anne C. Rose, "Religious Individualism in Nineteenth-Century American Families," in *Perspectives on American Religion and Culture*, ed. Peter W. Williams (Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), 319-330.
[214] Abigail Adams to John Quincy Adams, 20 May 1796, in *Adams Family Correspondence*, 11:297-298.
[215] Gregory Eiselein, "'A Religion of Their Own': Louisa May Alcott's New American Religion," in *Nineteenth-Century American Women Write Religion: Lived Theologies and Literature*, ed. Mary McCartin Wearn (Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2014), 121.
[216] Louisa Catherine Adams, *Diary*, 1:xxx.
[217] Louisa Catherine Adams, 3 February 1803, *Diary*, 1:184-185.

with a Christianity born of "benign feeling, good works, and divine benevolence."[218] The Stone Library in Quincy reflects the shared breadth of the couple's religious reading habits: diverse sermons, hymnals, and Bibles printed in Greek, Latin, French, German, and Hawaiian.[219]

A distinctively *American* Christianity that mixed scientific curiosity, Scottish common-sense philosophy, and Protestant piety became the Adamses' great guide in navigating the world. Like their post-revolutionary peers, John Quincy and Louisa found that practicing Protestantism fulfilled their everyday needs in ways that the prevailing precepts of rational philosophy and Whig ideology did not; further, religion "penetrated all discourse," making daily life meaningful and great tragedy bearable wherever they went.[220] Ever innovative, the antebellum Adamses studiously made and remade what Louisa (and her mother-in-law Abigail) called "true religion" in the courts of Napoleonic Europe and in the courtrooms of a slaveholding American republic.[221] From 1809 to 1825, the relentless tug of a diplomatic itinerary uprooted and replanted John Quincy and Louisa along with their three sons, George Washington (1801-1829), John 2d (1803-

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[218] David S. Reynolds, "From Periodical Writer to Poet: Whitman's Journey through Popular Culture," in *Periodical Literature in Nineteenth-Century America*, eds. Kenneth M. Price and Susan Belasco Smith (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995), 35-50.

[219] John Quincy made close lists of his book and pamphlet acquisitions throughout his life. The sermons mentioned here are cited at his Miscellany for the years 1803 to 1825 (Adams Papers), next to his New Testament chapter summaries. See also Henry Adams, *A Catalogue of the Books of John Quincy Adams, Deposited in the Boston Athenaeum* (Boston: Printed for the Athenaeum, 1938). The 1843 Hawaiian Bible, printed in Oahu and presented in late May 1845, bears an inscription of gratitude to Adams from the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, "for the kind interest he has taken in the Sandwich Islands."

[220] Gordon S. Wood, "Religion and the American Revolution," in *New Directions in American Religious History*, eds. Harry S. Stout and D. G. Hart (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 175; Patricia U. Bonomi, *Under the Cope of Heaven: Religion, Society, and Politics in Colonial America* (New York: 1986), 3.

[221] Louisa Catherine Adams, 27 February 1820, *Diary*, 2:477-478; Abigail Adams to Louisa Catherine Adams, 3 January 1818, Adams Papers.

1834), and Charles Francis (1807-1886). From 1809 to 1815, Adams acted as the first American minister to Russia, returning to serve as President James Monroe's secretary of state from 1817 to 1825. Like his father, he endured a fraught tenure as president (1825-1829), alienating many with his plans for internal improvements and federal support for the arts and sciences. Known mainly for serving as a Massachusetts Congressman from 1831 until his death in 1848, John Quincy opposed the annexation of Texas and war with Mexico. He overturned the gag rule on slave petitions and championed American neutrality in foreign affairs. Louisa, who acted as his confidante and salonnière in Washington, D. C., maintained her religious preferences to the end, stipulating an Episcopal funeral service for which the entire Congress adjourned in May 1852.[222]

In a century marked by people, goods, and ideas on the move, John Quincy manufactured a cosmopolitan Christianity through the daily exchange of diverse ideas about faith and doubt. He relished traveling through other liturgical seasons and sampling new beliefs. Reflections on the theology and rites of Catholics, Anglicans, Greek and Russian Orthodox, Hindus, Muslims, and Jews all appear in his diaries, letters, and miscellanies. They are interspersed with his regular updates on Napoleon's advance toward St. Petersburg, the perils of British politics at the Court of St. James, and his own uneasy adjustment to the fishbowl of Congressional life in the new Capitol of Washington, D. C. Throughout, Adams retained his New England providentialism, believing that the man who adhered to religious duty from infancy would "never be

[222] This marked the first time that the United States Congress conferred this honor on a woman in light of her "public regard." For a representative sample of the press coverage of Louisa's death, see the notices for "Congress" and "The Funeral of Mrs. Adams," printed in *The Republic* on 18 and 19 May 1852.

exposed to the resentment of a good and wise god, whatever the mode of his worship may be."[223]

Manuscripts record the Adamses' religious journeys; so, too, does their money trail. Like other Americans who migrated between Protestant sects, John Quincy Adams pronounced denominational differences indistinct and arcane; but he was exceptional in leveraging family wealth to subsidize the message. A survey of his parallel investments in multiple American religions offers additional evidence of Adams's cosmopolitan Christianity. During his time in the Capitol, John Quincy owned pews at the Second Presbyterian Church and St. John's Episcopal Church, while paying large sums for other pews at the major Unitarian and Episcopal venues in Quincy.[224] Ever on the hunt to resolve questions of identity and to earn forgiveness for missteps, Adams mirrored his generation's interest in diluting denominational differences in order to "assert a national selfhood that was essentially religious"; which, in turn, empowered fracturing Protestants to "minimize, if not resolve, racial, sexual, and economic divisions in the American nation."[225] As a "frequent sinner before God," Adams felt it vital that his constituents see him in church—*any* church—come Sunday. There, he welcomed admonishment for his sins and exhortation to virtue, two acts that Adams thought he was "sure of receiving"

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[223] John Quincy Adams, *Diary*, 1:362, 2:391-392.
[224] Interview with Daniel A. Stokes, Archivist, The New York Avenue (formerly Second) Presbyterian Church; Organizational Records, Scrapbooks, and Pew Plans, United First Parish Church of Quincy, Massachusetts; Organizational Records, Christ Church Episcopal of Quincy. See also George E. Backer, "John Quincy Adams as a Unitarian," *The Unitarian Review and Religious Magazine* 16 (1881): 135-153.
[225] Jenny Franchot, *Roads to Rome: The Antebellum Protestant Encounter with Catholicism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 6.

through prayer in "all the forms of Christian worship."[226] As each new encounter or pew purchase faded into the pages of his diary, the president pensively returned to the faith in which he was raised. By far, he concluded in 1846, Adams preferred the Congregational "essentials of Christianity." He did not join the full communion of his home church in Quincy until 1826, and when he finally did, the famed Christian statesman blamed his cosmopolitan choice of lifestyle for the extended delay in upholding one of the more formal aspects of the Adams family's longtime religious tradition: "I ought to have joined it thirty years ago or more; but the tumult of the world, false shame, a distrust of my own worthiness to partake of the communion, and a residence elsewhere and constantly changing, made me defer it to a more convenient opportunity."[227]

For Louisa, too, sampling and evaluating new religions became a significant hobby, paving another intellectual path for the First Lady to consolidate her influence at home or abroad. Louisa entrusted her life to a watchful Providence, subscribed to the idea of Jesus's "superhuman" nature, and served as an agile critic of the clergy. Louisa's commentary was like that of other antebellum women who encountered Christianities in a purely cultural context. Frequently, Louisa responded differently (and with less tolerance) to new rites than John Quincy did. She disliked Russian Orthodox priests and referred to at least one Washington, D. C., Methodist preacher as a "miserable Rhapsodist."[228] Like many, Louisa met and mocked the Bordentown, N. J., Shakers, a community that she saw as suffering under an "obviously imperfect" creed, a "highly

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[226] John Quincy Adams, 19 January 1843, Diary.
[227] John Quincy Adams, 8 September 1826, Diary.
[228] Louisa Catherine Adams, *Diary*, 1:xxix-xxxi; see also her 15 February 1806 entry, 234.

ridiculous mode of worship," and "illiterate and vulgar preachers." Later, describing the Shaker encounter in a long letter to her husband, Louisa managed to peer beyond contemporary prejudices and attempt a more tolerant view of the new sect. She acknowledged that the Shakers had shown "disciplined solemnity in their motions" and, that, "as in most creeds, their motives and intentions are pure, however wrong they may be in practice."[229]

The Anglo-American Louisa, who charmed Russian noblewomen and once "passed" for Napoleon's sister, also used local religion to "read" national culture and assert social influence. Abroad, Louisa performed some diplomatic maneuvers of her own, and often with religious undertones. Skillfully, she cultivated queens and noblewomen who grew comfortable sharing "private history," once they found common ground in discussing the universal Christian duties of motherhood.[230] Delicately, Louisa Catherine Adams knew when to change the topic (*away* from religion) at a state dinner.[231] She saved her most biting invective and un-diplomatic behavior, however, for her Adams kin. Setting foot in America for the first time in 1801, Louisa gasped: "Quincy! What shall I say of my impressions of Quincy! Had I steped into Noah's Ark I do-not think I could have been more utterly astonished—… Even the Church, its forms, The snuffling through the nose, the Singers…were all novelties to me."[232] She never

[229] Louisa Catherine Adams to John Quincy Adams, 21 August 1826, Adams Papers.
[230] Louisa Catherine Adams, "Adventures of a Nobody," *Diary*, 1:144.
[231] Louisa Catherine Adams, "Adventures of a Nobody," *Diary*, 1:174.
[232] Louisa Catherine Adams, *Diary*, 1:xxi.

settled into Unitarianism, and John Quincy happily joined her in journeying *away* from their home church, toward God.[233]

II. An Education: The Transatlantic Christian Patriot

A transatlantic teenager, John Quincy grew up praying whenever and wherever he could. What kind of a Christian and a republican was he? Proudly, Adams hailed from a long family line of nonconformists and innovators who led revolutions in church and state. John Quincy's dominant theology, from his earliest Harvard days, was close to early Unitarianism, with a heavy emphasis on pluralism as the bulwark of the American republic. Both of his parents came from a latitudinarian wing of Congregationalism, prioritizing "ethics over doctrine, life over theology, cultural accommodation over cultural theology."[234] Under their quasi-Unitarian tutelage, John Quincy believed in salvation, but never would he have heard a single, clear plan for how to achieve it. He acknowledged Jesus as a gifted teacher, and he blended scientific reason with religious inquiry. When John Quincy pored over Scripture or dipped into popular literature, he knit together moral education and social reality, with the end goal of perceiving a "grand design of Christianity" in his own life. For John Quincy and other liberalizing Protestants

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[233] Louisa Catherine Adams, *Diary*, xxx. For Henry Adams's reflections on Louisa in his *Education*, see Chapter 4.

[234] Donald G. Bloesch, *The Church: Sacraments, Worship, Ministry, Mission* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2002): 111. On latitudinarianism, see Margaret C. Jacob, *The Newtonians and the English Revolution, 1689-1720* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1976); Martin I. J. Griffin, *Latitudinarianism in the Seventeenth-Century Church of England* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1992 ed.); and Martin Fitzpatrick, "Latitudinarianism at the parting of the ways: a suggestion," in *The Church of England c. 1689-c. 1833: From Toleration to Tractarianism*, ed. John Walsh et al. (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 209-227.

of his era, that meant living a constant battle between "ought" and "is."[235] Such an approach to Christianity, at once idealistic *and* realistic, instilled a multigenerational sense of ecumenism within the family. "Ask me not then whether I am a Catholic or Protestant, Calvinist or Arm[i]nian?" his father, John, wrote. "As far as they are Christians, I wish to be a Fellow Disciple with them all."[236] The Adamses' peripatetic nature reinforced the commitment to pluralism within the family circle, leading the young John Quincy to create a liberal form of portable, patriotic Protestantism.

Intermingling religion with the last remnants of Revolutionary sentiment, antebellum Americans like John Quincy Adams strained for a new form of Christian republicanism, garnering mixed success and agonizing openly about the limits of church and state in guiding civic virtue.[237] On the eve of John Quincy's launch into political life, his father issued *the* multivolume sourcebook on tripartite federal government, framing American growth within the greater traditions and ideologies of European republics in *A Defence of the Constitutions of the United States of America* (1787-1789).[238] There, the second president equated American resistance to British tyranny with Ciceronian

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[235] Patrick Müller, *Latitudinarianism and Didacticism in Eighteenth-Century Literature: Moral Theology in Fielding, Sterne, and Goldsmith* (Frankfurt and New York: Peter Lang, 2009), 207-208.
[236] John Adams to Benjamin Rush, 21 January 1810, Adams Papers.
[237] Gordon S. Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1787* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998 ed.); Noll, *America's God*, 53-157; and Mark Y. Hanley, *Beyond a Christian Commonwealth: The Protestant Quarrel with the American Republic, 1830-1860* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994).
[238] On the composition, reception, and impact of John Adams's *Defence*, see volume 18 of *The Papers of John Adams* eds. Gregg L. Lint, Sara Georgini, et al. (Cambridge and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2016, forthcoming); C. Bradley Thompson, *John Adams and the Spirit of Liberty* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1998); "John Adams's Machiavellian Moment," *The Review of Politics* 57 (1995): 389-417; Zoltán Haraszti, *John Adams and the Prophets of Progress* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992); and Mortimer N. S. Sellers, *American Republicanism: Roman Ideology in the United States Constitution* (New York: New York University Press, 1994) 33-40. A modern reprint of the *Defence* was issued by Da Capo Press (New York) in 1971.

resistance to Caesar's corruption. The creation of a republic like America, where three distinct branches of government held power in check, thus met and symbolized the apogee of classical goals. Flipping through the *Defence*, John Quincy quickly rectified his "monumental" error of (initial) anti-federalism, soothed by his father's endorsement of a national constitution that balanced aristocratic and popular interests in a bicameral legislature. Over the course of three volumes, however, the senior Adams barely touched on the singular theme that John Quincy believed to be responsible for the ability of American republicanism to function in a largely monarchical world: Protestant Christianity.

The *Defence* made a powerful, provocative argument that resonated (though not always favorably) with Christian republicans, but it was only one of many cultural texts that fueled the new nation's obsession with what John Adams called the "full-length mirror" of antiquity.[239] Antebellum Americans devoured Virgil's *Aeneid* and composed mythic odes to the founders. They clashed over the beribboned "aristocracy" of the Order of the Cincinnati. They posed for portraits in Roman dress, imported panoramic wallpaper depicting Minerva's acts, and embroidered Hector's exploits on household linen.[240] Coming of age when strangers claimed *his* father as *their* founder, John Quincy

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[239] John Adams, *A Defence of the Constitutions of the United States of America*, 3 vols. (New York: Da Capo Press, 1970 reprint), 1:210.

[240] See also Caroline Winterer, *The Culture of Classicism: Ancient Greece and Rome in American Intellectual Life, 1780-1910* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002); *The Mirror of Antiquity: American Women and the Classical Tradition, 1750-1900* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007); Brent Gilchrist, *Cultus Americanus: Varieties of the Liberal Tradition in American Political Culture, 1600-1865* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2006), 159-244; Michael Meckler, ed., *Classical Antiquity and the Politics of America: From George Washington to George W. Bush* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2006), 1-54; Eran Shalev, *Rome Reborn on Western Shores: Historical Imagination and the Creation of the American Republic* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2009); and Joseph Farrell and Michael C. J.

moved in a world where classical allusions like these bolstered notions of American liberalism *and* challenged the architecture of a new, slaveholding republic. The first portion of Adams's life offers a personal perspective on that large-scale social change, namely, his youthful examination of using ancient republican models in the service of American growth. This also marked his first foray into serious religious inquiry. In many ways, this junior scholar's experiment highlights the dilemmas that early Americans encountered when they tried to mesh the ideologies of Protestant Christianity with classical republicanism.

According to the young John Quincy's investigation, the rise of Protestant Christianity marked a fortunate divergence from the classical republican tradition, one that would serve to benefit the long-term growth of American democratic thought and culture. How did he reach this conclusion? Partially in preparation for the Harvard entrance exam and partially out of religious curiosity, from 1784 to 1786 John Quincy absorbed Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* along with the Gospel of Luke.[241] When he began, Adams clung to a popular view of Christian republicanism that reached synthesis in the last act of the Age of Revolutions, a view based on the claim that the rise of American democracy belonged to a political tradition of liberalism stretching back to classical

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Putnam, eds., *A Companion to Vergil's Aeneid and Its Tradition* (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 353-418.

As historically-minded New Englanders fashioned a pantheon of "native" founders to esteem, they also dealt with political dilemmas of class that reconfigured the Revolutionary soldier's return to the new agrarian republic, as described in Van Beck Hall, *Politics without Parties: Massachusetts, 1780-1791* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1972); Bush, *Dream of Reason*, 2-57; and Minor Myers, *Liberty without Anarchy: A History of the Society of the Cincinnati* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2004).

[241] Details of John Quincy's intense preparation for the Harvard exam (1780-1785), which began under his father's tutelage at The Hague, appear in *Adams Family Correspondence*, 6:98, 405, 408-409, 412; 7:3, 129-130, 372-373.

antiquity. The Greco-Roman past was particularly instructive, John Quincy thought, but was not wholly predictive of the American future—mainly, because classical republics lacked the Protestant Christianity needed to instill a moral ethos and solidify true republican virtue.

In order to grasp how other republics had (mal)functioned, the teenaged Adams buried himself in a self-assigned syllabus to settle whether the beliefs of antiquity intersected with those of eighteenth-century Protestant Christianity. [242] Could he draw a straight line from ancient Athens to Boston, the "Athens of America"? Did Plato's *Republic* hold new lessons for a close reader of the Gospel? After several months of study, the young Adams's major conclusion was that Christians, "favour'd by revelation," should avoid over-reading problematic translations of classical philosophers in conducting their quest for helpful republican "truths." All religion, Adams thought, evolved through the practice of human dissent and discovery rather than through divine revelation. To a degree, this reflected how his father had instructed the Adams children to read the Bible—as an ancient text capable of enduring myriad translations, clear proof of Christianity's robust merit. John Quincy was certain that his New England brand of Christianity, however flawed, featured a kinder, gentler Providence than the pantheon of pagan gods, which, despite imposing arbitrary judgments, were worshipped fervently by Greco-Roman republicans. For example, in weighing Jupiter's appetite for revenge

[242] Many antebellum ministers, suffering from a general decline in the public recognition of their moral authority, undertook similar investigations. For their efforts to reshape Christianity for American republicans, see Hanley, *Beyond a Christian Commonwealth*; and Jonathan D. Sassi, *A Republic of Righteousness: The Public Christianity of the Post-Revolutionary New England Clergy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

against the omniscient benevolence of the Scripture's "Supreme Being," John Quincy Adams was gratified to discover that he could not force the gods, ancient and modern, to align. Addressing the earlier Protestant scholars who (mistakenly) sited Greek and Roman gods alongside Christian Providence as the chief agents of change and human progress, Adams asked: "Is it not a denial, of his wisdom, and justice, as well as of his Power? Surely our ideas of a God, are much more perfect at this Time."[243]

Like his antebellum peers, Adams now understood Christian republicanism as a dialectic that harmonized "cultural criticism and calls for traditional faith" within the daily duties of America's blossoming civic life.[244] As he picked through Homer and Luke, John Quincy grew convinced that America coalesced at a providential moment in history, just as the Protestant laity became strong and rational enough to support a constitutional republic. To Adams's mind, this historical break between two modes of thought—primitive and Protestant—indicated that people now knew to marshal scientific reason, and to distance themselves from harmful primitive beliefs. To the young Adams, the creation of America marked a dual milestone in humankind's religious and political progress: It was, historically, the best possible moment to be both Christian and republican. In Adams's view, the Christian laity, once it passed through a period of Reformation, had been empowered by Providence to shape religion and republic. Further, *his* generation of Protestants was able to approach Christianity without fear of godly reprisal for indulging in mortal sin or conducting scientific inquiry. In reevaluating the

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[243] John Quincy Adams, *Diary*, 1:400.
[244] Hanley, *Beyond a Christian Commonwealth*, 7.

popular arguments for Christian republicanism to guide national growth, Adams confronted the question of the day: Could the same Christianity underpinning the American republic also be leveraged to criticize it, and at what cost? Again in line with widely held social thought, Adams believed the answer was yes, although he worried about the toll that might take on Christianity. Adams's greatest concern, shared by other well-educated American elites, became keeping the "centrifugal energies of liberalism from jettisoning religion altogether."[245] Informed by his joint inquiry into biblical and classical texts, this youthful discovery—that Protestantism powered and preserved American union—became central to John Quincy Adams's lifelong commitment to Christian patriotism.

Traveling with Homer's heroes and anti-heroes set Adams's steps on a permanent path away from biblical literalism and enabled him to grow as a lay critic of New England religion. From the beginning, John Quincy's diary reveals an American Christian determined to pray for others and to think for himself. Biblical Christianity, for Adams and others of his generation, was ever relevant. They read avidly but acknowledged that the Scripture did not supply a total understanding of moral precepts. Hailing Enlightenment-era deism as largely defeated, a handful of Protestant elites like Adams grappled next with the advent of German textual criticism on American shores.[246] They believed that the Bible was intellectually sound enough to compete against other

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[245] Hanley, *Beyond a Christian Commonwealth*, 57; 32-56.
[246] Gordon S. Wood, *Empire of Liberty: A History of the Early Republic, 1789-1815* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 612-619; and Michael J. Lee, *The Erosion of Biblical Certainty: Battles over Authority and Interpretation in America* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 111-172.

systems of faith, but thoroughly unable to *predict* history. Rather, it was merely prefatory to the greater moral canon that Christians must discover through their own actions.

So John Quincy wandered beyond the Bible to search for foreign meditations on ethics. The young Unitarian eschewed literalism for liberal inquiry and seized the chance to translate his personal experiences into a malleable, freeform theology. He joined other inventive elites, operating inside and outside of the nation's blossoming seminaries, who placed Protestantism at the core of a broad humanities curriculum to be presented "less as a 'deposit of revelation' than as an aspect of culture."[247] Adams's journeys thus offer a window into the theology of elite laity who could afford education at Harvard or Princeton, two major arenas for debate on biblical inerrancy and Scripture's "reply" to new scientific discoveries. For Adams and his antebellum classmates, the Bible was one, special book among many in a burgeoning religious press, offering a menu of livable Christian directives that invited proficient, *personal* interpretation.[248]

Christian patriotism steered Adams's choices, and bolstered the familial instinct that adopting a cosmopolitan approach to religion was the best way of reinforcing the early republic. Although his religious curiosity took root abroad, it was Adams's youthful interactions with New England life that shaped his belief of how religion should operate *within* Providence's newest creation. Reading was one lens for Adams's recurrent study of human nature; the cycle of daily life in small-town New England provided another

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[247] Elizabeth A. Clark, *Founding the Fathers: Early Church History and Protestant Professors in Nineteenth-Century America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 8, 12, 97-137.
[248] Nathan O. Hatch and Mark A. Noll, eds., *The Bible in America: Essays in Cultural History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982); Charles H. Lippy, ed., *Religious Periodicals of the United States: Academic and Scholarly Journals* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1986); and Ronald F. Satta, *The Sacred Text: Biblical Authority in Nineteenth-Century America* (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2007).

pivotal perspective for his religious musings. John Quincy reacted to new religious ideas, he wrote, as he did to colors striking his senses. Despite changes in hue, the purity of providentialism was never in doubt. "I desire never to have an Idea, of a god, who is not infinitely good, and merciful, as well as powerfull," Adams wrote.[249] When two young neighbors in Quincy died suddenly, Adams sensed local grief overflowing to communal rage; friends sought to prosecute the "author of Nature" who governed any such loss. He feared that "weak" and "impious fools" might shun God and embrace atheism—a theme that his grandson Henry would take up with acidity in the modern parable of *Esther*, a century later.[250] But making such a violent turn to unbelief, for John Quincy, was as inconceivable as tossing a pebble in the air and rejecting the scientific truth of gravity. "Is it not still more absurd to deny, what Nature cries aloud in all her works," he wrote, "when we must, all acknowledge, ourselves, entirely ignorant, of the secret springs that keep the machine of the world in play."[251] Beyond reading assignments and personal experience, family history shows that traces of his father's deism and his mother's providentialism thus gave order to John Quincy's early religious thought.

As the American Revolution gave way to a difficult peace, and ministerial duties carried his parents to distant London, John Quincy deepened his roots in New England intellectual life. He grew more confident about expressing his theological views, joining his peers in denouncing Calvinism and evangelical fervor. His uncle and tutor, the Reverend John Shaw, parried with the teenager on questions of good and evil. Adams's

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[249] John Quincy Adams, *Diary*, 1:413.
[250] See Chapter 4.
[251] The metaphor equating religious instinct with gravity was John Quincy's, for which see his *Diary*, 1:359-360.

precocious queries demonstrated a youthful irritation with pulpit authority as the final word on theology.[252] Preachers were, to his mind, much as his father and others had struggled to describe them in the Massachusetts Constitution of 1780, the "public Protestant teachers of piety, religion, and morality" who encouraged Christians to be good subjects of the commonwealth.[253] Entering Harvard as a junior in 1786, Adams heeded those teachers' advice that builders of the republic must be "instant in prayer" as they readied American culture for the world's review. At school, however, he found the assigned reading on religion to be tedious and unimaginative. He blasted Philip Doddridge's divinity lectures for being too "mathematical" in refuting challengers to Christianity.[254] Decrying a general scarcity of viable models for moral virtue among the Harvard faculty, John Quincy pored over Terence and the Psalms, turning inward to develop his ideals of Christian humility and heroism. [255]

In evaluating local theology and pulpit talent, young Adams made for an unsparing critic. Adams found it distasteful when preachers, even the stars of the annual Dudleian Lecture series on natural and revealed religion, castigated other sects as a way

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[252] Robert A. East, *John Quincy Adams: The Critical Years, 1785-1794* (New York: Bookman Associates, Inc., 1962), 31-34.
[253] For John Adams's drafting of the Massachusetts Constitution of 17800, especially the fourth article of the Declaration of Rights, which sought to define "religion" and the citizenry's responsibility to support it, see *Papers of John Adams*, 8:228-271.
[254] John Quincy Adams, *Diary*, 2:28. Philip Doddridge (1702-1751), an English Independent minister known for promoting union among nonconformists, was one of John Adams's reference points in his revolutionary writings, for which see *Papers of John Adams*, 1:91, 94. Doddridge's book, *A Course of Lectures on the Principal Subjects in Pneumatology, Ethics and Divinity* (London: 1763), was a mainstay of the curriculum at eighteenth-century Harvard. Accidentally or not, John Quincy often slept through the bell notifying him to attend recitation of Doddridge's work, for which see his *Diary*, 2:9, 12, 28, 189.
[255] At one point, the vice president's son complained that Harvard faculty "treat the Students pretty much like brute Beasts," for which see John Quincy Adams, *Diary*, 2:29.

of promoting their own.[256] As a Harvard student, the future Boylston Professor of Rhetoric and Oratory took close notes on religious instructors who sacrificed content for "too much cant."[257] In their selection of subject and tone, Adams felt that most ministers condescended to address "a lunatic people" in the pews.[258] Like his father, the polymath John Quincy realized fairly early on that religion was not a profession that he cared to attempt. When Ebenezer Learned, a friend of less than "first-rate" genius and a "soul tortured with Ambition," confided his secret hope that a pulpit career might ensure his immortality, John Quincy scoffed at the idea.[259] Notably, the very vocal Adams never could separate the man from the cloth. This may have been the result of John Quincy's enforced sociability with a steady rotation of ministers—for, as an Adams, he was expected to subscribe for sermons, host dinners or teas, and to pass along (discreetly) news of his father's missions.[260]

John Quincy Adams was exceptionally harsh toward ministers who promoted resurgent Calvinist doctrines of man's innate depravity, condemning the histrionics of New Divinity acolytes who visited the campus.[261] Throughout the 1780s, his repeated encounters with these ministers drew John Quincy's special disdain. Championed by the Calvinist Samuel Hopkins, New Divinity adherents believed in double predestination and

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[256] John Quincy Adams, *Diary*, 2:91; Pauline Maier, "The Pope at Harvard: The Dudleian Lectures, Anti-Catholicism, and the Politics of Protestantism," *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, 3d ser., 97 (1985): 16-41.
[257] John Quincy Adams, *Diary*, 2:122. He served in the Harvard professoriate from 1806 to 1810.
[258] John Quincy Adams, *Diary*, 2:111.
[259] John Quincy Adams, *Diary*, 2:217. Learned practiced medicine in Leominster, Massachusetts and Hopkinton, New Hampshire.
[260] The tradition of hosting ministers to Sunday dinner—often held between Congregationalists' morning and afternoon services—continued in the Adams home with John Quincy's son, Charles Francis, and grandson, Brooks.
[261] John Quincy Adams, *Diary*, 2:11.

set "disinterested benevolence" as the cornerstone of Christian morality. By the end of the eighteenth century, the Edwardsean influence in New England had waned somewhat, due to uncharismatic clergy and an admittedly "dreary" message of Christian fate that ran counter to the laity's surge of post-Revolutionary confidence.[262] John Quincy heard New Divinity ministers preaching in a moment of theological transition, just as they were testing out the concept of a "moral governance," a process that flipped an internal switch, actualizing one's "taste" for good into a real action of will.[263]

To John Quincy's ears, the doctrine felt dissonant and even dangerously anti-intellectual, so it was worth decimating in the pages of his diary. Not only had New Divinity ministers co-opted and misinterpreted key precepts of Christianity, Adams thought, but they had done it in a fraught rhetorical style that disgraced New England's heritage of clerical eloquence. For example, Newburyport's Samuel Spring preached with devotion, Adams wrote, and all the "enthusiasm of a bigot."[264] Another notable interaction with their theology included John Quincy Adams's cool reception of Tillotson Howe, a New Divinity protégé of Eleazar Wheelock's Dartmouth nursery, who guested in the Quincy pulpit during the winter of 1786. After meeting Howe for tea in a cousin's parlor, Adams decided that Howe's "brain is a little crack'd but the singularity of his behaviour may be owing to the manner in which he has been educated and the Company he has kept." Adams sketched out Howe's upward climb from farmer to student-minister,

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[262] Joseph A. Conforti, *The Samuel Hopkins and the New Divinity Movement: Calvinism, the Congregational Ministry, and Reform in New England between the Great Awakenings* (Grand Rapids: Christian University Press, 1981); Gary J. Dorrien, *The Making of American Liberal Theology: Imagining Progressive Religion, 1805-1900* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 6-15.
[263] Holifield, *Theology in America*, 135-149, 342-352.
[264] John Quincy Adams, *Diary*, 2:317.

and was impressed that Howe paid for his own college tuition, thereby showing "a spirit of Ambition, and fondness for Study, which argue a mind above the common."

John Quincy's review of Howe's sermons, delivered the next day, was far less kind. Of the "impious system" outlined by Howe, Adams objected most to the narrow and "ludicrous" path to salvation that Howe proposed: grace brought belief and hence salvation, *but* that grace was unobtainable by human will alone. What Howe lacked in clear logic, he apparently made up for with a dose of provocative rhetoric. For ten minutes, Howe drew out what Adams sarcastically labeled an "elegant simile," in which "unregenerate" men savored heaven like swine romping through a palace. Though Howe brandished colorful examples with "a great degree of energy and Propriety," Adams thought the doctrine "opposite to common sense, as well as injurious to the supreme being." Beyond indulging in excessive oratorical flair, Howe's error, Adams wrote, was to carry the theme of man's innate depravity to an unreasonable degree. Once again, Adams used his diary to frame a query that echoed across his generation: What did all this New Divinity preaching mean for the future of American Protestants, so often guided by Massachusetts' pulpit stars? "If a Clergyman ventures, not to be quite illiberal," John Quincy wrote, "it is the most he can do."[265] The New England preacher's challenge, Adams concluded, was how to evolve a distinctively American Protestantism for republicans without appearing too Catholic. Liberal sentiments, as he acknowledged, faced an uneasy home in the national pulpit.

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[265] John Quincy Adams, *Diary*, 1:403, 412-413.

By conducting assessments of Christian republicanism and New England clerical skill, the young John Quincy Adams refined his intellectual voice as a lay critic of antebellum religion. Christian republicanism had gifted Adams with a synthesis of church and state that enabled his criticism of both institutions. He yearned for a (political) pulpit of his own to share those views. Emboldened by his initial wanderings, Adams embraced a new stage of religious development that coincided with his transition to husband, father, and professional diplomat. Given the range and scope of his intellectual seeking, the permanence of John Quincy Adams's own commitment to the "spark" of Unitarianism seems somewhat extraordinary in a period when Protestant denominations were rocked by evangelical revivals, the onset of church disestablishment, and bitter splits over slavery. Perhaps the puzzle is best explained by Adams's choice of profession, and his inclination to represent American identity as part of a globalizing Protestant influence in nineteenth-century life. For that reason, it is vital to turn next to his diplomatic mission in tsarist Russia (1809-1815), where he and wife Louisa used Christianity to endure family tragedy, to reconsider the Bible's lessons, and to interpret the vibrant panorama of St. Petersburg's religions.

III. The "True Religion" of a "Profitable" Man and a "Travelled Lady"

For John Quincy and Louisa Catherine, their fledgling family's spiritual health centered on adhering to general Christian tenets, making it a microcosm of young America's struggle. When they were separated by the hardships of diplomatic travel, letters between husband and wife framed news of daily life around the "blessings of Providence" and lunges at understanding why God afflicted or blessed their small

family.[266] Both trusted in an abiding and benevolent God, each Adams turning to Scripture for renewal when affliction roused symptoms of doubt. Largely representational of other antebellum citizens who were struggling to sustain faith despite multiple cultural challenges to religious authority, John Quincy and Louisa were quite exceptional in *where* they worked through those issues: the imperial court of tsarist Russia.[267]

Between 1809 and 1815, events and experiences in Russia altered the Adamses' modes of religious practice and led them to write more intimately on themes of faith and doubt. Often, Louisa and John Quincy were the sole Americans in a packed ballroom, made exotic by their republican politics and their Protestant-hybrid faith. Repeatedly, John Quincy pledged to be a "profitable" man to his family, mainly through the completion of American foreign service.[268] If, however, diplomacy heightened John Quincy's profile and expanded his religious tolerance, it did not always suit his wife's temperament. The glamour of cosmopolitan life took a physical and spiritual toll on Louisa. Her adherence to Protestant Christianity, tinged with quasi-Catholic interest in Marian compassion and the holy virtue of motherhood acted as a buffer to the aesthetic upheaval that Louisa experienced in racing from culture to culture. "I assure you one of the greatest taxes I have to pay is that of concealing that I am a travelled Lady," she wrote.[269] Their joint depiction as both "profitable" and "travelled" paints John Quincy

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[266] As she prepared her memoirs, Louisa referred to John Quincy's more precise diary entries to sharpen recollection of people or events. While we cannot know if Adams ever read his wife's diary, it is worth noting that most of her entries took the form of "journal letters" that she edited and sent either to John Quincy or to her father-in-law, John.
[267] Hatch, *Democratization of American Christianity*, 3-48.
[268] John Quincy Adams, 11 November 1813, Diary.
[269] Louisa Catherine Adams, 9 February 1821, *Diary*, 2:556.

and Louisa as self-identifying cosmopolitans; in Russia, they evidently learned to amplify their Christianity, too.

Frequently, the young ambassador spent his New Year's Eve diary entries agonizing over who might improve the soul of John Quincy Adams more: Providence, or the man himself. When Louisa experienced a series of miscarriages—at least four in the first three years of marriage, all suffered abroad—the stress and agony of repeated disappointment caused them to seek out faith to heal. Another tragedy, the death of their infant daughter Louisa in St. Petersburg in the fall of 1812, shattered much of John Quincy's mental world. Louisa's namesake was buried on Vasilevsky Island, a Lutheran cemetery for those not of the Russian Orthodox faith.[270] John Quincy could not fathom the providential reasoning that justified so many consecutive episodes of loss. His daughter's death upended Adams's highly intellectualized notions of what constituted good and evil, and her loss triggered some very direct questions in his diary about the kind of God that let it happen. Grappling with the great ends of existence, he now saw, required a religious dexterity he had yet to achieve. More than once, Adams confessed that he was horrified by his apparent shortcoming as a professed Christian who would not submit to divine judgment.

Inaugurating what became his characteristic way of coping with family tragedy, John Quincy Adams turned to Christian literature for solace. His poetic effort to address the problem of theodicy, titled "The Death of Children," relayed the sad event in ultra-Romantic imagery: "But when the Lord of mortal breath / Decrees his bounty to resume. /

[270] Louisa Catherine Adams, *Diary*, 1:xxx.

And points the silent shaft of death, / Which speeds an infant to the tomb."[271] Feeling melancholy, Adams turned to any and all forms of religion in St. Petersburg to seek peace from the "bitter sorrows" and "rebellion of the Heart" that came from God's "chastening hand." He was aware, perhaps, of how such private outbursts of emotion might be "read" in an age of revival. When Adams looked over his diary, using it as a self-improvement manual of sorts, the Christian self that he saw emerging was less than ideal. "Religious Sentiments become from day to day more constantly habitual to my mind. They are perhaps too often seen in this Journal," Adams wrote. "God alone can make even Religion a Virtue; and to him I look for aid that mine may degenerate into no vicious excess."[272]

By contrast, Louisa's religious writings brimmed over with emotion, full of passionate punctuation ("!!!") and melancholy poetry dedicated to the family tragedies that she endured. Haunted by her daughter's death long after her stay in Russia, she wrote in 1812 that the "babes image pursues me where ever I go bitter reflection adds to my pangs and in religion alone do I find consolation."[273] In Russia, Louisa's role as wife and mother (of a splintered, and often damaged family unit) also cemented her religious formation. Louisa came to reject affiliations with "Romanism," but, like many American women, she supported notions of Marian compassion and the kind of "family love" that expanded into feelings of social communion—just the sort of "softer" image that a

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[271] John Quincy Adams, "The Death of Children," in *Poems of Religion and Society* (Auburn and Buffalo: Miller, Orton & Mulligan, 1854), 58-59.
[272] John Quincy Adams, 31 December 1812, Diary.
[273] Louisa Catherine Adams, 23 October 1812, *Diary*, 1:357.

polarizing politician like Adams needed his wife to exhibit in public.[274] Often, Louisa compared her own plight to that of a Catholic martyr in search of "true religion."[275] Her providentialist theology of grace, Louisa wrote, was "so simple so clear and so striking that the tawdry dress in which its precepts are sometimes taught to the publick by men who have mistaken their genius, almost always mortifies me as it casts a shade of ridicule on things in themselves the most sacred."[276] Certain that sustaining Christianity at home foretold that the entire family would reunite in heaven, Louisa sacralized her role as wife and mother.[277]

The multiple losses that John Quincy and Louisa suffered abroad led the former to redouble his efforts to instill Christian morality in their surviving children via a transatlantic program of Bible study. "Let us impress that…*Education* is the business of human life—that our religion is the religion of a book—and that the meaning of that book is intrusted by divine Providence to the deliberate judgment of our own understandings," he wrote.[278] John Quincy and Louisa felt that Christian nurture was, as the American theologian Horace Bushnell later advised, a way to ensure that the nation maintained a ready supply of godly help.[279] Eying the American future, Adams harbored "lively and

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[274] Franchot, *Roads to Rome*.
[275] Louisa Catherine Adams, 27 February 1820, *Diary*, 2:477-478.
[276] *Ibid*.
[277] Colleen McDannell, *The Christian Home in Victorian America, 1840-1900* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 105, 128, 139, 147, 159-160.
[278] John Quincy Adams, *A Discourse on Education. Delivered at Braintree, Thursday, Oct. 24, 1839.* (Boston: Perkins & Marvin, 1840), 36.
[279] For his promotion of Christian nurture to strengthen the American family, see Horace Bushnell, *Christian Virtue* (New York: C. Scribner, 1861) and David L. Smith, ed., *Horace Bushnell: Selected Writings on Language, Religion, and American Culture* (Chico: Scholars Press, 1984). On Bushnell's cultural influence, see Theodore T. Munger, *Horace Bushnell: Preacher and Theologian* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, &Co., 1899); Barbara M. Cross, *Horace Bushnell: Minister to a Changing America*

confident…hopes" that his heirs would become "useful citizens to their country, respectable members of society, and a real blessing to their parents."[280] The painful fact that Adams and his wife spent nearly six years separated from two of their sons did not excuse them from the task of Christian parenting. Dutiful reports from the distant boys, who were shuffled between aunts and uncles in Quincy and Atkinson, New Hampshire, hinted that their religious education was fitful at best. A throwaway line from one of George Washington's letters in 1811, reaching his parents nine months later when the waterways melted enough to allow for mail, prompted great concern. His son's fondness for reading aloud Bible chapters to his elderly aunt was laudable, John Quincy wrote reprovingly, but it was not enough.

The remedy was vintage Adams. Over the course of the next two years, he issued a series of pedantic and personal *Letters on the Bible* describing how his sons should read Scripture, when to apply its lessons, and why it merited special distinction in world literature. "No book in the world deserves to be so unceasingly studied, and so profoundly meditated upon as the Bible," he wrote.[281] Here, John Quincy was echoing his own parents' advice, and that of an antebellum generation that still relied on Scripture as the point of departure for living a moral life. Nor was Adams alone in his quest to

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(Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958); William R. Adamson, *Bushnell Rediscovered* (New York, United Church Press, 1966); and Robert Bruce Mullin, *The Puritan as Yankee: A Life of Horace Bushnell* (Grand Rapids and Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002).

[280] John Quincy Adams, *Letters of John Quincy Adams, to His Son, on the Bible and Its Teachings* (Auburn: Derby, Miller, & Co., 1848), 10. The letters were first gathered for publication by his son Charles, and published in the *New-York Tribune* shortly after Adams's death in 1848. Hereafter cited as John Quincy Adams, *Letters.* A full transcription of the letters is in the Adams Papers, prepared by Charles for publication, for which see Chapter 3.

[281] John Quincy Adams, *Letters*, 119.

reinvent the Bible in popular understanding. The Bible, widely venerated by Americans as an "aesthetic touchstone," had attracted a fresh and vigorous round of cultural interest. Aside from arming Christian republicans, there was another reason for the large-scale appeal of biblical inquiry. Among Protestants, Bible reading encouraged the converts who emerged from the Second Great Awakening and subsequent evangelical revivals (ca. 1790-1840). At the same time, biblical inquiry offered new intellectual projects for lay elites. President Thomas Jefferson scrap-booked his own version of Scripture, and Herman Melville reconsidered biblical themes for the basis of his novel *Moby-Dick* (1851).[282] In Philadelphia and New York City, the Presbyterian lawyer Elias Boudinot began campaigning for the $10,000 he needed to found the American Bible Society in 1816.[283] The Romantic painter Washington Allston overlaid parables on quasi-American landscapes, while scholars—often Harvard-trained Unitarians just like John Quincy—tussled over how to use the Bible as a form of rational, scientific evidence.[284]

His own mastery of Biblical scholarship, Adams thought, was amateurish. Sometimes Adams could not find a decent copy to peruse during his travels, even in one of the five or so languages that he could read. Though he rose to study several chapters

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[282] Thomas Jefferson, *The Jefferson Bible, or The Life and Morals of Jesus of Nazareth Extracted textually from the Gospels in Greek, Latin, French & English* (New York: Akashic Books, 2004 reprint); Ilana Pardes, *Melville's Bibles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008); Paul C. Gutjahr, *An American Bible: A History of the Good Book in the United States, 1777-1880* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999).

[283] William Peter Strickland, *History of the American Bible Society, From Its Organization to the Present Time* (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1849).

[284] William H. Gerdts and Theodore E. Stebbins, Jr., *"A man of genius": The Art of Washington Allston (1779-1843)* (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1979); Jerry Wayne Brown, *The Rise of Biblical Criticism in America, 1800-1870: The New England Scholars* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1969); and Michael J. Lee, *The Erosion of Biblical Certainty: Battles over Authority and Interpretation in America* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

before breakfast, sometimes his attention slid away. "Sometimes I say to myself, I do not understand what I have read; I can not help it; I did not make my own understanding: there are many things in the Bible 'hard to understand,' as St. Peter expressly says of Paul's epistles," Adams acknowledged.[285] He cautioned his sons to persevere in the task. The Bible, as Adams lectured in his letters home, should be read in four ways: as divine revelation, historical record, evolving system of morality, and finally, as an unparalleled literary composition.[286] Further, the Bible provided several layers of history: universal, national, institutional, family, and individual. Rediscovering the Old and New Testament with the intention of sharing it with his children, John Quincy found fresh illustrations to support his case that the Bible was "an invaluable and inexhaustible mine of knowledge and virtue."[287] He emphasized that the Sermon on the Mount held the most eloquent expression of Christianity's major tenets, including the principles of nonviolence, the Ten Commandments, the Beatitudes, and the Golden Rule. Writing from Russia, John Quincy Adams found special resonance in the history of Abraham, whose trials of character tested his obedience to God as he coped with a childless wife and the divine mandate to build a new nation.

Such was the religious life of the mind for John Quincy Adams in St. Petersburg between 1809 and 1815, as he settled into marriage, fatherhood, and a high-profile diplomatic career. He had first traveled to the city as Francis Dana's translator almost 30 years earlier, part of a failed mission to secure Empress Catherine II's recognition of

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[285] John Quincy Adams, *Letters*, 13.
[286] John Quincy Adams, *Letters*, 120.
[287] John Quincy Adams, *Letters*, 20.

American independence.[288] Now, as a professional diplomat, Adams keyed into religion to decode Russian culture and press ahead with trade talks. As the American minister labored over a commercial treaty with Alexander I, diverse religious rites captivated his interest, offering Adams a unique way to apprehend Russian civilization. In a three-month stretch, he sampled Sunday services, baptisms, weddings, funerals, and high holy days at a Catholic church, a Kazan Church, and the English Factory Church (the Anglican outpost in St. Petersburg). Adams interviewed Greek Orthodox priests, curious as to how they calculated the date for Easter. He interrogated the Jesuit headmaster regarding the academic minutiae of schoolboys' curricula. He documented the retail operations at the "Frozen Market" by the Monastery of St. Alexander Nevsky, noting the commercial accommodations that merchants made for religious observance.[289] He recorded how various laity and clergy marked the life cycle, where the faithful buried their dead, what they wore to service, and the gestures of supplication that they used in prayer. No detail of how people "lived" religion in Russia escaped John Quincy's dogged capacity for wonder, curiosity, or outright judgment. One of Adams's chief interests was how new Christians found their way to religion and whether the performance of ritual shored up belief in God. A generation later, his son Charles would seize on the same question, wondering what—if anything—outward "shows" of piety could "tell" of one's inner faith.[290] John Quincy's rage to quantify varieties of religious experience coalesced in

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[288] For the unsuccessful Dana mission of 1781-1782, see volumes 12 and 13, *passim*, of *Papers of John Adams.*
[289] John Quincy Adams, 2 January 1812, Diary.
[290] See Chapter 3.

Russia, but it did not end there, and his own international celebrity began to change how Adams prayed.

After a brief stint in Paris to negotiate the Treaty of Ghent that ended the War of 1812, he and Louisa reunited with all of their sons in London. The period that John Quincy spent there serving as American minister, from 1815 to 1817, was a relatively happy time. Living eight miles outside of London in the suburb of Ealing ("Little Boston"), the Adamses attended service at the newly repaired Anglican church of St. Mary's.[291] As a famous model of American life in miniature, the Adamses respected but largely evaded adopting British ways, seeking out dissenting traditions that challenged the established Church of England. The three Adams boys attended the local Presbyterian school and went to service at the nonconformist chapel there, too.[292] Following New England religious instincts, the Adams family preferred the Presbyterian service as an occasional nonconformist respite from Anglican life. Adams found Presbyterian worship to be nearly the "same form as that of our congregational churches," featuring one-hour sermons that he thought were "written in a very good plain style, and the delivery was above mediocrity."[293] He cast a critical eye on the Anglican pulpit, calling the St. Mary's preachers haughty and obsessed with preventing the "infection of Methodism." He loathed how Anglican clergymen spoke, dressed, and walked. With every step, he thought they conveyed "arrogance, intolerance and all that is the reverse of Christian

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[291] Beyond John Quincy Adams's Diary entries of his London tenure, held in the Adams Papers, see also Duncan Cameron et al., *An American President in Ealing* (Ealing: Little Ealing History Group, 2014), 56-84.
[292] John Quincy Adams, October 1816, Diary.
[293] John Quincy Adams, 26 January 1817, Diary.

humility."[294] Once again, Adams derided what he perceived to be manifestations of religious intolerance, lay malaise, and clerical overreach.[295]

In Ealing, the rising son of John Adams learned that his family name was one of the few American cultural connections that most British citizens readily made, for better or for worse. John Quincy's efforts at Christian statesmanship, then, had to extend beyond the Court of St. James to an attempt to charm his reluctant small-town hosts. For the cosmopolitan Adams, some of his thorniest diplomatic work was excruciatingly local in scope, and it meant mending British perceptions of Americans by reminding them of a shared Protestant pedigree. In one of his frequent chats with John Quincy, St. Mary's elderly pastor, Colston Carr, nearly cited "the rebellion of the colonies" but (barely) reeled himself in before giving offense. Carr "softened his expressions with an evident effort," Adams wrote, "and called it the time when America was throwing off the yoke."[296] John Quincy, in turn, worshipped at St. Mary's but he grumbled privately about its practices: use of the Athanasian creed, lavish pine garlands hung after Advent, and the paltry ten parishioners who lingered after service to receive communion, or, "as they call it the most comfortable sacrifice of the body and blood of Christ."[297] And, as in Russia, Adams investigated the English holy days' impact on the local marketplace. Minutes after the "indifferent" crowd of Christmas worshippers shuffled out of St. Mary's, Adams wrote wonderingly, the bakers' shops of Ealing were already "illuminated" and open for

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[294]John Quincy Adams, 20 August 1815, Diary.
[295] *Ibid.*
[296] John Quincy Adams, 15 December 1815, Diary.
[297] John Quincy Adams, 25 December 1815, Diary.

business.[298] An extravagant display of evergreens notwithstanding, John Quincy Adams was never fully persuaded that the daily actions of the Anglican faithful constituted any true Protestant piety.

In 1817, readying to serve as President Monroe's Secretary of State and as an officer of the American Bible Society, a mature John Quincy Adams channeled his cosmopolitan Christianity toward new beginnings in his native country. Pausing at the Paris studio of bronze-worker Antoine-André Ravrio, Adams had purchased six busts of Cicero, Homer, Plato, Virgil, Socrates, and Demosthenes. [299] These statues became the family talismans of republican virtue. At the midpoint of his career, John Quincy had, seemingly, acquired the intellectual balance he once craved between Christian instinct and republican ideal. He had married outside of his denomination, immersed himself in biblical scholarship, and surveyed foreign religion. If leaving America had allowed Adams to grasp for a fuller formation of his Unitarian faith, then returning home would test it. John Quincy Adams packed up his household gods and sailed for Boston.

IV. The President as Poet

American religion had undergone sweeping changes in his absence, as revolutions in transportation and communication reshaped a nation growing beyond its original

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[298] *Ibid.*

[299] On Ravrio, see Glenn Campbell, ed., *The Grove Encyclopedia of Decorative Arts* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); and Edouard Foucaud, *The Book of Illustrious Mechanics of Europe and America*, trans. John Frost (New York: D. Appleton, 1846), 229-232. See also Aida DiPace Donald and David Donald, eds., *The Diary of Charles Francis Adams*, 8 vols. (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1964-1986), 5:vii, 124; and Laurel A. Racine, *Historic Furnishings Report: The Birthplaces of Presidents John Adams and John Quincy Adams*, 10 vols. (Charlestown: Northeast Museum Services Center, National Park Service, 2001), 8:723-744.

boundaries.[300] An admixture of scientific rationalism and lingering providentialism still guided the minds of antebellum Americans, but differences over slavery, party politics, and evangelical revival increasingly divided them.[301] John Quincy Adams's next major phase of personal religious change centered on his very public production of Christian rhetoric to guide the fractured, industrializing nation. Between his return from Europe in 1817 and his less than successful presidency ending in 1829, Adams infused political action with religious motivation by crafting a range of Fourth of July orations, town meeting speeches, and anti-slavery diatribes. Now adroit in adapting the language of Christian citizenship for any audience, John Quincy operated with more religious tolerance than had his revolutionary forebears, and especially so on the page. He held fast to his belief that Protestant patriotism engendered pluralism and inquiry in ways that would make the nation flourish. Often, Adams rose to address a mechanics' hall or church picnic audience of increasingly diverse Americans who thought as he did, that Christianity laid the groundwork for a good society, bolstered new efforts at public education, and solidified the American identity as God-fearing, hard-working, and just.[302] Adams's longtime interest in using literature to marshal these views now took a more serious turn, as he began to write poetry that connected Christianity with the growing antebellum "wants" of American culture. In a bustling religious marketplace, poetry

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[300] On the market revolution's impact on the Adamses' native New England, see: David R. Meyer, *The Roots of American Industrialization* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 23-41; Thomas Bender, *Toward an Urban Vision: Ideas and Institutions in Nineteenth-Century America* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1975); Robert W. Doherty, *Society and Power: Five New England Towns, 1800-1860* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1977); Sellers, *The Market Revolution*, 3-33; Watson, *Liberty and Power*, 17-41.
[301] Gilchrist, *Cultus Americanus*, 130.
[302] Gilchrist, *Cultus Americanus*, 159-218.

would offer John Quincy Adams a rare haven to mull over Providence's plan and to pray for guidance.

Protestant Christianity prevailed in the early American republic, but there was a vast and exhausting set of varieties and practices for the returning Adams either to learn, or relearn. Ever inquisitive, the Secretary of State resumed his religious journeys. Now, as a prominent player in the federal arena, Adams struggled to balance his own beliefs with the social reality of divergent Protestant groups and to sample their miscellaneous offerings. Returning home had brought John Quincy's private days of religious musings to a sudden end; strangers easily recognized him and Louisa as they traveled through America. Once installed in Washington, D. C., in 1817, Adams served as a trustee of the New York Presbyterian Church and purchased 30 pews to support the family's longtime Unitarian home in Quincy. Louisa kept an Episcopal pew as well at Christ Church Quincy and hosted "sociables" to benefit any number of Christian charities, orphan societies, and voluntary associations.[303] From 1818 onward, Adams served as vice president of the newly created American Bible Society. And, at least once, he drafted the cover letter that accompanied mass mailings of Bibles.[304] Writing in Advent 1825, contending with a deeply bifurcated Congress and barely ten months into his own contentious administration, Adams used the borrowed pulpit to revisit some familiar Old Testament passages on leadership. There is no clear record of John Quincy Adams reading Friedrich Schleiermacher, but Adams employed messages that reflected the

[303] For Louisa's charitable activities, set against the backdrop of Washington's "etiquette wars," see Margaret Bayard Smith, *The First Forty Years of Washington Society* (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1906); Catherine Allgor, *Parlor Politics* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000).
[304] John Quincy Adams, *On Faith.*

German theologian's relative notoriety among American elites. Like Schleiermacher, Adams was intrigued by the dual nature of the human soul, where one "drive" ensnared experiences for personal pleasure, and a competing force "longs to extend its own inner self even further…while never being exhausted itself."[305] Adams defined religion as the "first sentiment…impressed…upon [the] Soul" and "a profound consciousness of…dependence upon God." That Christmas, antebellum voters held their free King James Bibles and read the new president's plea: to receive Solomon's "wise and understanding heart" from America's God.[306]

It was a difficult era for a Christian republican like John Quincy to endure, one where well-groomed, Harvard-educated statesmen like the Adamses lost their offices to a bumper crop of ambitious, mud-slinging politicos.[307] Poetry helped. As he had done at Harvard and in Russia, Adams turned to literature to reckon with Providence's blurry plan for America and to cope with political disappointments, like his loss of a second presidential term in 1829. Just as historians hailed his rival Andrew Jackson as the "symbol for an age," a politician who came to represent the introduction of the country's roughest and newest characters into power, so, too, the literary figure of John Quincy Adams stands as the symbolic "pilgrim for an age." At least three of his poems open with pilgrims complaining of weakness, strife, or despair; all of them are perplexed about how to greet God. Adams's literary heroes share a narrative arc: they begin in distress,

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[305] Richard Crouter, ed., *Schleiermacher: On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003 ed.), 5.
[306] John Quincy Adams, *On Faith*.
[307] Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Age of Jackson* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1945 ed.); Lawrence F. Kohl, *The Politics of Individualism: Parties and the American Character in the Jacksonian Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); and Watson, *Liberty and Power*.

convene with Providence for aid, and end in thanksgiving. The peak of Adams's poetry-writing occurred as he suffered three more sudden tragedies: the deaths of his father (1826), sons George (who died in a jump or a fall from a New York steamship in 1829), and John 2d (who died of complications related to alcoholism in 1834). Adams's own health began to fade, and he suffered a paralytic stroke in the late winter of 1846. "Suspended between his spiritual destiny, which he cannot fulfill, and his animal nature, in which he cannot remain," one scholar has written of Adams's dilemma as president and poet, "the statesman is forever condemned to experience the distinction between the longings of his mind and his actual condition as his personal, eminently human tragedy."[308] Yet, among his colorful class of antebellum lawmakers, Adams's willingness to share the process of aging and to experiment with prayer in poetic form was wholly unique.

In a presidential career marred by nasty personal politics, writing poetry remained one of Adams's great joys. Usually he galloped ahead of his colleagues to set intellectual trends, but for once, Adams was merely following a wave of popular interest in Coleridgian Romanticism.[309] John Quincy, born along with the new nation in an era of literature that celebrated the "excessive" in tandem with "the sublime," epitomized a generation that scholars of Romanticism have identified as "transatlantic travellers from the Old World" who saw America as "the site of untold reckless experiments, a perennial

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[308] Greg Russell, "John Quincy Adams: Virtue and the Tragedy of the Statesman," *The New England Quarterly* 69 (1996): 56.
[309] For Adams's use of the pastoral mode to explain the historical progress of civilization and its social impact, see Wendell Glick, "The Best Possible World of John Quincy Adams," *The New England Quarterly* 37 (1964): 3-17.

source of the marvellous, the extravagant, and the quaint."[310] Much of the prevailing excitement over the nation's physical beauty and a general desire to resurrect its Puritan past came across in the appreciative religious themes of Adams's poems. He was in good company. New England's more prominent Unitarians shared this literary bent, giving rise to an impressive and complicated discourse of aesthetic impressionism and theological controversy that, in turn, dominated the emerging print culture.[311] Although he did not go as far as William Cullen Bryant or Henry David Thoreau in "worshipping in the woods," Adams's cosmopolitan life of seeking had convinced him of at least one of their conclusions: that sacred beauty was often found far beyond the meetinghouse, in corners of everyday life.[312]

John Quincy Adams was not a natural poet, but he was a devotee of great literature. Ever a diligent student, Adam's torturous process of writing Romantic poetry showed him to be a fine mimic of the art. His nuanced appreciation for the literature of antiquity shaped Adams into a gifted translator of the classics and won him the sobriquet "Old Man Eloquent" on the House floor, but few would have expected him to become a best-selling author of original verse.[313] As a diplomat in Prussia, Adams had taught himself German by completing a full-scale translation of Wieland's *Oberon.* Later, Adams published a medieval epic in Byronic verse, *Dermot MacMorrogh, or, the*

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[310] Morse, *American Romanticism*, 1:2.
[311] Lawrence Buell, "The Literary Significance of the Unitarian Movement," in ed. Conrad Edick Wright, *American Unitarianism, 1805-1865* (Boston: The Massachusetts Historical Society and Northeastern University Press, 1989), 19.
[312] Gatta, *Making Nature Sacred*, 73-75.
[313] See, especially, Adams S. Potkay, "Theorizing Civic Eloquence in the Early Republic: The Road from David Hume to John Quincy Adams, *Early American Literature* 34 (1999): 147-170.

Conquest of Ireland: An Historical Tale of the Twelfth Century, in Four Cantos, which was popular enough to enter a third printing just before he died. He especially admired the "noble and magnificent sentiments" of Plutarch's *Lives* (so "Christian like" in scope but marred by an "inattention to Chronology"), and the human condition as Shakespeare framed it in *Hamlet*. Like his parents, John Quincy often invoked lines from Pope's *Universal Prayer*, Milton's *Paradise Lost*, and anything by Dryden or Sterne. The sixth president went along with the prevailing literary trends by composing pastoral odes to sun-dials, pretty young women, rainbows, and even a hot-air balloon, but a more serious love of the Psalms' melodic language drove his style. Poetry was an enjoyable linguistic maze for Adams to parse, and he approached writing it with all the rigid calculation that he once reserved for fixing weights and measures.

John Quincy Adams's contribution to the "Unitarian literary renaissance" was, as he knew, inescapably amateurish. As the President aged into a senior Congressman, poetry was something he dashed off quickly with an autograph request; enclosing "a few lines" pleased both the hobbyist and his supporters. Some odes were lighthearted, like the verses he enclosed to son John 2d, advising him to "Keep Life's steamboat at low pressure."[314] When Adams really began writing in earnest, around the time of his failed reelection campaign in 1829, it was probably because he felt religious poetry to be both challenging and therapeutic. His "rubbish" books and miscellanies, filled with a fair amount of interlocking revisions, show how curled up in editorial anguish he could

[314] "Steamboat Verses," enclosed in John Quincy Adams to John Adams 2d, 13 October 1823, Adams Papers.

become over a single line of verse. Often, at first pass, Adams appeared frozen in the familiar writer's dilemma of word choice and, like the lawyer that he was, willing to argue from every angle. But a closer look at his acts of revision suggests that poetry served as the intellectual landscape in which Adams, through wrenching self-examination, puzzled out how to approach his Creator. One poem, frayed by endless rewrites, began, "My soul, before thy Maker, stand." Adams crossed out "stand," in favor of "kneel," then proceeded to reconsider his choice, on and off, for some time. When it finally appeared in print as part of *Poems on Religion and Society*, an anthology published shortly after his death, Adams had, finally, opted to "kneel."

Many worshippers of Adams's generation felt obliged to align religion with the republic, fearing that the national surge of material progress had also incited a cultural riptide of immorality.[315] One of the most fascinating aspects of Adams's religious development was his headlong pursuit of an idealized Christian patriotism through the political, intellectual, and institutional channels of a national culture that was steadily ripening and opening to the world. The medium he chose, however, set John Quincy apart from his father. At the center of his poetry lay two themes, the significance of Christian fellowship and the search for American identity. In choosing to approach God as a pilgrim of nineteenth-century America, Adams weighed what form his pilgrimage should take in conjunction with civic duty. Adams's attempts to reconcile political issues with the personal questions that revolved around a "religion of the heart" were manifested in his poetry drafts. The process of creating poetry functioned as a kind of

[315] Johnson, *Early American Republic*, 114.

healing act for Adams, allowing him to reencounter the young country's recent past and reframe it in a way that would make the republic's future feel less fragile. He marveled at the scientific and technological changes that the market revolution wrought, connecting new cities with railroads and opening lines of communication, but he worried about interpreting Christian responsibility for the American republic. With his plans for internal improvements lying in shambles, it was hard for Adams to point to any real success derived from his Christian republican agenda. By 1830, after a checkered presidency, Adams's poetry reflected the trials of a Christian patriot whose faith had to be refitted for a republic in peril from forces within.

Preserving the American union was Adams's great cause, but it was difficult to do so when the existence of slavery grossly undermined the new republic's lofty Christian ideals. Neither he nor Louisa owned slaves, but his sisters-in-law did, so political disputes like the Missouri Compromise (1820) rippled through the vast family circle. John Quincy and Louisa were stridently antislavery, but their "abolitionist" leanings tilted only toward a vague consideration of Thomas Jefferson's derelict plan of education, gradual emancipation, and recolonization in Africa. Throughout the 1830s and 1840s, Adams's Unitarian conscience was tested repeatedly in Congress by legislative wrangling over slavery, Sunday mail service, and issues of public morality. It was most apparent when, from December 1835 to May 1836, the petitions he presented from constituents "praying" for local abolition of slavery intensified from 18 to 300,000.[316] Joining liberty

[316] David C. Frederick, "John Quincy Adams, Slavery, and the Disappearance of the Right of Petition," *Law and History Review* 9 (1991): 113-155.

of religion with the right of petition was a triumph for Adams personally and politically, whether he was advocating against slavery, or for the Sabbaterian movement. As his Congressional service was repeatedly extended, the core belief that "good Christians make good citizens" continued to steer Adams through the growing disunion.

John Quincy Adams's successful intervention in 1841 in the case of 53 enslaved Mendi captives, who mutinied had aboard the Spanish schooner *Amistad,* stemmed from an inner crisis of Christian conscience. Aware that he took on prosecuting the entire slave trade with their representation, Adams labored over his nearly eight-hour speech to the Supreme Court. Some of his best arguments Adams tucked away into his diary, persuading himself that the frailty of age must not hinder the Christian's siege against slavery. "No one else will undertake it. No one but a Spirit unconquerable by Man Woman or Friend, can undertake it, but with the heart of martyrdom," Adams wrote. "What can I do for the cause of God and man? for the progress of human emancipation? for the suppression of the African Slave-trade? Yet my conscience presses me on—let me but died upon the breach."[317] After his successful defense, writing proudly to family and friends, Adams marked his legal wins in the *Amistad* case and in overturning the gag rule as Christian victories. The *Amistad* crew, in turn, paid Adams's legal fees with a Bible.[318]

This was the kind of "godly America" that John Quincy navigated: Scripture led him to make moral choices about the kind of case he took on (no matter the political fallout), and even his Mendi clients knew enough to honor his Christian republicanism by

[317] John Quincy Adams, 29 March 1841, Diary.
[318] The *Amistad* crew presented him with a King James Bible, now on display at the Stone Library.

paying in Scripture. Overall, John Quincy's vision of the rising American republic was powerful, Protestant, and prudent. Professing that the two "keys" to his "political creed" were internal union and independence from foreign exploitation, Adams blended his private religion with the national interest.[319] Or, as he put it in an 1837 poem: "Almighty father look in Mercy down, / Oh! grant me Virtues to perform my part / The Patriots favour and The Statesman's art." All of the American religious history that he knew filled out several more stanzas: a judicious (or judic*ial*) Providence who favored *this* nation above all others, the ancient directive to men and women to refine Christianity through citizenship, and the expectation that heavenly reward depended on the fulfillment of republican duty. He titled it "A Congressman's Prayer." For John Quincy, as for his father's generation, Protestantism represented the first form of early modern nationalism, tethering citizens to their government with a moral cause to save it and a righteous God to guard it. The double yoke of Protestantism and patriotism gave Adams's career its force; writing poetry finally gave Adams the public grace he sought. In his last years of political life, Adams wrote poems that celebrated the Psalms and made prophecies to other "sons of the Pilgrims," prodding them to recall that a "Nation's living power" corresponded to her people's trust in divine mercy.

The poem for which Adams remains best known, "The Wants of Man," first appeared in 1841. This mass-market Christian parable coincided with Adams's most famous legal drama, the *Amistad* case. It represented a culmination of the poetic style and subject that Adams had begun rehearsing as a teenager in 1784, and it differed little from

[319] John Quincy Adams to Skelton Jones, 17 April 1809, Adams Papers.

the other "album verses" he signed away daily to autograph-seekers. His father had played with the same theme twenty years earlier, riffing to John Taylor of Carolina that the "first Want of Man is his Dinner, and the Second his Girl." Such a scenario often led to "rash Marriages" and a "Chapter of Accidents," he warned. "The most religious," the senior Adams added, "very often leave the consideration of all these Wants to him who supplies the young ravens when they cry."[320] John Quincy's take was less snappy, and it was saturated in the antebellum melancholia of social ills (like intemperance of spirit, or spirits) that afflicted various Adamses. Composing the 25 stanzas gave Adams a much-needed respite from turbulent Congressional debates over slavery, the Smithsonian bequest, the revenue bill, and the right of petition. Throughout the spring and summer of 1840, the insomnia that Adams suffered in Russia seized him again; piling on stanzas brought a measure of relief.

In June 1840 a final draft of "The Wants of Man" passed to Mrs. William H. Seward, the influential wife of New York's governor, and she sent it (with Adams's permission) to the editor Thurlow Weed. Weed published the poem in the Albany *Evening Journal* on 3 September 1841, and other newspapers rushed to reprint it.[321] Newly returned from his lecture tour "On Faith," the elderly Adams was delighted with his "overnight" success. The poem was a straightforward diatribe about vanity and greed, an exposition of his conscience indicting the sins of capitalist culture and antebellum

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[320] John Adams to John Taylor of Carolina, 24 January 1815, Washburn Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.
[321] For the poem's publication and circulation, see Lyman H. Butterfield, "Introduction," in John Quincy Adams, *The Wants of Man* (Worcester: Achille J. St. Onge, 1962 edition).

excess.[322] Adams's rendition of human wants was seemingly endless, including but not limited to cashmere shawls, French cooks, marble mansions, "picture-garnish'd rooms," gold tureens, "a printing press for private use," a wife "of temper sweet—of yielding will-- / Of firm, yet placid mind," a home of "wise and brave" boys and (poignantly) "chaste and fair" girls. John Quincy Adams's "Wants" ended with "the seals of power and place, / The ensigns of command, / Charg'd by the People's unbought grace, / To rule my native land."

Was the Christian patriot tallying up his life? If so, the pilgrim had found, in poetry, another way to express the limits and opportunities of Christian republicanism, and to weave his inner religious dilemmas into the fabric of the nation. Man would do well to consult his faith—that "natural and essential denomination of the human soul"—and to realize that the last great want of religion should be first, Adams wrote. As with any Romantic hero constructing the self from Puritan origins, Adams's poetry thus survives as an ideal genre in which he "dreams imperial dreams about himself; he universalizes his importance; he absorbs himself into the infinite; he creates works having the appearance of unconditional reality in order to keep at bay the conditional, contingent, and dependent nature of his existence."[323] At the end of his life, John Quincy was well established in his theological beliefs but curious about how others came to their own religious parameters of justice, charity, and truth. In his lectures *On Faith*, Adams called for a widespread renewal of inquiry and a return to crusades of social justice. To

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[322] Adams drew his inspiration from the opening lines of Oliver Goldsmith's Hermit in *The Deserted Village*, "Man wants but little, here below…" (London: W. Griffin, 1770).
[323] Simonson, *Radical Discontinuities*,154.

begin, he urged listeners to make their own journeys through the unique byways of American religious culture.

On February 21, 1848, John Quincy Adams took his usual seat in Congress, and heard debates for an hour before the vote came up. He had opposed the motion—to commend recent victories in the Mexican War—and rose again to press his argument at a little past one o'clock. A sudden "fit of apoplexy" (likely another stroke) drove him down. Adams lingered in a coma in the Speaker's Room before dying two days later. "His own wishes are gratified," one newspaper reported of Adams's final hours, "for it was his wish to die in harness."[324] Americans closed in to mourn Adams's death with scenes of public religiosity, covering the Capitol in black crêpe and lining the streets for a glimpse of his silver-mounted coffin. A freshman Congressman from Illinois, Abraham Lincoln, stepped forward to serve as a pallbearer. The sixth president's sole heir, Charles Francis, left his young family at the first word of his father's illness and hastened to Washington. Charles was concerned about the delicate health of his mother Louisa, who lived for four more years. Delayed en route at the Philadelphia train depot, Charles circled a stranger reading a black-bordered newspaper, too nauseous to approach and confirm the breaking news.

As Washington mourned John Quincy, his family cast around for his successor, Charles. Gazing grief-stricken at his father's writing desk, still strewn with weeks of work—and reluctant to clear the statesman's last notes—Charles, at first, wheeled and ran from the room. "The glory of the family is departed and I a solitary and unworthy

[324] "Mr. Adams's Illness," Springfield, Mass., *Daily Republican*, 24 February 1848.

scion remain overwhelmed with a sense of my responsibilities," Charles wrote in his diary, adding: "I am alone in the generation."[325] Dinner parties and sermons were given in the president's honor, and a stately funeral procession bore his body back to Quincy. Elegiac death notices swept through the cities. "The remarkable history of the Christian Statesman and honored Patriot, whose death the Nation now mourns throughout its length and breadth, should be speedily written," one editor advised.[326] State legislators passed resolutions praising John Quincy's legacy. The Supreme Court adjourned, executive offices were shuttered for two days, and Army regiments wore "crape on the left arm and on their swords" for the next six months. After the Unitarian William Parsons Lunt, then the minister of Quincy's First Church, eulogized Adams's sacrifice "upon the altar of his country and his God," he directed the pallbearers to "rise up, and take these remains of the patriarch, and bury him with his fathers. There may he rest in peace until the resurrection of the last day."[327]

Conclusion: "Heaven Not as Adams Expected"

Six years after his death, John Quincy Adams began to speak again. This, at least, was the belief of Josiah Brigham, a self-described "modern spiritualist" and a long-standing member of Adams's own family church. The popular resurrection of John Quincy, in many ways, reflected the desire of antebellum Christians to seek God in esoteric places without completely deserting traditional churches. The cultural shift in *who* led these experiments signaled a sea change in American religious authority; leading

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[325] Charles Francis Adams, entries for 23, 24, and 25 February 1848, Diary, Adams Papers.
[326] "John Quincy Adams," Springfield, Mass., *Daily Republican*, 28 February 1848.
[327] William P. Lunt, *A Discourse Delivered in Quincy, March 11, 1848, at the Interment of John Quincy Adams, Sixth President of the United States* (Boston: Dutton and Wentworth, State Printers, 1848), 1-44.

séances gave women a greater public speaking role as well as a new platform to discuss politics and propose church/state reforms.[328] When the wife of a prominent businessman like Josiah Brigham showed interest in the dead (and mostly unpopular) sixth president, people listened—and printed what they heard. Brigham had attended John Quincy's funeral, had even funded publication of Lunt's sermon. As his spiritual interactions with Adams's memory attest, Brigham fit the antebellum mold of progressive-minded, industrializing Americans who used spiritualism to apply order to the chaos of market society, and thereby "resacralize a society and a cosmos that they feared was spiritually empty."[329]

It is worth briefly describing here the background of the man who took such a special interest in cultivating Adams's afterlife. Brigham knew Adams from his summers in Quincy. Well-respected in the Congregational community, Josiah Brigham traced his family line back to 1634 in Cambridge, Massachusetts. His estate sat between Northborough and Westborough "on the southerly line" and offered a stunning view of Little Chauncey Pond. By the time Josiah inherited it, two hundred years of Brighams, or five successive generations, had worked the same land. For his father, a Revolutionary War veteran, a good farm represented the pinnacle of Christian success and the lifeblood of republican community. The young Josiah disagreed. In this way, his thinking was very much in step with that of his peers. Since 1815, the market revolution had changed men's

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[328] Anne Braude, *Radical Spirits: Spiritualism and Women's Rights in Nineteenth-Century America* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989).
[329] Bret E. Carroll, *Spiritualism in Antebellum America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 3-4.

and women's paths for professional fulfillment and heightened their expectations.[330] The crumble of patriarchal authority, and with it, notions of how Revolutionary fathers passed along lands or creeds to their sons, reshaped Josiah's generation.[331] Formally, Brigham adopted the family religion of Congregationalism, but he did not stop his seeking there.

Although Josiah Brigham's intellectual travels were not as wide as those of John Quincy Adams's, he represented the antebellum archetype of the industrializing New Englander. Brigham taught in a series of Massachusetts public schools and spent the War of 1812 as a Light Infantry volunteer encamped at South Boston. On returning home, Brigham again turned away from agricultural life, this time favoring the "mercantile pursuits" that suddenly felt more attuned to the needs (and profits) of the modernizing nation. By the time of Adams's death, he had risen to impressive heights of civic leadership: chairman of the General Schools Committee, clerk and treasurer of the new and powerful Quincy Canal Corporation, trustee and president of the Board of Investment of the Quincy Savings Bank, and president of the Quincy Stone Bank. Massachusetts governor Edward Everett, who was Charles Francis Adams's brother-in-law, personally selected Brigham to serve as a justice of the peace. Much as John Quincy himself wished to be portrayed, one of Brigham's biographers recalled him as "frank and affable," a "Christian gentleman" who was ever mindful of religious duty and never missed

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[330] On how the market revolution and evangelical revivalism changed American politics, see Hatch, *Democratization of American Christianity*, 206-219; Watson, *Liberty and Power*, 3-86, 178-179, 185, 222-223; Sellers, *The Market Revolution*; Perry, *Boats against the Current*, 177-178; and Jeffrey P. Sklansky, *The Soul's Economy: Market Society and Selfhood in American Thought, 1820-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

[331] Amy S. Greenberg, *Manifest Manhood and the Antebellum American Empire* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Johnson, *Early American Republic*, 113-116.

communion. The central Christian lesson to draw from Brigham's life was that "the honorable pursuit of wealth and outward reputation" came only from forming "a character strong in integrity and in that fear of the Lord which is the beginning of wisdom."[332] In a country bedeviled by fears of "Mammon" and the onset of "Christian" wealth—an issue that Charles would battle privately—Josiah Brigham had transformed himself into a model merchant-prince of a *new* New England.

In the early 1850s, the Quincy businessman began hosting private séance circles at his estate to entertain his wife and daughter, who were both "rapping and tipping mediums."[333] Through his web of civic connections Josiah Brigham was always meeting new people, and in June 1854, he made the acquaintance of a "respectable, unassuming young man, of only common-school education, with no pretensions to more than common capabilities." This was Joseph Dutton Stiles, who quit his job as a printer when he "perceived he possessed mediumistic powers," and later became a well-known spiritualist.[334] Stiles quickly impressed Brigham by contacting the spirit of the banker's dead brother; then he moved on to the "Sixth Sphere" of the "Spirit Land," where Stiles claimed to encounter John Quincy Adams. According to Stiles's book, *Twelve Messages from the Spirit of John Quincy*, Adams took six hours to transform from his physical body and to get his bearings in the celestial plane, his "new sphere of duty." Greeted by

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[332] "Josiah Brigham, Esq." in John Livingston, *Biographical Sketches of Distinguished Americans, Now Living* (New York and London: s.n., 1853), 66-69.
[333] On spiritualism's appeal to "respectable" Christians like Brigham, see Braude, *Radical Spirits*; Schmidt, *Restless Souls*; Molly McGarry, *Ghosts of Future Past: Spiritualists and the Cultural Politics of Nineteenth-Century America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 1-93.
[334] "Preface," in *Twelve Messages from the Spirit of John Quincy Adams, through Joseph D. Stiles, Medium, to Josiah Brigham* (Boston: Bela Marsh, 1859).

his parents and John Hancock, Adams discovered a "celestial telegraph" that allowed him to communicate with the living through mediums, and to control their thoughts via quasi-poetic messages of Christian fellowship. Adams visited the Brigham home, identifying its green expanse of farm and sparkling pond. A pageant of historical figures moved through the scenes, occasionally colliding: Salem witches and Christopher Columbus, Patrick Henry and Benedict Arnold, slave children and Pilgrims. In a late twist, Stiles's iteration of Adams indicated that heaven was not what he expected, warming to the theme of organized religion as defective and misleading. Adams condemned churches as antiquated institutions that had built up "sectarian platforms" and had not "met the spiritual exigencies of the people."[335] A foray into the "Temple of Peace and Good-Will" with William Penn, Martha Washington, Shakespeare, Hannah More, Jane Grey, Empress Josephine, and Peter Whitney managed to resolve many of Adams's doubts about human nature. A hovering circle of spirits (Jefferson, Hamilton, Burr, and Israel Putnam in that number) descended in semi-finale to bless "Spirit-life, one grand reception day."[336] The rest of the book contained similar adventures of John Quincy Adams in the afterlife as he met Napoleon, debated Confucius, and joined in an impromptu jubilee for emancipated slaves.

Bizarre as it may sound, *Twelve Messages* may be the best testament to John Quincy Adams's appreciation for religious culture; surely few would have enjoyed reading it as much. Here was his faith bounded and unbounded, American pilgrims and

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[335] *Twelve Messages*, 180.
[336] *Twelve Messages*, 191, 202.

European heretics, Unitarian clergy and Congregationalist counterparts, Calvinist forebears and a generation of free blacks. Adams's religious conscience was just as crowded and his place in American life just as curious. During his stints as ambassador, Secretary of State, President, and United States Congressman, Adams remained committed to the projection of America as a Christian commonwealth. Human will forged belief, Adams argued, and that sense of belief formed the Christian faith needed to counter man's trials. Faith, he concluded, was a "natural and essential denomination of the human soul."[337] Scion of a famous family rooted in New England Congregationalism, Adams has frequently come across in American history exactly as he (correctly) feared colleagues would describe him: cold, awkward, and Calvinist to the core.[338] Yet in reading the nation's leader as an important social historian of religion, we see that Adams's intense pursuit of religious exchange suggested greater stirrings of liberalism within Protestant life, too. As a young man, he borrowed his father's copy of Condorcet's *Outlines of the Progress of the Human Mind* and likely saw the marginal commentary scribbled there, "Philosophers must arrive at perfection *per saltum*." The making of John Quincy Adams's religion happened in much the same way, by a leap or a jump.

How and why John Quincy Adams came to define and redefine religion matters deeply, because often the form of worship that he attended was not his own. Throughout the first three decades of his career he led what he called a "wandering life" through The

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[337] John Quincy Adams, *On Faith.*

[338] John Quincy Adams confided to his Diary on 4 June 1819 that he often appeared to be "a man of reserved, cold, austere, and forbidding manners; my political adversaries say, a gloomy misanthropist, and my personal enemies, an unsocial savage. With a knowledge of the actual defect in my character, I have not the pliability to reform it."

Hague, Prussia, St. Petersburg, Paris, and London—all sites largely bereft of opportunities to hear Unitarian preaching. When Congress was in session, the chaplains who shaped Adams's moments of reflection between debates were rarely clergy of his own denomination. As a statesman and, later, as an antislavery firebrand, John Quincy valorized political office as the epitome of a Christian patriot's service to Providence. Throughout a contentious career, Christian thought and practice refitted Adams with the moral armor he needed to persevere in politics, and to persuade the American public that the work of nation-building must continue. Like other antebellum Unitarians, John Quincy enjoyed testing theologies within the dual fields of experience (party politics) and art (Romantic poetry). He was the only American president who wrote poetry, mainly to interrogate or to reinforce his religious beliefs. While he found theological hermeneutics little more than an academic hobby, he was wholly captivated by the world's rich variety of religious cultures. Though he and other Unitarians were most at home in a faith that, by the Civil War, was snidely described as centered in "the fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of man, and the neighborhood of Boston," Adams's cosmopolitanism set him apart.[339]

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[339] The wording of this insult riffed on a common formulation of Unitarianism that, due mainly to James Freeman Clarke's influence, held as creedal through the 1890's: "We believe in: The Fatherhood of God; The Brotherhood of Man; The Leadership of Jesus; Salvation by Character; The Progress of Mankind onward and upward forever." See, for example, Unitarian Sunday-School Society, "Our Faith," *Every Other Sunday* 13 (1897): 147; David Robinson, *The Unitarians and the Universalists* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1985), 101-106; Michael McGloughlin, *Dead Letters to the New World: Melville, Emerson, and American Transcendentalism* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 20; and Gary Dorrien, *Social Ethics in the Making: Interpreting an American Tradition* (Chichester and Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 327. By 1880, Unitarians ratified it in the "Ames Covenant" introduced by Charles Gordon Ames, an Adams cousin: "In the freedom of truth, and in the spirit of Jesus Christ, we unite for the worship of God and the service of man." For a broader discussion of why Unitarian notions of covenant language

In their own ways, John Quincy and Louisa grappled with a shared set of antebellum concerns about Christianity's social power and moral authority. On the whole, they were early adopters of the social language and middlebrow literature of nineteenth-century religious liberalism, a "dialect that was spoken with increasing frequency and fluency from the 1830s forward."[340] As other elites did, they reshaped ideas of "godly community" to suit American congregations transformed by sectarian unrest, industrial growth, a burgeoning immigrant population, and the resurgence of evangelical orthodoxy.[341] Reimagining John Quincy Adams at prayer—his private moments of doubt and public messages of faith—illuminates the evolution of the Unitarian conscience in a transitional era that emphasized free will, toleration, and biblical inquiry. Like other liberalizing Protestants, the antebellum Adamses combined faith and good works to advance on the widening path to salvation. Holding fast to the Reformation-era legacy of the priesthood of all believers, John Quincy and Louisa molded Christianity into a minimal set of core teachings that respected Providence, encouraged morality, and upheld the natural order.[342] Though he never inclined toward

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mattered—especially to the Gilded Age Adamses who attempted to write American church history—see Chapter 5.

[340] Schmidt, *Restless Souls*, 10-12; Matthew S. Hedstrom, *The Rise of Liberal Religion: Book Culture and American Spirituality in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 13-17.

[341] Conrad Wright, *Congregational Polity: A Historical Survey of Unitarian Universalist Practice* (Boston: Skinner House Books, 1997), 32-65; Block, *Nation of Agents*, 424-458; Howe, *What Hath God Wrought*, 164-202.

[342] Michael J. Langford, *The Tradition of Liberal Theology* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2014), 19-58.

the political views of famed Catholic convert Orestes A. Brownson, John Quincy also came to champion a universal "religion-of-humanity" model.[343]

Near the end of his life, in the autumn of 1844, John Quincy settled into Pew 54 of the family's Unitarian home church and listened to William P. Lunt preach on how a troubled soul might reconnect with God.[344] The sermon, while "ingenious and impressive," was too lengthy for Adams's taste. On Sundays like this, when Adams could not shake off the "cares of the world" before receiving communion, he grew reflective. He let his mind drift, past the grey-white republican columns lining the congregation's familiar pews. Sitting in church but again striking out on his own path of religious exploration, Adams reminisced on the course of his spiritual development. When he imagined his own religious autobiography, John Quincy Adams still cleaved to the palimpsest of Christian republicanism that had guided his first steps of inquiry away from Quincy: "My soul was like one of those Sheets of antient parchment," Adams reflected, "upon which a poem in monkish rhyme is written over an Oration of Cicero."[345]

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[343] William R. Hutchison, *The Modernist Impulse in American Protestantism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1992), 12-40. See also Patrick W. Carey, *Orestes A. Brownson: American Religious Weathervane* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2004).
[344] Lunt preached from John 12:27: "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour."
[345] John Quincy Adams, 6 October 1844, Diary.

CHAPTER THREE

Charles Francis Adams on Pilgrimage

On a May morning in 1843, shortly after his father lambasted the Puritan ideologue and Rhode Island founder Roger Williams before a distinguished group at the Massachusetts Historical Society, Charles Francis Adams handed over his $1.50 fare in a Boston railroad car.[346] Charles, a 36-year-old lawyer and aspiring man of letters, rattled along New England roads that would have looked strikingly different and greener a decade earlier. A new set of landmarks—textile mills, tollgates, turnpikes, and clusters of suburban development—now sped by. Cutting the old four-hour stagecoach commute in half, the train bore Adams in the first-class carriage, wage laborers in the second-class seats, and a sizable load of freight: everything from manufactured goods due for sale in New York City and Providence, to horses, iron, and mail bound for the South and West.[347] Adams's destination was a prime example of young America's explosive industrial expansion and commercial growth. Thanks to the newly completed Blackstone Canal, an influx of Irish Catholic workers, and the birth of wire-making and industrial firms that made it "a paradise for mechanics," Worcester epitomized the rising

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[346] In his 29 May address, printed as *The New England Confederacy of MDCXLIII* (Boston: Charles C. Little and James Brown, 1843), John Quincy Adams painted Williams as a persuasive insurrectionist whose winter banishment to Rhode Island demonstrated a rare strain of colonial leniency for dissenters, for which see also Chapter 1.

[347] On the rates, freights, and history of the Boston & Worcester Railroad, see *Report of the Directors of the Boston & Worcester Rail-Road, to the Stockholders, at Their Annual Meeting, June 3, 1844* (Boston: I. R. Butts, 1844); Charles J. Kennedy, "The Early Business History of Four Massachusetts Railroads-IV," *Bulletin of the Business Historical Society* 25 (1951): 207-229; and Edward C. Kirkland, "The 'Railroad Scheme' of Massachusetts," *The Journal of Economic History* 5 (1945): 145-171.

antebellum metropolis.[348] Hardly relegated to the Boston backwater where Charles's grandfather John was "condemnd to keep School," Worcester citizens of the 1840s traded scholarship at the American Antiquarian Society, propelled their local representatives into the Massachusetts governor's chair, and debated national topics like abolitionism and temperance reform.[349]

Despite massive internal improvements, New Englanders like Charles still followed the same spring calendar as their colonial forebears. They scheduled their annual benevolent association meetings for the end of May, just as the General Court wrapped up business and adjourned for the summer.[350] At the city's heart, marking the crossroads of three rail lines, lay a low-slung, wooden depot made festive with floral garlands and swags of evergreen. Still lacking a real ticket office, the Worcester depot was *the* venue for major social gatherings like the one that Charles had traveled to attend, hosting 1,000-person events in an upstairs hall as the trains rumbled and braked below. Along with 800 other prominent churchgoers and clergymen, Adams filed into the Unitarian "collation," an annual day of feasting, hymnals, and oratory held to honor

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[348] David R. Meyer, *The Roots of American Industrialization* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 23-41; Thomas Bender, *Toward an Urban Vision: Ideas and Institutions in Nineteenth-Century America* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1975); Robert W. Doherty, *Society and Power: Five New England Towns, 1800-1860* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1977); Charles Sellers, *The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America, 1815-1846* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 3-33; and Harry L. Watson, *Liberty and Power: The Politics of Jacksonian America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2006), 17-41.

[349] John Adams to Richard Cranch, 29 August 1756, Worcester, in *The Papers of John Adams*, 17 vols., eds. Robert J. Taylor et al., (Cambridge and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1977—), 1:15; and Kenneth J. Moynihan, *A History of Worcester, 1674-1848* (Charleston: History Press, 2007), 129-153.

[350] John Quincy Adams, 31 May 1845, Diary, Adams Papers.

denominational works and to broadcast piety. It was a fairly new tradition, just a few years old.[351]

Six dutiful hours later Charles left, dubious of the event's religious payoff. Only recently, he had resumed church attendance after a hiatus from the Unitarian fold, after reasoning that "setting apart one day from secular work…leads to great improvement of the mind and the affections."[352] Like a number of other Victorian Americans, Charles diagnosed in himself the signs of a budding secularism, one that might ruin the republic *or* denote "a hallowed moment when a large segment of the population, finally, had become (or would soon become) liberated enough to believe what they wanted to believe."[353] Charles was not sure *what* to make of it. Skeptical gentlemen scholars like Adams now hesitated, intellectually and emotionally, when it came to swallowing whole any Christian doctrine. Instead, Adams and the rest of the American gentry tested out secular (mostly Romantic) methods to investigate the dilemmas of self and society that religion no longer resolved.[354] Brandishing New England Christianity with flowers and speeches at the local depot, Adams thought, was no proof of the piety they used to cope

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[351] "Unitarian Festival," Boston *Daily Atlas*, 31 May 1843; "Exercises at the Collation Furnished by the Unitarian Laymen of Boston, to the Clergy of Their Denomination, on Tuesday, May 30, 1843," American Broadsides and Ephemera, Series 1, No. 6158. On 27 May 1845, John Quincy Adams presided over the same collation, recording in his Diary that he "sat up until one o'clock in the morning" to write and polish his two-hour address the night before, Adams Papers.
[352] Charles Francis Adams, Diary, 22 November 1842, Adams Papers.
[353] John Lardas Modern, *Secularism in Antebellum America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 4-48; Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007); and James Turner, *Without God, Without Creed: The Origins of Unbelief in America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985).
[354] Jeffrey P. Sklansky, *The Soul's Economy: Market Society and Selfhood in American Thought, 1820-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Daniel Walker Howe, "American Victorianism as a Culture," *American Quarterly* 27 (1975): 507-532; and Mark A. Noll, ed., *God and Mammon: Protestants, Money, and the Market, 1790-1860* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

with the deeper changes of an industrializing age. "It was a very curious spectacle and singularly illustrative of New England manners," he wrote of the day's exhibition. "I think all the peculiarities of the character of our people were visible here. Their good nature and their stiffness, their quiet domestic feelings and kind hearts with their utter deficiency in the elegance of life. As soon as I decently could, I escaped from a scene in which my greatest surprise was to find myself."[355]

That scene—and Charles's awkwardness in it—inspires the three themes of Victorian religious life scrutinized in this chapter: why the weight of his cosmopolitan education and "Christian wealth" rendered a familiar faith foreign; how Charles cultivated "authentic" piety by savoring church aesthetics more than the words of clergy or creed; and the significance of his lifelong pilgrimage for the "religious confidence" needed to seal his civic/personal identity. In these ways, Charles was emblematic of a generation that practiced a "troubled" faith in market society and sought God in worldly beauty, but one that remained reliant on Christian (and preferably Protestant) symbols to navigate life with a patchworked set of middle-class values.[356]

In history, and in his own day—painfully so—Charles was often noticed, but rarely *seen*. Son and grandson of great men, he clung to their Providence for comfort. Religion remained a constant, but cultivating cosmopolitan Christianity became his goal. Inner piety, not pew time, mattered most. "I am not one of those who think that religion is

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[355] Charles Francis Adams, Diary, 30 May 1843, Adams Papers.
[356] Anne C. Rose, *Victorian America and the Civil War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 17-67; Daniel Walker Howe, "The Market Revolution and the Shaping of Identity in Whig-Jacksonian America," in *The Market Revolution in America: Social, Political, and Religious Expressions, 1800-1880*, eds. Melvyn Stokes and Stephen Conway (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1996), 259-281.

to be formed in particular places alone," he wrote.[357] Diplomatic duty led him through foreign Christianities. Back in Quincy, Charles's travels to and from the family church epitomized generational tensions between polarities of "cosmopolitanism and provincialism, rationalism and enthusiasm, politeness and rudeness."[358] Ostensibly the ideal Christian Republican, Charles was locked in a lifelong battle for belief. The pilgrimage he undertook on that spring day in 1843—commuting for a rote performance of Unitarianism while his father blasted a rare American pioneer of the Christian past—indicated a new dividing line between the two generations, antebellum and Victorian, in the field of worship and dissent. For Charles's surprise at finding himself in Worcester jolts the reader, too: How had American Christianity been "made strange" to New England's native son?

I. An Education: "I Am No Zealous Disciple"

Following the three stages of religious pilgrimage (separation, liminality, aggregation) outlined by the anthropologists Victor and Edith Turner, this chapter begins by exploring Charles's youthful alienation from New England Unitarianism, mainly as a result of his cosmopolitan education and the sudden influx of wealth that came with his 1829 marriage.[359] Then, I sketch his liminal phase of exploration among other Christianities—what Charles picturesquely referred to as "my journeyings"— to assess how those experiences shaped his aggregation phase, or formal return to social life, with

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[357] Charles Francis Adams, *Diary*, 3:13-14.
[358] Daniel Walker Howe, *Making the American Self: Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 111.
[359] Victor Turner and Edith Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture: Anthropological Perspectives* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), 1-39.

what a mature Adams called "the force God has given me."[360] Exemplifying how the liminality of religious travel shifted American perspectives at midcentury, Charles acts as a case study to reconstruct the paradoxical ways in which Protestants turned inward to remake identity while, intriguingly, pursuing religion as a very public form of leisure. How and why mainline worshippers like Adams experimented with spiritual seeking is often overshadowed in the long historiography of nineteenth-century life, which privileges celebrity clergy, revivalist theatrics, and blossoming popular interest in non-Western ideologies. Next to the religious color of scandals, communes, and reform crusades, Charles may seem like drab copy. But Adams and other mainstays of the Unitarian flock had their religious adventures, too. Charles spent much of his adulthood, like other bourgeois Americans, fretting that while new prosperity underwrote much-needed national change, the same font of wealth eroded republican values.[361] Later, as a third-generation politician and man of letters, Charles struggled to connect with Christian voters adrift in an industrializing culture.[362]

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[360] Charles Francis Adams, *Diary*, 6:329.

[361] Lorman Ratner et al., *Paradoxes of Prosperity: Wealth-Seeking Versus Christian Values in Pre-Civil War America* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009); Sklansky, *Soul's Economy*; R. Laurence Moore, *Selling God: American Religion in the Marketplace of Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

[362] On the relative durability and changing nature of American Christianity in the Victorian age, see Harold P. Simonson, *Radical Discontinuities: American Romanticism and Christian Consciousness* (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1983); David Morse, *American Romanticism, Volume 1, From Cooper to Hawthorne* (Totowa: Barnes & Noble Books, 1987); Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989); Conrad Edick Wright, ed., *American Unitarianism, 1805-1865* (Boston: The Massachusetts Historical Society and Northeastern University Press, 1989); Lewis Perry, *Boats against the Current: American Culture between Revolution and Modernity, 1820-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); James E. Block, *A Nation of Agents: The American Path to a Modern Self and Society* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002); John Gatta, *Making Nature Sacred: Literature, Religion, and Environment in America from the Puritans to the Present* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2004); Leigh Eric Schmidt, *Restless Souls: The Making of American Spirituality* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2005); Daniel

Charles Francis Adams (1807-1886) was born in Boston and raised as a citizen of the world, babbling first in French and perfecting his English in letters to grandmother Abigail.[363] Nor did Adams's changeling childhood, spent in Tsar Alexander I's palace and in the middle-class suburbs of Georgian London, wholly prepare Charles to grasp the "New England manners" that framed his faraway brothers' adolescent years. Sickly and nervous, John Quincy and Louisa Catherine's third son was an unlikely heir apparent to the Adamses' political dynasty, yet the pair cultivated him for public service from an early age. At two years old, Charles made his diplomatic debut in the "Savage" dress of an American Indian chief, opening a Russian costume ball with a high-born toddler on his tiny arm.[364] At eight, "white-faced," he braved the overland passage from St. Petersburg to Paris with his mother, evading Napoleon's resurgent forces on a 40-day,

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Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); Ratner, *Paradoxes of Prosperity*.

[363] Charles is undersung in Adams historiography, claiming one full-scale biography that charts his political career and literary efforts, but with little emphasis on religion: Martin B. Duberman, *Charles Francis Adams, 1807-1886* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1961). Sketches of his editorial life appear in Peter Shaw, "The Apprenticeship of Charles Francis Adams," *The American Scholar* 2 (1969): 312-322 and Earl N. Harbert, "Charles Francis Adams (1807-1886): A Forgotten Family Man of Letters," *Journal of American Studies* 6 (1972): 249-265. Charles's diplomatic career received new attention in Amanda Foreman, *A World on Fire: Britain's Crucial Role in the American Civil War* (New York: Random House, 2010).

[364] John Quincy Adams's account of his mission as the first American minister to Russia comprises his Diary entries from 27 June 1809 to 24 June 1814, Adams Papers. See also Samuel Flagg Bemis, *John Quincy and the Foundations of American Foreign Policy* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1965); Marion Mainwaring, *John Quincy Adams and Russia: A Sketch of Early Russian American Relations as Recorded in the Papers of the Adams Family and Some of Their Contemporaries* (Quincy: Patriot Ledger, 1965); and David W. McFadden, "John Quincy Adams, American Commercial Diplomacy, and Russia, 1809-1825," *The New England Quarterly* 66 (1993): 613-629.

For Louisa's version of the children's ball, see *Diary and Autobiographical Writings of Louisa Catherine Adams*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2013), 1:297-299, 303-304, 316, 326. As executor of the Adams estate, Charles Francis Adams organized, read, and edited his parents' papers for publication.

2,000-mile haul through the Russian winter of 1814.[365] When he reunited with his older brothers in London a year later, Charles felt like a stranger to the two loud "Yankee" teenagers who shared his surname. He had little in common with them, especially in terms of religious upbringing. For the first decade of his life, Charles's sole interactions with the family faith of American Unitarianism either came from outdated books or from his father's close instruction.[366]

As a transnational teenager, Charles leveraged his cosmopolitan education to nurture a wary pluralism. Charles struggled "to act as becomes a member of a high family," yet he was certain that, as a third son, even his most promising path did not lead as far as the White House doors.[367] It was far more likely, Charles thought, that he would serve as a Massachusetts senator or as a literary man, mining his education to steer the new republic's progress. "I do not expect to make a very great figure in the world," young Charles observed. "I cannot get over my dislike to the idea of a political existence. It shackles the independence of mind and feeling which I have always perhaps extravagantly admired, and in this Country it destroys all social ties."[368]

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[365] For Louisa's account of the family's life in Russia and subsequent flight to Paris, first published by her grandson Brooks in 1903, see Louisa Catherine Adams, *Diary*, 1:283-406. See also Michael O'Brien, *Mrs. Adams in Winter: A Journey in the Last Days of Napoleon* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010).
[366] For John Quincy Adams's religious instruction of his sons, see Chapter 2.
[367] Aida DiPace Donald and David Donald, eds., *The Diary of Charles Francis Adams*, 8 vols. (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1964-1986), 1:184.
[368] Charles Francis Adams to John Quincy Adams, 22 January 1828, Adams Papers. In his 26 March reply, the elder Adams fired back: "If you *prefer* to remain in private life, stand aloof—you may be sure not to be disturbed in your privacy" (Adams Papers).

Charles drafted the eclectic education that he needed for his future role as another "Christian in heart and life" bound to serve the nation.[369] And, like his father, he completed much of it abroad. Charles studied first with Russia's resident corps of itinerant Jesuit and Orthodox faculty, then attended a Presbyterian boarding school in suburban England. Returning to America in 1817, Charles deviated from the normative Protestant education of his peers, blurring old denominational lines in order to maximize his opportunities for intellectual growth. After a two-year stint at the Boston Latin School, Charles enrolled in the Washington, D.C., school of Dr. George E. Ironside, a former Episcopal priest and a prominent convert to Roman Catholicism.

As a literary mentor—and Adams's first real teacher on American shores—the Catholic Ironside proved formative to Charles's long-term intellectual habits. Ironside's change of faith had made news in the Capitol, especially once he began advertising the idea that it was "more convenient to live a Protestant, but safer to die in the Catholic church."[370] The Adamses, long accustomed to public battery in the newspapers, did not care about Ironside's colorful press. John Quincy hired him on as an undersecretary and Spanish translator for the U.S. Department of State, awarding the Scot an annual salary of $1,750.[371] The new Georgetown Jesuit's second wife, two sons, and three daughters became favorite fixtures at Louisa Catherine's "sociables" and elsewhere on the Capitol

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[369] "Priestley's Life and Correspondence," *The Christian Examiner and Theological Review* 12 (Boston: Gray and Bowen, 1832): 258. Here and below, I relate Charles's interpretation of American Protestant ideals to characteristics explored in the prominent Unitarian periodical of his day, *The Christian Examiner*, and to which he subscribed.

[370] "Bishop Hobart's Views of the Catholic Church," *The United States Catholic and Monthly Review Magazine* 7 (Baltimore: John Murray, 1848): 661.

[371] Thomas Hughes, *History of the Society of Jesus in North America, Colonial and Federal*, 3 vols. (London: Longman, Greens, & Co., 1907-1917), 1:1078.

scene.[372] Ironside's "small apartment" school next to the Treasury office became a second home for Charles.[373] Under the unconventional Ironside's guidance, Charles flourished. His Greek improved. He started and kept up commonplace books of poetry and law.[374] In the early republic, Ironside prospered as an "impossible" man: an Aberdeen native handling sensitive documents of American foreign policy; an Episcopal chaplain whose biblical inquiry led to Catholic conversion; a family man who chose Jesuit life but squired his wife to D.C. galas.

The rare example of George Ironside, a Christian republican entrusted with the highest duties of the nation and at least two churches, confirmed to Charles that Protestant tendencies (i.e. inquiry) did not always culminate in a commitment to Protestantism. To Charles, the ability to distinguish the finer nuances of beliefs held by his string of Protestant, Orthodox, and Catholic instructors mattered little. Thanks to a polyglot band of tutors, and just in time to enter Harvard's halls, Adams built up a generous definition of what constituted "real" or "useful" Christianity. Early on, Charles Francis Adams arrived at his lifelong credo: "Theology is not religion."[375]

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[372] On the transatlantic career of George Edmund Ironside (1766-1827), see William M. MacBean, *Biographical Register of Saint Andrew's Society of the State of New York*, 2 vols. (New York: Printed for the Society, 1922-1925), 2:763. The Scottish-American clergyman's diplomatic posting came at the recommendation of Henry Clay. Regular mention of Ironside's contributions appears in John Quincy Adams, Diary, *passim*, 1821-1825, Adams Papers.

[373] For a description of Ironside's school, techniques, and disciplinary measures, see John Quincy Adams, Diary, 17-18 October, 1 November, and 22 December 1819, Adams Papers.

[374] Charles Francis Adams, Literary and Legal Commonplace Books, 1822, 1825, 1827-1827, Adams Papers. In honor of Ironside's memory as an intellectual role model and to ease the "distressed condition" of his family after his death, Adams purchased several of his mentor's books at public auction in June 1828 (*Diary*, 2:134-135).

[375] Charles Francis Adams, *Diary*, 5:18.

Charles was not alone in modifying his religious views to retrofit intellectual pursuits, and, as with past Adams alumni, his Harvard years were crucial to his next stage of development. "Journeying toward liberalism" with other early Victorians who evinced an all-purpose Christian "worthiness" over denominational dogma, Charles joined his brothers in Cambridge, in 1821, at the heart of the nation's Protestant establishment.[376] Largely unrivaled in the realms of faculty, books, and scientific equipment, Harvard College was where the worldly American came to learn. Harvard's religious ecosystem played an important role in Adams's youthful formulation of faith and doubt. There, the prim young man learned more about Christianity and temperance, showing tolerance to religious ideas, though he never warmed up to the people who spread them.

To a degree, the household gods still set the curriculum. From Mondays to Saturdays, metaphysics and natural philosophy filled the hours after morning prayer—although Charles overslept "shamefully" often and skipped that rite in the campus chapel.[377] When he did make it to one of president John Thornton Kirkland's sermons, Adams's attention drifted off. "I sunk into my usual apathy and was conscious of nothing passing before me," Charles wrote of church service at Harvard.[378] He spent afternoons rotating between lecture topics in Protestant theology, oratory, algebra, and classical literature. Beside him, a charcoal sea of Oxford-suited peers labored away at Homer's

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[376] Daniel Walker Howe, *The Unitarian Conscience: Harvard Moral Philosophy, 1805-1861* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970); D. H. Meyer, *The Instructed Conscience: The Shaping of the American National Ethic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1972); George M. Marsden, *The Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Unbelief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 3-9, 183-186.
[377] Charles Francis Adams, *Diary*, 1:39, 99-104, 211, 220, 290.
[378] Charles Francis Adams, *Diary*, 1:353.

Iliad, William Enfield's *Institutes of Natural Philosophy, Theoretical and Experimental* (1783), William Paley's *Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy* (1785), Cicero's *De Officiis*, and the political essays of Englishman John Locke. Charles excelled at history and literature, but little else. Young Charles had a "meditative mind" made for prose, along with the Adams stubbornness for stomaching orthodox instruction. "Charles must teach himself all that he learns," John Quincy wrote wearily. "He will learn nothing from others."[379]

Toiling through ancient church history on his 1820s campus, Charles's attention to personal religion was lackluster. Though he did not journey into doubt as fully as son Henry would, young Charles was an openly apathetic Christian. In 1823, packing for a Christmas sojourn to visit his parents in Washington, D.C., for example, young Adams received his fall test results and deemed them fair. He did not linger at Harvard for final word of another grade: his theology exam, which consisted of a written analysis of Paley's tenets, and which Adams was sure he had flunked. He stood 51st in a class of 59, and had already tried to talk his way out of a mathematics requirement; the sheer tedium of studying theology was a sore point with the aspiring author.[380] "I know full well I am no zealous disciple of that school," Charles wrote flatly. "It is not a subject which interests me."[381] Rather, the president's son studied just enough doctrine to pass his classes. He showed up for just enough church service to satisfy expectations. There, like his forebears, Charles evaluated his religious instructors' oratory at Harvard. Adams had

[379] John Quincy Adams, Diary, 25 December 1825, Adams Papers.
[380] Charles Francis Adams, *Diary*, 1:10-13.
[381] Charles Francis Adams, *Diary*, 1:10-13. No record of his final theology grade has been found.

formed his first religious memories in the grand cathedrals and private boys' schools of Europe. By contrast, New England Unitarianism felt foreign and sounded quaint. But, fated to follow in the family footsteps of public service, Charles knew he could not afford to separate himself outwardly from a mass of God-fearing voters. Admittedly, though, Charles never learned or even appreciated theological distinctions, mainly because he did not foresee a career in the pulpit.

Theology and ritual did not attract the awkward young man, but people who professed religious ideas casually—along with those who "canted" doctrine from a pulpit—intrigued him. Certainly, Charles had a broad spectrum of American Christianity to sample. The Protestant ministers who preached to Charles and his friends sounded nationalistic and highly competitive about what a Christian America should look like. Jacksonian-era clergy scrambled to reassert social authority and to shore up their cultural relevance. Overall, most ministers crusaded with a hodgepodge of "revivalism, millenial expectation, and lay mobilization to rally a newborn army into battle for a Christian America."[382] Throughout the 1820s and 1830s, clergy blamed Native Americans for cholera outbreaks, issued myriad fast and thanksgiving proclamations, and blasted the Bostonians who tasted the exotic "Romanism" of Catholicism. The Adams family faith took a hard hit in the religious marketplace, too. For, following the evangelical fervor of the Second Great Awakening, led by dynamos like Timothy Dwight, Francis Asbury, and Charles Grandison Finney, Unitarians' longtime growth wavered while the Baptists and Methodists claimed ground.

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[382] Sellers, *The Market Revolution*, 209.

Like many of his peers, Charles rebelled against the insular nature of *all* ministerial authority when it came to constructing his own worldview. The aspiring lawyer/writer focused on criticizing pulpit oratory and rhetoric, sidelining cumbersome theological details. Charles's early sermon notes tallied a minister's rating based on two criteria: Did he articulate a memorable message? How did he use scriptural and/or social evidence to convey his argument? Adams found most visiting Protestant missionaries "arrogant," and, in his private journal, he relished puncturing the swollen reputations of clergymen like Henry Ware, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and even Harvard's leader, John Thornton Kirkland. Ware he found "highly Metaphysical" and "rather too demonstrative." Charles did "not much like any of the Emerson family," all talented theologians who made, he thought, for "haughty" and weak orators. Adams, disgusted by what he saw as the provincial clergy's "undue" emotional manipulation of laity, wrote that "there is nothing so wicked to me as to make religion a cover for exciting the passions of the people as there is nothing which can more easily be done and which done, has more pernicious effects."[383]

The reading list and pulpit critiques may have looked familiar, but this was hardly the same Protestant education in godly republicanism that so many Adams ancestors had endured.[384] Rather, Charles's experience at antebellum Harvard was of a New England

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[383] Charles Francis Adams, *Diary*, 1:15-16. Charles was baptized by Rev. William Emerson, father of Ralph Waldo.
[384] J. David Hoeveler, *Creating the American Mind: Intellect and Politics in the Colonial Colleges* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2002), 213-239.

institution in transition.[385] As admission broadened to include a roster of new families, the college inaugurated an array of "beginner" classes in the arts and sciences. At the same time, it wooed alumni to return as "resident graduates" to undertake advanced study at no cost.[386] The elite school was eager to bridge new gaps in American culture, for the old "New England ways" were in flux.

Beyond Harvard walls, Charles's America was a nation weighing how to work *and* pray. Coming of age in the 1820s and 1830s, as state lawmakers disestablished Congregationalism in Massachusetts, Charles met an industrializing nation riven by physical and spiritual change.[387] To understand Adams's sporadic piety, it is worth sketching here antebellum America's arena of "God and Mammon," an evangelical hive of social upheaval and industrial invention.[388] As cities rose, Protestant sects grew diverse and diffuse. The individualistic drive of the market revolution had begun in 1815 and (quite literally) gathered steam over the succeeding decade, minting a batch of freethinking, self-made men and women.[389] In turn, Charles's Jacksonian-era peers strove to fire up and refuel national networks. They funneled tax money, once allotted to clergy, into the industrial endeavors and civic associations that they planned on a new, interurban

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[385] Bernard Bailyn, *Glimpses of the Harvard Past* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986); and Samuel Eliot Morison, *Three Centuries of Harvard, 1636-1936* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1965).
[386] *Ibid.*
[387] John D. Cushing, "Notes on Disestablishment in Massachusetts, 1780-1833," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 26
(1969): 169-190; Kelly Olds, "Privatizing the Church: Disestablishment in Connecticut and Massachusetts," *Journal of Political Economy* 102 (1994): 277-297; Peter S. Field, *The Crisis of the Standing Order: Clerical Intellectuals and Cultural Authority in Massachusetts, 1780-1833* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1998); and Douglas, *Feminization of American Culture*.
[388] Sellers, *The Market Revolution*; Stokes and Conway, *The Market Revolution in America*; and Sklansky, *The Soul's Economy*.
[389] Watson, *Liberty and Power*; Sellers, *The Market Revolution*; and Bender, *Toward an Urban Vision*.

scale. They kept building steeples. But they also laid down railroads, carved out canals, and set up cities. As they refined the "godly" gifts of Puritan heritage, citizens like Charles wondered if America *was* to become *the* promised land where, as John Quincy Adams envisioned it, "the race of mankind is advancing towards perfection; where deserts are turning into villages, and forests into cities."[390]

Charles grew up in an era of American life when providentialist promises seemed to be made manifest in the rising traffic of diverse peoples, ideas, and goods.[391] As Charles observed, new modes of transportation and communication improved prospects for rapid intellectual exchange. In 1820, Americans ventured down the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers on 89 steamboats; by 1840, some 536 steamboats jammed the same waterways, carting bulk goods like cotton and grain at cheaper freight rates.[392] In his "bourgeois republic," literacy bloomed, followed by rising enrollment in higher education. In 1820 savvy readers like Adams got their news from 1,200 daily and weekly papers; by 1835, that figure had more than doubled.[393] Trains connected readers, ferrying ideas that upended rural New England's fabled quiet as they tore through each hamlet. The Gothic allegorist Nathaniel Hawthorne, vacationing in Sleepy Hollow, New York, eyed the train's approach—"shrieking…comes down on you like fate, swift and inevitable"—with queasy glee. "How much life at once has come into this lonely place!"

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[390] John Quincy Adams to Abigail Adams, 30 June 1811, Adams Papers.
[391] Watson, *Liberty and Power*; Sellers, *Market Revolution*; Bender, *Toward an Urban Vision*; Stokes and Conway, *Market Revolution*; and Howe, *What Hath God Wrought.*
[392] Allen C. Guelzo, *Fateful Lightning: A New History of the Civil War and Reconstruction* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 188.
[393] Sellers, *The Market Revolution*, 364-395; Ronald J. Zboray and Mary Saracino Zboray, *Everyday Ideas: Socioliterary Experience among Antebellum New Englanders* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2006).

Hawthorne wrote, echoing Americans' collective shudder and thrill at the change.[394] Such phenomenal progress ignited spiritual concern. How (if at all) did a "railway nation" hail God?

Caught in the press of change, antebellum Americans took stock of their Christianities. Eighteenth-century revolutionary life had led families like the Adamses to experiment with different modes of piety and morality, but now industrial demands altered their religious goals.[395] Preserving a Christian America, as Charles and others acknowledged, required at least the *appearance* of a unified front to combat the rampant "sins" introduced and proliferated by industrialization and urban growth. As founding fathers like John Adams died out, Americans tried on "selves" that were more flexible to the fluctuations of market society, and to an expanding arena of denominations.[396] "My ideas upon the subject of the Christian Religion are very vague and have compelled me to this," Charles wrote of his diary-keeping, where he led a lifelong search for the "right *bent*."[397] In many ways, his journal reflects the myriad spiritual wanderings of a generation that, like the Unitarian periodical of record, preferred the label of "Christian examiner" as they sentimentalized theology to fit with new urban realities.[398]

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[394] Ronald J. Zboray, *A Fictive People: Antebellum Economic Development and the American Reading Public* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 69-82; Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Celestial Railroad* (New York: New American Library, 1980 ed.), Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964).
[395] See, for example, D. H. Meyer, *The Democratic Enlightenment* (New York: Putnam, 1976).
[396] Sklansky, *The Soul's Economy*, 1-13; Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*; Meyer, *Instructed Conscience*; and Wilson Smith, *Professors & Public Ethics: Studies of Northern Moral Philosophers before the Civil War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1956).
[397] Charles Francis Adams, *Diary*, 1:105, 108-109.
[398] Douglas, *Feminization of American Culture*; McDannell, *Christian Home in Victorian America*; Claudia Stokes, *The Altar at Home: Sentimental Literature and Nineteenth-Century American Religion* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014).

For Charles and his peers, the cultural project of shaping a new middle-class morality took several forms, contouring Christianity to ensure that their behavior kept to the "right bent." Challenging traditional ministerial authority, they revised old philosophies of right and wrong.[399] Working within the Protestant and Catholic traditions, the American laity devised a set of Christian solutions meant to resolve the growing list of communal ills. Banding together in tract societies and mutual-aid groups, women and men (often in that order) vied to counter the social sins of intemperance and "ungodly" behavior bred by city life.[400] Everywhere Charles turned, Christian rhetoric crept into the cultural mix. A popular pantheon of women authors—including the Adamses' New England neighbors Louisa May Alcott, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and Julia Ward Howe—infused the literature of the day with parables of fallen ministers and deathbed scenes of pious triumph.[401] Abolitionists addressed biblical justifications for slavery. Utopian pioneers promoted communal living as stewardship of the earth. Sabbaterians upheld the sanctity of Sunday as a day of prayer safe from congressional activity, mail delivery, and profiteering merchants.[402] Thus, in the 1820s and 1830s, Charles Francis and his early

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[399] Karin E. Gedge, *Without Benefit of Clergy: Women and the Pastoral Relationship in Nineteenth-Century American Culture* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); Mark Y. Hanley, *Beyond a Christian Commonwealth: The Protestant Quarrel with the American Republic, 1830-1860* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994); and Jonathan D. Sassi, *A Republic of Righteousness: The Public Christianity of the Post-Revolutionary New England Clergy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).
[400] For the religious roots of American reform movements in the nineteenth century, see Robert H. Abzug, *Cosmos Crumbling: American Reform and the Religious Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); Gedge, *Without Benefit of Clergy*; Jennifer Graber, *The Furnace of Affliction: Prisons and Religion in Antebellum America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011); and T. Gregory Garvey, *Creating the Culture of Reform in Antebellum America* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2006).
[401] Stokes, *Altar at Home.*
[402] Alexis McCrossen, "Sabbatarianism: The Intersection of Church and State in the Orchestration of Everyday Life in Nineteenth-Century America" in *Religious and Secular Reform in America: Ideas,*

Victorian peers grew up in an American Christian environment that was republican, reform-minded, and experimental.

For all of young Charles's purported moral superiority, the Adams family circle was not immune to the same sins of intemperance and ungodly behavior that troubled antebellum life. Two of his uncles—including Thomas, who controlled his inheritance and the Adams estate—suffered from alcoholism. Charles's brothers, John 2d and George, would succumb, too, by 1834. Charles's Christian neighbors in Boston had a long and contradictory history of suppressing intemperance. In fact, his grandfather John once attempted (fruitlessly) to map out and ban Braintree's taverns.[403] Wider social efforts to curb drinking were, in turn, constrained by mixed messages among reformers; Massachusetts's first temperance society, for example, served wine at most of its antebellum meetings.[404] Scholarly and solitary, Charles's lack of sociability at first protected him from his brothers' predilection for partygoing. But in the spring of 1824, a teenaged Charles was eager to shake off his studies, especially the months-long assigned reading of Johann Lorenz von Mosheim's *Ecclesiastical History*, a doorstop of "dull doctrine" parlayed by a "malignant" scholar "quite deficient" in "the milk of human kindness."[405] Charles's small circle of Harvard friends supplied entertainment, usually in

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Beliefs, and Social Change, eds. David Keith Adams and Cornelis A. van Minnen (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 133-158.

[403] *The Diary and Autobiography of John Adams*, 4 vols., eds. L. H. Butterfield et al. (Cambridge and London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1961-1966), 1:128-130, 190-192, 204-206, 210-211, 212-216.

[404] Christopher G. Bates, ed., *The Early Republic and Antebellum America: An Encyclopedia of Social, Political, Cultural, and Economic History*, 4 vols. (New York: Routledge, 2015), 72-76.

[405] For his reading of Mosheim's *An Ecclesiastical History, From the Birth of Christ to the Beginning of the Eighteenth Century: In Which the Rise, Progress and Variation of Church Power Are Considered in Their Connection with the State of Learning and Philosophy, and the Political History of Europe during that*

the form of late-night singing parties and roving card games that crisscrossed the college Yard, fueled by cheap wine. Cambridge residents and Harvard presidents took these improprieties somewhat seriously. Since the school's inception in the seventeenth century, a few legions' worth of clergy and lawyers (all on the cusp of a gentlemanly graduation) had incurred large fines for drinking, smoking, or breaking glass.[406]

Charles, more reserved than his peers and slightly priggish, rarely joined in Harvard's binge nights of student mayhem. On 14 May, he awoke to a mystery ailment: headache, nausea, disinterest, melancholia. Huddled in his dormitory room—where food and sleep were futile—Charles leafed through some family favorites (Voltaire, Lawrence Sterne's *Sentimental Journey*) for comfort, then threw aside the "lame poetry" that he read there. Adams could not diagnose the root of his illness, beyond the two bottles of "champagne wine" he drank the night before, a new habit that, he confessed, now caused his "blood to be in a heated state." The hungover Charles, naive to the scientific links newly made between alcohol and ill health, offered an interesting vow. "Indeed if I do not feel better I have made up my mind to ask leave of absence from the President for the rest of the term," he wrote. As the day wound down, and Adams's health improved, he made one more uncharacteristic choice. Charles took out his Bible. He read two chapters, straight through, "for the first time for a great while," Charles wrote in his diary. "I do not

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Period, 4 vols. (New York: E. Duyckinck, 1824 ed.), see Charles Francis Adams, *Diary*, 1:108-149, passim.

[406] Bailyn, *Glimpses of the Harvard Past* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986); and Morison, *Three Centuries of Harvard*.

recollect having read one before for three or four years."[407] He sketched out his own private Christian temperance plan, deciding that one night's error merited a new course of self-reform.

For Charles and many of his Anglo-American peers, then, Christian examination began at home. The primary texts of young Charles's religious life became the Bible and his own diary, an act that linked his "writing self" to his "reading self."[408] After the 1824 debacle, he resumed daily Bible-reading *and* he kept a diary in earnest. Diaries, which underscored the privacy of the bourgeoisie home in contrast to the public frenzy of the marketplace, were hardly private in the Adams household.[409] Rather, they were assigned reading for the next generation to consume, and were created as such. The journal was Charles's arena to record and refine his behavior, a liminal place to confess the many emotions that often fell short of his lofty Christian ideals. Here, he was very much in line with other Victorian Protestants who enjoyed notching the daily growth of the Christian "self" on the page. A willingness to set down in writing all the ways they sought God's solace—in church or, better, in the wilds of nature—demonstrated true spiritual submission. Further, the thinking man's diary was a medium that allowed a prominent

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[407] For the full account of his epic hangover in 1824 and the resulting efforts to resume his daily Bible-reading, see Charles Francis Adams, *Diary*, 1:137-139. On links between alcohol and ill health made in the early republic, see Sharon V. Salinger, *Taverns and Drinking in Early America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002); and Matthew Warner Osborn, *Rum Maniacs: Alcoholic Insanity in the Early Republic* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2014).

[408] Anne-Marie Millim, *The Victorian Diary: Authorship and Emotional Labour* (Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate, 2013).

[409] On Anglo-American diarists as "private" intellectuals, see Millim, *The Victorian Diary*; Kathryn Carter, "The Cultural Work of Diaries in Mid-Century Victorian Britain," *Victorian Review* 23 (1997): 251-267; Jane H. Hunter, "Inscribing the Self in the Heart of the Family: Diaries and Girlhood in Late-Victorian America," *American Quarterly* 44 (1992): 51-81; Molly McCarthy, "A Pocketful of Days: Pocket Diaries and Daily Record Keeping among Nineteenth-Century New England Women," *The New England Quarterly* 73 (2000): 274-296; and Zboray and Zaboray, *Everyday Ideas*.

Christian like Charles Francis Adams to call out differences between the nation's progress and that of his own soul.[410]

And, if those differences incited a change in self or society, then the Victorian diarist went public with the tale. Abolitionist and lawyer Richard Henry Dana, Jr. used *Two Years before the Mast* (1840) to raise attention for the plight of sailors. In his eponymous *Narrative* of 1845, orator Frederick Douglass laid out his odyssey from Chesapeake slave to free man. The Transcendentalist Henry Thoreau offered *Walden* (1854) to show how living apart from industrial life fostered self-reliance and spiritual discovery. Later on, reformers like Jane Addams, a pocket diarist at 14 years old, used journal-writing to stockpile professional confidence and to articulate Christian plans for social change. Even the monarch who named the age—Victoria—kept a diary where she painted an idyllic family life and drafted prayers for divine guidance. Charles, heir to an American political dynasty, kept his diary with the same Christian fervor. Admittedly less eloquent than Thoreau's prose, and "pretty monotonous" in subject matter next to Dana's adventures as a Brahmin seaman, Charles always heard the diary ticking along as his "second conscience."[411] Like his Puritan forebears, *this* Adams's diary operated like a self-improvement manual, an evergreen trap that ensnared Charles's moral triumphs and many failings. Aware that he was "read" as cold and morose by peers, Charles committed his diary, from an early age, to monitoring the progress of his Christian "self."

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[410] Rose, *Victorian America and the Civil War*, 253-255.

[411] In a letter of 28 November 1827, John Quincy Adams advised Charles's brother, George Washington Adams, that for any man, "A Diary is the Time Piece of Life…His Record is a second Conscience" (Adams Papers). Charles was typically morose about his skill as a diarist, calling it "a pretty monotonous record of the very even tenour of my life," in Charles Francis Adams, *Diary*, 4:235. Mostly unpublished, it spans 1 May 1824 to 2 November 1880.

Within the pages of his diary, Charles Francis Adams also preserved a unique home study of Christian life in Victorian America. There, he interspersed religious musings with the episodes of birth, marriage, and death that followed his Harvard graduation and marked out the traditional Adams family cycle of public life. In 1827 Charles noted meeting Abigail Brown Brooks (1808-1889), whom he married after a courtship filled with high melodrama (mostly manufactured by Charles). Lively hostess "Miss Abby" was the third "great belle" and the youngest daughter of Boston's wealthiest merchant, Peter Chardon Brooks, and Nancy Gorham Brooks. Abby's New England roots ran deep, and her Brahmin pedigree easily outshone suitor Charles's: Gorham goldsmith money on her mother's side, and the prestige of colony founders like the Saltonstalls, Wards, Cottons, and Boylstons filling out her father's side of the family tree.[412] Charles's cosmopolitan mother, First Lady Louisa Catherine Adams, approved of the match, calling Abby "a wonderful favorite of the family" in Washington, D.C., and "quite an oddity."[413] Vivacious and chatty, Abby was well-suited to co-host Charles's prospective career as a lawyer/man of letters. She was, Charles noted with his customary reserve, "gregarious like all other Americans and this is perhaps what I regret most in her."[414] Curdled compliments aside, he was eager to marry Abby.

Charles's father John Quincy, already battling family displeasure over a post-presidential turn in Congress, was less supportive. He ordered Charles to put marriage

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[412] William Everett, "Abigail Brown Adams," Obituary, *New England Historic and Genealogical Register*, July 1889, 343; 8 and 15 June 1889, *Quincy Patriot*. Prior to their marriage, Charles and Abigail were distantly related.
[413] Louisa Catherine Adams to George Washington Adams, 29 January 1827, Adams Papers.
[414] Charles Francis Adams, Diary, 17 July 1835.

plans on hold until he finished a two-year clerkship in Daniel Webster's law office, and secured a real job. The younger Adams was irate, and continued to rage against parental intervention as the engagement wore on. Blocking marriage was not, Charles thought, the act of a Christian father. His mother, often ill or distracted by the alcohol-related antics of her other two sons, seemed numb to Charles's pain. "Indeed I never saw a family which has so little of the associating disposition if it can so be called," Charles grumbled. "I am therefore not much attached to family and much more happy when independent of it."[415] At a time when the home was a safe harbor for Christians to convene, Charles pulled away from his famous parents. By 1829, he and Abby finally won their consent, moving into a spacious Boston townhouse. On the brink of creating a new life with Abby, his mind turned to fatherhood: Was the Christian family really a refuge, and how could he ensure it?

II. "Am I What I Should Be?"

Throughout the 1830s and 1840s, the ideal of the Christian family dominated and joined together America's ever-shifting public and private spheres.[416] Through art and labor, decoration and practice, Victorian homes like Charles and Abby's projected Protestant messages of union and progress despite the rising tides of modernity. Charles and Abby had, over time, five sons and two daughters; their notions of Christian family life likely evolved in tandem.[417] The home was also Abby's religious turf. Though she

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[415] Charles Francis Adams, *Diary*, 2:51.
[416] McDannell, *Christian Home in Victorian America*; Stokes, *The Altar at Home;* Douglas, *Feminization of American Culture*; and John Maass, *The Victorian Home in America* (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1972).
[417] The Adamses' fifth son, Arthur (b. 1841), died suddenly at the age of five.

was "subordinate" to the "government" of husband Charles, Abby and other Victorian mothers were heralded as *the* arbiters of religious nurture at home.[418] On the basis of manuscripts alone, Abby is a hard woman to know, a keen homemaker who charmed the sour Adams clan despite their family politics. Abby, who left little literary imprint of her spiritual journeys in the archive, seems to have stepped out of one of the glossy Currier and Ives lithographs of her day. Her letters revolved wholly around the welfare of her husband and children. Her brief, mature diary noted only the "perfect days" she spent calling on neighbors with fresh fruit baskets. "Mrs. Charles Adams is a very pleasant young woman," wrote one family visitor in 1842, with "an endless tongue and a great number of small children."[419]

The site to search for Abby's religious influence, then, is not in the archive, but at home. There, Abby and other Victorian mothers lined foyers with rich iconography of religious events or stories (like heirloom Delft Scripture scenes). Proudly, they laid out a handsome, gilt-tipped Bible for visitors to see.[420] Raised in the Brooks tradition of

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[418] See, for example, Horace Bushnell, *Christian Virtue* (New York: C. Scribner, 1861 ed.). On Bushnell's influence, see Michiyo Morita, *Horace Bushnell on Women in Nineteenth-Century America* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2004); Harvey Green and Mary-Ellen Perry, *The Light of the Home: An Intimate View of the Lives of Women in Victorian America* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983); Louise L. Stevenson, *The Victorian Homefront: American Thought and Culture, 1860-1880* (New York; Twayne Publishers, 1991); Theodore T. Munger, *Horace Bushnell: Preacher and Theologian* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, &Co., 1899); Barbara M. Cross, *Horace Bushnell: Minister to a Changing* America (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958); William R. Adamson, *Bushnell Rediscovered* (New York, United Church Press, 1966); David L. Smith, ed., *Horace Bushnell: Selected Writings on Language, Religion, and American Culture* (Chico: Scholars Press, 1984); and Robert Bruce Mullin, *The Puritan as Yankee: A Life of Horace Bushnell* (Grand Rapids and Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002).

[419] William Clarkson Johnson to Alexander B. Johnson, 3 October 1842, Adams-Johnson-Clements Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society. W. C. Johnson sued Charles for his wife Mary Louisa's share of the Adams estate.

[420] Laurel A. Racine, *Historic Furnishings Report: The Birthplaces of Presidents John Adams and John Quincy Adams*, 10 vols. (Charlestown: Northeast Museum Services Center, National Park Service, 2001); Amy Richter, *At Home in Nineteenth-Century America: A Documentary History* (New York and London:

philanthropy, Abby sponsored a number of "ladies' causes" and regularly mailed $10 bills to an ecumenical range of charities. Echoing the "separate spheres" vision of social motherhood that Victorians promoted, Mrs. Charles Adams also made the rounds to sick and dying relatives, dispensing prayers and dinner baskets.[421] The longest and most lyrical diary entry Abby wrote was an account of a teenage girl's funeral. Graveside, Abby watched as six farmhands raised and lowered the white bier, ivory tuberoses piled high. "We then all walked back across the same green fields without the child," she wrote.[422] On happier days like Christmas, Abby joined Charles in an hour of hymn-singing at home. They recited Psalms with their children, then made the carriage drive to town for several hours of church service. Parents might split up—often, Charles attended Boston's Brattle Street Church (Unitarian) with his sons, where his political connections lay; while Abby went to Trinity Church (Episcopal) with the girls, to reconnect with her father's business associates and their wives.[423] Like many Americans, the Adamses used Sundays to burnish the idea of the family unit as a microcosm of national community and

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New York University Press, 2015); Richard L. Bushman, *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities* (New York: Knopf, 1992).

[421] Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860," *American Quarterly* (1966): 151-174; Nancy M. Theriot, *The Biosocial Construction of Femininity: Mothers and Daughters in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988); C. Dallett Hemphill, *Bowing to Necessities: A History of Manners in America, 1620-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); Nancy F. Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780-1835* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997); Jeanne Boydston, *Home and Work: Housework, Wages, and the Ideology of Labor in the Early Republic* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); Stevenson, *The Victorian Homefront*; and Stokes and Conway, *The Market Revolution*.

[422] Abigail Brooks Adams, Diary, 9 October 1861, Adams Family Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

[423] Together, the Adamses frequently attended service at Boston's First Church (Unitarian), where Abby's brother-in-law Nathaniel Langdon Frothingham served as pastor from 1815 to 1850.

progress. Overall, they believed that good Christian citizens who tried out different paths always reunited at home, just as they would in heaven.

Sidelining salvation as an immediate goal, antebellum Protestants like Abby and Charles lived in an age of intense voluntarism that yielded, as Edwin S. Gaustad had observed, an age of reform—"an American Revolution all over again, only this time not in politics but in religion."[424] Increasingly, as Charles noticed during a series of 1830s fast-days, the pews felt much lighter. The face of New England religion was changing again, and Charles attributed it to the bustle and stir of industrial life. New families joined the Unitarian fold, upgrading the silver communion plate and sponsoring reforms.[425] The American Christianity of the 1830s, to Charles, took on a mechanical and inauthentic feel. Around him, religion flourished in a rising sea of specialized periodicals, a Sunday School Union, and missionary drives. New entities like the American Bible Society and the American Tract Society mass-produced and deluged homes with material: a million Bibles and six million tracts a year, respectively.[426] As Boston's Catholic hierarchy took shape, local Protestants kept busy in politics. Deftly, Charles and his fellow worshippers invoked Christian language to protest Cherokee Indian removal, debate the national

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[424] Edwin S. Gaustad, *Faith of Our Fathers: Religion and the New Nation* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), 122.
[425] On the growth of Unitarianism in nineteenth-century New England, see: Conrad Wright, *A Stream of Light: A Short History of American Unitarianism* (Boston: Skinner House Books, 1989); John A. Buehrens, *Universalists and Unitarians in America: A People's History* (Boston: Skinner House Books, 2011); and David Robinson, *The Unitarians and the Universalists* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1985).
[426] David Turley, ed., *American Religion: Literary Sources & Documents* (The Banks: Helm Information, 1998), 35.

bank's fate, decry slavery, and urge temperance reform.[427] But, Charles fretted, was all this "Christian" talk hollow?

Empty pews, to his way of thinking, *were* worrisome, but they likely meant Americans were just busy being model Christians somewhere else. A general decline in clerical talent upset him more; without their storied ministers, how would New Englanders set their moral compass? During one 1831 fast-day, Adams sat down in a "thin" church and analyzed the scene. Charles's Providence understood humility, but also man's right to enjoy life. "The doctrine that the mere act of self mortification is meritorious in the sight of God, is somewhat exploded," Adams wrote. "Surely he is not disposed to look harshly upon the moderate use of human enjoyments."[428] He was less kind to the clergy. Pressed to counter evangelical revivalists and to ferry faith to the Western frontier, New England Unitarians were stretched far too thin, Charles thought, and their pulpit work suffered as a result. "Faith is a favourite topic with Unitarian preachers who as a class believe less than almost any Sect of Christians," Adams wrote in his diary. "They consider faith only in its more limited applications to credibility, or to the qualities of humanity."[429] To atone for a spate of bad sermons, Charles began to pack his Bible on every business trip.[430]

Still eyeing the "slippery steps of the Presidential palace," Charles endured Boston's "religious gloom" throughout the 1830s. Wary of new theologies, Charles

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[427] Amanda Porterfield and John Corrigan, eds., *Religion in American History* (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010); Watson, *Liberty and Power*; Howe, *What Hath God Wrought*; Hatch, *Democratization of American Christianity*; and Noll, *America's God*.
[428] Charles Francis Adams, *Diary*, 4:23.
[429] Charles Francis Adams, *Diary*, 8:16-17.
[430] Charles Francis Adams, *Diary*, 4:81-82, 86.

continued to practice law while seeking a "suitable end" for his talents.[431] During this period, Adams tried out a fair number of churches, surprised to find that he far preferred the "unfashionable" gallery seats to the usual fourth-row presidential pew. There, Charles snagged a better perspective on the whole "house." He heard the choir's emphasis more clearly. The sight of old Harvard peers in the pulpit made him grimace, then whine. Their iterations of religious ideas, like universalism, made Adams mistrustful of how such "liberality" might operate on an impressionable worshipper base. "The world is not open easily to new truth," Adams wrote, and he was no exception.[432] For example, Charles found Transcendentalism—a philosophy based on experiential knowledge and self-reliance, as espoused by acquaintance Ralph Waldo Emerson and others—to be downright dangerous.[433] Charles accepted holy mysteries, and he loathed preachers who overexplained them. "The mystery of the birth of Christ is one of those things I never pretend to rest upon," Adams wrote with complacent rigidity. "Inexplicable as it is in every point of view, I prefer to let it remain so, satisfied with the divine nature of the mission and its beneficent purpose."[434] To Charles, theological illiteracy was now a point of pride, a badge of pious Christian submission.

Painfully, the collapse of a tight-knit Christian community around the itinerant Charles Francis Adams came when he needed it most, as his own famous family again

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[431] Charles Francis Adams, *Diary*, 5:187, 234; 6:9, 25, 107.
[432] Charles Francis Adams, *Diary*, 5:55.
[433] For the roots and growth of this philosophy, see Charles Capper and Conrad Edick Wright, eds., *Transient and Permanent: The Transcendentalist Movement and Its Contexts* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1999); and Philip F. Gura, *American Transcendentalism: A History* (New York: Hill & Wang, 2007).
[434] Charles Francis Adams, *Diary*, 5:87.

fell under attack. Now a published essayist and executor of the Adams family estate, Charles was idle, barred from pursuing a political career while John Quincy continued on the public stage. One brother, a likely suicide, had died in 1829; by 1834 Charles was "alone in the generation" following his second brother's violent spiral into alcoholism and debt.[435] "I am tossing about in an ocean of nothing," Charles wrote, blaming his fitful Christianity for the drift.[436] A 25 year-old father, he no longer saw a way to revive his original plan of leading a quiet literary life. When he read aloud Bible passages to Abby at home, Charles self-identified with the parable of Lazarus's resurrection.[437]

Grudgingly, he took up the family's political mantle. Charles discovered that his Protestantism eased the burdensome fact that he was now forever "wedded to the soil of Massachusetts."[438] Pious Americans like Charles had acquired strength through the "school of affliction," as past waves of sermonizers suggested. So Adams set to funding new institutions of charity and education, the kind that helped "good men contract *localities* of feeling" and bolstered self-improvement.[439] Half-heartedly, he trained for public office by observing fast days. Dutifully, he and Abby hosted ministers for dinner. If snow barricaded them inside and away from the church, then Charles skimmed over sermon anthologies or read aloud the Psalms to his children. This was the "numb deism,"

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[435] Charles Francis Adams, Diary, 25 February 1848. For the sudden deaths of George Washington and John Adams 2d, see Chapter 2.
[436] Charles Francis Adams, *Diary*, 4:313.
[437] Charles Francis Adams, *Diary*, 4:293.
[438] Charles Francis Adams, *Diary*, 2:396.
[439] See, for example, Ebenezer Porter**,** *Signs of the Times: A Sermon Preached in the Chapel of the Theological Seminary, Andover, on the Public Fast, April 3, 1822* (Andover: Flagg and Gould, 1823), 5-6, 9,15, 23.

more political than personal, that son Henry eviscerated in his *Education*.[440] And, as the nation grew, Charles and other Americans acknowledged how difficult it was to keep up the old ways of "knowing" God, and God's plan for the nation.

In the swirl of new ideas that suffused 1830s religious life, Charles Francis Adams and many of his republican peers clung to the vestiges of New England's colonial worship habits. One Anglo-American custom, the fast day, became Charles's preferred marker to measure his religious growth. The fast day, with its New England Congregationalist roots, existed as religious tradition and political sacrament from colonial days. The power to designate a fast day rested with local clergy and state governors; presidents could only "recommend" national fasts—as Charles's grandfather John had learned.[441] As Americans drew on religion to help build the early republic, days of fast and thanksgiving remained an interpretive site to ritualize spiritual engagement in political life once the Revolution's fervor had passed. Early nineteenth-century calls to the fast day shuttered businesses, legislatures, and schools in order to attract believers to the country's ever-multiplying denominations. A standard fast proclamation appointed a day of "solemn humiliation, fasting, and prayer," but it is hard to know if any actual fasting took place among observers. The proclamation language came from the Church of England, and it was issued with few American edits. State fasts were in April or September, with national fasts set for the summer months.[442] Reconfiguring a Puritan

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[440] For Henry Adams's reflections on his childhood and religious upbringing, see Chapter 5.
[441] For John Adams's fast-day controversy, see Chapter 1.
[442] William DeLoss Love, *The Fast and Thanksgiving Days of New England* (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin, 1895); David Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes: The Making of American Nationalism, 1776-1820* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

tradition for republican needs, adherents designed a Christian morality with political influence and a healthy sense of providentialism. Antebellum sermons outlined a public Christianity that blended religion with republicanism. Between 1800 and 1850, four themes dominated the fast day literature that Charles and his Protestant peers heard every year: the impulse of patriotic piety; the sources of national sin; the pulpits' critical advice on foreign policy; and the regulation of public response to afflictions like cholera.

A decade after yellow fever devastated New York, cholera struck at America's rising cities, in 1832. Municipal regulations and health boards were weak; medical knowledge was scant at best. Residents were advised to stay calm and to scrub down infected buildings with quicklime.[443] "King Cholera" claimed nearly a million lives in Europe; the death toll spiked higher throughout the spring and summer, as Canada and then New York City came under siege. Citizens understood little of how the contagion spread—via poor hygiene, polluted water, and a general lack of city sanitation protocols—but they were *certain* it came from anywhere except America (usually they pinned blame on the non-Christian powers of India or Asia). On 3 August, New Yorkers knelt in prayer for a local fast day, called by clergy to still the "hand of God" that administered cholera's retribution for an urban "mother-monster," the rampant sin of atheism.[444] Six days later, Bostonians joined them in a national fast day service, countering the pandemic's "destroying angel" with a strong show of Christian solidarity.

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[443] Charles E. Rosenberg, *The Cholera Years: The United States in 1832, 1849, and 1866* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962).

[444] See, for example, Orville Dewey, *A Sermon on the Moral Uses of the Pestilence, Denominated Asiatic Cholera: Delivered on Fast-Day, August 9, 1832* (New-Bedford: B. T. Congdon, 1832). In time, Charles found Dewey "more pretentious than pious" (*Diary*, 8:328).

[445] Many ministers, like the New Bedford Unitarian Orville Dewey, dusted off their old providentialist rhetoric to rouse the crowd. "If you doubt whether your ears hear me rightly, I repeat it, and say it is a *beneficent visitation*," Dewey thundered in his widely circulated sermon. "There is another calamity, another curse, which, as I believe, it is designed to remove, and which impressed me with greater horror. The Cholera, I am firmly persuaded, will prevent more suffering than it will occasion."[446]

To Adams and his Boston neighbors, the scourge of cholera hinted at the vengeful return of an Old Testament God, the same Providence that Americans had jettisoned for material gains. Deeply invested in national sins like slavery and luxury, Christians perceived of cholera—a seemingly arbitrary and vastly understudied illness—as divine judgment. Interpretation varied. An antebellum worshipper like Charles would *not* have heard—or appreciated—the same Calvinist jeremiad of "great destiny and sorry failings" that his Puritan ancestors did.[447] Rather, the concerned minister of 1832, who read news accounts of the epidemic and prayed over dying worshippers, confronted a monumental task in composing the August fast day sermon. For reference, he might have checked Charles Buck's new edition of the *Theological Dictionary.* There, Buck defined sin plainly as "the transgression of the law, or want of conformity to the will of God" and enumerated the recognizable kinds of sin. Buck listed eight types: original sin, actual sin,

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[445] F. W. P. Greenwood, *Prayer for the Sick: A Sermon Preached at King's Chapel, Boston, on Thursday, August 9, 1832, Being the Fast Day Appointed by the Governor of Massachusetts, on Account of the Appearance of Cholera in the United States* (Boston: Leonard C. Bowles, 1832).
[446] Dewey, *A Sermon on the Moral Uses of the Pestilence*.
[447] Henry F. May, "The Religion of the Republic," in *Ideas, Faiths, and Feelings: Essays on American Intellectual and Religious History, 1952-1982* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 163-186.

sins of omission, sins of commission, sins of infirmity, secret sins, presumptuous sins, and the unpardonable sin.[448] But in rationalizing cholera as a sacred judgment levied for mortal vice, to which sin(s) should the responsible clergyman refer? Since colonial days, Americans had accepted affliction as admonition for sin and as a way to renew faith, but cholera's pervasiveness and high mortality rate made it difficult for even a model Christian like Charles to comprehend.

Just as his undergraduate debauchery served Charles Francis Adams a lesson in Christian temperance, the cholera outbreak of 1832 prompted another sharp turn in his practice and belief. Charles feared that the Christian family circle he had built was vulnerable to providential wrath. Panicked that he could not save Abby and their small children from contracting cholera, Adams tried to inoculate the family with prayer. He transcribed his father's letters on the Bible. The family sang an extra round of Psalms, and Charles's Bible drills with the children intensified. On 9 August 1832, he fasted all day but skipped church, opting to stay home and read the Gospel instead.[449] Cholera's march added to Charles's characteristic anxiety over family affairs, and he sought refuge in his diary. "Have I done as much as I ought to have done?" Charles wrote. "Am I what I should be?"[450] Surrounded by the ornaments and cues of the Christian home so closely curated by Abby, he devoted the next four Sundays to drafting a full exegesis of the Sermon on the Mount, an Adams family favorite.[451] This writing assignment was, to

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[448] See "Sin," in Charles Buck, *A Theological Dictionary* (Philadelphia: James Kay, Jun. and Pittsburgh: John I. Kay & Co., 1831), 422-423.
[449] Charles Francis Adams, *Diary*, 4:343. The national fast day for cholera was called for 9 August 1832.
[450] Charles Francis Adams, *Diary*, 4:348-349.
[451] For related thoughts from John and John Quincy Adams on Matthew:5-7, see Chapters 1 and 2.

Charles's mind, an exercise meant to sharpen religious reasoning and virtue.[452] There, Charles laid out his thoughts on the opinions and the character of Jesus Christ, compiling a layman's guide to modern morality that wavered remarkably little over the next fifty years. With labor, he condensed it to two pages.

Though it marked Charles's only foray into deeper theological waters, his observations offer key evidence of how skepticism and belief coexisted in the antebellum Unitarian mind.[453] Religion was a constant for Charles, as it had been for past Adamses, because practicing faith served to shape personality and politics. Like John Quincy and Louisa, Charles conceived of his own Christian conscience as innate, a pure human instinct that Providence (or people) prodded into growth. "The object of all religion," he wrote, "is to operate upon human conduct."[454] When Charles began work on the exegesis in the summer of 1832, the 25-year-old father still considered himself a shapeless Christian "what" meant to be molded into a useful Christian "who." In Christ, Adams looked for another "self" to parse, and possibly to emulate. He was not entirely sold on what he found. First, like other Unitarians, Charles admired Christ as a gifted moral teacher, but he demurred from proclaiming Christ's divinity. With a trace of Brahmin elitism, Adams wondered how such "a man issuing from the midst of poor, uneducated people in a state of ignorance and excessive depression, should all at once pour out a

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[452] Charles Francis Adams, *Diary,* 4:412.
[453] On the evolution of Unitarian thought and American religious culture in this period, see: Howe, *The Unitarian Conscience*; Meyer, *The Instructed Conscience;* Smith, *Professors & Public*; Wright, *A Stream of Light*; Buehrens, *Universalists and Unitarians in America*); and Robinson, *The Unitarians and the Universalists.*
[454] Composed throughout August 1832, these untitled reflections appear in Charles Francis Adams, Literary Miscellany, 1841-1875, Adams Family Papers Additions, Massachusetts Historical Society.

flood of the purest morality upon the world?"[455] Second, while Christ effectively deployed doctrine and popularized morality in a manner that eclipsed Plato and the prophet Mohammad, Adams doubted Christ's utility as the best ethical model to follow. Here, Charles siphoned his reasoning directly from the social realities of antebellum life, and the arenas of God and Mammon through which he moved.

On the page, Charles pitted Seneca against Savior, to show that Christ conquered lust and greed where the household gods had not. Adams admired Jesus's "supernatural" ability to renounce pride and wealth, but he charged that Christ's human flaw was "a passion for prosletyism" that bespoke a "purely selfish motive."[456] Christ's power as a moral teacher, to Adams's mind, was undercut by an entrepreneurial avidity for promoting his parables abroad. Next, Charles tackled the dilemma of where else in history to seek new models of piety, beyond Christ. "There have been many persons claiming precisely the same character in which Christ appears to the world," Adams wrote, comparing and dismissing leaders of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. "But the mentality sticks in them all. There is a taint of self in every action."[457] To conclude his Scriptural analysis, Adams pledged a form of "self-government" that regulated his mind, heart, and actions to Christian piety. Further, in the face of afflictions like cholera, Charles rationalized that *his* God understood skipping a service or two. If the "inner man" was a true Christian, Adams wrote, then outward piety was just a rote exercise. "The practice of religion as inculcated by the Saviour," Charles wrote with new certainty, "is to

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[455] *Ibid.*
[456] *Ibid.*
[457] *Ibid.*

be found in the every day life of industrious men."[458] Intellectual pilgrimage over, Adams again returned to politics.

Following his bout of biblical inquiry, Charles Francis Adams committed wholly to a solo career of politics, publication, and philanthropy, armed with what he called "the force God has given me." For Charles, the period from 1832 to 1861 marked a high tide of literary production and public engagement. His fast-day reflections stirred up a dose of the religious confidence that he so desperately sought, transforming Charles into "what" he thought he should be as a Christian Republican, and as an Adams. Throughout the 1830s and 1840s, Adams authored book reviews and essays for Boston newspapers and *The North American Review*, reaping moderate success as a serious practitioner of *belles-lettres.*[459] An ardent bibliophile, he was magnetized to the new science of librarianship—the idea that saving and sharing historical documents was a manifestation of American identity and the cultural work of the gentleman scholar.[460] Powered by exceptional filiopiety, Charles trudged through sorting and reading the family papers: roughly a quarter of a million manuscript pages of diaries and loose letters. As a modern discipline, historical editing was largely underdeveloped. From the archive, Charles mined his transatlantic education, drafting an American genre of experience that differed from the

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[458] *Ibid.*

[459] On Charles's literary career, see: Duberman, *Charles Francis Adams*; Peter Shaw, "The Apprenticeship of Charles Francis Adams," *The American Scholar* 2 (1969): 312-322; and Earl N. Harbert, "Charles Francis Adams (1807-1886): A Forgotten Family Man of Letters," *Journal of American Studies* 6 (1972): 249-265.

[460] On the "gentleman-scholar" archetype and surrounding myths, see: Eugene Charlton Black, ed., *Victorian Culture and Society* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973); Daniel Walker Howe, "The Victorian Period in American History," in *The Victorian World*, ed. Martin Hewitt (London and New York: Routledge, 2012), 708-724; and Edmund Richardson, *Classical Victorians: Scholars, Scoundrels and Generals in the Pursuit of Antiquity* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 58-60.

"life-in-letters" models of European biography. Carefully, he wrapped the Adams cosmos around the familiar trajectory of Revolution-to-republic, embedding the family's story within that of the nation and effectively repackaging it for resale.[461] Surveying two generations' worth of the rare manuscript harvest, Charles began preparing the papers for publication. He finished in 1874.

Historical editing was a passion project that Charles fit in when public duties allowed. Elsewhere, he followed the Adams template, serving in the state legislature from 1841 to 1844, where he emerged as an antislavery leader. By 1846, Charles had found another outlet for his talents, as editor and proprietor of the Boston *Daily Whig*. Two years later, Charles joined the paternal line of ticketholders, running (unsuccessfully) as the vice-presidential candidate for the new Free Soil Party. Beginning in 1858, Charles served in the U.S. House of Representatives, until President Lincoln appointed him minister to the Court of St. James's in spring 1861. For the next seven years, Charles upheld Adams traditions: sampling Europe, enacting diplomacy, and soaking up religious views abroad.

Charles's early education had equipped him to be a man like the father he prized to a cultic degree, "fully imbued with the spirit of Roman fortitude qualified by Christian morals."[462] His Adams lineage also foretold a wanderlust for religious travel, and Charles next embraced it. Between 1832 and 1868, as he fought to consolidate political influence in his father's shadow, Charles drew on the popular ideal of the Christian family for

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[461] Shrewdly, Charles reintroduced the clan to a critical American public by deploying his tart, quotable grandmother Abigail in *Letters of Mrs. Adams: The Wife of John Adams*, 2 vols. (Boston: C. C. Little and J. Brown, 1840).
[462] Charles Francis Adams, Diary, 26 February 1848.

moral support. But at heart, he remained a pilgrim, happy to leave Abby's cozy Christian nest and try out other ways of knowing God. Religious travel became an intellectual escape for Charles, a path away from Unitarianism's stifling grip on Boston politics and culture. Charles's "journeyings" north, west, and south brought a much-needed respite from local religious thought and practice. Whenever he tangled with the Quincy pastor, William Parsons Lunt, over politics, Charles went on hiatus to *save* his faith. "I scarcely know what to do," Adams wrote of one such customary break. "To leave a church with which I am so intimately associated is in the highest degree painful, and yet to subject myself to such trials of Christian temper is spoiling all my religious feeling, and my respect for church forms."[463] There were other places to seek God in everyday life, he decided. Like many Victorians who sought the sacred and the sublime, Charles marveled at Niagara Falls' natural beauty. He went west to meet the Mormons, and dabbled in Catholic and Anglican aesthetics—along the way, testing his idea of Providence as the agent of progress. In many ways, Charles's travels of self-discovery illustrate a generation of elite men and women who exuded "parlor piety" at home, but who *really* preferred to engage with God alone, and on a foreign road.

III. "My Journeyings"

As the anthropologists Victor and Edith Turner have observed, travelers turn inward. They are equally focused on reaching an external goal (i.e. shrine), and on exploring the spiritual change that such an experience causes within (i.e. miracle). Along

[463] Charles Francis Adams, Diary, 3 November 1850. He returned to regular service in Quincy on 4 May 1851.

the way, they identify relics or markers of progress, and the routes they take are gridded onto maps as new "conduits of cultural transmission" and mercantile exchange. In literature, pilgrims appear vulnerable but steadfast. [464] They are lone souls thrown together and bonded by a collective desire to access something greater and eternal. These conflicting Protestant personalities coexisted within Charles and other Victorians. Here, it is worth mapping three pilgrimages pivotal to Charles Francis's mature Christianity: to Niagara Falls and Catholic Canada in 1836; to meet the Mormon leader Joseph Smith in 1844; and, finally, back to high-Church England as the Civil War tore America in two.

Niagara Falls, when Charles encountered it in 1836, was the Victorian pilgrim's amusement park of choice. By 1861, hordes of visitors had collected enough lay evidence to persuade the distant Roman Catholic Church that Niagara merited consecration as an official "pilgrim shrine."[465] Striking in its idyllic beauty and ready-built for thrill-seekers, the rocky site hunched over the American-Canadian divide. Once the Erie Canal was completed in autumn 1825, "doing the Falls" became a dramatic must-see on the New England version of the gentleman's grand tour. Voyagers like Charles, taking the "Fashionable Tour" through upstate New York and Canada with a set of Brahmin friends,

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[464] Turner and Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture*; see also Jonathan Sumption, *The Age of Pilgrimage: The Medieval Journey to God* (Mahwah: HiddenSpring, 2003); see Chapter 2 for John Quincy's poetry.

[465] On Niagara Falls and the site's wide-ranging intellectual and cultural influence, see: John F. Sears, *Sacred Places: American Tourist Attractions in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); Patrick McGreevy, *Imagining Niagara: The Meaning and Making of Niagara Falls* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1994); Christopher Mulvey, "New York to Niagara by Way of the Hudson and the Erie," in *The Cambridge Companion to American Travel Writing*, eds. Alfred Bendixen and Judith Hamera (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 46-61; Richard H. Gassan, *The Birth of American Tourism: New York, the Hudson Valley, and American Culture, 1790-1830* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2008); and Elizabeth R. McKinsey, *Niagara Falls: Icon of the American Sublime* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

approached via steamer and train. On arrival, Charles and other travelers could buy Indian beadwork or, like the novelist Nathaniel Hawthorne, "pilgrim staffs" at the souvenir shops ringing the site. Hawthorne's purchase was a wise one. Niagara's slippery rocks, weak staircases, and blinding spray all reinforced the physical adversity and emotional turmoil of an actual pilgrimage. Paid "hermits" popped out to startle visitors, lending authenticity to the scene. Tightrope walkers captivated the crowd.

Battered by Niagara's strong wind, Americans clutched their best-selling guidebooks and stumbled on toward the sublime. For a 25-cent general admission fee (some attractions cost extra), Charles hiked a semi-wild landscape of fancifully named venues like Horseshoe Fall, Termination Rock, the Cave of the Winds, and Mr. Barnett's "museum of curiosities." Judging by the bloated advertisements and gazetteers of a nascent tourist industry, Niagara's sacred spots (literally) promised to dose Charles with divine enchantment. The Cave of the Winds was, for example, the "*ne plus ultra* of wonders, a visit to which no person of sufficient nerve, ought to omit," one 1840 guidebook rhapsodized, "especially as there is always, in the afternoon, when the sun shines, a very bright rain-bow visible within the cave, and behind the sheet of water."[466]

Despite the circus sideshow and the hyperbolic ad literature that it relied on for profit, Niagara's splendors and terrors stirred genuine religious reaction in paying pilgrims like Charles. For Adams, and for other genteel city-dwellers or honeymooners on holiday, Niagara's "wild," prepackaged pilgrimage symbolized the Burkean sublime

[466] Oliver G. Steele, *Steele's Book of Niagara Falls*, 7th ed. (Buffalo: Oliver G. Steele, 1840), 38.

of the eighteenth century, and the mad rush of industrial change that they lived in.[467] As a walkable parable of beauty and danger, Niagara epitomized the residual lawlessness of America's borderlands, and the young nation's conflicted love of expansion. One prize view that recurred in Victorian lithographs and journals, for example, was the perspective taken "from the top of the American ladder," which bourgeois tourists used in their Niagara memoirs to glorify national progress and to nudge for even more. From that eerie summit, drawing closer to God and with chaos gushing below, many recorded spiritual epiphanies. Adams's initial response was less effusive than that of the American author Caroline Howard Gilman, who "felt the moral influence of the scene," and a great deal more like that of another cosmopolitan who "stamped" Niagara's peace on his heart, Charles Dickens.[468]

Part of a generation of early Victorians who traveled crosscountry and wrote about it, Charles also put down his changing impressions of Niagara's unique spirituality on the page.[469] Carrying a copy of Thomas Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus*, Adams landed at Niagara in June 1836. Like other elites, Adams enjoyed peering into relatively foreign territory to find and rate other "selves" and "types."[470] Niagara offered a canned pilgrimage for cautious Protestants like Charles to experience and record. Unlike many, he omitted the tiresome details of climbing the Terrapin Tower's faulty steps, of skirting

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[467] Sears, *Sacred Places;* McGreevy, *Imagining Niagara;* Mulvey, "New York to Niagara"; Gassan, *The Birth of American Tourism;* and McKinsey, *Niagara Falls*.
[468] Sears, *Sacred Places*; Jane Smiley, *Charles Dickens: A Life* (New York: Viking, 2002).
[469] Casey Blanton, *Travel Writing: The Self and the World* (New York: Routledge, 2002); Sears, *Sacred Places*; Gassan, *The Birth of American Tourism*; and Bendixen and Hamera, *Cambridge Companion to American Travel Writing*.
[470] Christopher Mulvey, *Transatlantic Manners: Social Patterns in Nineteenth-Century Anglo-American Travel Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

the Whirlpool's rapids, and of earning his Termination Rock Certificate. Rather, the 30-year-old father and thwarted politician focused his religious self on the sensory experience of the Falls. He heard Niagara three miles before he saw it, marveling at the sight of three waterfalls pounding down a wall of rock. He longed to duck under the spray, but he did not want to upset his already nervous children. The whole trip, Adams thought, was therapeutic but "impossible" to describe. "I looked with that kind of wonder which is not satisfied with seeing and continues under the impression till the mind ceases to be conscious of the cause operating upon it," Charles wrote, with his usual emotional restraint. "I was under constant excitement while at Niagara, never ceasing to take pleasure at observing the Fall from the various positions, although I could not analyze in what that pleasure consisted."[471]

En route, the train chatter had been about presidential conventions, so what Adams liked best about Niagara—its numb peace—naturally articulated his inner spiritual unrest over the grim prospect of an extended bout of political service to New England. The air was softer, Charles wrote, and Niagara's tranquility briefly spirited him away from party strife. The prickly Charles even managed to make a few friends among fellow pilgrims when they were hobbling along the same slippery paths, suddenly "united by scrambles." He disdained patronizing the souvenir-sellers, who polluted the sacred site with the "penny-wise projects of man." In his diary, pondering how the epic waterfall placed "man in scale with creation" for the industrializing age, Adams gazed out at Niagara's sheet of blue water in reverie. "To the worldly man, the rivers of God flowing

[471] Charles Francis Adams, *Diary*, 8:20-30.

in Paradise with milk and honey would appear only as power to move so many millwheels," Charles wrote bitterly, torn between his cosmopolitanism and his Christianity.[472]

Reluctantly abandoning Niagara's pleasure-grounds for the oddities of Catholic Canada, Charles traveled north to Quebec City and Montreal. Again, he expected a religious spectacle. The Bostonian Charles's impressions of North American Catholicism were, in line with other elite Protestants, fairly negative. While popular complaints about Catholics hewed to the same old prejudices that his grandfather John once voiced—they favored papal pomp and performance over true piety; they answered to Rome before Washington—an ugly groundswell of anti-Catholic invective shaped the cultural message further.[473] An influx of (mostly Irish) Catholic immigrants stocked new industries and companies with employees. At the same time, these newcomers disrupted long-established New England notions of class and privilege. For, as the "Catholic hordes" swept up construction jobs and settled in city boarding-houses, they also planted churches and schools, in Baltimore, Boston, New York, and Philadelphia. No longer a "priestless church," Catholics now nurtured seminaries, convents, and colleges. Nuns, more than clergy, reinforced ideals of Christian charity and exerted Catholic authority in regional

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[472] Charles Francis Adams, *Diary*, 8:27.

[473] On the growth of American Catholicism in the nineteenth century, and cultural reactions to its rise, see, for example: Franchot, *Roads to* Rome; James M. O'Toole, *The Faithful: A History of Catholics in America* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008); Jay P. Dolan, *The American Catholic Experience: A History from Colonial Times to the Present* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1985); Susan M. Griffin, *Anti-Catholicism and Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); and Jon Gjerde, *Catholicism and the Shaping of the Nineteenth-Century American Mind* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011). For John Adams's perspective on colonial Catholicism, see Chapter 1.

Protestant strongholds. These far-flung communities of women religious, who between 1727 and 1920 helped to proliferate 500 hospitals, 50 colleges, and more than 6,000 parochial schools, also attracted the wrath of Victorian critics.[474] Overall, the visible consolidation of Catholic social power unnerved traditional elites and upset political goals. By the 1850s, this Protestant anxiety manifested in the nativist and anti-Catholic policies of the Know-Nothing Party and others.[475]

It can be hard to see who "made" American Catholicism more in the nineteenth century—Catholic promoters, or Protestant critics—and that cultural friction spurred Charles's 1836 trip. Vigorously, Adams's Protestant colleagues debated the religion's theological authenticity in public. Doggedly, they investigated the Anglo-Protestant and Franco-Catholic imperial roots of American history. Thanks to popular literature and new opportunities for steam travel to Catholic enclaves like Canada, Protestants shored up their own "ism" by redefining "Romanism" and its related evils. Certainly, Boston's Brahmin corps was simultaneously perplexed by and disdainful of the "new" Catholics' rise, and convents came under their direct fire. Satirized in print and attacked on city streets, urban Catholics faced a difficult, transitional era in the 1830s and 1840s. In the antebellum Boston newspapers that Charles saw, for example, he read ample evidence of Catholic cruelties. Editions frequently carried a litany of atrocities committed against

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[474] Carol Coburn and Martha Smith, *Spirited Lives: How Nuns Shaped Catholic Culture and American Life, 1836-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999); Margaret M. McGuinness, *Called to Serve: A History of Nuns in America* (New York: New York University Press, 2013); and Franchot, *Roads to Rome*.

[475] John R. Mulkern, *The Know-Nothing Party in Massachusetts: The Rise and Fall of a People's Movement* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1990); Katie Oxx, *The Nativist Movement in America: Religious Conflict in the 19th Century* (New York and London: Routledge, 2013); and John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925* (New York: Atheneum, 1963).

young, innocent women by a tyrannical mother superior, or by a roving Catholic worker. Like his peers, Adams read shocking extracts of Rebecca Read's 1835 "tell-all" of the horrors she suffered in nearby Charlestown's Ursuline convent (*Six Months in a Convent*), which was burned to the ground by a mob of Protestant rioters in summer 1834.[476] Adams flipped through the juicier bits of Maria Monk's *Awful Disclosures*, an 1836 "exposé" of Montreal convent life, in which the mother superior acted as little more than a brothel director. Monk's and Reed's sensational tales—brimming with lecherous priestcraft, pimping nuns, and overstuffed prose—became instant bestsellers for the wide audience of anti-Catholic agents.[477] As his carriage rolled up to the gates of Maria Monk's former convent/brothel in 1836, Charles's religious curiosity ran high.

Adams had seen Catholics before, and even worshipped alongside them—in Europe. At Quebec Cathedral, his gaze lingered on the Gothic rafters longer than on the people in the pews. The architectural beauty of a foreign church attracted Charles far more than its ways of worship, and when he visited in summer 1836, Quebec's neoclassical façade was under reconstruction.[478] Repeatedly ravaged by fire and invaders,

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[476] Franchot, *Roads to Rome*; Nancy Lusignan Schultz, *Fire and Roses: The Burning of the Charlestown Convent* (New York: The Free Press, 2000); Jeanne Hamilton, "The Nunnery as Menace: The Burning of the Charlestown Convent, 1834," *U. S. Catholic Historian* 14 (1996): 35-65; and Daniel A. Cohen, "Miss Reed and the Superiors: The Contradictions of Convent Life in Antebellum America," *Journal of Social History* 30 (1996): 149-184.

[477] In March 1835 Read, a former Episcopalian and Ursuline novice, published her Gothic novel, *Six Months in a Convent, or, The Narrative of Rebecca Theresa Reed, Who Was under the Influence of the Roman Catholics About Two Years, and An Inmate of the Ursuline Convent on Mount Benedict, Charlestown, Mass., Nearly Six Months, in the Years 1831-2* (Boston). Maria Monk published *Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk, or, The Hidden Secrets of a Nun's Life in a Convent Exposed* (New York) in January 1836. Scholars continue to debate both works' authorship.

[478] Adams visited the Cathedral-Basilica of Notre-Dame de Quebec. On the church's past, see Franklin Toker, *The Church of Notre-Dame in Montreal: An Architectural History* (Montreal and Buffalo: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991).

the cathedral represented to Charles the inevitability of Christianity's (even *Catholic* Christianity's) endurance of earthly ills. Adams openly admired the church's high vaulted ribcage of golden-white arches and its bright, stained-glass windows. There, and when he attended high mass in Montreal, he found the "highly ornamental interior" of most Catholic churches "imposing," and the parishioners too focused on acts of "external piety."[479] While Adams singled out "devotion" as the lone precept that Catholics excelled at teaching, his private list of complaints about them multiplied. He could barely hear the minister, who stood some distance away from the pews. He thought mass, which clocked in at 1 ½ hours, was overlong. Worship aesthetics—especially the music—disappointed him, reifying his opinion that Catholicism was made for "an ordinary class of minds" that preferred "idolatry" to piety. "The common people in the aisles all seemed to pray," Adams wrote, glancing around the cathedral, "although it might be a matter of doubt if they knew to whom they were praying."[480]

The salacious aspects of Catholicism paled as Charles continued his Canadian journey, yet his interest in religious "others" grew. He was curious to see how cities shaped Christianity. Arriving at Maria Monk's site of the "Grey Nunnery"—where the novice/novelist had taken the "black veil," lain in her own coffin for a rite of initiation, and then "resolved to submit" to the physical assault of several "perfect" priests—Adams discovered none of the same lurid rites on display.[481] Rather, the convent and adjoining hospital functioned like a joint gift shop, selling "trifles" to fund their operating costs. "I

[479] Charles Francis Adams, *Diary*, 8:37-49.
[480] Charles Francis Adams, *Diary*, 8:39.
[481] Monk, *Awful Disclosures.*

confess I was puzzled to perceive the wickedness," Adams wrote, with more than a trace of disappointment.[482] Catholicism, Charles concluded, was more of a business than a cult, focused on making profits and not on "stealing" Protestants.

Once back in Boston, Charles watched the onset of urban Catholicism keenly, attending mass at new churches and describing the quality of oratory in his diary. He came to admire the "simple, clear, direct, and affectionate" discourse of "paternal" Catholic clergy. He was surprised to hear pastors address their flocks in English, not Latin: "I was not aware that this was within the rules," Charles wrote. "But being so, it explained the sources of influence over the people."[483] Trained to travel through foreign churches and read for aesthetic clues, Adams relied on local religion to teach him how city politics might ebb and flow. One Easter, for example, lilies and a white cross greeted Charles from the familiar Unitarian altar of the Brattle Street Church. The new Catholics, not old-school Unitarians, would own the city by century's end, he predicted. "The recognition of the papal calendar is complete," Charles observed of the change in tradition. "I foresee that in time Boston will be zealous in Romanism, but it will be long after my day."[484]

Niagara's beauty spoke to Adams's search for the sublime, and visiting Catholic Canada brought a respite from the burdens of New England church history and practice that he inherited. But unlike other Adamses, the mature Charles was less agile at

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[482] Charles Francis Adams, *Diary*, 8:37.
[483] Charles Francis Adams, Diary, 13 November 1853, Adams Papers.
[484] Charles Francis Adams, Diary, 17 April 1870, Adams Papers. Charles's projected chronology of Catholicism's rise in Boston was fairly accurate, for which see: Franchot, *Roads to* Rome; O'Toole, *The Faithful*; Dolan, *The American Catholic Experience*; and Gjerde, *Catholicism and the Shaping of the Nineteenth-Century American Mind*.

integrating foreign religious ideas into the teachings in which he was raised, likely a result of his dim appreciation for learning theology. His religious encounters were just that—awkward and unexpected episodes of amateur discovery. In these meetings, Charles resembled the bulk of Victorian Protestants who were, by turns, fascinated by and fearful of how new prophets and changing liturgical rites transformed God's message for America. Charles held new beliefs, and their caretakers, at a scrupulous distance. Throughout his life, he remained reticent to pursue robust religious inquiry at the intellectual level. As his Protestant peers grew bogged down in theological battles, Charles purposefully turned away. "The Trinity or the Unity are questions involving so much of unintelligible matter," he wrote, "that I think it is better to trust without discussing the goodness of God."[485] Instead, he worked at mastering the sensory study of religion. He clocked when worshippers sat or stood, and why certain ornaments decked the church. Aesthetics, not creeds, dominated his diary of exploration. Often, the architecture of foreign venues—a cathedral's bones, not the souls gathered inside—was Adams's key to understanding new forms of prayer.

Here, it is critical to recall that Charles considered these "journeyings" north, south, and west to be acts separate from his regular congregational membership. His pilgrimages away from the family faith were a chance to exhale, often occurring after he took on extra Unitarian duty. Take the spring of 1844: No sooner had he and Abby entered formally into the communion at the family church in Quincy—a step he had weighed since 1832—than Charles began booking a southern and western tour with his

[485] Charles Francis Adams, *Diary*, 8:142.

cousin, Josiah Quincy.[486] Abby, recuperating from a miscarriage, stayed home and read sermons. Together, Charles and Josiah traveled from Boston to Baltimore, then on to the Capitol for a few days. There, Charles enjoyed Unitarian sermons on "brotherly love," but he thought that the Washington clergy lacked the vehemence to exhort a crowd. "The difference between us and the South seems to be in matters of Oratory," Adams noted, "that their manner is better than their matter, and our matter is better than our manner."[487] Leaving Virginia, the two steamed down the Ohio River and then looped up the Mississippi, taking in the sights at Cincinnati, Louisville, and St. Louis, before landing in the Mormon complex of Joseph Smith's Nauvoo, Illinois, in mid-May. They were a prominent pair. Charles was serving in the Massachusetts House of Representatives, and his fourth cousin Josiah presided over Boston's City Council. They had a religious kinship, too. Both men were Unitarian elites and therefore highly skeptical of any self-pronounced prophet. "Revelation, I must confess it, never looked to me much beyond the frenzy of an excited imagination," Charles wrote in his diary.[488] But he was eager, like Josiah, to meet "the celebrated Joe Smith," who had swiftly consolidated both sacred and secular power in a fertile region of the expanding nation.[489] Now a presidential candidate

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[486] Charles Francis Adams, Diary, 4 February 1844, Adams Papers. Aside from Charles's diary and Josiah Quincy's letters home, the most comprehensive account of this trip appears in Henry Adams II, "Charles Francis Adams Visits the Mormons in 1844," *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, 3d ser. (1944-1947): 267-300.
[487] Charles Francis Adams, *Diary*, 8:47.
[488] Charles Francis Adams, *Diary*, 8:74.
[489] On Joseph Smith and the rise of Mormonism in antebellum America, see, for example: Richard L. Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (New York: Vintage Books, 2007); Jan Shipps, *Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985); Eric A. Eliason, ed., *Mormons and Mormonism: An Introduction to an American World Religion* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992); and John L. Brooke, *The Refiner's Fire: The Making of Mormon Cosmology, 1644-1844* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

who prophesied and authored scripture from his haven in the American west, Joseph Smith was as far from Unitarianism as Charles Francis Adams could flee in 1844.

When Charles called Smith "celebrated," he did not mean it as a compliment, for Adams came to judge the Mormon "king" as a canny profiteer and "mountebank apostle" of Christianity. In this way, Charles echoed the awe and ire that often characterized American attitudes toward "a peculiar people" who, with their homemade prophet and practice of polygamy, felt *too* foreign to be claimed by Christians of any stripe.[490] When they met in May—one short month before Joseph and brother Hyrum died at the hands of an anti-Mormon mob—Adams was familiar with the basic outline of Smith's religious development. Charles had heard of Smith's angelic visions, which began in the 1820s at his family's farm in upstate New York. Charles had read of Smith's efforts to set down those heavenly revelations, translated from holy golden plates, in the *Book of Mormon*, which was first published in 1830. And Charles had some idea of the formalization of Smith's beliefs into a religious institution, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints.[491] What Charles did *not* realize, until he sat down with Joseph Smith in Nauvoo, was how adroitly the Mormon tavernkeeper had bonded together religious and political authority on the ground. Although Josiah's biting account of the trip,

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[490] J. Spencer Fluhman, *"A Peculiar People": Anti-Mormonism and the Making of Religion in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012); and Patrick Q. Mason, *The Mormon Menace: Violence and Anti-Mormonism in the Postbellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).
[491] *Ibid.*

published in 1881, is far better known to scholars, Adams's reflections on meeting the first generation of Mormons deserve another look as well.[492]

To a seasoned traveler like the 36 year-old Charles, bad tavernkeepers were nothing new. At first glance, he counted Joseph Smith in that number, just another civil but unkempt host who hustled him in and out of a maze of occupied rooms in search of a clean, spare bed. The Mormon founder was, to the Bostonian's eyes, a man of "frank but not coarse vulgarity."[493] To Charles's mortification, Smith woke a dozing tenant, "whom he very abruptly slapped on the shoulder and notified to quit."[494] After providing a generous breakfast, Smith lectured Charles and Josiah on Mormon doctrine. With what Adams called a "cool impudence" that greatly "amused" the two New Englanders, he led them down to the private chamber to visit his mother Lucy Mack Smith. There, the Mormon unwrapped four Egyptian mummies and several rolls of yellow papyri. Next, "Joe" explained in detail the related holy manuscripts that he had transcribed. "Of course, we were too polite to prove the negative," Charles wrote in his diary with trademark Unitarian aplomb, "against a man fortified by revelation."[495] He was more interested in Smith's half-finished stone temple, his total control of the Nauvoo courts, and his use of communal tithing to fund Mormonism's national structure and growth. Despite Smith's best efforts at instruction, Charles never grasped the intricacies of Mormon belief, and he

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[492] Josiah Quincy published his version of the Nauvoo trip in two editions of the New York *Independent* on 29 December 1881 ("Leaves from Old Journals") and 9 January 1882 ("Leaves from My Journal"). For a thorough, modern reappraisal of Quincy's account, see John J. Hammond, "Re-examining the Adams/Quincy May 1844 Visit to Nauvoo," *The John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* (2010): 66-95.
[493] Charles Francis Adams, Diary, 15 May 1844, Adams Papers.
[494] *Ibid.*
[495] *Ibid.*

did not appreciate paying a quarter to Lucy for viewing the Mormon cache of antiquities and hieroglyphics. Smith's ideas of *how* Mormons marked revelation, conversion, and salvation never clarified in Charles's mind.

At first, Adams struggled to reconcile with Mormonism as a Christian-ish variation of "the Jewish system." By trip's end, Charles hazarded (wrongly!) that "Joe" Smith's "theological system is very nearly Christian Unitarianism—with the addition of the power of baptism by the priests of adults to remit sin, and of the new hierarchy of which Smith is the chief by divine appointment."[496] Asked to give an impromptu homily during the Easterners' visit, Smith obliged with a sermon on the tavern's front steps, defeating a Methodist heckler in the process. Charles missed his only chance to hear a Mormon preach. He was upstairs consulting with a walk-in client, a U.S. marshal chasing a debtor in Nauvoo, where federal power was often thwarted or superseded by the prophet's authority. For Charles, it was a reminder that harnessing sacred and secular power—as Smith had done—relied on a dangerous amount of charisma. As "Joe" walked the Brahmins back to their carriage, Adams mulled the Mormon "lesson" of his high-speed tour through western Christianity. "On the whole I was glad I had been," he wrote. "Such a man is a study not for himself, but as serving to show what turns the human mind will sometimes take."[497]

Throughout the 1840s and 1850s, politics and publishing absorbed Charles's attention.

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[496] *Ibid.*
[497] *Ibid.*

From 1841 to 1845, he served in the Massachusetts state legislature, gaining a reputation for his antislavery orations. Although he was the vice-presidential candidate of the newly formed Free Soil Party in 1848, Charles did not hold office again until 1858, when he was elected as a Republican member of the House of Representatives. He served in that post until early 1861.

With less time for long-distance junkets, Adams recommitted to raising a Christian family. At each journey's end, Charles chose to renew his faith: part of the pilgrim's "aggregation" phase, after the "liminality" of seeking God elsewhere. But, like most Adamses, he returned from cosmopolitan travel with a distinctly critical edge. A habitual pew-renter like his ancestors, the middle-aged Charles gloomily projected that Unitarian talent—and therefore, denominational influence on American thought and culture—was in steep decline. "As a consequence I full expect they will die out by the end of the century," he wrote.[498] Charles began to worry, looking at his growing children, that he was the last of the "Adams race" to view religion as a constant.

Around him, social evidence mounted that the Christian family ideal was dissolving along with the union. His youngest daughter, Louisa, regularly nailed just three commandments out of ten. Sons Henry, Charles Francis, Jr., and John Quincy II, showed faint interest in reciting their Psalms.[499] An occasional Sunday School teacher throughout the summers of the 1850s, Charles sought to reconnect his children with the Bible, just as his own father had done. Charles walked them through chapters of Jeremiah

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[498] Charles Francis Adams, Diary, 12 December 1869, Adams Papers.
[499] Charles Francis Adams, Diary, 1840-1850, *passim*, Adams Papers.

and the prophets, desperate to sow "habit and familiarity with the sacred book."[500] Early on, he declared it a losing battle, but he persisted with the Bible drills: "I fear that in this endeavour of mine to promote the religious culture of my children I have very nearly failed. Probably not many parents have persevered with more steadiness than I in efforts to advance those who have been placed under my care, but I regret to feel that I have not been successful," Charles wrote in his diary. "My children do not show the smallest sign of religious feeling—much less than I did at their age, although I was left much more to myself."[501] Once a caustic critic of Boston's "religious gloom," he now seemed to embody it, at home and abroad.

Diplomatic duty called Charles and his family back to England in the spring of 1861. Appointed American minister to Britain just as the Civil War erupted, Charles mostly relished the opportunity to step (finally) into the family spotlight of public service. Speeding away from what he called "the terrible explosion of the sad moral volcano of American slavery," Charles sheltered, with wife Abby and most of their family, in the buoyant culture of Queen Victoria's London.[502] In 1863 Charles scored a major diplomatic win. He persuaded the ministry to halt the progress of Confederate ironclad ships, built in Liverpool. His act stemmed a tide of British support for the south, just as a ring of Confederate agents pressured Victoria's ministry for aid.[503] Adams, who loathed

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[500] Charles Francis Adams, Diary, 5 February 1843, Adams Papers.
[501] Charles Francis Adams, Diary, 10 October 1847, Adams Papers.
[502] Charles Francis Adams, Diary, 31 December 1861, Adams Papers.
[503] For Charles's diplomatic career, and for the tangled interactions of northern and southern agents in England, see: Duberman, *Charles Francis Adams*; Foreman, *A World on Fire*; Howard Jones, *Blue & Gray Diplomacy: A History of Union and Confederate Foreign Relations* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010); Don H. Doyle, *The Cause of All Nations: An International History of the American*

the pomp and parade of diplomatic life at the Court of St. James's, resigned his post in 1868. While the years of 1861 to 1868 were personally and professional stressful to Charles—the livelihood of both his nation and his Union soldier son were in constant, grinding doubt—his time in England was, by far, the most fulfilling pilgrimage of Charles's life. An American statesman who felt more at home in cosmopolitan Europe, Charles mined every scrap of free time to indulge his aesthetic curiosity in foreign modes of Christianity and culture.

Charles Francis Adams's "journeyings" through English religion had, at first, a theme. His plan was to locate and catalogue the work of the country's quintessential church architect, Christopher Wren (1632-1723), who rebuilt London's religious landscape after the Great Fire of 1666.[504] Charles had no pretensions of professional architecture, but beauty was holy to him. And, like many Victorians, he found religious art to be highly therapeutic.[505] Tracking from St. Paul's Cathedral to a set of lesser-known chapels, Charles learned to spot Wren's signature motif: the cruciform layout with spare design, capped with a broad white dome that rose, more like a castle than a church, against London's gritty skyline. With his secretaries/sons Henry and Brooks in tow,

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Civil War (New York: Basic Books, 2015); and Frank L. Owsley, *King Cotton Diplomacy: Foreign Relations of the Confederate States of America* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1931).

[504] Adrian Tinniswood, *His Invention So Fertile: A Life of Christopher Wren* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

[505] Kristin Schwain, *Signs of Grace: Religion and American Art in the Gilded Age* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008); David Morgan, *Protestants and Pictures: Religion, Visual Culture, and the Age of American Mass Production* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); Geoffrey Blodgett, ed., *Victorian America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1976); Irving H. Bartlett, *The American Mind in the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (Arlington Heights: H. Davidson, 1982); Burton Raffel, *American Victorians: Explorations in Emotional History* (Hamden: Archon Books, 1984); Thomas J. Schlereth, *Victorian America: Transformations in Everyday Life, 1876*-1915 (New York: HarperCollins, 1991); and Steve Ickingrill et al., *Victorianism in the United States: Its Era and Its Legacy* (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 1992).

Charles methodically worked his way through most of Wren's 52 churches. His notes were brief, and focused on the quality of light in each house of worship. "We value this so little in America, that we make cellars of our churches," Charles wrote after a stop at St. Michael Bassishaw.[506] Just as the Civil War fractured Charles's world and shredded all inherited notions of Providence, he chose to take his cues from Wren, and rebuild his sense of Christianity, first.

Often, the city itself expanded *and* intruded on Charles's enjoyment of religious beauty. He disliked the park crowds. Italian opera music blared loudly by his legation office, and gin shops gaped open for early-morning business on the Sabbath. "Think of this on a Sunday in New England," Adams exclaimed.[507] Yet, Charles resumed his religious wanderings, undeterred. He sampled mesmerism and Christian "parlor games" alongside his elite English peers.[508] He tried out the British versions of Unitarian, Presbyterian, Anglican, and Baptist denominations. Overall, Adams decided that Britain's Christian clergymen possessed "more fervor" and less talent than their American cousins.[509] Filiopiety, too, guided his steps back to boyhood haunts. Charles knelt in prayer at All Hallows Barking, where his parents wed, and wept quietly at the wonder of it. "Life has rolled away since I was here," Charles wrote, with his customary blend of melancholy and nostalgia.[510] At Ealing, where he and his brothers (now long dead) had reunited, Charles circled their old rooms. "My spirit was softened all day as if I

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[506] This church was demolished in 1900. St. Michael Bassishaw's former site is now the Barbican Centre.
[507] Charles Francis Adams, Diary, 23 June 1861, Adams Papers.
[508] Charles Francis Adams, Diary, 17 November 1861, Adams Papers.
[509] Charles Francis Adams, Diary, 1861-1868, *passim*, Adams Papers.
[510] Charles Francis Adams, Diary, 24 March 1862, Adams Papers.

had accomplished a pious pilgrimage," Adams observed, "and as if I could lay up the remembrance of a cheering vision of the distant past, as one of the compensations of my in some respects painful present state."[511] In 1868, with the city at his back, Charles felt he had mastered a new stage of Christian pilgrimage. Saints and scripture no longer laid out for him the shrines or goals that he must meet. *He* did.

Conclusion: Death of a Christian Examiner

Suffering from ill health and dementia in the late 1870s and early 1880s, Charles receded from public view, and died in 1886. Abby followed three years later. To the world, Charles Francis Adams seemed to be the ultimate all-American insider: scion to a political dynasty, a Bostonian who honed his cosmopolitan aesthetics in the royal courts of Europe. He was far from it. As his religious journeys show, Charles never felt that blessed. He was most at home in a strange city, and violently uncomfortable in a roomful of Americans. New England religion baffled and at times repulsed him enough to flee. Charles journeyed away from the family church not because he suddenly stopped being Christian, but because he thought his Christian instinct might grow dull from the low quality of liturgy that he heard there. Overall, Charles's most deeply felt spiritual actions came from the bone-deep certainty that he was born with a religious instinct. Christianity was always *his*, Charles believed, and that preset condition merely needed his steady nurture to thrive. Pilgrimage helped. By the end of his life, Charles was convinced that skepticism was a healthy intellectual attitude as well; his natural Christianity made him

[511] *Ibid.*

immune to unbelief. "I believe so fully in Christianity that I have little fear of discussion of Atheism in any form it may take," Charles wrote in his omnipresent diary.[512]

As the first descendant to tackle publishing the Adams archive while shouldering diplomatic duties, Charles spent his life hunting for the religious confidence to live up to recent history and to play down family scandals. Like his father and grandfather, Charles dutifully attended Harvard, manned a post as the American minister in Queen Victoria's London, and dabbled somewhat successfully in the twin spheres of local and national politics. He was the family's last providentialist, determined to see God's hand in American history and to examine Christianity for republican adaptability. Charles's "journeyings" into Christian aesthetics inspired son Henry to understand religion from the outside in—no need to suffer over studying theology. And, as youngest son Brooks would do, Charles evinced a cultic adherence to the family as a form of religion, a clan that demanded his protection and preservation to meet providential goals.

This chapter has reconsidered statesman and political scion Charles Francis Adams as a Christian pilgrim in the age of American Victorianism, an era when he and others "sought careers that shaped identities, leisure that engaged imagination, family life that evoked resonant feeling, and a political process that explored ideals."[513] Among members of Adams's generation, the substance of faith's appeal dimmed, eclipsed by massive social changes in communication, transportation, and intellectual exchange. Church membership became more of a formality, or a beacon to indicate social status,

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[512] Charles Francis Adams, Diary, 15 November 1870.
[513] Rose, *Victorian America*, 4.

rather than a proof of deep piety. Adams, at first nonchalant about this change, became increasingly distressed about how Christian republicans might properly behave. For, like his peers, Adams grew perplexed as to how—if at all—his family legacy of Enlightenment Christianity operated in the industrial society through which he traveled. Along with other well-educated Victorian elites, Charles audited troves of moral philosophy to shape his self-identity. Unlike many, he did so in the shade of two less-loved presidents. Charles's close account of the Victorian commoditization of Christianity, then, forms another link in the long chain of Adams family faith. In John Quincy's America, Christianity was a unifying force for those who pursued temperate, disciplined lives. In Charles's America, the new opportunities created by market society bucked against those norms as talk of disunion swelled; and political fractures made men and women move against old religious currents.

Charles's own religious biography, always at hand in his diary, disappointed him most. Adams traveled widely through foreign faiths, but never fully shouldered New England practice. To his death in 1886, Charles was perplexed as to how (if at all) the family heritage of liberal Protestantism fit into the American republic. Despite all the Bible drills, Charles knew he never imprinted Christianity on his children. And that failure of faith—more than any political injury—gutted him to the core. "Their total neglect of religious services is a source of profound regret to me," he wrote, "as it is the first departure of the race since it removed from the old country for free worship."[514] His ancestors grappled with institutionalizing ideologies like providentialism and Christian

[514] Charles Francis Adams, Diary, 30 August 1874, Adams Papers.

republicanism. They drew on New England tenets of church and state to build revolution, then government. Charles, in turn, led a host of critics who quantified and questioned religion's value. Behind him trailed a boy who savored his tales of Niagara's roar and made his own notes on Wren's rafters. The real payoff of Charles's life of pilgrimage and Christian examination came, perhaps, a generation later, with the rise of son and skeptic Henry Adams.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Cosmopolitan Christianity of Henry Adams

For the curious New Englander of 1886 seeking a glimpse of the Great Buddha in Kamakura's full autumn splendor, the journey to Japan had to begin in late spring. The 48 year-old historian Henry Adams, still mourning the suicide of his wife Clover, packed a handful of books on Buddhism and left his new H Street townhouse in May.[515] From Washington, D.C., Henry traveled back to his native Boston and changed trains for New York, where he "dragged" friend and artist John La Farge aboard the Albany express bound for San Francisco. Both men were grateful for the opportunity to escape recent setbacks. La Farge's bankruptcy had tarnished his fame as muralist of Boston's new Trinity Church, and the Catholic artist hoped that a three-month tour of Shinto temples would rejuvenate work on his next commission, an altarpiece in New York City depicting *The Ascension of Our Lord.* Turning eastward, Henry thought, would "right" his point of view and hasten completion of his multivolume *History of the United States 1801-*

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[515] Henry Adams's private library, held at the Massachusetts Historical Society, contains roughly 20 titles related to Buddhist and Hindu studies. Representative titles of non-Western religion include Samuel Johnson's *Oriental Religions and Their Relation to Universal Religion*, 2 vols. (London: Trübner, 1879); H. H. Wilson, *Essays and Lectures on the Religions of the Hindus*, 2 vols. (London: Trüber & Co., 1861-1862); and Henry Osborn Taylor, *Deliverance: The Freeing of the Spirit in the Ancient World* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1915).
On the introduction of Eastern thought to nineteenth-century American elites like Henry, see Thomas A. Tweed, *The American Encounter with Buddhism, 1844-1912: Victorian Culture and the Limits of Dissent* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); Christopher E. G. Benfey, *The Great Wave: Gilded Age Misfits, Japanese Eccentrics, and the Opening of Old Japan* (New York: Random House, 2003); and David Weir, *American Orient: Imagining the East from the Colonial Era through the Twentieth Century* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2011). For shifting interpretations of what constitutes "American Buddhism" and why scholars struggle to trace its diffusion, see Peter N. Gregory, "Describing the Elephant: Buddhism in America," *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation* 2 (2001): 233-263.

1817.[516] Thanks to a family perk, the cosmopolitans traveled in high style. For the next eight days, the pair enjoyed skimming through the western landscape in the comfort of the director's private car—La Farge sketching the plains in watercolor, and Adams reading about the rites of Buddhism between naps. Outside, rumors swirled that they were on a mysterious "railroad-related" mission to Japan for the American government. Then, in Omaha, as Henry remembered it, "A young reporter got the better of us; for when in reply to his inquiry as to our purpose in visiting Japan, La Farge beamed through his spectacles the answer that we were in search of Nirvana, the youth looked up like a meteor, and rejoined: 'It's out of season!'"[517]

Fashionable or not, the journey suited a seeker like Henry Adams, who epitomized the "confused Christianity" of the Gilded Age and centered his life on looking for a usable nirvana.[518] This chapter charts Henry's assault on the two central faiths—Christianity and republicanism—that had set (and mostly kept) the Adams dynasty in political office for two centuries. For, in a rogue departure from family history, the skeptic Henry proved far more cosmopolitan than Christian. The rise of Henry's unbelief, made evident here through analysis of his literary output and world travels, reveals how Gilded Age skeptics flourished: by setting aside the search for God's existence; by

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[516] Also known as *The History of the United States During the Administrations of Thomas Jefferson and James Madison*, Henry Adams issued this work in nine volumes between 1889 and 1891.

[517] Henry Adams to John Hay, 11 June [*1886*], in eds. J.C. Levenson et al., *The Letters of Henry Adams*, 6 vols. (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1982-1988), 3:11-12. Hereafter cited as Levenson, *Letters of Henry Adams.* John La Farge published his account of the trip in *An Artist's Letters from Japan* (New York: The Century Co., 1897). Henry's elder brother, Charles Francis, Jr., was president of the Union Pacific Railroad on which they traveled.

[518] James Turner, *Without God, Without Creed: The Origins of Unbelief in America* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1985). Broadly interpreted, the Buddhist concept of nirvana is founded on Four Noble Truths: Suffering exists; suffering has a cause; suffering has an end; there is a cause to the end of suffering, and that path brings enlightenment.

making a "nontheistic morality;" and by elevating new ideals or non-Western faiths above those of Christianity.[519] Deliberately, year by year, Henry sloughed off the family heritage of godly republicanism. His religious disenchantment, however, was more complex than a simple "subtraction story."[520] Rather, Henry embraced the "purity" of modern science and, later, Buddhism, transforming himself into a savage critic of American manners. "Every church mouse will write autobiography in another generation," Henry predicted in 1883, "in order to prove that it never believed in religion."[521] Here, and in the eponymous *Education* (1918) that followed, Henry's trajectory from lukewarm Christian to full-on skeptic exposed a deepening rift in the busy landscape of American religious thought.

Given his half-century siege on the intellectual foundations of church and state in industrial America, Henry Adams fits the unique category of an "exceptional normal" as a historical subject, since his religious arc reveals "social mechanisms failing to work."[522] More than a millstone that cramped scientific understanding, religion was to Henry a crippling force, one that dragged down statesmen and obliterated the world's finer forms of culture. Paradoxically, the ritualistic act of consuming religious culture—rather than *being* religious—fueled Adams's masterworks. Henry came to believe that modern

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[519] Turner, *Without God, Without Creed*, 171-202.
[520] Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007).
[521] Henry Adams to John Hay, 23 January 1883, in ed. Worthington Chauncey Ford, *The Letters of Henry Adams, 1858-1891*, 2 vols. (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1930), 1:347. Hereafter cited as Ford, *Letters of Henry Adams.*
[522] For Edoardo Grendi's conceptualization of the "exceptional normal" in microhistory, see Peter Burke, *History and Social Theory* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 42; Carlo Ginzburg, John Tedeschi, and Anne C. Tedeschi, "Microhistory: Two or Three Things That I Know About It," *Critical Inquiry* 20 (1993): 10-35; and Elizabeth A. Clark, *History, Theory, Text: Historians and the Linguistic Turn* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004).

Christianity, in its familiar American Protestant format, corrupted progress. Crafting a worldview that rejected his father's corrosive Providence, Henry embodied a nascent agnosticism, or suspension of belief in God, that shaded scholars' thought as the nineteenth century motored to a close.[523] By 1914 and bracing for war, he self-identified as a "faithless" St. Augustine of Hippo, trapped "like an octogenarian rat" in a world "whose social, political, scientific and moral systems rests on a religion of high explosives."[524] How Henry Adams got *there*—and why he *still* pursued nirvana—mirrored a major plot twist in late Victorian life: For a growing number of Americans, Christianity was no longer a constant.

I. Another *Education* Abroad

Shearing away from his Puritan namesake, young Henry Adams (1838-1918) displayed none of the usual, familial instinct to uphold and administer God's government in New England. While the previous chapters have focused on how the Adamses made religion, Henry's story is one of cosmopolitan curiosity and deliberate destruction. As a cultural critic, he was of course forceful in addressing issues of church and state. Henry was one of the intellectual leaders of a pivotal generation of modernizing Americans who abandoned providentialism, decentered biblical influence, and unapologetically reframed life, as scholar Anne C. Rose has observed, by placing

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[523] For a reconsideration of categorizing Anglo-American scholars of Henry's era as either religious or secular, see Frank M. Turner, *Contesting Cultural Authority: Essays in Victorian Intellectual Life* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 3-37.

[524] Henry Adams to Charles Milnes Gaskell, 7 [*August. 1914*]; to Lawrence Mason, 1 April 1915, in Levenson, *Letters of Henry Adams*, 6:657, 692.

"sacred values in secular terms."[525] Like other Victorians who came of age in the Civil War era, he grew up practicing a "mild deism" under the guidance of the nation's first family.[526] In his memoir, *The Education of Henry Adams*, he described that "large and overpowering" family as "rather an atmosphere than an influence."[527] By his account, each child was indoctrinated into the Adams/Brooks legacy with a bound Bible and a silver christening mug.[528] Little Henry, the middle child of seven, mumbled through the weekly recitation of his Psalms, and, early on, questioned the Scripture's historical accuracy.[529] He suffered through Sunday services at the old Unitarian church in Quincy, defecting for foreign congregations when overt political themes (slavery, temperance) preoccupied the pulpit.

Along with his peers, Henry rejected the idea of an omniscient Providence—the Civil War's horror confirmed that he had no real clue what God "did," either for North *or* South. Raised Christian in America, Henry showed no interest in using Protestantism as a means of reform. Later, he produced *Democracy: An American Novel* (1880) to satirize republicanism, the other family faith. "He went through all the forms; but neither to him nor to his brothers or sisters was religion real," Henry wrote of his first dealings with faith and doubt. "The children reached manhood without knowing religion, and with the

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[525] Mark A. Noll, *The Civil War as a Theological Crisis* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006); Anne C. Rose, *Victorian America and the Civil War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Mary Farrell Bednarowski, *American Religion: A Cultural Perspective* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1984).
[526] Henry Adams, *The Education of Henry Adams* (Cambridge: The Riverside Press, 1918), 34, 35.
[527] Henry Adams, *Education*, 36.
[528] Henry Adams, *Education*, 15.
[529] Only five siblings lived to adulthood; Henry's younger brother Arthur (b. 1841) died in 1846.

certainty that dogma, metaphysics, and abstract philosophy were not worth knowing."[530] Christianity never felt authentic to Adams, even as a young man. Great-grandfather John, that "church-going animal," would have been shocked to hear Henry's confession of faithlessness. The sudden death of "real" religious instinct haunted his *Education*, and splintered Henry's intellectual attention along parallel lines of interest in medieval and modern life. In counterpoint to his Puritan ancestor, then, it is worth seizing on Henry Adams's own query: Where did the roots of his *un*belief lie?

It can be hard for biographers to recall that Henry was once a child; and that the *Education* is not the sole source—nor even an accurate one—for reconstructing his religious life.[531] In fact, Henry Adams's *Education* may be the greatest con in American history-writing. There, his self-invention (and subsequent self-annihilation) begins at baptism, when Henry conjures up a fictional preacher, venue, and guest list for his own

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[530] Henry Adams, *Education*, 34, 35.

[531] Two modern trilogies serve as the standard reference works on Henry Adams: Ernest Samuels, *The Young Henry Adams; The Middle Years*; *The Major Phase* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966); and Edward Chalfant, *Both Sides of the Ocean: A Biography of Henry Adams, His First Life, 1838-1862*; *Better in Darkness: A Biography of Henry Adams, His Second Life, 1862-1891*; *Improvement of the World: A Biography of Henry Adams, His Last Life, 1891-1918* (Hamden: Archon Books, 1982-2001). Significant, well-focused anthologies include David R. Contosta and Robert Muccigrosso, eds., *Henry Adams and His World* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1993); and William Merrill Decker and Earl N. Harbert, eds., *Henry Adams and the Need to Know* (Charlottesville: The University of Virginia Press, 2005).

Overshadowed by the eponymous *Education*, most scholars have employed one of three methods to profile Henry: by using psychobiography, by isolating a single strand of his output for manageable analysis, or by grouping him with like-minded cosmopolitan thinkers. See, for example Max I. Baym, *The French Education of Henry Adams* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1951); Robert A. Hume, *Runaway Star: An Appreciation of Henry Adams* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1951); J.C. Levenson, *The Mind and Art of Henry Adams* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1957); Melvin E. Lyon, *Symbol and Idea in Henry Adams* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1970); William Dusinberre, *Henry Adams: The Myth of Failure* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1980); T. J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981); Michael O'Brien, *Henry Adams and the Southern Question* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2005); and Gary Wills, *Henry Adams and the Making of America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2005). Curiously, they often fail to treat the topic of his own religion beyond mention of his anti-Semitism, or to praise his work on the medieval soul.

christening.[532] To understand Henry's growth as a skeptic, we need to hold aside his *Education*, and take a wider view of Christian practices and beliefs as Henry first encountered them in the 1840s and 1850s.

The First Church parish registers show that pastor William Parsons Lunt baptized Henry before the Unitarian congregation in Quincy on 23 September 1838. After that, the church record falls fairly silent.[533] So what kind of faith had Henry accepted through baptism? Moments after Henry's welcome to Unitarianism, Lunt preached that sin ruined the mind. He emphasized that performing religious duty was the hallmark of a truly "moral" person. Henry's father Charles, who prized inner morality over outward piety, bridled at the pastor's advice. Charles found most clergy "irksome" and out of touch. Religious leaders like Lunt, in Charles's eyes, blinked past the dilemmas incurred by chasing success in Victorian America. "Mind is not moral," Charles grumbled that evening. "If it was, the world would be a less difficult place to live correctly in."[534]

Broad doctrines of Christian community prevailed in New England culture and shaped Henry's early development. In keeping with mainstream Unitarian thought, Henry was seen "not only as a religious, but as a social being." As he heard it, "this law of sociability" would "show itself in religious feeling and action, as well as in multitudes of

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[532] Henry opens the *Education* with a Boston venue and an "uncle" minister presiding, on p. 3.
[533] Members' Registers, Vol. 3, p. 294, United First Parish Church of Quincy, Massachusetts. I am grateful to Pastor Emeritus Reverend Sheldon Bennett, Pastor Reverend Rebecca Froom, Gary Haynes, and member Bill Westland for sharing the wealth of baptismal, marriage, and membership records held at the church, now Unitarian Universalist.
[534] Aida DiPace Donald and David Donald, eds., *The Diary of Charles Francis Adams*, 8 vols. (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1989), 8:114-115. Lunt preached from Hebrews 12:14 and Mark 7:11-12.

other things."[535] Churches, as Henry heard throughout his childhood, were therefore noble but wholly voluntary associations.[536] He grew up in a well-to-do household where the rigors of theology never really held sway.[537] "Men are not *born* into the church, but into the *world*: though volumes have been written to the contrary," one prominent minister advised in his best-selling manual. "Nor can any act of power, ecclesiastical, or civil; or any parish, or diocesan, or other geographical lines, make them members. It must be by their own intelligent act."[538] This, then, was the Unitarian community that first claimed Henry Adams as a Christian in baptism: individualistic, voluntary, and experiential.

Coming of age in the 1840s and 1850s, Henry experienced a home church in transition. Throughout New England, the suburban Unitarian membership's influence ebbed. Meanwhile, central Boston's fast-rising Unitarian churches drew larger crowds, better preachers, and wealthier donors. [539] Following Lunt's death in 1857, the Quincy parish sank into eclipse.[540] A half-century cycle of Transcendentalist utopias and reform

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[535] *Ratio Disciplinæ, or the Constitution of the Congregational Churches* (Portland: Shirley and Hyde, 1829), 21-22.
[536] Sidney E. Mead, *The Lively Experiment: The Shaping of Christianity in America* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 103-133.
[537] For the religious instruction of Henry and his siblings, see Chapter 3.
[538] John Mitchell, *A Guide to the Principles and Practices of the Congregational Churches of New England: With a Brief History of the Denomination* (Northampton: J.H. Butler, 1838), 39.
[539] William R. Hutchison, *The Transcendentalist Ministers: Church Reform in the New England Renaissance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959); David Robinson, *The Unitarians and the Universalists* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1985); Conrad Wright, ed., *A Stream of Light: A Short History of American Unitarianism* (Boston: Skinner House Books, 1989); James Darsey, *The Prophetic Tradition and Radical Rhetoric in America* (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 159-160; and John A. Buehrens, *Unitarians and Universalists in America: A People's History* (Boston: Skinner House Books, 2011).
[540] The Rev. Sheldon Bennett, in discussion with the author, 28 January 2014. For the development of First Church, see Chapter 1; and Charles Francis Adams, Jr., *The History of Braintree, Massachusetts (1639-*

movements had rejuvenated some American Unitarians with the spiritual energy of philosophical idealism.[541] But as the emergent Universalist community encroached on Unitarian turf in Quincy, the Adams family's preferred sect seemed to hit an intellectual plateau. Exhausted from theological battles, the antebellum Unitarian establishment, at the local level, was simply too depleted to excite Henry's generation.

Adams was aware of these great structural changes in American religion, but wholly uninterested. The theological controversies that habitually gripped New Englanders flew beneath his focus. Rather, Henry blamed the "irksome" Unitarian clergy when his religious instinct, ever weak, sank further. He loathed the Bible drills that his father led at home, and scoffed at pulpit oratory. Around him, the Unitarian parish still moved with stately tradition. But Henry sensed a hollowing out of piety in reciting creeds, and he resented wasting hours in worship that might be spent in literary pursuits. As the First Church withdrew from denominational preeminence, young Henry quietly called off his search for God. His experience echoed that of other Victorian elites, who found that the "enfeeblement of liberal Protestantism combined with the fragmenting sense of selfhood" deeply etched "widespread feelings of personal disorientation and anomie."[542]

1708): The North Precinct of Braintree (1708-1792) and the Town of Quincy (1792-1889) (Cambridge: The Riverside Press, 1891), 10-57, 144-157.

[541] On American Christians' pursuit of (Germanic) philosophical idealism, which predicated a "spiritualizing" God but resisted the idea that the complexity of human progress was reducible to a few universal variables, see David W. Noble, *The Paradox of Progressive Thought* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1958), 125-156; and Paul K. Conkin, *The Uneasy Center: Reformed Christianity in Antebellum America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 97, 148.

[542] T.J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace*, 117-118.

From an early age, Henry Adams prioritized searching for "self" over searching for God. Arriving at Harvard in 1854, he followed the well-worn family path and dabbled in Christian metaphysics, but he deemed that system of ideas wanting.[543] He felt that the metaphysics of his father's day—still a mainstay of most Quincy pulpit orations —was ill-suited to inform his intellectual journey. The central problem of American faith, Henry thought, was the same that afflicted any religion: clergymen failed to account for the laborious process of fashioning self-identity, and when they did address the relationship between religion and society, ministers tended to treat God as the sole agent of human development. Henry Adams dissented. He thought that the metaphysical "god Whirl" (and even the secular authority of science) wrote people *out* of the story of human progress by decentering the role of individual will.[544] "I AM is the starting point and goal of metaphysics and logic, but the church alone has pointed out that this starting-point is not human but divine. The philosopher says—I am, and the church scouts his philosophy," Adams later wrote of encountering the drawbacks of Christian metaphysics. He confessed that taking the skeptic's path triggered repercussions, too. "She answers NO! You are NOT, you have no existence of your own," he continued, satirizing credal

[543] Catherine L. Albanese, *A Republic of Mind and Spirit: A Cultural History of American Metaphysical Religion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007); Louis Menand, *The Metaphysical Club* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2001); Russell B. Goodman, *American Philosophy before Pragmatism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); and Allen W. Wood and Songsuk Susan Hahn, eds., *The Cambridge History of Philosophy in the Nineteenth-Century, 1790-1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).
[544] Samuels, *Henry Adams: The Middle Years*, 204.

language. "You were and are and ever will be only a part of the supreme I AM, of which the church is the emblem."[545]

Throughout the 1840s and 1850s, Unitarians and Unitarianism grew more fragmented in Henry's hometown. In New England, where the "visible saints" of his Puritan namesake's era once piloted church and town, many Protestants now took an inward turn. This resulted in the rise of less visible saints who valued the search for grace over the exculpation of sin.[546] Interdenominational mobility, a feature of the new normal of "common-core Protestantism," meant that many prayed at familiar, if not always, native houses of worship.[547] If they skipped services, then young Henry and his peers kept the ascendant spiritual market alive by bankrolling Christian charities, buying tracts, funding missionaries, and merging reform societies. They maintained Protestant power by performing benevolence.[548] So long as he marked *some* holy days in the presidential pew at Quincy, Henry's mounting lack of interest in organized religion did not rile the family circle. To be a doubter did not mean a permanent disconnection from Christian culture. Many American Victorians, echoing the activities of their British counterparts, used doubt as a method to reengineer hereditary concepts of good and evil that fit with

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[545] Frances Snow Compton [Henry Adams], *Esther* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1884), 8.
[546] Albanese, *A Republic of Mind and Spirit*; Menand, *The Metaphysical Club*; Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989); Leigh Eric Schmidt, *Restless Souls: The Making of American Spirituality* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2005).
[547] Sydney E. Ahlstrom and David D. Hall, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 129, 842-856.
[548] Jon Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), 257-288; Robert H. Abzug, *Cosmos Crumbling: American Reform and the Religious Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); Ronald G. Waters, *American Reformers, 1815-1860* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1997); Robert H. Bremner, *American Philanthropy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988); Susan Curtis, *A Consuming Faith: The Social Gospel and Modern American Culture* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991).

industrial society. Amid such soul-shaking concerns, church membership was no longer a cultural habit that Henry Adams and his peers felt that they must maintain.[549] Little had changed a few decades later, when Henry quipped to a longtime friend that he was "now going to church every day, that is to the church door as the young women come from afternoon service. You know me better than to expect more."[550] The two, world and church, did not connect for him—yet.

Graduating in 1858, Henry set out to become a scientific historian and gentleman scholar in the English model.[551] Adrift on the eve of the Civil War, Henry celebrated his 1856 Harvard commencement with a grand tour of England, Austria, Italy, and France, pausing to study civil law in Berlin and Dresden. A series of changes in the Adamses' fortune made possible Henry's flight. His mother Abigail Brown Brooks had cemented the family wealth with a dowry from the China trade. A railroad enterprise in Quincy proposed cutting through several underused acres of family land, and the Adamses brokered a tidy profit from the sale. As one of the highest-paid members of the American diplomatic corps, which was now supported by the State Department's bureaucrats, his father Charles enjoyed a hefty income. Two centuries after his namesake had bolted from England, Henry became the first Adams son who could afford the return trip in style. The

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[549] Richard J. Helmstadter and Bernard Lightman, eds., *Victorian Faith in Crisis: Essays on Continuity and Change in Nineteenth-Century Religious Belief* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990); David Mislin, *Saving Faith: Making Religious Pluralism an American Value at the Dawn of the Secular Age* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015).

[550] Henry Adams to Charles Milnes Gaskell, 7 March 1870, in ed. Worthington C. Ford, *A Cycle of Adams Letters*, 2 vols. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1920), 1:167. Hereafter cited as Ford, *Cycle*.

[551] On the Anglo-American "gentleman-scholar" archetype, see: Eugene Charlton Black, ed., *Victorian Culture and Society* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973); Daniel Walker Howe, "The Victorian Period in American History," in *The Victorian World*, ed. Martin Hewitt (London and New York: Routledge, 2012), 708-724; and Edmund Richardson, *Classical Victorians: Scholars, Scoundrels and Generals in the Pursuit of Antiquity* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 58-60.

heroes of Henry's life (Charles Sumner, grandmother Louisa) were Continental travelers. Henry pined for colorful experiences like theirs, and for the aesthete's life that lay beyond the old Adams triangle of Washington duty, Boston law, and Quincy leisure. Henry knew he would remain wealthy enough to continue traveling indefinitely for research—good news for any budding scholar. Hearing how unhappy his brothers John Quincy II and Charles Francis, Jr. were in their Court Street law dens, Henry fled to Europe in 1858. At first, he planned to edit his grandfather's papers for publication. Then Henry shoved aside family duty for foreign pleasures.

Henry's first solo European jaunt, in many ways, exemplified his generation's avidity for consuming world culture in grand tours, university exchange programs, and exotic pilgrimages.[552] Just a half-century earlier, John Quincy Adams expressed reluctance at printing his *Letters on Silesia* in the *Port-Folio*, in the belief that few Americans cared to read about Bohemian castle ghosts and Prussian military maneuvers.[553] Grandson Henry likely found his travelogue downright dull. Antebellum Americans had completed the intellectual project of "unbecoming British" and thus Henry's generation greeted Europe with heightened expectations. In their letters and novels, Gilded Age narrators like Henry Adams heroicized (or, in Mark Twain's case, lampooned) Americans' ability to "fill in the blanks" of the world's "uncharted places,"

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[552] Harvey Levenstein, *Seductive Journey: American Tourists in France from Jefferson to the Jazz Age* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 3-36; Annette G. Aubert, *The German Roots of Nineteenth-Century American Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); and Christine Guth, *Longfellow's Tattoos: Tourism, Collecting, and Japan* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004).
[553] Linda K. Kerber and Walter John Morris, "Politics and Literature: The Adams Family and the *Port Folio*,"
The William and Mary Quarterly 23 (1966): 450-476.

thus reifying "modern" views of racial ideology, advertising, and commercial tourism.[554] Raised on British books that emphasized the travelogue as an affirmation of education and self-improvement, tastemakers like Adams plied (better) travel routes to invent a literary canon of their own. Free of institutional restraints, they reflected on the "American" characteristics that came to light in the European wild, joining a ragtag "cult of spectatorship" that celebrated the "exotic novelty of the human environment."[555] Washington Irving, James Fenimore Cooper, Frederick Law Olmstead, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Wendell Phillips, Bayard Taylor, and Ralph Waldo Emerson all produced travel literature starring Americans abroad. Their books and lecture tours advertised that Americans were inquisitive and mobile purveyors of intellectual life.[556]

The new vogue for literary tourism stirred writers like Henry Adams to memorialize contact with ancient wonders and foreign cultures, while making transatlantic reform networks.[557] Often, religion supplied the roadmap. Visits to churches, religious sites, artworks, and clerics formed popular itineraries. At the same time, tourists experimented with other, more daring forms of selfhood abroad. Descendant of two presidents, the aspiring cosmopolitan Henry had idolized grandmother

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[554] Tim Youngs, ed., *Travel Writing in the Nineteenth Century: Filling the Blank Spaces* (London: Anthem Press, 2006), 1-16; William W. Stowe, "Henry Adams, Traveler," *The New England Quarterly* 64 (1991): 197-205.
[555] Harold F. Smith, *American Travellers Abroad: A Bibliography of Accounts Published before 1900* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University, 1969), 9-10, 33, 37, 39.
[556] Lewis Perry, *Boats Against the Current: American Culture between Revolution and Modernity, 1820-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 125-140; John Carlos Rowe, "Nineteenth-Century United States Literary Culture and Transnationality," *PMLA* 118 (2003): 78-89; Tom Lutz, *Cosmopolitan Vistas: American Regionalism and Literary Value* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004); and Philip Gould, "Catharine Sedgwick's Cosmopolitan Nation," *The New England Quarterly* 78 (2005): 232-258.
[557] Nicola J. Watson, ed., *Literary Tourism and Nineteenth-Century Culture* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan), 1-13, 175-210.

Louisa Catherine, a London-born First Lady, for "try as she might, the Madam could never be Bostonian, and it was her cross in life, but to the boy it was her charm."[558] His father Charles worried privately that such European overexposure "unfitted Americans for America."[559] Those who could afford a grand tour returned laden with souvenir caches, new political affiliations, and, strikingly, with changes wrought on their western brands of thought. Some elites like Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's son Charles, an occasional parishioner at the Adamses' congregation, ventured far beyond "le tour du monde" set by Continental borders, and sampled cultural life in Asia. There, the young Longfellow and his peers literally committed themselves to the Unitarian ideal of experiential self-knowledge with a tattoo tapestry of their travels.[560] By century's end, these encounters fostered a high tide of cross-cultural exchange, widened Americans' reading habits, and evolved ideas of citizenship and universal rights.[561]

Americans on a grand tour—which could run for several years—picked over saints' bones, ogled royalty, shopped for art, dined at mineral springs, and holed up in alpine retreats.[562] As the phenomenon had been for young English aristocrats a century

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[558] Henry Adams, *Education*, 16.
[559] Henry Adams, *Education*, 70.
[560] Guth, *Longfellow's Tattoos.*
[561] Mark Rennella, *The Boston Cosmopolitans: International Travel and American Arts and Letters* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); Leslie Butler, *Critical Americans: Victorian Intellectuals and Transatlantic Liberal Reform* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); and James T. Kloppenberg, *Uncertain Victory: Social Democracy and Progressivism in European and American Thought, 1870-1920* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996). On American cosmopolitanism and the evolution of world citizenship as a modern ideal between the eighteenth and twentieth centuries, see David Gavin Kendall, Ian Woodward, and Zlatko Skrbiš, *The Sociology of Cosmopolitanism: Globalization, Identity, Culture and Government* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); and Pauline Kleingeld, *Kant and Cosmopolitanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).
[562] James M. Volo and Dorothy Denneen Volo, *Family Life in 19th-Century America* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2007), 344-347.

earlier, Henry's grand tour of 1858-1860 was "culturally expansive, yet socially exclusive, reaffirming the socio-political power of a male ruling elite."[563] He landed in Europe shortly after abolitionist headliner Harriet Beecher Stowe's triumphant tour, whetted to sample the "real" Old World after years of study. Aside from good steak and claret, however, Henry was (fashionably) disappointed in the cultural offerings that he encountered abroad. Berlin society he called "profane" and more isolating than "the society of the twelve Apostles." Significantly, he went out of his way to entertain a pair of Jewish-American women whom he saw repeatedly ostracized at social events. Church attendance did not factor into his routine other than touring famous chapels and cathedral libraries. First dazzled and then dazed, Henry grew jaded from the sensory overload. "I get so bored by all these sights that I only want to get out of their way," Adams complained. [564] Notably, family letters gathered from his grand tour plot a more colorful mosaic of culture than the mournful portrait he painted in the *Education.* For, in company with other anti-provincial intellectuals and artists, Henry moved easily between disparate worlds, in a way that transcended the commitment to the American exceptionalism or "fawning Anglophilia" of his parents' generation.[565] Henry came to savor Europe as a "living museum," and he used the trip to sharpen his tone as a cultural critic.

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[563] Kay Dian Kriz, "Introduction: The Grand Tour," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 31 (1997): 87-89.
[564] Henry Adams to Charles Francis Adams, Jr., 22 April 1859, in Ford, *Letters of Henry Adams*, 1:35.
[565] On the evolution of itinerant Americans and the "worldliness" of their narratives, see Butler, *Critical Americans*; David A. Hollinger, *Postethnic America: Beyond Multiculturalism* (New York: Basic Books, 2000); idem, *Cosmopolitanism and Solidarity: Studies in Ethnoracial, Religious, and Professional Affiliation in the United States* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006); Menand, *The Metaphysical Club;* Gerard Delanty, "The Cosmopolitan Imagination," *Revista CIDOB d'Afers Internacionals* 82/83 (2008): 217-230; Rennella, *The Boston Cosmopolitans*; and Watson, *Literary Tourism and Nineteenth-Century Culture.*

Henry's encounters and exchanges on his grand tour reinforced his self-identity as an erudite cosmopolitan, and jettisoned much of the Christian instinct that the Adams clan so prized. In letters home, Henry vented plenty of glib, twenty-something angst over his unformed moral character. Then, neatly, he turned around and skewered European clergy as too rotten to restore his molting spirituality. "The tone that I hear is so low, so selfish and so irreligious, that it compels me more and more to a love for what is pure and good," he wrote. "I should become a fanatic, I believe, and go into the pulpit if I remained here long."[566] Henry did not say what *was* pure and good to him. Perhaps he was reluctant to diagram his moral philosophy in stale Christian rhetoric. Or perhaps he did not know. In any event, Adams's pessimism took sturdy root abroad, alongside his scholarly interest in Christianity's social functionality. The first step in asserting an independent intellect, he decided, was shedding the religious frameworks that historians used to interpret culture. At the same time, Henry repudiated his grandfather John Quincy's model of the transatlantic Christian patriot, trampling long-held intellectual traditions as he did so. Henry used his grand tour to help evict three religious ideas formative to the family's string of statesmen: Providence, patriotism, and a thick haze of Christian metaphysics.

When it came to observing foreign faith, however, Henry drew on the family's customary modes of exploration, and simultaneously chose to indulge in the aesthetic

[566] Henry Adams to Charles Francis Adams, Jr., 17-18 December 1858, in Ford, *Cycle*, 1:10.

odysseys of his era.[567] He was fascinated by foreign ritual. In letters home, Henry recorded stray bits of evidence: the diameter of a saint's tomb, a seating plan for a Dresden wedding reception, the distance between long-martyred dissenters' homes. Henry began amassing religious artifacts to flaunt before his Brahmin friends, hunting down a rare engraving of Raphael's *Madonna di San Sisto*. In many ways, Henry's new mania to collect "signs of grace" in an "age of illustrations" typified American elites' mission to share Protestant, middle-class values through the acquisition and contemplation of Christian themes in popular art.[568] For many of his peers, worshipping in style now felt equal to or greater than apprehending religious truth. Again, Henry Adams lunged at the world of religion with seemingly contrary purpose—as his distaste for blind piety grew, so too did his vast display collection of religious art, books, and talismans.[569]

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[567] Mary Warner Blanchard, *Oscar Wilde's America: Counterculture in the Gilded Age* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998); Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace*; Geoffrey Blodgett, ed., *Victorian America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1976); Irving H. Bartlett, *The American Mind in the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (Arlington Heights: H. Davidson, 1982); Burton Raffel, *American Victorians: Explorations in Emotional History* (Hamden: Archon Books, 1984); Thomas J. Schlereth, *Victorian America: Transformations in Everyday Life, 1876*-1915 (New York: HarperCollins, 1991); and Steve Ickingrill et al., *Victorianism in the United States: Its Era and Its Legacy* (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 1992).

[568] Kristin Schwain, *Signs of Grace: Religion and American Art in the Gilded Age* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008); David Morgan, *Protestants and Pictures: Religion, Visual Culture, and the Age of American Mass Production* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

[569] Before his marriage, Adams's letters reveal a general appreciation for sacred art, but he did not manage his own money enough to buy more than a stray engraving or two. Later, Adams took a more active role in shopping for art, much of it religious in nature. Over the last three generations, plenty of Adamses sat for portraits with an array of Anglo-American artists and photographers. Sponsoring them became a part of family tradition. Henry's investment, then, often began with finding a promising artist to patronize. For example, starting with the Japanese sojourn of 1886, Adams subsidized a great deal of La Farge's work and travels, including their 18-month joint odyssey in the South Seas, 1890-1891. With John Hay, Adams commissioned adjoining Romanesque townhouses in Washington, D.C., from architect Henry Hobson Richardson. Adams patronized Tiffany & Company for custom-made birthday baubles for his nieces, and Isabella Stewart Gardner sought him to consult on art purchases for her Fenway mansion.

In January 1861, Henry returned to Washington, D.C. to serve as his father's diplomatic attaché, and rediscovered America on the brink of Civil War.[570] Angling away from the search for God, Henry saw that Providence would shield neither his family nor his nation from the coming fracture. Around him, Americans struggled to balance regionalized Christianities with millennialist perspectives of the conflict. As it unfolded, multiple religious interpretations of the Civil War enveloped the Adamses, gathering momentum within the reflective sphere of Anglo-American print culture.[571] But in what language should the skeptic-as-citizen address this or any other republican dilemma? Despite his glamorous European tour, Henry was too inexperienced to manufacture real political eloquence. On the editorial page, he retreated from quoting doctrine but still exercised Christian rhetoric to stage the hostilities.[572] Though he believed its social force was frail, Henry attempted to use Christianity to frame his thoughts on the projected secessions of Maryland and Virginia. Then, he pivoted to prophesy how the Civil War would eradicate American Christianity. "I do not want to fight them. Is thy servant a South Carolinian that he should do this thing?" Henry ranted, likening Confederates to

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Photographs of Adams's various household interiors, held in the Massachusetts Historical Society, show trays and tables laden with the exotic ornaments that he purchased in consultation with Meiji-Era art historian Ernest Fenollosa and William Sturgis Bigelow, later the primary donor to the Asian galleries of the new Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. On Adams as art collector and patron, see Ernst Scheyer, *The Circle of Henry Adams: Art and Artists* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1970); Marc Friedlaender, "Henry Hobson Richardson, Henry Adams, and John Hay," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 29 (1970): 231-246; and James L. Yarnall, *Recreation and Idleness: The Pacific Travels of John La Farge* (New York: Vance Jordan Fine Art, 1998).

[570] Continuing a family tradition, Charles Francis Adams was appointed American minister to Britain in March 1861. He arrived in London that May with Henry and wife Abigail; for the family's religious life there, see Chapter 3.

[571] Harry S. Stout; *Upon the Altar of the Nation: A Moral History of the American Civil War* (New York: Viking 2006); Noll, *The Civil War as a Theological Crisis*; and Alice Fahs, *The Imagined Civil War: Popular Literature of the North and South, 1861-1865* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

[572] Rose, *Victorian America and the Civil War*.

dogs. "I claim to be sufficiently philanthropic to dread it, and sufficiently Christian to wish to avoid it... Men…will come with their bibles as well as their rifles and...will pray God to forgive them for every life they take."[573] Already, he showed a mature skeptic's talent in blurring sacred and secular lines for public consumption. And at the moment of national disunion, just as the Adams family's 200 year-old legacy of godly republicanism gave way, this was Henry's self-identity: "sufficiently Christian."

On the Union side, one of those Bible-toting men was Henry's brother, Charles Francis, Jr., who longed for a career in the 1st Massachusetts Cavalry over predictably genteel skirmishes in the family field of law. Charles's late 1861 enlistment enraged Henry. He claimed that Charles was "throwing" himself away thanks to the "madness" of the times, which no longer offered "any chance of settled lives and Christian careers."[574] Henry never bothered to expand on what he meant by "Christian" livelihoods, beyond the usual New England paths of clergy, law, and medicine.[575] But both brothers knew that political careers hinged on service in Congress, not the cavalry, and Henry's words stung. In Charles's blustery rebuke, a two-page harangue written on picket in the Carolinas, he lashed out at Henry's lack of "faith in God and the spirit of [the] age." It was the brothers' first real argument, and the only time they clashed over religion. Charles reasserted some of the old Christian certainty about the American future that Henry saw peeling away: "We shall come out all right," the elder brother wrote, "and if we don't, the

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[573] Henry Adams to Charles Francis Adams, Jr., 8 January 1861, in Ford, *Cycle*, 1:77. The reference is to 2 Kings 8:13.
[574] Henry Adams to Charles Francis Adams, Jr., 28 December 1861, in Ford, *Cycle*, 1:94.
[575] Henry Adams, *Education*, 32.

world will."[576] Fighting for the Union Army foretold a providential path of service, Charles wrote, and the Adamses' hard-won political gains must be preserved. He advised the petulant Henry to find his own course of duty. Henry took up his family post in London as the American legation secretary, and sent dispatches or pro-Union editorials to *The New York Times* for anonymous publication.[577]

As it did for many Americans, the religious event of the Civil War engraved a boundary line in the brothers' intellectual formation: Charles reaffirmed his faith, and Henry left it behind. By 1862, Henry professed, his belief in nearly everything—hopes for American union, the surety of his father's diplomatic skill, and his own future prospects—had dissolved in the tumult of war. Henry's always tentative faith in God wilted further, as Charles's spirituality blossomed on the battlefield. Rebuffing one family faith—Christianity—Henry anxiously turned toward another, republicanism. Religious tidbits armed Henry with cocktail party chatter, but church history was only a superficial interest that augmented his more serious reading of democratic theorists like Alexis de Tocqueville and John Stuart Mill. Democracy, young Henry informed his family, was all the religion he would ever need. Viewing America from London, Henry declared that Mill and de Tocqueville alone reigned as the "two high priests of our faith" in republican democracy. He remained steadfast in his belief that the "great principle of democracy" was "still capable of rewarding a conscientious servant."[578] So he trailed after his father, taking notes on Christopher Wren's churches and parliamentary debates,

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[576] Charles Francis Adams, Jr. to Henry Adams, January 1862, in Ford, *Cycle*, 1:102-103.
[577] Charles I. Glicksberg, "Henry Adams the Journalist," *The New England Quarterly* 21 (1948): 232-236.
[578] Henry Adams to Charles Francis Adams, Jr., 1 May 1863, in Ford, *Cycle*, 1:281-282. For Brooks's treatment of the same theme in *The Degradation of the Democratic Dogma*, see Chapter 5.

but Henry's professional passions for religious tourism and political critique remained shallow in his twenties. By contrast, his brother Charles's commitment to a robust American form of Protestantism grew. It was Henry, safe in London, who made a strategic retreat to the more skeptical realm of scholarship on historical Christianity.

The young Adams brothers confronted old Christian certainties, and each man chose a markedly different approach. Why? Like most Americans, both saw that Providence would not carry them out of the war's horror.[579] They accepted, then, that reshaping Christianity—or rejecting religion outright—might help them find a way to live through it.[580] At war, Charles latched on to faith as solace. Back at the American legation in London, Henry experimented with a secular approach when religious topics arose. Their intellectual activities in the spring of 1863, for example, predicted divergent paths. Henry pored over Mill's works on democracy. He debated Calvinism's "brutalized and degraded Christians" with poet Robert Browning at a dinner party. To his parents, Henry declared that de Tocqueville's life and writings supplied the "Gospel of my private

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[579] Mark A. Noll, *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 422-438; George N. Frederickson, *The Inner Civil War: Northern Intellectuals and the Crisis of the Union* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993); Nina Silber, *The Romance of Reunion: Northerners and the South, 1865-1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993); and Drew Gilpin Faust, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008).

[580] On the Civil War's shattering of religious ideals, the fallout for American Victorians, and the rise of pragmatism, see Paul A. Carter, *The Spiritual Crisis of the Gilded Age* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1971); T.J. Jackson Lears, *Rebirth of a Nation: The Making of Modern America, 1877-1920* (New York: HarperCollins, 2009); John N. Ingham, *Assault on Victorianism: The Rise of Popular Culture in America, 1890-1945* (Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press, 1987); Mark C. Carnes and Clyde Griffen, eds., *Meanings for Manhood: Constructions of Masculinity in Victorian America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990); Menand, *The Metaphysical Club*
Stout; *Upon the Altar of the Nation;* and Noll, *The Civil War as a Theological Crisis.*

religion."[581] Meanwhile, the Christian soldier Charles's reliance on authority, local and divine, wavered more than once. A few miles outside Boston, his commander had proven too drunk to lead the handpicked corps of Brahmin rookies, and Charles found himself at the regiment's head.[582] Encamped near Harpers Ferry, Virginia, the "boy-captain" struggled to incorporate the "7000 masterless slaves [who] have joined the line." To brother Henry alone, Charles deplored Americans' reluctance to undertake the "Christian and tedious effort to patiently undo the wrongs they had done, and to restore to the African his attributes."[583]

Family correspondence, and not the *Education*, again serves as a better key to indexing *how* Henry Adams left the Unitarian "brotherhood of man" and overrode Scriptural authority. For, at a critical juncture in his religious development, Charles's voice was the loudest in Henry's head. At the American legation, Charles's dispatches from the Southern front were shared and discussed with greater attention than most. Letters to and from Charles stitched together literary quotes, philosophical mottoes culled from old Harvard drills, and, critically, snippets of Scripture. For the Victorian Adamses, the Bible was many things: a great literary opus, an historical record, a symbol of human progress, and a moral resource to be used in times of crisis.[584] Like great-grandmother

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[581] Henry Adams to Charles Francis Adams, Sr., 1 and 11 May 1863, in Ford, *Cycle*, 1:281-282; 2:11-12.
[582] When Charles Francis Adams, Jr. presented his *Autobiography* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1916), he asked that it not be read solely as a "memoir of war reminiscences" but those stories form its core. To compose it, he relied on battlefield diaries (which he then burned) and family letters (which he saved, now part of the Adams Family Papers-All Generations and Charles Francis Adams, Jr. Papers collections at the Massachusetts Historical Society).
[583] Charles Francis Adams, Jr. to Henry Adams, 6 April 1862, in Ford, *Cycle*, 1:129.
[584] John Quincy Adams's *Letters on the Bible* served as the family's main manual, for which see Chapters 2 and 3.

Abigail, Charles quoted Milton's *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regain'd*, at one point asking Henry to replace the chorus lines he had forgotten from *Samson Agonistes*. Stumbling at what followed from "Though we oft doubt," Charles finished his troubled thought on the Civil War—"to live to see the philosophy of this struggle"—by drawing on Matthew's Parable of the Talents.[585]

Charles reported on the war in religious language, but Henry never replied in kind. Writing on the anniversary of the Battle of Bunker Hill (June 17th), father Charles, Sr., addressed his soldier son in the providentialist rhetoric leveraged by Northerners and Southerners alike. The "great trial," he wrote, was a way of "purifying and exalting us in futurity," and the only means of paying slavery's penalty to a righteous God.[586] When Charles, Sr., and his namesake defaulted to providentialism to rationalize the war and its aftermath, Henry pointedly refrained from joining in. In Henry's eyes, his brother's renewal of Christianity marked him for a mundane life. "You work for power. I work for my own satisfaction," Henry wrote to Charles, appraising the war's toll on their family. "You like roughness and strength; I like taste and dexterity. For God's sake, let us go our ways and not try to be like each other."[587]

For Henry, Christian civilizations older than the American republic now held greater scholarly appeal. The Civil War that endangered his brother daily gifted Henry with a profitable career as a freelance journalist and gentleman scholar. A few highlights

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[585] "All is best, though we oft doubt, / What th'unsearchable dispose / Of highest wisdom brings about, / And ever best found in the close. / Oft he seems to hide his face, / But unexpectedly returns / And to his faithful Champion hath in place / Bore witness gloriously..." (lines 1745-1750). See also Matthew 25:14-30.
[586] Charles Francis Adams, Sr. to Charles Francis Adams, Jr., 17 June 1864, in Ford, *Cycle*, 2:145-147.
[587] Henry Adams to Charles Francis Adams, Jr., 21 May 1869, in Ford, *Letters of Henry Adams*, 1:160.

drawn from Henry's tenure in Europe of 1861-1868 illustrate his path. He shipped off to Palermo (minus credentials) to interview the Italian revolutionary Giuseppe Garibaldi. "Ye Gods what an escapade and won't the parients howl," he bragged to Charles.[588] Next, he fired off a series of screeds against the Southern cotton interest for the *Boston Advertiser*. He watched William Wetmore Story sculpt Union General George B. McClellan from life. Then Henry steamed back to the Capitol in time to earn notice as "one of Washington's three best dancers." On sabbatical in 1863, Henry poked through the ruins of Wenlock Abbey. He picnicked on champagne and partridge near the former Roman baths. An ocean away, Charles wrote wearily of enduring Virginia's "Carnival of Death."

As the Civil War and his father's mission shuddered to a close, Henry Adams publicly swore off the "family go-cart" of politics, instead hoisting his profile as a deft critic of culture.[589] Again, Henry's letters reveal more than his *Education.* Mentioning President Lincoln's death only in passing, Henry openly mourned the new and sorely needed grid of steel railways that scarred the "antidiluvian" charm of Florentine roads. The young cosmopolitan was showing real signs of wear, too. He had no tattoos to brandish, but after several years on tour, dusty carriage trips to visit medieval mountain towns had badly thinned Henry's dove-brown hair. And there was a serious intellectual change at work. Finally feeling free of Christianity's encumbrance, Henry would return

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[588] Henry Adams to Charles Francis Adams, Jr., 5 June 1860, in Levenson, *Letters of Henry Adams*, 1:xv.
[589] Henry Adams to Charles Francis Adams, Jr., 16 November 1867, in Levenson, *Letters of Henry Adams*, 1:557.

from Europe, as he told Charles, a "violent radical, inclined towards every 'ism' in the faint hope of detecting within it some key to the everlasting enigma of progress."[590]

May 1865 found the fledgling historian Henry Adams plotting a return to his American roots, and a greatly changed family circle. "This scattering of our family has left curious marks on us," Adams observed from the Continent, where he lingered for three more years in a pseudo-diplomatic capacity. "For my part I can only promise to be liberal and tolerant towards other people's ideas; let them leave me equally to mine."[591] Cavalryman Charles, Jr., entered the railroad industry, eventually rising to the presidency of the Union Pacific Railroad. Brooks practiced and taught law.[592] The eldest brother, John Quincy II, took up experimental farming and dipped into Democratic (!) state politics. Sisters Louisa Catherine Kuhn and Mary Parker Ogden settled into motherhood, philanthropy, and seasonal grand tours. Henry dove back into American culture, honing his reputation as a razor-sharp critic of politics, art, and literature. Arguably more liberal but no longer a standard-issue Protestant, Henry Adams came home to Quincy in 1868.

Henry's interest in religion, now, was purely academic in scope. Spending several years out in the world had made Henry confident enough to manage the family faith on his own terms. For example, he did not regularly receive communion at First Church, but Henry sustained the Adams Temple and School Fund that funded Quincy's centers for educational and religious development. He made payment on the family's Unitarian pew but rarely used it. Publicly, he had no interest in exploring the many denominational

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[590] Henry Adams to Charles Francis Adams, Jr., 10 May 1865, in Levenson, *Letters of Henry Adams*, 1:495-496.
[591] Henry Adams to Charles Francis Adams, Jr., 25 September 1863, in Ford, *Cycle*, 2:88.
[592] For the religious lives of Brooks and Charles Francis Adams, Jr., see Chapter 5.

roads of Victorian life. Privately, he kept up old lines of correspondence with Harvard classmates-turned-clergy. He loaded up his bookshelves with teachings on Buddhism, Hinduism, and the history of the early church.

Using Christianity was part of Henry's innate cosmopolitanism, his cultural shortcut to reading Berlin's social ranks and charming the peers who so intimidated his parents in London. His actual theological attachment to it was superficial at best, but Henry's acknowledgment of Christianity as a cultural language had never faltered abroad. Now he sought to translate that cosmopolitan discovery into American scholarship on the preindustrial soul. Henry accepted a professorship at Harvard, where he was, as *he* said, "pitchforked" into the field of medieval history.[593] Professor Adams was assigned nine hours a week to lecture 100 upperclassmen, and given the syllabus start date of 987 A.D.[594] Teaching a specialization that was utterly foreign and gleeful to do it, Henry mined his grand tour for seminar material. He took up editing *The North American Review* and opened a long series of editorial volleys interacting with and criticizing presidents, artists, and social reformers.[595] Henry's pledge of ideological liberalism evaporated before his new field of study and the happy prospect, in 1872, of marrying a "charming blue," Marian ("Clover") Hooper. "She knows her own mind uncommon well," Henry wrote, heaping on worldly praise for his bride. "She does not talk *very*

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[593] Henry Adams to Henry Cabot Lodge, 2 January 1873, in Levenson, *Letters of Henry Adams*, 2:155.
[594] Adams began his seminar with the rise of the (Direct) Capetian dynasty in France.
[595] For Henry's 1871-1876 editorship, see ed. Edward Chalfant, *Sketches for the North American Review by Henry Adams* (Hamden: Archon Books, 1982); Charles I. Glicksberg, "Henry Adams the Journalist," *The New England Quarterly* 21 (1948): 232-236; Contosta, *Henry Adams*; Joanne Jacobson, *Authority and Alliance in the Letters of Henry Adams* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992); and Samuels, *Henry Adams*.

American."[596] In Clover, Henry Adams found the ideal partner for his cosmopolitan lifestyle: another elite, well-educated skeptic eager to sample religious culture from New England to the Nile, minus any fruitless search for God.

II. Abd-el-adem's *Democracy*

Henry Adams's longest correspondence was with his brothers, but it was the women in his life—medieval and modern—who refined his scholarly sense of religion and next helped him to construct a nontheistic morality. A closer analysis of his marriage to Clover, their travels, and his 1880 parable, *Democracy*, reveals Henry to be a skeptic bent on shredding all family faiths. Here, Henry's literary fame set him apart, but in his confused approach to Christianity, he was just following the American crowd. As he embarked on the next phase of his journey away from God and Unitarian membership, Henry joined other seekers of the 1870s and 1880s who worked to remake morality without certain Protestant presets. To do so, they used Christianity as a point of departure rather than as a destination. They sidelined conversion as a goal, and surveyed spirituality. They experimented with "exchanging selves" to *ensure* that American religion "bore the signs of contact with those who were other and different."[597] Postbellum Protestants pursued this intellectual and cultural project widely, in print and in prayer, emphasizing that what made the American religious experience distinctive was its vibrant dynamic of encounter and exchange. Henry and Clover, meanwhile, cultivated

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[596] Henry Adams to Charles Milnes Gaskell, 26 March 1872, in Levenson, *Letters of Henry Adams*, 3:133-134.

[597] Catherine L. Albanese, "Exchanging Selves, Exchanging Souls," in ed. Thomas A. Tweed, *Retelling U.S. Religious History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 200-226; Schmidt, *Restless Souls*; Hatch, *Democratization of American Christianity*.

an acid skepticism regarding organized faith and its purported moral virtue. They were openly disenchanted with the Protestant Christianity that they inherited. To understand why Henry and Clover Adams never fully invested in the Gilded Age reinvention of America as a Christian nation, it is worth revisiting the sources and sites that they used to interrogate social ideas of right and wrong.

Clover's earliest religious life was, like Henry's, tilted toward doubt. Clover (1843-1885) was the youngest child of the Transcendentalist poet Ellen Sturgis and Dr. Robert Hooper. [598] Ellen was an active contributor to *The Dial* and a friend of Margaret Fuller. Ellen's death at 36 devastated the family and launched Clover into the role of hostess, leaving little time for prayer. The first editor of her published letters enshrined Clover at the heart of a "Washington Circle" of salonnières, describing her genealogical pedigree as "half Puritan and half Pilgrim."[599] She attended James Freeman Clarke's Unitarian church in Boston as a child, but shared Henry's aversion to organized faith. Like Henry, Clover read Latin, Greek, and German. Later, when Adams conducted historical research at the Library of Congress, Clover assisted him. Well-read, curious about religion—but not wholly committed to Christianity—and by all accounts as eloquent as Henry, Clover made a feisty intellectual match. She studied widely on her own; frequent houseguest Henry James dubbed her "a perfect Voltaire in petticoats."[600]

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[598] The life and art of Clover Adams has received new attention thanks to the biographer Natalie Dykstra's *Clover: A Gilded and Heartbreaking Life* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2012). See also Otto Friedrich, *Clover* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979); Eugenia Kaledin, *The Education of Mrs. Henry Adams* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1981); and Patricia O'Toole, *The Five of Hearts: An Intimate Portrait of Henry Adams and His Friends, 1880-1918* (New York: C.N. Potter. 1990).
[599] Thoron, *Letters of M. H. Adams*, xiii.
[600] Dykstra, *Clover*, 10, 109-115.

And, along with many of the Hooper women, Clover battled mood swings and bouts of extreme depression. The neurasthenic Henry considered her an ideal wife, and they honeymooned on the Nile in summer 1872.[601] Their first journal letters home were joint narratives, in which the neophyte cosmopolitan huddled in a fringed luxury cabin, seasick and homesick for the distant "heaven" of New England.[602] In the skeptical Clover, Henry had found a unique intellectual partner to share and debate his discoveries. She was equally willing to explore and proof out new forms of faith. With Clover in tow, Henry Adams resumed his intensive course of self-discovery around the world; the cosmopolitan pair kept up a costly whirlwind of foreign travel throughout the 1870s.

A bare half-century after John Adams and Thomas Jefferson traded daydreams of Cairo's call, Henry and Clover steamed, stylishly, into port. Henry's flight into Egypt, along with a sea of other blueblooded travelers who lugged their new Kodak cameras on "donkeyback" to the Pyramids, represented a shift in how modernizing Americans documented cultural encounter.[603] Egypt, nominally a province of the Ottoman Empire, was awash in debt following the Civil War boom years of cotton trade with Britain.[604] After weathering waves of English and French occupation, Egyptians mostly welcomed

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[601] The newlyweds passed by two other notable Americans cruising the Nile that summer, an elderly Ralph Waldo Emerson and a teenaged Theodore Roosevelt, for which see Benfey, *Great Wave*, 138.
[602] Henry Adams and Marian Hooper Adams to Robert William Hooper, 9-19 July 1872, in Levenson, *Letters of Henry Adams*, 3:143-145. Clover photographed Henry at work in their stateroom on the *Isis* (Henry Adams and Marian Hooper Adams Photographs Collections, Massachusetts Historical Society).
[603] On nineteenth-century American travel in the Middle East, see Lester Irwin Vogel, *To See a Promised Land: Americans and the Holy Land in the Nineteenth Century* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993); Brian Yothers, *The Romance of the Holy Land in American Travel Writing, 1790-1876* (Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate, 2007); and Stephanie Stidham Rogers, *Inventing the Holy Land: American Protestant Pilgrimage to Palestine, 1865-1941* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2011). Brooks Adams covered some of the same ground in the early twentieth century, for which see Chapter 5.
[604] Paula Sanders, *Creating Medieval Cairo: Empire, Religion, and Architectural Preservation in Nineteenth-Century Egypt* (Cairo and New York: American University in Cairo Press, 2008).

the cultural onslaught of rich, literary-minded visitors like the Adamses. The Victorian genre of Middle East travel-writing, in turn, split Americans into cultural agents of two camps: either tourists (passive clients of expert-led trips) or travelers (active intellectuals who chased experience).[605] The Adamses were a bit of both. Travelers like Clover slotted a stray Anglo-Arabic phrase into letters home as evidence of their worldliness. Tourists like Henry groused about the price of desert lodging and lamented the absence of little modern luxuries. Whether diligent or pretentious in their labor to comprehend the exotic, Gilded Age writers like the Adamses reshaped American readers into reformers, using cosmopolitan adventures to nourish new conversations about universal human rights and religious pluralism.[606]

The Adamses and their liberalizing peers proved to be more translocal than transatlantic, reaching across religious neighborhoods to picture the world. The idols and byways of Cairo invited them to roadtest new cultural behavior free of their era's hidebound etiquette manuals.[607] Henry and Clover made a great effort to photograph ruins, to befriend imams and visit mosques, and to learn a variety of the local customs. Ever inquisitive, they were not always kind to foreign ways of faith, nor to people living outside Christianity. Occasionally, the Adamses evoked the characterizations of shallow

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[605] Jeffrey Alan Melton, *Mark Twain, Travel Books, and Tourism: The Tide of a Great Popular Movement* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2002); Vogel, *Promised Land*; and Rogers, *Inventing the Holy Land*.

[606] Rennella, *Boston Cosmopolitans*, 2, 7, 11-12; Hollinger, *Postethnic America*, 3-5, 84-88; Lutz, *Cosmopolitan Vistas*, 3; and Daniel T. Rogers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998).

[607] Maureen E. Montgomery, "'Natural Distinction': The American Borgeois Search for Distinctive Signs in Europe," in *The American Bourgeoisie: Distinction and Identity in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Julie B. Rosenbaum, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 27-44.

American tourists that Twain paraded in *The Innocents Abroad* (1869). It was no accident that Twain's subtitle—*The New Pilgrim's Progress*—jabbed at opulent Yankees who relaxed their old sensibilities once free of New England's stricture. Money helped. Henry and Clover could afford the novelty of constant travel, and it filled a sensory void. Even dire news from home could not curb their extravagant gallop. Alerted to a $9,000 loss arising from a mill fire, Clover joked she would "buy a big Japanese teapot and put everything in it—a fireproof one. I still buy clothes, for…we may as well die game."[608] Clover grew as jaded as Henry. To pass the time at Karnak, she printed photographs: panoramas of the sacred space pocketing the Pyramids, and not a worshipper in sight save her 5'4" husband. Clover lacked the education, she claimed, to appreciate the idols as Henry did.[609] Eye to eye with the Temple of Dendur—and with the very gods that John Adams had once rifled past in Christian dismay—Clover glazed over. Even the ornate shadow-play of the tall sandstone registers, alive with lotus-bound believers praising Isis and Osiris, failed to move her. "One gets so blasé and anything less than three thousand years seem[s] quite too modern to be worth much," Clover wrote home.[610]

After Karnak, the religious sites that drew Henry and Clover were cultural palimpsests, as complex to experience as any of the extra-illustrated books lining the Adams library in Quincy. From the beginning, it was Clover, operating as the domestic manager, who kept their itinerary on track by navigating religious proprieties abroad. In

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[608] Clover Adams to Robert William Hooper, 21 April 1873, in Ward Thoron, ed., *The Letters of Mrs. Henry Adams* (Boston: Little Brown, and Company, 1936), 99.
[609] Clover Adams to Robert William Hooper, 16 February 1873, in Thoron, *Letters of M. H. Adams*, 75-76.
[610] Clover Adams to Robert William Hooper, 16 February 1873, in Thoron, *Letters of M. H. Adams*, 75-76. The temple was restored and installed in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City in 1978.

this respect she suffered few of the budget constraints or condescensions that Abigail or Louisa Catherine had endured. As Henry swept toward the Sphinx, for example, it was Clover who stayed behind to hire guides and to ease the delays brought about by observance of Ramadan.[611] Following the route that most Westerners took, Clover and Henry spent Christmas in Asyut. As the crew baked bread, Clover dressed the barge with "palm branches in default of the orthodox hemloc," and shopped for last-minute pottery gifts in the bazaars.[612] Henry, eager to see how a world without Christianity thrived, roamed from site to site. Every revelation made him giddy. In Luxor, he photographed Abu Simbel and planned a treatise on the multicultural legacy of Egyptian law. Spain beckoned, too. Near Cordova, John Adams's great-grandson entered the "glorious" Great Mosque and fell in epiphany: "But whether my name is now Abd-el-adem, or Ben-shadams, or Don Enrique Adamo, I couldn't take oath, for I have been utterly bewildered to know what has become of my identity, and the Spaniards have been so kind to us that I feel as though I owed them a name."[613]

For Henry, religion was emerging as a transitory force in history, one that remade nation and self. His most vivid ideas about faith often "came home" to Henry Adams on the road, and the full realization of *that* philosophy struck him first in Egypt. Peeling back the historical strata of Christian, Jewish, and Muslim growth prodded Henry to think that religion supplied scholars with markers, or fixed points, when human progress

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[611] Clover Adams, to Robert William Hooper, 5 December 1872, in Thoron, *Letters of M. H. Adams*, 60-61. Muslims mark the month of Ramadan with fasting and prayer; nineteenth-century American Christians like the Adamses often interpreted it as a Muslim version of Lent.
[612] Clover Adams to Robert William Hooper, 1 January 1873, in Thoron, *Letters of M. H. Adams*, 64-65.
[613] Henry Adams to Charles Milnes Gaskell, 21 November 1879, in Ford, *Cycle*, 1:317.

accelerated toward change.[614] Certainly, by the late 1870s, he perceived that energy at work in his own life. For, overwriting the family's religious tradition, Henry and Clover's odysseys untethered the last remnants of their hereditary Christian character. And, increasingly, Henry was drawn to researching new notions of female divinity. He questioned why the premodern ideal of a miracle-working Sainte Vierge (Virgin Mary), emblazoned in grand mosaic form at the Chartres cathedral, had fallen so far out of favor. Past generations of Adamses had used explorations of foreign faith to reinforce American Protestantism, publicly and privately. By contrast, the cosmopolitans Henry and Clover Adams embraced new religious knowledge as a way to get around the world, not into heaven.

On their return, Clover and Henry set up cultural salons in Boston and Washington and abstained from formal church membership. In this, they were not alone. Pew demographics remain blurry at best, but after a dip in the 1870s and 1880s, American Christian membership did not rebound until the 1890s.[615] From the skeptics' perch, Henry and Clover witnessed a religious marketplace in flux. They watched as interest in Catholic, Baptist, and Methodist communities swelled. From the sidelines, they saw an influx of Protestant immigrants transform "common-core" worship. They

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[614] Henry Adams refined his theory of the scientific approach to history and its scholarly implications in three key essays, discussed below: *The Tendency of History* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1896); "The Rule of Phase, Applied to History" in *The Degradation of Democratic Dogma*, ed. Brooks Adams (New York: Macmillan, 1919), 263-311; and "A Letter to American Teachers of History" (Washington: Press of J.H. Furst Co., 1910).

[615] See, for example, Roger Finke and Rodney Starke, "Turning Pews into People: Estimating 19th Century Church Membership," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 25 (1986): 180-192.

noticed that Western churches had institutionalized beyond their frontier roots.[616] Henry and Clover did not care to join in any of it. Now and then, they walked the one block up from Lafayette Square to St. John's Episcopal Church for Christmas or Easter service.

God was never a part of how Clover framed the Washington world. For most of her short life, Clover's only Sunday morning ritual was to write a long letter to her father. Her dispatches were lighthearted reminiscences of cocktail party repartee, museum trips, and political gossip. Glancing out the screen window onto posh H Street, just beyond a tangle of heliotrope and rose, Clover recorded her neighbors—those "miserable sinners"—making their way to church in "very good clothes." She mocked the "look" if not the "feel" of practicing Christians of her own elite class. "I fancy no prayer-book repentance would bring them to confess that their Sunday clothes are bad," Clover quipped. "Those are no matter of heredity, but so very personal."[617] Even religion-minded friends, like the philosopher and psychologist William James, failed to change the Adamses' views about the potential benefits of committing to Christian membership. And, for a time, Adams pronounced Clover "quite converted" by James's philanthropy; the pair doled out substantial sums to "Christian" causes.[618] Henry Adams respected James's notion that the "great men" who improved society were recognized by God—"if there is a God," Henry taunted.

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[616] Amanda Porterfield and John Corrigan, eds., *Religion in American History* (Chichester and Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 229-265; Ahlstrom and Hall, *Religious History*, 763-872; and Andrew Preston, *Sword of the Spirit, Shield of Faith: Religion in American War and Diplomacy* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012).
[617] Clover Adams to Robert William Hooper, 13 May 1883, in Thoron, *Letters of M. H. Adams*, 448.
[618] Henry Adams to William James, 27 July 1882, in Levenson, *Letters of Henry Adams*, 3:464.

But charity did not reawaken belief, and in the Adams household, a stylish agnosticism prevailed throughout the 1870s and 1880s. As artifacts of religious reportage, family letters again string together the story of the Adamses' exit from faith. Past correspondents like John Quincy and Louisa plied Christianity as a cultural language of duty; by contrast, Henry and Clover *only* deployed it in irony. Clover, renowned for her wit on the Washington dinner circuit, parodied the old New England rhetoric of Christian virtue for comedic effect. "A merciful Providence" freed her from social obligations, and Henry James's visits promised debauchery of a biblical hue. A divorce epidemic among the Capitol's elite forced the weary hostess to rewrite her place cards, as she could not "legally open a 'Home for Sinners' without a license from the District."[619] For Henry and Clover Adams, Christianity was no longer a viable practice. It was a punchline.

By 1880, Henry Adams felt bold enough to profess his satire of American faiths—Christianity and republicanism—on the page, but only under the mask of anonymity.[620] The founder's heir chose to ridicule America's federal machinery in novel fashion. With *Democracy: An American Novel*, Adams amplified the popular critiques of political corruption put forth by other best-selling writers like Twain and Charles Dudley Warner (*The Gilded Age*, 1873), Marion Crawford (*An American Politician*, 1884), and Edward Bellamy (*Looking Backward*, 1889). Adams also joined with the Victorian

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[619] Clover Adams to Robert William Hooper, 18 January and 5 February 1882, in Thoron, *Letters of M. H. Adams*, 328, 329, 344.

[620] Henry's authorship was not known until after his death. At times, Clover Adams, John Hay, and Clarence King were misidentified as the author of the wildly successful *Democracy* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1908 ed.).

authors who geared up to puncture the profile of the Protestant establishment, a literary crusade later championed by the likes of Harold Frederic (*The Damnation of Theron Ware*, 1896), Samuel Butler (*The Way of All Flesh*, 1903), and Sinclair Lewis (*Elmer Gantry*, 1926). More focused on personalities than on plots, this literary cohort used character studies and literary "types" to assess the features that sealed "American" identity.[621] By turns exploitative or earnest, these authors mocked elites' superficiality, and, simultaneously, drafted a manual for new arrivals to follow as they joined industrial America.[622]

Popular literary trends aside, Adams ripped the bittersweet ethos of *his* Washington tell-all from the cache of family letters that he pored over as a young man in Quincy. Required reading for any Adams son on the path to statesman, the archive spilled over with musty scandals and political parables. "Remember Democracy never lasts long. It soon wastes exhausts and murders itself," Henry's great-grandfather John had warned in 1814. "There never was a Democracy Yet, that did not commit suicide."[623] The American Civil War, to Henry's mind, capped *the* self-annihilation of godly republicanism. So Henry set *Democracy* amid the gritty "failure" of Reconstruction-era

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[621] V. L. Parrington, *Main Currents in American Thought: An Interpretation of American Literature from the Beginnings to 1920* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987 ed.), vol. 3; James B. Salazar, *Bodies of Reform: The Rhetoric of Character in Gilded Age America* (New York: New York University Press, 2004); and Brooks D. Simpson, *The Political Education of Henry Adams* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1996).
[622] See, for example, David Mislin, "'Never Mind the Dead Men': *The Damnation of Theron Ware* and the Salvation of American Protestantism," *The Journal of the Historical Society* 11 (2011): 463-491.
[623] John Adams to John Taylor, 17 December 1814. Washburn Autograph Collection, Massachusetts Historical Society.

Washington, and Adams modeled his leading lady, the northerner Madeleine Lee, after a hybrid of wife Clover and grandmother Louisa Catherine.

The wealthy widow Madeleine, spiritually bereft after losing her Confederate husband and her only son, relocates to the Capitol after years wandering on the European grand tour trail. Hungry to "measure with her own mind the capacity of the motive power" of politics, Madeleine bypasses New York society and settles into the whirl of a Lafayette Square kingmaker's life. Immediately, she is "bent upon getting to the heart of the great American mystery of democracy and government."[624] Two suitors—the upstanding Virginia republican John Carrington and the sleazier Illinois senator Silas P. Ratcliffe—vie for her affection as a wife and patron. On a side trip to Mount Vernon, to their great chagrin, they learn that what Madeleine really wants in a second husband is no less than "George Washington at thirty."[625] Her devout sister, Sybil Ross, fills in as the standard-bearer of Protestant virtue. Through Madeleine's eyes, readers also view "President Jacob" (no surname), one of "nature's noblemen" who ascends easily to the White House, but effects little real change once installed.[626] In receiving-line banter, dinner debates, and Senate gallery snapshots, Madeleine records her utter loss of a once rosy faith in American republicanism. Disgusted with Ratcliffe's drive and underwhelmed by Carrington's dogmatic grip on eighteenth-century moral philosophy, Madeleine makes a dramatic exit to the Holy Land.

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[624] Henry Adams, *Democracy*, 5, 10, 12.
[625] Henry Adams, *Democracy*, 22, 122.
[626] Henry Adams, *Democracy*, 66, 76, 117.

Henry's canonical tweak—taking the standard freshman senator's disenchantment saga and awarding the lead to a single woman who cannot vote—was a dress rehearsal for his much weightier critique of church/state/gender relations within the American elite, later seen in *Esther*. The plot of the skeptic-citizen's exodus and journey, according to Henry Adams, was already set in place: A cosmopolitan doubter's social task (marriage) compels her to choose between religion, science, and self; she chooses self. Notably, in his first rendering of a new, nontheistic morality where "justice is the soul of good criticism," Adams elects women to the authority role.[627] In a family where it was customary to announce political creeds, Henry used his first novel to echo great-grandmother Abigail's plea, to redefine the duties of women in a democracy. It is precisely *because* of Madeleine's non-voting status that Adams assigns such narrative value to her exegesis of American politics. To be a single woman and a skeptic makes Madeleine an outsider twice over. As a social entity whom Victorian churches claimed to aid—the new widow—her repulsion to Christianity thus becomes especially significant. Madeleine has "not entered a church for years," because such visits only stir up "unchristian feelings." *Democracy*'s heroine is proud *not* to be "an orthodox member of the church; sermons bored her, and clergymen never failed to irritate every nerve in her excitable system." Pious Sybil, on the other hand, quotes Scripture, sings in the choir, and sends up novenas for eligible dancing partners. Madeleine stifles a laugh at her sister's

[627] Henry Adams, *Democracy*, 67.

piety, but she never forces her grim agnosticism onto friends or kin. "'Time enough,' said she, 'for her to forget religion when religion fails her.'"[628]

If religion failed Madeleine Lee—and Henry, *and* Clover—then might new science help? Madeleine Lee's amateurish efforts at applying scientific theory to historical progress are, like those of her creator, extremely unwieldy. There is little talk of "warfare" between God and science in Henry's novels; neither science nor faith can sate his characters' needs. Appraising Congressmen thick in debate, Madeleine identifies herself as an alchemist of political talent: "One by one, she passed them through her crucibles, and tested them by acids and by fire. A few survived her tests and came out alive, though more or less disfigured, where she had found impurities."[629] Madeleine, who reads the English biologist Herbert Spencer's works on evolution, tries repeatedly to align Darwinian ideas with unfolding events. Proving an apt and self-taught pupil of political science, she yields to one senator's glib "confession" of support for Darwinian evolution. However, she shares his twinge of fatalism, expressed here, that parroting new theories feels as foolish as reciting the old creeds. Ratcliffe answers:

> I have faith; not perhaps in the old dogmas, but in the new ones; faith in human nature; faith in science; faith in the survival of the fittest. Let us be true to our time, Mrs. Lee! If our age is to be beaten, let us die in the ranks…There! have I repeated my catechism correctly? You would have it! Now oblige me by forgetting it. I should lose my character at home if it got out.[630]

By contrast, her suitor Ratcliffe scoffs at the notion that humankind "descended from monkeys," although his political machinations (ironically) underline Ratcliffe's frenzy to

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[628] Henry Adams, *Democracy*, 17.
[629] Henry Adams, *Democracy*, 20.
[630] Henry Adams, *Democracy*, 78-79.

adapt and survive. Via Madeleine, Henry lashes out at the culture of "confused Christianity" in which he moved.

Democracy is an angry book. In it, Henry racks up family feuds, society wars, and a near-duel. Far from the well-ordered Christian republic of his ancestors' days, America has run wild with corruption, ambition, and greed on a (newly) global scale. With no "personal God" but a vague "democracy" to guide her, Madeleine tries to formulate a modern moral philosophy that patches up these social wounds. First, she queries Congressmen and is nonplussed at their replies. "Half of our wise men declare that the world is going straight to perdition; the other half that it is fast becoming perfect. Both cannot be right," Madeleine observes. "I must know whether America is right or wrong."[631] Torn, she turns to gathering social clues. She is sickened by the "dance of democracy" around the "automata" of the "waxen" president and his wife, which accelerates with "wilder energy." Such a display dampens the heroine's gusto for real political inquiry, despite having turned her "disadvantage"—womanhood—into a democratic role—that of a minority prophet indicating the structure's weak moral foundations.[632] For, like Henry, Madeleine senses little ideological substance operating behind the White House curtain.

The pessimistic Adams, more gifted at beginnings than endings, has written himself into a corner. So, near the book's fitful end, the origins story of Madeleine's agnosticism finally tumbles out. Sybil recalls how Madeleine, devastated by the sudden

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[631] Henry Adams, *Democracy*, 57.
[632] Henry Adams, *Democracy*, 87-88, 91, 171.

deaths of her husband and son, raved memorably and for days "about religion and resignation and God."[633] Voicing Henry Adams's own discovery, Madeleine perceives she has "sinned" by exchanging one dead faith (Christianity) for another (republicanism). She labels the United States a failed experiment. But while she has "atoned for want of devotion to God, by devotion to man," she remains confused about how to resume her course of moral education without attracting more dogma.[634] "I want to go to Egypt," Madeleine concludes. "Democracy has shaken my nerves to pieces."[635] And Henry Adams, persuaded by his own *Democracy* that a skeptic of Christian republicanism would never fit the desirable "American" mold, threw himself into becoming a modern citizen of the world.

At the midpoint of his career, Henry's cultivation of a cosmopolitan aesthetic triggered a violent rejection of the classical precepts of Christian republicanism that his ancestors venerated. Europe, long the Adams family's finishing school for political thought, now held few bankable charms beyond good weather and fine ruins. Throughout the winters of the 1870s and early 1880s, Henry and his wife defected to ancient, sunny Venice. There, Clover, proud of her "reputation as an intelligent woman," became more discriminating in her travels through art. Encountering the lavish barbarism of a former model republic—identified as such by John Adams in 1786—*Democracy*'s secret author dispensed with the lessons of classical history and pursued aesthetic idylls instead.[636] The

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[633] Henry Adams, *Democracy*, 253.
[634] Henry Adams, *Democracy*, 179.
[635] Henry Adams, *Democracy*, 370.
[636] By contrast, Henry's generation demonstrated an attachment to Venice as a model for Northern republicanism and as a cautionary tale of cultural excess. See John Julius Norwich, *Paradise of Cities:*

pair settled into an easy routine, joining other elites to savor the moody beauty of the city's palazzos and lagoons, then captured best by American John Singer Sargent's busy paintbrush.[637] After a lazy breakfast "*á la française*," they boarded the fleet of overpriced gondolas. Then, as Clover recalled, they would "hunt up churches, where we often turn sadly from pictures which we had wanted to see, getting nothing for our search."[638]

Henry's initial design of a nontheistic morality, based on tattered republican tenets and European travel, soured. Protestant ideas of right and wrong—so clearly reflected back to John Quincy in Erasmus's hometown, and to Charles Francis, Sr., in the barren pews of a fast day service—now tasted too stale for Henry to use. The Socratic directive to "Know thyself" fell especially flat: "We can't prove even that we are," Henry wrote.[639] The family seat of Quincy, Henry's summer home, bore the marks of that ennui. On the library mantel where the household gods still presided, Adams pushed aside the old busts of Homer and Cicero. Slyly, Henry planted his new totem center stage: a colossal bronze trio of half-nudes carousing in Dionysian excess.[640] Between his literary tasks and her amateur photography, the Adamses of the early 1880s seemed successful, even happy. Eschewing church membership, they bought religious art and mined

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Nineteenth-Century Venice Seen through Foreign Eyes (London: Viking, 2003); Linda C. Dowling, *Charles Eliot Norton: The Art of Reform in Nineteenth-Century America* (Durham: University of New Hampshire, 2007), 84-85; and Judith Martin, *No Vulgar Hotel: The Desire and Pursuit of Venice* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2007). For Americans seeking to draw political lessons from Europe and thereby stimulate social reform movements, see Kloppenberg, *Uncertain Victory*; Robert Kelley, *The Transatlantic Persuasion: The Liberal-Democratic Mind in the Age of Gladstone* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1989); and Butler, *Critical Americans.*

[637] Warren Adelson, *Sargent's Venice* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006).

[638] Clover Adams to Robert William Hooper, 20 October 1872; to Ellen Gurney, 27 October 1872, in Thoron, *Letters of M. H. Adams*, 52, 53.

[639] Henry Adams to William James, 27 July 1882, in Levenson, *Letters of Henry Adams*, 3:464.

[640] For John Quincy Adams's procurement of the household gods, see Chapter 2.

Christian rhetoric to make literature. At home and abroad, Henry and Clover found a way to use Christianity without being Christian. Then, in 1884, Clover's father grew ill, and Henry Adams struggled to prepare his wife for the death of her only parent.[641] He settled on writing a novel.

III. From 'Sage Hen' to Sainte Vierge

At first pass the plot of *Esther* (1884), published under the pseudonym Frances Snow Compton, is deceptively popular in tone. Yet it was, as Henry recalled, "written in one's heart's blood."[642] He issued 1,000 copies, sold 514, and bought up the balance to destroy. Scholars have long associated the protagonist, freethinker Esther Dudley, with Clover Adams.[643] A Puritan heiress and New York society "name," Esther falls in love with the Episcopal clergyman Stephen Hazard. She also fights an attraction to her paleontologist cousin, the skeptic George Strong. Adams keeps the reader guessing as to where he lands in the "warfare" talk of his day; he gives the man of science and the man of faith an even number of choice lines as they pursue Esther. Created by a vigorously agnostic author, Stephen Hazard turns out to be a surprisingly likeable prelate. In his first sermon, he reconciles science, Christianity, and civilization. "The hymns of David, the plays of Shakespeare, the metaphysics of Descartes, the crimes of Borgia, the virtues of

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[641] Dykstra, *Clover;* Friedrich, *Clover*; Kaledin, *Education of Mrs. Henry Adams*; and O'Toole, *Five of Hearts*.

[642] Henry Adams to John Hay, 23 August 1886, in Levenson, *Letters of Henry Adams*, 3:34. Adams's authorship was revealed only after his death, and the usual suspects—Clover, Hay, and King—were often misidentified as such.

[643] See, for example: R.P. Blackmur, "The Novels of Henry Adams," *The Sewanee Review* (1943): 281-304; Edward N. Saveth, "The Heroines of Henry Adams," *American Quarterly* (1956): 231-242; David F. Musto, "'Heart's Blood': Henry Adams's Esther and Wife Clover," *The New England Quarterly* (1998): 266-281; and Eric Rauchway, "Regarding Henry: The Feminist Henry Adams," *American Studies* (1999): 53-73.

Antonine, the atheism of yesterday and the materialism of to-day, were all emanations of divine thought, doing their appointed work," he preaches. "It was the duty of the church to deal with them all."[644] His choice of homily, tinged with popular philosophical idealism, suggests that even Clover might find Hazard sympathetic enough to attend Henry Adams's fantasy church.[645]

Again, it is a corps of imaginary women who advance Henry's nontheistic morality best. "The proper study of mankind is woman and, by common agreement since the time of Adam, it is the most complex and arduous," Henry later wrote.[646] To an unusual degree within his profession at the time, Henry took a special interest in the impact of political change on women. He identified religion as the main sphere where they reinterpreted and enacted social power.[647] As "real" women envisaged amid the juvenilia, satire, and sensationalism of Gilded Age fiction, Henry's female characters display a refreshing amount of intellectual panache and religious depth.[648] Esther, named for a biblical queen but increasingly distrustful of scriptural authority, is clearly a callback to Clover. Her status as a skeptic is somewhat shielded by her elite social class and wealth. Like her real-world counterpart Clover, the roots of Esther's doubt are

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[644] Henry Adams, *Esther*, 7.
[645] Johnson and Lloyd, "Immanent God and Creative Man"; Conkin, *Uneasy Center*.
[646] Henry Adams, *Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres* (Cambridge: The Riverside Press, 1919), 198.
[647] Richard F. Miller, "Henry Adams and the Influence of Woman," *American Literature* 18 (1947): 291-298; John Gatta, *American Madonna: Images of the Divine Woman in Literary Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); and Jacobson, *Authority and Alliance*.
[648] Key studies of how Gilded Age literature came to guide Progressive politics on issues related to gender, race, and urbanization include: Eric J. Sundquist, *To Wake the Nations: Race in the Making of American Literature* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1993); Judy Arlene Hilkey, *Character is Capital: Success Manuals and Manhood in Gilded Age America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997); Joel Shrock, *The Gilded Age* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2004), 39-40, 151-182; and Mark Storey, *Rural Fictions, Urban Realities: A Geography of Gilded Age American Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

murky. She delights in the social ritual of churchgoing and finds the notion of congregationalism attractive. And she instinctively welcomes Hazard (Adams's irony!) in the initial guise of Christian solace. Marriage plans eventually force Esther's religious doubts out into the open. Rather than seeking wisdom from the church, she turns to other laywomen for advice. A "sage hen"—the beautiful and "authentic" Colorado orphan Catherine Brook—arrives to wrench the love triangle further. Made wise by her "Westernness" and ultra-femininity, Henry's native bird makes a stir in the city flock. The "sage hen" remains a strikingly liberal ingénue for Adams to create, a forerunner of the characters cast in popular fictions of gendered religion by Frederic, Butler, and Lewis.[649] A former Presbyterian, Catherine is a Christian subversive, too, but of a milder variety; she sneaks Charles Dickens novels into service.[650] She is an American innocent who will neither lose her hold on the Christian church, nor judge those who choose to leave it.

With *Esther*, Henry used the production of Christian culture as a plot device to provide a more full-bodied critique of American religion than had his sketch in *Democracy* four years earlier. Rounding out Adams's avatars of religion, science, and "Americanness" is Wharton, a bohemian artist and dimming Catholic. Wharton's lack of a first name hints at his ultra-liberal nature, thus ruling him out as a real suitor. Yet it is the creation of his religious art that drives Henry's tale. Wharton recruits Esther and Catherine to paint murals for Hazard's new Fifth Avenue church. Henry again pulled the

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[649] Parrington, *Main Currents in American Thought*; Maurice S. Lee, *Uncertain Chances: Science, Skepticism, and Belief in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).
[650] Henry Adams, *Esther*, 43-44.

plot from his own life, having spent the winter of 1883 observing John La Farge at work on the walls of a roofless Trinity Church. Adams watched La Farge set three massive stained-glass window scenes—*Resurrection, Christ in Majesty,* and *New Jerusalem*. Fixed on making a "color church" to shake up the dowdy Boston palette of white and grey, La Farge translated favorite Protestant themes into neo-Byzantine shades of Pompeian red and Ravennese teal.[651] In Henry's retelling, the same commission is executed mainly by women. Esther and Catherine embrace the opportunity to join the all-male artists' club, thus indicating their moral commitment to build up the church for future parishioners in a meaningful way.

Modern American women, to Henry, were copies of the Sainte Vierge: holy, emotional, and able to rule others (wisely) by feeling as well.[652] A closer analysis of *Esther* suggests that in the Victorian contest for moral purity, to be won either by masculine intellect or by feminine emotion, Henry again finds Christianity torn asunder. Abigail's great-grandson leans closer to calling a victory for the ladies. For, like Henry's own female friends, Esther is imbued with an emotional intelligence that outstrips conventional notions of male superiority. That makes her a formidable intellectual rival, and especially so to her suitors. Clever Esther/Clover, in Adams's formulation, is the literary rebuttal to a sea of Gilded Age heroines ruined by goopy "sentiment." Esther never weeps. She never laments. Empowering Esther is Henry Adams's rejoinder to an

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[651] James F. O'Gorman, ed., *The Makers of Trinity Church in the City of Boston* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2004), 14-21.
[652] Henry Adams, *Mont-Saint-Michel;* Miller, "Henry Adams and the Influence of Woman"; Gatta, *American Madonna*.

American religious establishment phobic about "feminization" at the hands of pious women.[653]

Esther Dudley cannot focus heart and mind in prayer, and she feels no remorse about it. Complacent in her lukewarm Christianity, she uses sermon time to rank her neighbors' outfits. Slowly, she distances herself from the ideas behind the rites. Adams depicts Esther's retreat from organized faith as rational and deliberate, a necessary tragedy of modernity. Viewed as a literary idol, Esther is Adam's finest monument to the elegant "lady skeptic" of the Victorian era. Inside, she is yet another confused and "sufficiently Christian" member of the American elite. Her mind whirls in speculation about competing perspectives offered by science and/or faith. After her father's death, Esther experiences a wave of doubt—first in herself, then in God. Mere steps from the funeral, Esther panics and accepts clergyman Hazard's offer of marriage. They enjoy a rocky engagement. Minister Hazard, in "calling up the divinity which lies hidden in a woman's heart, is startled to find that he must obey the God he summoned."[654]

Esther dives into a course of self-taught theology, but she cannot master burgeoning doubts. Sage hen Catherine acts as a friendly foil, trying to soothe Esther's mounting agitation. And Adams, more agnostic than ever, finally unlocks the narrative skill needed to explain a (fictive) crisis of faith. Adams invents some stunning scenes between Esther and Catherine. His dialogue yields a unique portrait of female skeptics discussing Christian doctrine and legitimating their motives for doubt. In staging these

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[653] Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture* (New York: Knopf, 1977).
[654] Henry Adams, *Esther*, 168.

conversations, Adams's "female" tone is grave and focused—a throwback to the women who, as "fireside" theologians, drove the novels of Harriet Beecher Stowe. According to Henry's narrative, Christianity is unraveling in real time across the disparate bands of American society that Esther and Catherine represent.[655] If she weds Hazard, then Esther fears she will be discovered as a doubter, and ruin them both. Catherine flings off her friend's deepest worry with a casual putdown of the congregation's relative piety. Esther's doubt, the "sage hen" observes, is normal, respectable—even laudable. Here is the exchange:

> "But I must go to his church," said Esther, and "sit at his communion."
> "How many people at his church could tell you what they believe?" asked Catherine. "Your religion is just as good as theirs as long as you don't know what it is."[656]

Esther realizes her inability to commit to Christian devotion except on her own liberal terms. She cannot make a wholehearted leap (backward) to accept dogma. Like Adams, she is more drawn to church aesthetics than to theology. Along with many of her real-world peers in the American gentry, Esther turns to the physical beauty of religion as a cultural strategy to redeem her ebbing faith.[657] But, in her big-city "color church," Esther cannot find a Yankee corollary to match the great blue majesty and Marian unity of Henry's Chartres. Esther's inward turn, to inventory and then judge the precepts of American Protestantism, only strengthens her resolve to reject it—no matter how many more murals of divine femininity Wharton commissions her to create. Esther breaks off the engagement in order to defend her status as a skeptic, and similarly puts an end to her

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[655] On the growing acceptability of unbelief in late nineteenth-century America and its literary manifestations, see especially Turner, *Without God, Without Creed*; and Lee, *Uncertain Chances.*
[656] Henry Adams, *Esther*, 180.
[657] Schwain, *Signs of Grace;* Morgan, *Protestants and Pictures;* and Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace.*

cousin's chances, too. She remains in love with Hazard, who acknowledges Esther's Christianity to be a lost cause, and quickly departs for…anywhere else (Adams does not say).

Admittedly, Henry Adams's intellectual goals here were high. But the oddball literary form that he chose—an over-long novella or a too-short novel, with a La Farge-based bankruptcy subplot—made the whole religious dilemma feel rushed, with no satisfactory ending for Esther. Henry, stumbling over how to end it, nearly seized on a much darker suggestion from his friends. At a pivotal moment, Esther stands in the shadow of Niagara Falls, explaining to the clergyman that what irks her most about organized faith is the act (real or pretended) of total submission. Aloft before Hazard (!) she is a powerful profile: the forthright skeptic, defiant against nature's flood and resistant to the social tide of Christian membership. But, as Clarence King recalled to John Hay, Henry nearly flipped the scene another way. King thought that Esther should have jumped to her death, "as that was what she would have done," and he told Adams so. "Certainly she would," Henry agreed, "but I could not suggest it."[658] Pointedly, Henry used *Esther* to show Clover that religion did not offer the only path out of grief. Clover, always better at finishing projects than Henry, never mentioned the book in correspondence. Like Esther, she fled to art.

Imagining and writing *Esther* proved therapeutic for Henry's historical craftsmanship. His academic interests remained permanently focused on the subject of female divinity; specifically, how to reinterpret the role of women in church

[658] Dykstra, *Clover*, 158-159.

development. Outwardly critical of modern religion's utility throughout the 1880s and 1890s, Henry Adams became obsessed with comprehending how the Catholic Church had made and manufactured the preindustrial soul. More and more, the self-invented medievalist relied on religion to explain episodic change.

At Harvard, Adams focused his history seminars on medieval institutions, like record-laden churches, in order to collect more evidence. How, he wondered, had Christianity atrophied from the glory of Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres? The church history that Adams sought to tell was a wholly new draft of the Christian declension narrative. He shunted aside the Puritans and reintroduced Gilded Age Americans to the Sainte Vierge, emphasizing the significance and sensation of medieval female divinity. "Christ the Trinity might judge as much as He pleased," Henry wrote of the Virgin enthroned at Chartres, "but Christ the Mother would rescue; and her servants could look boldly into the flames."[659] After *Esther*, restaging republican or religious dramas as novels no longer intrigued Adams. Recovering the "limitless will" of women, soldered by history to the "limitless conscience" of medieval Christianity—*that* project consumed the rest of Henry Adams's professional energy.

Henry's anonymous novel sold well but, sadly, his effort failed at home. On 6 December 1885, nearly ten months after her father's death, Clover drank the potassium cyanide in her Chestnut Street darkroom. The newspapers were kind, discreetly noting that she "dropped dead…due to a sudden paralysis of the heart."[660] After an Episcopal

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[659] Henry Adams, *Mont-Saint-Michel*, 145.
[660] "Death of Mrs. Henry Adams," *The Boston Herald*, 7 December 1885.

funeral service, Henry buried his wife at Rock Creek Cemetery in Maryland. He made contact with the sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens, then wrapping up work on the Robert Gould Shaw memorial on Boston Common, and the architect Stanford White. The Boston cosmopolitan wanted Clover's tomb (and later, his own) to mark the convergence of several religious cultures, like the many sites they had experienced together. At the same time, Henry wanted the monument to summon up something nameless and dateless enough to appeal to his fellow travelers in grief. The grave marker, Adams thought, must demonstrate the acceptance of death but not be overruled by loss. Peacefield's household gods likely stirred in his imagination, for Adams requested something "Socratic" for the tomb, with a touch of Michelangelo's Sistine glory, a sexless figure that would evoke the "peace of God" and "mental repose." For Clover, Henry commissioned "Nirvana." [661]

IV. Seeking the Fin-de-Siècle Nirvana

Puzzled, Saint-Gaudens made a few sketches and scribbled in his notebook, "Amplify." He pressed Adams to assign "any book *not long*" so he could study the subject of nirvana first. Distraught, Henry declined. He might have offered a few words of definition from Clover's childhood pastor, James Freeman Clarke, who had just published *Ten Great Religions* (1884). There, Clarke epitomized Victorian Americans' fuzzy understanding of Buddhism as "the Protestantism of the East."[662] Adams might have articulated an understanding of nirvana as Clover's cousin, William Sturgis

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[661] For sketches of the Adams monument and Henry's instructions, see Augustus Saint-Gaudens, *The Reminiscences of Augustus Saint-Gaudens* (New York: The Century Co., 1913), 1:356-362; and Thoron, *Letters of M. H. Adams*, 455-459.

[662] Pathak, *American Missionaries and Hinduism;* Jackson, *Oriental Religions and American Thought;* Tweed, *American Encounter with Buddhism*; Ray, *Bengal Renaissance;* Bean, *Yankee India*.

Bigelow, later defined it: a "peace that passeth understanding trained on material things…the peace of limitless consciousness unified with limitless will."[663] Or, Henry might have quoted back the words of *his* bohemian artist Wharton in *Esther*: "Nirvana is what I mean by Paradise…It is eternal life, which, my poet says, consists in seeing God."[664] Perhaps the medievalist did not know what to suggest as an introductory text, given his own odd pastiche of intellectual encounters with non-Western religion. Scouring sacred Buddhist texts did not reveal nirvana's "mysterious *Nothing*," nor how Adams might conquer "that highest state of absolute quiescence" through, as his generation understood it, committing to a sort of self-annihilation or "Asiatic atheism."[665] Buddhistic notions of compassion, Adams guessed, *might* connect to his historical vision of the Sainte Vierge's unifying power over medieval society—but he was far too grief-stricken to investigate how or why. Henry, intent that American culture had poisoned Clover, gravitated to the most foreign philosophy that he could find for comfort.

The cub reporter who intercepted Adams on the Nebraska prairie in 1886 was entirely right—nirvana had a "season," and Henry was not alone in his quest. Increasingly, nirvana appealed to many seeking a neutral alternative to the constant sectarian storms over what made up "Christian" heaven.[666] For those shaken by the Civil War's carnage and enticed by the chance of spiritual regrowth, Buddhist passivity offered a therapeutic option to the militaristic Christian optimism manifested by the Social

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[663] William Sturgis Bigelow, *Buddhism and Immortality* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1908), 75.
[664] Henry Adams, *Esther*, 40.
[665] Edward E. Salisbury, *Memoir on the History of Buddhism* (Boston: S. M. Dickinson, 1844), 7-8.
[666] Tweed, *American Encounter with Buddhism;* Benfey, *Great Wave;* and Weir, *American Orient.*

Gospel movement's budding reform culture.[667] For Henry and other Victorian elites who dabbled in grafting Eastern religion onto Western science, nirvana came to represent a scholarly state of mind beyond joy or sorrow.[668] The efforts of mainline Protestants (and skeptics like Henry) to understand the theological principles of nirvana, however, rarely penetrated farther than a vague, imperialist-tinged sympathy for a "passive" race of believers. As it progressed over several decades, Henry's concept of nirvana most approached Clarke's early grasp of it as "that profound inward rest" of nothingness. Losing Clover—and, in the next year, his father Charles Francis, Sr.—reinvigorated Henry's search for religious truth, but only to achieve the mystical heights of nirvana. "I have not had the good luck to attend my own funeral, but with that exception I have buried pretty nearly everything I lived for," Henry wrote just before the first anniversary of Clover's death.[669] He groped for the peace that such "nothingness" offered, though he never put that sentiment in print. Instead, Henry recruited the aesthetic counsel of John La Farge and set off on a marathon grand tour of the world for the rest of his 80 years. If Henry Adams served as an "exceptional normal" case study of the curious Victorian skeptic before Clover's death, then his religious travels now veered—permanently—away from the household gods and toward truly "exceptional" territory. He promised to

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[667] Samuel S. Hill, "Religion and the Results of the American Civil War," in *Religion and the American Civil War*, ed. Randall M. Miller et al. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 360-384; Tweed, *American Encounter*, 2-11; Rose, *Victorian America and the Civil War;* Curtis, *A Consuming Faith*; and John L. Thomas, "Romantic Reform in America, 1815-1865," *American Quarterly* 17 (1965): 656-681.
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[668] Weir, *American Orient*, 78-79, 110-111, 177.

[669] Henry Adams to Anne Palmer Fell, 5 December 1886, Adams Family Papers Additions, Massachusetts Historical Society. Discovered in 2010, the Adams-Fell letters provide new insight into how Henry coped with Clover's death.

send Saint-Gaudens photographs of Buddhas and nirvanas from their next stop: Kamakura, Japan.

Once aboard the San Francisco steamer in June 1886, Henry was distressed to learn that his fellow passengers included four female missionaries. Great-grandparents John and Abigail relished crossing oceans with clergymen.[670] Several weeks into the Pacific voyage and still a thousand miles from Yokohama, Henry Adams—historical champion of holy women—refused to speak to them and fled the cabin when service began. "They sing and talk theology, two practices I abhor," he wrote.[671] Finally arriving in Kamakura, an exhausted Henry insisted on scaling the rooftop of a local priest's home. Borrowed Kodak in hand, he wobbled on the wooden slope, cursing the work it took for him to properly shoot the 40-foot bronze Buddha. Right there, "standing on my head at an angle of impossibility," Henry recalled, "[I] perpetrated a number of libels on Buddha and Buddhism."[672] Fighting for balance in the Great Buddha's shadow, Henry Adams entered a new and final phase of his religious development, eager to explore and elevate non-Western religious ideals that might enliven and inform the world.

Despite washed-out roads and a cholera outbreak, Henry's quest for nirvana continued daily.[673] A survey of Adams's Japanese sojourn shows how deftly Gilded Age

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[670] For their encounter with the American Universalist clergyman John Murray during the spring 1788 crossing from Britain to America, see Chapter 1.
[671] Henry Adams to Theodore F. Dwight, 28 June [*1886*], in Levenson, *Letters of Henry Adams*, 3:13. Dwight was Henry's personal secretary.
[672] Henry Adams to John Hay, 9 September 1886, in Levenson, *Letters of Henry Adams*, 3:37.
[673] Henry's Japanese tour is well-documented in the journal letters he sent to secretary Theodore F. Dwight and others, selected and published in the third volume of Levenson, *Letters of Henry Adams.* See also Pierre Lagayette, "Henry Adams's Aesthetic Ragbag," *Revue française d'éudes américaines* 7 (1979): 17-30; Henry Adams, "The Mind of Henry Adams" in *John La Farge* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1987);

cosmopolitanism eroded the "mild deism" in which he was raised. Henry's three months in Japan established his new, more professional pattern of religious inquiry. By trip's end, it was clear that the skeptic had grown into an avid collector of all things touched by faith: ideas, records, lands, and objects. In Japan, Henry Adams refined his approach of studying religion from the outside, in. "Images are not arguments, rarely even lead to proof, but the mind craves them," Adams wrote.[674] His understanding of faith hinged more on image and perspective than on feeling or doctrine.

Adams maintained a few quirks of the gentleman traveler, but his method of documenting Japanese religion in words and photographs made him into an all-new brand of church historian. Every morning, Henry brewed his own Chinese tea. Then he photographed monks and mortuary gates, temples and tombs. La Farge tarried in a temple entryway for an hour or more. Adams tore through, then spent hours struggling to convey the unique scale of Buddhist faith in his journal letters home. An autodidactic medievalist, Henry's view always soared up to seek the infinite. The visual record of religion that he created is extraordinary. It is simultaneously a struggle for perspective on a new world, and a statement of agnostic bewilderment that such believers exist. Traveling on to Latin America, the South Seas, and back to Europe, Henry let his camera talk. His photographs restage lost landscapes of Gilded Age faith, as one American encountered it: Shinto priests resplendent in full robes, mosque spires rimmed in sepia, dusty workmen resting at Ramesses' toes, Tahitian royals at play, and a company of

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James L. Yarnall, "John La Farge and Henry Adams in Japan," *American Art Journal* 21 (1989): 40-77; and Benfey, *Great Wave*, 105-107, 120, 128-157.

[674] Henry Adams, *Education*, 489.

Fijian women dancing off the page.[675] From his Tokyo campsite, Henry mirrored American popular interest in homemade sacred art. Many saw this as part of a "therapeutic culture" of religious devotion that sheltered them, if only for a lunch hour, from the secular mayhem of industrial change that brought managers, mergers, mechanization, and the metropolis.[676] From Kyoto, Henry saw it as vital to the historian's craft.

Religion and art, for the scholar Henry Adams, were one. In Japan, Henry absorbed the visual language of religious iconography, learning to "read" temples as he did Gothic cathedrals. The trappings, symbols, and folkways that the Japanese used to build religion indicated their past and future as a culture, Adams thought. Sketches of crenellated pagodas dot his "Japan Expenses" notebook, where he recorded spending the modern equivalent of $250,000 on Japanese netsuke, brocades, kimonos, and bric-á-brac.[677] He bought as much as he could carry away via rickshaw, cornering markets' worth of religious "stuff" and then rushing back at the first word of a new salesman's lot. A lavish shopper, Adams positioned himself as a slightly less generous critic of Japanese religion. Far away from the familiar flying buttresses of Gothic France, Adams dismissed the scarlet-and-gold curlicues of Shinto temples as too "baroque." The temples looked

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[675] Henry Adams and Marian Hooper Adams Photographs Collections, Massachusetts Historical Society.
[676] Alfred D. Chandler, *The Visible Hand: The Managerial Revolution in American Business* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1977); Alan Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982); T.J. Jackson Lears, "From Salvation to Self-Realization: Advertising and the Therapeutic Roots of the Consumer Culture, 1800-1930," in *The Culture of Consumption: Critical Essays in American History*, 1880-1980, eds. Richard Wightman Fox and T. J. Jackson Lears (New York: Pantheon, 1983), 1-38; Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace*; Morgan, *Protestants and Pictures*.
[677] Henry Adams, "Japan Expenses" Notebook, Adams Papers.

like "toys," he wrote, with the same sting he gave Chartres' enfeebled laity. Among many Japanese, "religion was a high old joke," he wrote, mocking Tokyo's upper-class piety with the same whiplike tone he honed in *Esther*. He loved the landscape—dreamier and greener than he expected, stirring a sublime pleasure that was nirvana-*like* enough when other sights underwhelmed the aging cosmopolitan. In Japan, however, Adams never found an Asian apogee of religious culture to equate with his Western discoveries. Kamakura's Great Buddha lacked the great blue of Chartres, he thought, and Adams suddenly missed the neo-Byzantine exuberance of Trinity Church. Henry's carefully wrought photographs, though, eventually served as a vital artistic aid. It is his Mount Fuji skyline that La Farge used for the asymmetrical, rose-gold haze backing Christ in his final *Ascension*. It was the artistic expression of a religious idea that Henry Adams now appreciated and endorsed as his own: Buddhism rising over Christianity.

Like his far-flung peers, Adams saw the fin-de-siècle era as a cultural bookend, and he joined them in mulling over *which* religion might carry them into a gainful American Century. This intricate project—a pluralistic survey of multiple religions that, in turn, challenged the "democratization of American Christianity" ushered in during the antebellum period—took place across the overlapping levels of national culture and social class that Henry Adams traversed. Back in the United States, many heard the shift before they saw it. Abruptly, in the 1880s, America's religious soundscape changed key. Streetcars, once hushed by state courts to appease clergy, now clattered along on Sabbath-days. Pealing church bells, once sheltered by the same local lawmakers, were

now frequently deemed a public nuisance.[678] In Henry's hometown, the family church still sat at the town's center, but the heart of the public square had shifted. World fairs, leisure communities, and trade union activities now dominated as the venues for civic discussion and debate.[679] Communal events like the 1893 Columbian Exposition literally restaged questions of identity, race, and gender to ask who made up "we the people," and why global empire was, definitively, to be "our" goal. An increasingly critical working class, attracted to the solidarity and benefits of membership in industrial unions, experimented with riots, strikes, socialism, and contracts.[680] American Christian leaders, trying to sync episodes of national change with orthodox lessons in morality, hastened to keep pace with each cycle. The Protestant church had arguably governed the early republic's mission and regularly put forward its clergy to settle social questions for a mass of Christian citizenry.[681] By the 1890s, however, Christianity was one option among many. Judaism, Hinduism, and Buddhism all drew popular interest and the scholarly spotlight. New dilemmas arose: How might these new faith communities vote, or serve

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[678] Isaac Weiner, *Religion Out Loud: Religious Sound, Public Space, and American Pluralism* (New York: New York University Press, 2014).

[679] Bruce Laurie, *Artisans into Workers: Labor in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1989); Sean Dennis Cashman, *America in the Gilded Age: From the Death of Lincoln to the Rise of Theodore Roosevelt* (New York: New York University Press, 1993); Robert Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877-1920* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1967); Raymond A. Mohl, *The New City: Urban America in the Industrial Age, 1860-1920* (Arlington Heights: H. Davidson, 1985); John F. Kasson, *Amusing the Million: Coney Island at the Turn of the Century* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1978); and Robert W. Rydell, *All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).

[680] Alan Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1982); William Leach, *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power, and the Rise of a New American Culture* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1993); and Eric Rauchway, *Murdering McKinley: The Making of Theodore Roosevelt's America* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1993).

[681] See, for example: Paul S. Boyer, *Urban Masses and Moral Order in America, 1820-1920* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978); Mark Y. Hanley, *Beyond a Christian Commonwealth: The Protestant Quarrel with the American Republic, 1830-1860* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994); and Henry F. May, *Protestant Churches and Industrial America* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967).

cultural needs? What social tasks did these religions incur? Against such a busy backdrop, the drama of a few well-heeled doubters fretting over either inner Christianity or outward republicanism felt insignificant, and even irresponsibly so. Within a decade, Adams's *Democracy* became a religious artifact.

After Clover's death, Henry never really returned to America, or to Western Christianity. New England society repulsed him. Perhaps he feared that a return would confirm that he was right on trend with his generation rather than racing ahead of it, and therefore already lost "in the ranks." Like his peers, Henry grappled with a moral crisis born of the Civil War and encroaching modernity. To many, the "national" Christian conscience that "pressed on" his grandfather had been overdiluted by constant sectarian reinventions. With evangelical revivals "cooling down" and mainline churchgoers ceding to what William James labeled an inner "unrest," Adams's generation wrestled anew with "ways to know" the world. As analysis of Henry's literary output and religious travels has shown, the philosophies of naturalism, scientism (or positivism), and agnosticism all gained ground, part of a broader cultural effort to determine the "ultimate causes" of existence and action.[682] Like a scientific naturalist, Henry believed that nature and nurture combined to mold irrevocable characteristics and choices, so he wrote novels meant to unlatch the motives of religious behavior. His attraction to positivism—the idea that

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[682] Gillis J. Harp, *Positivist Republic: Auguste Comte and the Reconstruction of American Liberalism, 1865-1920* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995); D. H. Meyer, "The Victorian Crisis of Faith"; Jean de Groot, ed., "Homegrown Positivism: Charles Darwin and Chauncey Wright," in *Nature in American Philosophy* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2004), 53-71; Keith Newlin, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of American Literary Naturalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); Donald Pizer, *Realism and Naturalism in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1966); and May, *Protestant Churches and Industrial America.*

scientific theory revealed general laws of human action—grew, too. Mostly, Adams felt alone in the crusade to understand humanity's (or even *his*) purpose in society. "I am still in the religious epoch of blind and silent recognition of the will of God—or of the Devil," he wrote to his younger brother Brooks from fin-de-siècle Paris, "anyway, of the helplessness of insects and polyps like us."[683]

During his frenetic rounds of travel in the 1880s and 1890s—to the South Seas, Latin America, India, and Russia—Adams formalized his commitment to a functionalist view of religion. He worked out an intellectual hierarchy of creeds that held, more or less, until his death in 1918. Overall, Henry viewed Christianity as a historical system that effectively powered bygone civilizations. Once the primary operator of political growth and self-development, modern Christianity was, in Adams's view, corpselike at best: good only for an occasional fright. Christianity's traction in America was dubious, he pronounced, since the "dynamo" of science loomed to supplant the church's dessicated authority. Most "Asiatic" religions were too passive to present a serious cultural threat, Adams decided, reserving a special rancor for Hinduism. Throughout the Gilded Age era, as steady waves of Vedanta Society speakers descended on New York City and Boston to articulate philanthropic agendas, or to attend the 1893 World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago, Henry turned away in disgust. [684] Before the 1890s, his knowledge of Hinduism came from skimming Rudyard Kipling's tales. He had little interest in reading the sacred

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[683] Henry Adams to Brooks Adams, 8 August 1899, Adams Papers.
[684] Carl T. Jackson, *A Vedanta for the West: The Ramakrishna Movement in the United States* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994); Timothy Miller, ed., *America's Alternative Religions* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 173-179; and Richard Hughes Seager, *The World's Parliament of Religions: The East/West Encounter, Chicago, 1893* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995).

Hindu texts first translated and made available in his boyhood, courtesy of (to Adams's mind) dilettantes like Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau.[685] "It is a nameless horror, tempered by Buddhistic illusions," Henry wrote to Brooks, traveling through India. "It is a huge nightmare, with cobras and cows."[686] Henry's main complaint with Hinduism, however, was economic. To Adams, religious "success" hinged on "survival of the cheapest;" and monotheism therefore always triumphed, since adherents owed fewer tributes to one god.[687]

Judging showcases of faith at century's close, Henry devalued Hinduism and Judaism—two "dysfunctional" and "corrupt" religions that he stuck firmly at the bottom of his rankings. Originally, Henry's frequent use of "Jew" as an epithet was likely not intended to be religious in nature. For unlike those of his ancestors Henry's private library did not contain a single work explicitly focused on Judaism. The Adams family fortune sank in the panic of 1893, and the shock killed Henry's eldest brother within a year. Thereafter, when Henry or Brooks took aim at bankers, "Jew" operated as a fashionable replacement for "moneylender." Idly, they laced family letters with a virulent undertone of anti-Semitism. A publishing contract communiqué to Brooks, for example, alluded to "your friend Jew No. 2." When his overstuffed townhouse felt devoid of new acquisitions or pleasant company, Henry complained of living in a "Jew atmosphere." To Adams and others, using "Jew" as a bitter pejorative bundled up the "patrician

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[685] Amanda Porterfield, *The Protestant Experience in America* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2006), 192-194.
[686] Henry Adams to Brooks Adams, 24 January 1896, Adams Papers.
[687] Henry Adams to Brooks Adams, 2 April 1896, Adams Papers.

resentment…of the growing visibility of a generation of nouveau-riche capitalists whose power felt alien to many inheritors of the republican tradition."[688]

Henry Adams was not alone in his anti-Semitism. Russian pogroms, implemented in 1881, sent waves of Eastern European Jews to American shores.[689] Jewish synagogues, periodicals, and benevolent societies—all routes of cultural assimilation that Henry would have recognized—were fairly common by the 1890s, but not necessarily welcomed in American cities, where social and ethnic discrimination was rife. Often, proponents of Jewish heritage came into conflict with the Social Gospel movement's militant conceptualization of Christlike behavior.[690] Like other influential elites, such as the Presbyterian theology professor Samuel H. Kellogg, whose "notorious Jew-baiting" marred drafts of more serious scholarship, Henry's casual anti-Semitism tainted otherwise thoughtful critiques of world economy with ugly screeds against the Jewish "pig" bankers allegedly engaged in a vast global conspiracy. "I plunge into a horde of Jews, the most terrible since the middle-ages," Henry wrote from London. "They are secret and banded together, they lie; they cheat the Christian; they are gutter-Jews at that, the new lot; and they own us all."[691] In Paris, Adams read and widely praised the work of Édouard Drumont, founder of the Anti-Semitic League of France. For an editor who

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[688] Jacobson, *Authority and Alliance*, 41-43.
[689] Hasia R. Diner, *A Time for Gathering: The Second Migration, 1820-1880* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992); and Jonathan D. Sarna, *American Judaism: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004).
[690] See, for example: Jonathan D. Sarna, ed., *Minority Faiths and the American Protestant Mainstream* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998); Naomi W. Cohen, "Antisemitism in the Gilded Age: The Jewish View," *Jewish Social Studies* 41 (1979): 187-210; and John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1955).
[691] Henry Adams to Charles Milnes Gaskell, 6 October 1895, in Levenson, *Letters of Henry Adams*, 4:333.

advised his *North American Review* contributors to write in "bald" style, one wonders if anti-Semitic sentiment flooded Henry Adam's conversation, too, since he freely granted it so much space on the page.

Sensory appreciation of ritual—a bright wedge of stained glass, the swaying chant of prayers to the Sainte Vierge—led Henry Adams to continue sampling other household gods. And, in any given letter, Henry was as liable to curse a religious discovery as to gush about it. The American skeptic was surprised and even charmed by the persistence of faith in others. In Fiji with La Farge, Adams was struck by the pluralism espoused by Protestant missionaries, who acknowledged that rites of ancestor worship would never totally melt away from local culture: "Everyone knows that the natives are all Christians only in form; they try any sort of God that comes handy, on the idea that it can't do harm and may do good," he wrote.[692]

In his own quest for nirvana, begun "out of season" several years earlier, Henry Adams now openly emphasized the elevation of non-Western ideals to replace Christianity. Increasingly, a hazy Buddhism guided Adams's work and gave new purpose to his travels.[693] Busy completing an ox-cart pilgrimage through Sri Lanka in 1891, Adams made himself unavailable for Augustus Saint-Gaudens's repeated pleas for supervision on the Rock Creek monument to Clover. At Anuradhapura, Henry inspected the great plain of brick dagobas marking fallen temples. He searched out the sacred Bodhi Tree where Buddha attained nirvana, saddened to see that only "a sickly shoot or

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[692] Henry Adams to Elizabeth Cameron, 15 July 1891, in Ford, *Letters of Henry Adams*, 1:507.
[693] On Henry's intense intellectual attraction to Buddhism, see Vern Wagner, "The Lotus of Henry Adams," *New England Quarterly* 27 (1964): 75-94.

two from the original trunk" remained. Henry Adams was further disappointed when, after a half-hour sitting meditation, he still failed to achieve nirvana. "The place was a big bazaar of religion, made for show and profit. Any country shrine has more feeling in it than this whole city seems to have shown," he wrote. "I am rather glad the jackals and monkeys own it, for they at least are not religious formalists, and they give a moral and emotion to the empty doorways and broken thresholds."[694] Once again, Henry Adams had "missed" nirvana, but identified two items on his short list of what constituted "pure and good": morality and emotion.

Many Adamses wrote most when they were deeply embedded in a foreign faith, and Henry was no exception. His next mode of exploration—poetry-writing—followed family custom in all but theme. In curly script, Adams scribbled a poem, "Buddha and Brāhma," for a niece's enjoyment. He did not mail it for twenty years. Like John Quincy, Henry drafted and revised stanzas, rejiggering the words on sheets the size of index cards to sum up his mature system of nontheistic morality. John Quincy had recorded his religious poetry in a private miscellany book that he dubbed "The Chaos," but for Henry, the phenomenal chaos of modernity was real, and inescapably public. Composed in an ox-cart at century's end, the poem is Henry's attempt to compare the relative truths of Hinduism and Buddhism—the same project that his Unitarian predecessors plied earlier as antebellum missionaries and merchants drawn to the Bengal Renaissance.[695] Then,

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[694] Henry Adams to Elizabeth Cameron, 13 September 1891, in Ford, *Letters of Henry Adams*, 1:523-527.
[695] For Unitarians' earlier, fraught interpretations of Buddhism and Hinduism, see Sushil Madhava Pathak, *American Missionaries and Hinduism: A Study of Their Contacts from 1813 to 1910* (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1967); Carl T. Jackson, *The Oriental Religions and American Thought: Nineteenth-Century Explorations* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1981); R. K. Gupta, *The Great Encounter: A Study of Indo-*

discovery of Asian faith either cued up a "universal religion," or portended collapse into a newly fortified Christianity. Adams skipped past his peers and resigned both goals. His poem, carved out of Buddhist catechism, describes the dilemma of Malunka, a pilgrim torn between the systems of (native) Hinduism and (acquired) Buddhism. Malunka asks Buddha if the world is eternal. The teacher admires and lets drift a single lotus blossom in reply—and the student is thoroughly lost. Malunka asks his Brahmin father to decode the Buddha's meaning. The elderly raj narrates the saga of Buddha's enlightenment, outlining the "silent thought, abstraction, purity" of the Eightfold Way to nirvana. Henry's ode to Buddhistic suffering is focused and calm in tone—akin to that of *Esther*'s women, who must dwell in doubt.

"Buddha and Brāhma" is the clearest statement of what Henry finally deemed "pure and good," and it is his renunciation of the filiopiety that he thought clouded the Adams family mind. Henry's depiction of the encounter between Malunka and the raj is staged like a classical epic; such an open-minded, open-hearted exchange would not have been possible with his own father. Even more intriguing is Henry's assumption that Eastern religions are broken parts of a whole, with Hinduism refracting multiple morals also found in the comparative unity of Buddhism. One faith can act to explain another, Henry suggests, but neither can function to support self and society. According to the raj, the thoughts and acts of Buddha have been, "to me a mirror, clearer far / Than to himself,

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American Literature and Cultural Relations (New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1986), 1-145; Daniel Ross Chandler, *Toward Universal Religion: Voices of American and Indian Spirituality* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1996); Tweed, *American Encounter*; Sibnarayan Ray, *Bengal Renaissance: The First Phase* (Calcutta: Minerva Associates, 2000); and Susan S. Bean, *Yankee India: American Commercial and Cultural Encounters with India in the Age of Sail, 1784-1860* (Salem: Peabody Essex Museum, 2001).

for no man sees himself." With this poem, Henry drew on his scattershot, kaleidoscopic knowledge of "Veda…the alphabet of all philosophy," and underlined his desire to study further the Buddha's Dharma Wheels of existence. Henry's poem ended worlds away from his grandfather's effort, "A Congressman's Prayer," offered a century earlier. Plainly choosing Buddhist ideals over Christian precepts, the Boston Brahmin and worldly skeptic wrote: "Gautama tells me my way too is good; / Life, Time, Space, Thought, the World, the Universe / End where they first begin, in one sole Thought / Of Purity in Silence."[696]

The globetrotter saw, by 1892, that he must cycle back to his commissioned nirvana. Henry returned to Washington, anxious to see the Rock Creek monument. He agreed wholly with the Paris art critic who called it "the image of Eternity and Meditation…I know of no analogous work so profound in sentiment, so exalted in its art, and executed by methods so simple and broad, since the most telling sculpture of the Middle Ages. In me personally it awakens a deeper emotion than any other modern work of art."[697] Henry's blank reverie before that bronze monument of nirvana marks Clover's sole cameo in the *Education*.

Conclusion: The Empty Glass

Henry presidential pedigree made him a prominent skeptic in an era when mainline church membership fluctuated and spiritual tourism led Americans to take non-Western faith seriously. Soured by New England Unitarianism, a cosmopolitan youth

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[696] Henry Adams, "Buddha and Brāhma," *Yale Review* (1915): 82-89. For John Quincy Adams's religious poetry, see Chapter 2.
[697] Gaston Migeon, *Art et Décoration*, cited in Saint-Gaudens, *Reminiscences*, 1:366.

introduced him to the wonders of older Christian civilizations. Henry and Clover, taken as skeptical interpreters of the country's evolving religious cultures, made a unique pair. Previous Christian generations of Adamses explored other religions and returned home to liberal Unitarianism. By contrast, Henry and Clover encountered new faiths with surprise, mistrust, enjoyment, and doubt; they had no Christian home to return to, and then reveled in it. This chapter has drawn deliberately on sources and moments when they felt most exposed and fully engaged in the process of interpreting religious change. Family papers, then, bring their narratives of encounter and exchange to the fore. The act of letter-writing upset Henry most, yet he could not stop doing it; his cache of correspondence reveals more about the ebb of his Christian "instinct" than the highly-curated riptide of memoir in his *Education*. Clover's photographs, in turn, imprint a foreign world in reverse. Her efforts to shoot the Pyramids via Kodak, or to simulate Victorian Christmas dinner in Asyut, show how Americans experimented with making religion an art.[698]

His creation of popular literature reflected Henry's view that Christianity and republicanism—the pillars of Adams family faith—were too ruined to salvage. Fortunately, he began to flourish as a writer in middle age, just as American worshippers' interest swiveled from pantheistic Hinduism to "strange" and "singular" Buddhism. An expensive passion for researching historical Christianity ran Henry around the world in eighty years—through Tokyo, Tahiti, Cuba, the Rockies, Russia, Greece, and Egypt. In the course of his religious travels, the medievalist also produced two anonymous novels

[698] Scott Trafton, *Egypt Land: Race and Nineteenth-Century American Egyptomania* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).

that censured national touchstones of church and state. Unlike many other skeptics who traveled between denominations, he rejected modern Christianity whole. And, famously, Adams delivered a searing indictment of New England's moral decay in his self-titled *Education*. By 1905, what was left for Henry Adams to criticize?

As the twentieth century's first spring bloomed across Washington, a childless Henry Adams reflected on his legacy. The family had always written for the archive, and Henry was nervous that they said too much, and that his own personal habits were so finely etched there. "Our dogmatism is certainly odious, but it was not extravagant until we made it a record. The world is going so fast, now, that dogmatism or marked individuality has become economically unprofitable and socially obstructive," he wrote to Brooks. "Types are fast changing even here...The new century is already a new world."[699] Desperate to grab hold of it, the medievalist grew uneasy, and then reckless. For, if not exactly the nirvana he still hoped to find, then the familiar work of history-writing offered Henry a dose of intellectual relief. The process of looking for Christian teachings that eased the rigors of contemporary life—what father Charles had called the "religious confidence" to go about *his* life a generation ago—spurred Henry to depart from tradition and adapt methods of scientific determinism to produce scholarship. Choosing to be free of a denominational anchor, Henry Adams next drew on his skepticism in order to undertake the scientific study of medieval religious life. Perhaps, like his academic peers, he generalized about Christianity's ills in order to reject it and

[699] Henry Adams to Brooks Adams, 4 March 1900, Adams Papers.

thus grasp for the scientific objectivity needed to write "good" history.[700] Though not a churchgoer, Henry held to faith (and, particularly, to Christianity) as a way to trace human progress and its inevitable degeneration. As his later work shows, Adams presented a form of cosmopolitan Christianity for his readers: a blend of prized "twelfth-century instincts," quasi-Buddhist passivity, positivist experimentation, and a general feeling of self-atomization. A great deal of Henry's cosmopolitanism manifested itself in his last religious studies, not all of it kind, balanced, or well-informed. A cultural omnivore and dilettante who frequented transatlantic constellations of thought, Henry was able to "draw upon and enact vocabularies and discourses from a variety of cultural repertoires."[701] His final, key reflections on faith arise in his scientific history on the female soul of medieval architecture, in *Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres* (1905).

Scholarliness was next to godliness, in Henry's mind. From the 1890s and until his death in 1918, Henry promoted the "hard pan of science" as the best method to make history, stating that "science cannot be played with."[702] The payoff of being a philosopher

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[700] Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

[701] Gavin Kendall, ed., "Introduction," *The Sociology of Cosmopolitanism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 25-26. Kendall defines cosmopolitans as transcultural actors rooted in first-world privilege, and argues that the philosophy is a route to developing a "moral self" *and* the specialist knowledge needed to form communities of interest/activism. "Cosmopolitanism is an intellectual and political project," Kendall argues, "that makes the promise of a global civil society" (149). To connect this with the post-Enlightenment philosophy that Henry's generation inherited, see eds. Roland Pierik and Wouter Werner, *Cosmopolitanism in Context: Perspectives from International Law and Political Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); and Keingeld, *Kant and Cosmopolitanism*. For a medieval version of the same theme, centered on exploring sites of exchange for Christian universalists (a practice that often "demonized cultural differences"), and one that Henry likely favored, see eds. John M. Ganim and Shayne Aaron Legassie, *Cosmopolitanism in the Middle Ages* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

[702] Adams refined his theory of the scientific approach to history and its scholarly implications in three key essays: *The Tendency of History* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1896); "The Rule of Phase, Applied to History" in *The Degradation of Democratic Dogma*, ed. Brooks Adams (New York: Macmillan,

and a scientist of history, as Adams thought, was the "pleasure...to work as though he were a small God and immortal and possibly omniscient."[703] From the South Sea beach that served as his household, the "small god" accepted the presidency of the American Historical Association in 1894. That winter, Adams forwarded his annual address from Guadalajara, Panama. His speech on "The Tendency of History," later expanded and published as "A Letter to American Teachers of History," is a curious artifact, studded with all the ornaments of late nineteenth-century thought. Filled with Darwinian vigor, Henry argued that his colleagues must "necessarily raise history to the rank of a science." This approach, he wrote, incurred the wrath of two powerful institutions, church and state. The "church," as Adams predicted in cautiously liberal terms, would resist "any science of history, because science, by its definition, must exclude the idea of a personal and active providence." A thorny patrilineal history of service to the state made Henry even sharper on the second point; he warned that the American government would move against this doctrine with real muscle. In Henry's audience sat scholars primed by the Enlightenment legacy of scientific rationalism, unsure of how to implement his controversial plan. Was history to be science, or art?

Back at the AHA, Adams's dream of scientific history was not an entirely new vision—merely a more eloquent pitch of themes that had preoccupied scholars throughout the century. Energized by the age of Darwin, modernizing Americans had spent recent decades endeavoring to place their experiences within the context of a

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1919), 263-311; and "A Letter to American Teachers of History" (Washington: Press of J.H. Furst Co., 1910).

[703] Henry Adams to Charles Milnes Gaskell, 18 April 1871, in Levenson, *Letters of Henry Adams*, 2:106-107.

longer, liberal tradition.[704] The appeal of using scientific tools to conduct credible historical investigations that legitimated their finds naturally grew. Simultaneously, science-minded historians faced a public battery of new ideologies that tested their scholarly work. At the same time, Henry put his own twist on the old family religion by rejecting the prototypical Victorian search for "unity, comfort, inspiration" in both his personal and professional spheres.[705] Christianity was a relic to be studied, with Henry's own scholarship as the model, but never revived. Henry's "Letter" was strident, yet he demonstrated genuine affection for other gentlemen scholars—a love of professional fellowship that evoked the Victorian academic ideal, a tranquil Protestant community of "small gods" bent in inquiry. Adams sized up the circle and sped away, diving into a colorful twelfth-century Catholic past that marked, for him, the lost heights of godly civilization emblazoned in feminine, mosaic form.

Henry Adams returned from his exotic sojourns set on gathering and cataloging symbols of morality and emotion, seeding what became the academic field of scientific study of religion. No biography of Adams can omit his *Education*, but it is the companion volume, *Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres*, that articulates the final phase of his religious thought. Focused on sensory appreciation of ritual, *Mont-Saint-Michel* succeeds as a melodrama of the medieval soul. Men, women, the infinite—this is the moral inquiry of Henry's life in sixteen chapters, and a lively example of the scientific scripture of history-

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[704] Dorothy Ross, *The Origins of American Social Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Novick, *That Noble Dream;* and Thomas L. Haskell, *Objectivity is Not Neutrality: Explanatory Schemes in History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998).
[705] Meyer, "The Victorian Crisis of Faith," 77.

writing that he promoted.[706] While the *Education* asserts that a multiplicity of selves must suffer through modern life, *Mont-Saint-Michel* offers a glorious prequel of forfeited Christian unity and Marian compassion. In *Mont-Saint-Michel*, Adams plays his hunch that the Second Law of Thermodynamics steers history, causing humanity to accelerate between fixed points of progress or decay.[707] The results of his trial are beautifully uneven. As scholars have noted, *Mont-Saint-Michel* is not a particularly well-researched work of art history, nor is it the handy guidebook that Henry, still imitating cosmopolitan travelogues, intended it to be.[708] Rather, *Mont-Saint-Michel* says a lot about Henry's inner fantasy of religion. It is the moral *Education* that the skeptic longed for, and one that his homemade Unitarianism failed to stock. To the reader, Henry leaves "only the empty glass of my scholasticism for you to turn down."[709]

Perhaps it was a latent, ironic effect of his Bushnellian upbringing, but Adams's medieval scholarship most evinced his desire to write *against* the tendency of American Protestant historians who orchestrated soft, weak notions of female divinity while privileging the more "serious" goals of male self-interest.[710] The iconoclastic Adams was not the average medievalist, for the writer of *Esther* and the widower to Clover chose to enshrine female intellect in the Church. For a functionalist like Adams, the project

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[706] To situate *Mont-Saint-Michel* alongside the evolution of Adams's thoughts on history, see Keith R. Burich, "Henry Adams, the Second Law of Thermodynamics, and the Course of History," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 48 (1987): 467-482.
[707] Henry tweaked his phrasing of the Law when he wrote about it in the context of history-writing, and brother Brooks would do the same, for which see Chapter 5.
[708] See, especially, Ernst Scheyer, "Henry Adams 'Monte-Saint-Michel and Chartres,'" *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 13 (1954): 3-10; and John P. McIntyre, "Henry Adams and the Unity of Chartres," *Twentieth Century Literature* 7 (1962): 159-171.
[709] Henry Adams, *Mont-Saint-Michel*, 381.
[710] Mark Edwards, "'My God and My Good Mother': The Irony of Horace Bushnell's Gendered Republic," *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation* 13 (2003), 111-137.

offered a dual case study in the juxtaposition of two refuges for the religious: the masculine, mountain island abbey of Mont-Saint-Michel, and the grand, feminine cathedral of Chartres. Both holy sites recall a bygone era when, as Adams writes in skeptical wonder, Christianity was strong enough to solve "the whole problem of the universe."[711] From the very beginning, Henry's narrative voice in *Mont-Saint-Michel* is one of a small god (or a young Buddha?) marveling at medieval creation. "The Archangel loved heights," Adams begins, carrying the reader "nearest to God," to share Michael's perspective on earth. [712] Knowing Adams from the *Education*, such a rapid ascent portends that angels crash down. And so, rather than gazing up at a god in rapture, the reader is sent plunging to earth. It is a vicious reminder of man's inevitable moral descent, and an artful symbol of the normative social structure that Adams describes as religious rule in Mont-Saint-Michel: warlike and rough, versus Chartres's peaceable reign of bourgeois progress, afflicted only by the rise of monastic schools and an occasional Crusade. Henry's innovative use of popular/material culture, such as *jongleurs*' ditties and architectural figures, allows him to construct a cathedral-sized narrative of impeccable detail. To the middlebrow reader who could not afford the pilgrimage to isolated Mont-Saint-Michel, Henry recreates a foreign world meant to stir twentieth-century Americans' blossoming interest in medieval life and to assign moral complexity to its brutality.[713]

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[711] Henry Adams, *Mont-Saint-Michel*, 44.
[712] Henry Adams, *Mont-Saint-Michel*, 1.
[713] Norman E. Cantor, *Inventing the Middle Ages: The Lives, Works, and Ideas of the Great Medievalists of the Twentieth Century* (New York: W. Morrow, 1991); Kathleen Verduin, ed., *Medievalism in North America* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1994); and Kim Ileen Moreland, *The Medievalist Impulse in American*

Piecing together French ballads and stained glass, Henry managed to say just as much—if not more—about the moral crises of Gilded Age America than either his brother Brooks (critic of Western civilization's decay) or Charles Francis, Jr. (critic of railroad monopolies and capitalism).[714] The senior scholar Henry Adams appreciated the French version of a Catholic past where women reigned, but he did not go so far as to forecast a Catholic future for America. That inquiry remained for others to explore. Henry idolized his grandmother Louisa and her Marian qualities, but he separated himself from brother Brooks in adopting a wholehearted stance for or against Catholic modernity. "As a religious and conservative anarchist I have had much to thank God for...Indeed God has been good to me," Henry wrote, adding: "Bishop Keane has hopes that I may join the true church, and truly I would like to be a cardinal."[715] Nor was the childless Henry particularly invested in passing along faith to the next generation. Religious education, as the self-proclaimed "conservative Christian Anarchist" instructed one young niece, was "a means of holding oneself up in faith and feeling. Therefore it tends to what is called Jesuitism, or practiced evasion of difficulties. What it is intended to help, it then helps to destroy."[716]

At the end of Henry Adams's well-travelled life, long after his religious tours shifted from dusty carriage to Mercedes motorcar, a religious sentimentalism took over his daily routine in Lafayette Square. When Henry's health began to fail, his nieces

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Literature: Twain, Adams, Fitzgerald, and Hemingway (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1996).

[714] For Brooks's and Charles Francis Adams, Jr.'s social critiques, see Chapter 5.

[715] Henry Adams to Brooks Adams, 18 February 1896, Adams Papers. The Roman Catholic Archbishop John Joseph Keane was a frequent visitor to Henry's Washington, D.C., home.

[716] Henry Adams to Mabel Hooper La Farge, 29 April 1902, in Levenson, *Letters of Henry Adams*, 5:381.

arranged to send him a live-in secretary on trial. Learning that Miss Aileen Tone could sing Thibaut's *chansons de geste* in a rotating program of six per night for two weeks straight or more, he hired her on the spot. Henry opened the American century with daily recitals culled from his "Hundred Men and Women" of medieval myth. He hunted for and published the lines of Richard's prison song.[717] In a string of letters to his nieces, the old cosmopolitan delighted in overlaying modern marvels with medieval norms. "My idea of paradise," Adams wrote, "is a perfect automobile going thirty miles an hour on a smooth road to a twelfth-century cathedral."[718] Once restricted to a few chosen friends, his *Mont-Saint-Michel* was published to critical acclaim. Medieval Christianity kept the skeptic alive and wholly engaged in the past. Thanks to the recovered beauty of his premodern "glass," he was "at home here and everywhere," Adams wrote from St. Rèmy, France. Facing the world war that he and Brooks had repeatedly predicted, Henry turned back to familiar medieval supports. By mid-1914 Adams claimed to have secured a nirvana, of sorts, when he returned to his New Hampshire cottage after a season spent entertaining his now elderly crew of cosmopolitans. He had found something "pure and good," if totally lost, that peaked in the feminine divinity of medieval France, but the conservative Christian Anarchist felt little or no "Adams-like" need to administer self-improvement because of it. Convinced that religion and art were one, he speculated as to

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[717] Sometimes known as Blondel's song, and possibly sung by a troubadour searching for Richard I (the Lion-Hearted), who was captured near Venice en route home. According to legend, only Richard would have recognized the tune, for which see David Boyle, *Blondel's Song*: *The Capture, Imprisonment and Ransom of Richard the Lionheart* (London and New York: Viking, 2005).

[718] Henry Adams to Mabel Hooper La Farge, 17 June 1902, in Levenson, *Letters of Henry Adams*, 6:25. Henry leased an 18-horsepower Mercedes at £80/month during his 1904-1905 tour of French cathedrals. He made frequent mention of "the machine" and its costly repairs in his letters (same, 5:591-607 *passim*, 654-687 *passim*, 705, 715; 6:147).

the next form that an American skeptic's story, like his own, might take. "It is astonishing that no one of rank and breeding has ever since said anything worth repeating—except me, of course, and a few dead-beats like us," Henry Adams wrote to a friend in July 1914. "But it only proves my theory that the whole show is—what do they call it now, a movie?"[719]

[719] Henry Adams to Ward Thoron, 28 July 1914, in Levenson, *Letters of Henry Adams*, 6:654.

CHAPTER FIVE

Higher than a City upon a Hill

Henry Adams's better angels—frozen in sepia prints made at Mont-St-Michel and framed in New England oak—soared in state over the Quincy bed of his youngest brother Brooks.[720] Like his *Education*, the pictures were meant for Henry's reference or for family eyes only, filling out the unique religious landscape that Brooks made of his sanctuary in the Adams home.[721] Great-grandmother Abigail's Gospel tiles bordered the hearth. Charles Sr.'s novels and church histories hugged hallway shelves. Within easy reach lay a dogeared King James Bible that Brooks had owned since the age of nine. A gravel path led Jazz Age visitors into the Stone Library, where 300,000 Adams manuscripts were tucked away from the country damp, with the household gods keeping watch. Brooks toured guests past the bronzes and through the colonial garden. Proudly, he pointed out First Ladies' china and presidents' diaries. Keeping house in a shrine, Brooks and wife Daisy were cocooned in a Christianized version of the American past. Heirloom quilts blanketed John Quincy's pine bed, where they slept. Underfoot, "Muslim red" rugs rounded out the room with tree-of-life motifs. In an unlocked drawer, Brooks kept candles and matches close for late-night reading, along with a loaded pistol. It was

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[720] Scrapbooks and loose photographs, Henry Adams Photograph Collection, Massachusetts Historical Society.

[721] Laurel A. Racine, *Historic Furnishings Report: The Birthplaces of Presidents John Adams and John Quincy Adams*, 10 vols. (Charlestown: Northeast Museum Services Center, National Park Service, 2001), 4:423-426; 5:508-514. I am grateful to Adams National Historical Park Deputy Superintendent Caroline Keinath and her staff, who shared their expert knowledge of the site on multiple research visits made between October 2009 and May 2014.
For *The Education of Henry Adams* and for the significance of photography in Adams family life, see Chapter 4.

there, as family legend went, that Brooks Adams greeted every day with his acid hymn: "God damn it! God damn it! God damn it!"[722]

Often overlooked except by economic historians who lionized his critique of capitalism, Brooks Adams (1848-1927) offers a slippery and surprising bend in the family's religious road.[723] Born four months after John Quincy's death, the sickly Brooks seemed prone to buckle under the ancestral mantle. He attended Harvard, toured Europe, and worshipped at Quincy's First Church. In his religious path, the contrarian Brooks seceded from the "Adams tribe." At first agnostic, he reached out to the world's "others," initiating a slow burn of discovery that kindled his mature, public recommitment to organized faith. Groomed for a political arena that no longer welcomed Adams presidents, he was "an unusable man" who wrote "damnably superfluous" prose—a cultural critic who felt overqualified yet unappreciated by his people and by his God.[724] A single-minded theorist who barbed his best arguments with paradoxes and rants, Brooks

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[722] Thornton Anderson, *Brooks Adams: Constructive Conservative* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1951), xiii.

[723] Brooks's political thought has drawn attention, but the entirety of his life and work has attracted few full-scale biographies. Mainly, scholars sketch Brooks's religious explorations by placing him within the "Adams tribe" of Protestant presidents and public intellectuals. The key texts are Charles A. Madison, "Brooks Adams, Caustic Cassandra," *The American Scholar* 9 (1940): 214-227; Anderson, *Brooks Adams*; Arthur F. Beringause, *Brooks Adams*: *A Biography* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1955); Timothy Paul Donovan, *Henry Adams and Brooks Adams: The Education of Two American Historians* (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1961); Abigail Adams Homans, *Education by Uncles* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1966); Wilhelmina S. Harris, "The Brooks Adams I Knew," *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, 3d ser., 80 (1968): 94-113; and Paul C. Nagel, "Brooks Adams after Half a Century," *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, 3d ser., 90 (1978): 38-57; idem, *Descent from Glory: Four Generations of the John Adams Family* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999). See also Perry Miller's introduction to the 1962 edition of Brooks Adams, *The Emancipation of Massachusetts* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin), v-xl.

[724] Daniel Aaron, "The Unusable Man: An Essay on the Mind of Brooks Adams," *New England Quarterly* 21 (1948): 3-33. This description has been variously attributed to Brooks, to his nieces, and to Theodore Roosevelt. Henry often attacked his brother's writing as "damnably superfluous," as with Brooks' unpublished [ca. 1905-1909] biography of John Quincy Adams, a typescript of which is held in the Adams Papers along with a copy of Henry's many edits.

wrote brilliant but tortured text. "The texture of all Adams's thought was not consistent and mirrored the inner contradictions of his mind and character," one biographer (and many more) sighed.[725] Brooks's bylines outnumbered those of "anonymous" Henry, who won far more praise.[726] To kin, Brooks came across as a bitter, haunted man who preached daily of pessimism and catastrophe. Powerful admirers like Theodore Roosevelt and Henry Cabot Lodge acknowledged Brooks's work, yet they did not apply his parables to political life. Painfully, he was an intellectual without a public. "I shouldn't wonder if I had quite a reputation after I'm dead," Brooks guessed.[727]

Like his Puritan ancestors, Brooks strove to connect Christianity with American culture. Bringing the family story full circle, this chapter charts Brooks's battle to renew his faith and embed it into a cosmopolitan critique of early American history and the rise of urban capitalism. Along with other modernizing Protestant elites, Brooks eyed warily

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[725] Charles Hirschfeld, "Brooks Adams and American Nationalism," *American Historical Review* 69 (1964): 371-392.

[726] For Henry's and Brooks's roles as significant Victorian intellectuals and the genesis of cosmopolitan reform, see: Paul A. Carter, *The Spiritual Crisis of the Gilded Age* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1971); T.J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981); idem, *Rebirth of a Nation: The Making of Modern America, 1877-1920* (New York: HarperCollins, 2009); John N. Ingham, *Assault on Victorianism: The Rise of Popular Culture in America, 1890-1945* (Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press, 1987); Mark C. Carnes and Clyde Griffen, eds., *Meanings for Manhood: Constructions of Masculinity in Victorian America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990); Leslie Butler, *Critical Americans: Victorian Intellectuals and Transatlantic Liberal Reform* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); David A. Hollinger, *Postethnic America: Beyond Multiculturalism* (New York: Basic Books, 2000); idem, *Cosmopolitanism and Solidarity: Studies in Ethnoracial, Religious, and Professional Affiliation in the United States* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006); Louis Menand, *The Metaphysical Club* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2001); John Carlos Rowe, "Nineteenth-Century United States Literary Culture and Transnationality," *PMLA* 118 (2003): 78-89; Tom Lutz, *Cosmopolitan Vistas: American Regionalism and Literary Value* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004); Gerard Delanty, "The Cosmopolitan Imagination," *Revista CIDOB d'Afers Internacionals* 82/83 (2008): 217-230; Mark Rennella, *The Boston Cosmopolitans: International Travel and American Arts and Letters* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); and Nicola J. Watson, ed., *Literary Tourism and Nineteenth-Century Culture* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

[727] Brooks Adams to Henry Cabot Lodge, [*ca. 1894*]. Henry Cabot Lodge Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

the blossoming of Christian fundamentalism, the growth of foreign missions, and the assimilation of Catholic and Jewish communities into American culture.[728] He, too, judged New England's Unitarian ecosystem to be suffocating, dull, and unimaginative. But Brooks grew up minus the providentialist proclivities of his ancestors. So his worldview tilted when he considered life without—and *then* with—God. Seerlike, Brooks marshaled Christianity to serve the sweeping claims he made in the two works reconsidered here: *The Emancipation of Massachusetts: The Dream and the Reality* (1887, 1919) and *The Law of Civilization and Decay* (1895). These volumes represent the hinge in Brooks's thought as he transitioned from agnostic to believer, from Victorian failure to modern prophet.

In sorting out his "confused Christianity," Brooks joined with other mainstays of the Unitarian flock who merged old-fashioned piety and historical scrutiny to bind up the postbellum republic.[729] As Margaret Bendroth has shown, the mainliners of Brooks's day were "not simply failed evangelicals, traditionless and compromised, but people with a particular historical burden, distinct from that of newer twentieth-century denominations and religious organizations."[730] Brooks's struggle is a prime case study in how Gilded Age elites dealt with that weight. To trace his return path to faith—and to see why

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[728] Mark Hulsether, *Religion, Culture and Politics in the Twentieth-Century United States* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007); Harry S. Stout and D.G. Hart, eds., *New Directions in American Religious History* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); Michael J. Lacey, ed., *Religion and Twentieth-Century American Intellectual Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); and Charles H. Lippy, *Introducing American Religion* (Providence: Journal of Buddhist Ethics Online Books, Ltd., 2009), 177-242.
[729] James Turner, *Without God, Without Creed: The Origins of Unbelief in America* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1985); Margaret Bendroth, *The Last Puritans: Mainline Protestants and the Power of the Past* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015).
[730] Bendroth, *The Last Puritans*, 3.

Brooks dared the one act of religious testimony that no other Adams had in three centuries of public life—we turn to his first signs of Christian fracture.

I. An Education: The Burden of New England Church History

The story of Brooks's "failed" New England education mirrored that of brother Henry.[731] Religion was, to Brooks, a tiresome form of family duty rather than an instinct to nurture. Throughout the 1850s, Sundays in Quincy were, for all the children, a special torment. As his brother Charles Francis, Jr., recalled, it meant an onerous recitation of hymns, followed by a dreary stretch of homily at the same church a short ride away. At midday, between services, the Adamses often hosted a leaden roast beef lunch for the pastor. "I was glad when Monday came; for me it wasn't 'black Monday,' for it was six days before another Sunday. I remember now the silence, the sombre idleness, the sanctified atmosphere of restraint of those days, with their church-bells, their sedate walk and their special duties," Charles, Jr., wrote many decades later. "The recollection of those Sundays haunts me now."[732] The hyperactive Brooks, at odds with his siblings, fidgeted throughout the day and bristled at his parents' plan of Christian nurture. A poor pupil, Brooks failed at reciting Scripture, spelling, and saying his prayers. He ruined his father's evening reading with "screams, & laughs, & rants, & twists, & jumps."[733] Mother Abby labeled him "very backward," telling Henry that Brooks was "good, dutiful, & honest as the day, lovely tempered as you know full well, & in intellect about like the generality of

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[731] See Chapter 4.
[732] Charles Francis Adams, Jr., *Charles Francis Adams, 1835-1915: An Autobiography* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1916), 13-14. For Henry's similar account of youthful religious (un)observance, see Chapter 4.
[733] Abigail Brooks Adams to Henry Adams, 30 January 1859; Mary Louisa Adams to Henry Adams, 20 August 1860, Adams Papers.

boys, but not so clever as you three."[734] By April 1861, when the clan decamped to England for Charles, Sr.'s diplomatic duties, Brooks had channeled his mania into an obsessive appetite for collecting exotic stamps.

Along for the adventure, 13-year-old Brooks took the related change of culture in stride. Around him, Europe was increasingly more than a private playroom for well-heeled Americans. The Adamses' penchant for foreign travel neither set them apart, nor marked them as members of the monied class. Any bourgeois tourist could book a first-class passage for $200, or, by the century's end, stay home and roll the dice on an 85-cent board game that simulated Continental glamor.[735] In Brooks's day, affluent Bostonians believed that firsthand exposure to British culture was particularly vital for New England's sons and daughters to experience. For the Puritans' descendants, the trip was a cultural keyhole through which they might glimpse the feudal past. Raised on the cardinal lesson that their forebears had fled for liberty's sake, the men and women of Brooks's era regarded Old World travel as a useful historical contrast with American life. They greeted Europe with a national self-identity hardened by industrialization, urbanization, war. Part filiopiety and part fun, visiting England allowed Americans to explore and to preen

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[734] Abigail Brooks Adams to Henry Adams, 4 January 1860, Adams Papers. Brooks's older brothers were Henry, John Quincy Adams, Jr., and Charles Francis, Jr; see the modern genealogical chart in Appendix A.
[735] Rennella, *The Boston Cosmopolitans*, 18-19; Joel Shrock, *The Gilded Age* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2004), 122-123; Sean Dennis Cashman, *America in the Gilded Age: From the Death of Lincoln to the Rise of Theodore Roosevelt* (New York: New York University Press, 1993); John F. Kasson, *Amusing the Million: Coney Island at the Turn of the Century* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1978); and Robert W. Rydell, *All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).

When Brooks first crossed the Atlantic, he hoped to supplement the highbrow culture of his famed hometown, then dubbed the "Athens of America."[736] Busy London suited Brooks's rapacious intellect; his Christian education remained haphazard at best. Brooks kept little record of it, though, since the grand tour narrative as a genre had fallen out of vogue by midcentury.[737] In family letters from England, flashes of Brooks appear. An "innocent abroad," much like Mark Twain's (anti)heroes, Brooks evidently learned to parrot the Boston cosmopolitan's take on daily life in 1860s Europe: simple yet slow; majestic but far *too* feudal for the archetypal American go-getter; tranquil to the point of tranquilizing.[738] Underwhelmed by Old World culture, a sullen Brooks tagged along on his father's pilgrimages to Gothic churches.[739] He tried out Anglican, Catholic, and Presbyterian rites. He shadowed a few legs of idol Henry's tour. The tattered repertoire of holy bones and sacred sites failed to ignite any spiritual interest in the youngest Adams. Harvard-bound, he returned to the heart of Unitarianism in July 1865. Brooks carried

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[736] Rennella, *The Boston Cosmopolitans*; Butler, *Critical Americans*.

[737] Allison Lockwood, *Passionate Pilgrims: The American Traveler in Great Britain, 1800-1914* (New York: Cornwall Books, 1981); Harvey Levenstein, *Seductive Journey: American Tourists in France from Jefferson to the Jazz Age* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 3-36; Annette G. Aubert, *The German Roots of Nineteenth-Century American Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); Christine Guth, *Longfellow's Tattoos: Tourism, Collecting, and Japan* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004); Tim Youngs, ed., *Travel Writing in the Nineteenth Century: Filling the Blank Spaces* (London: Anthem Press, 2006), 1-16; Harold F. Smith, *American Travellers Abroad: A Bibliography of Accounts Published before 1900* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University, 1969); Lewis Perry, *Boats Against the Current: American Culture between Revolution and Modernity, 1820-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); Lutz, *Cosmopolitan Vistas: American Regionalism and Literary Value* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004); Watson, *Literary Tourism and Nineteenth-Century Culture*.

[738] Mark Twain, *The Innocents Abroad: Or, The New Pilgrim's Progress* (Hartford: The American Publishing Company, 1869), 187-188; Jeffrey Alan Melton, *Mark Twain, Travel Books, and Tourism: The Tide of a Great Popular Movement* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2002).

[739] Beringause, *Brooks Adams*, 24-35; and on Charles Francis Adams's London pilgrimages, see Chapter 3.

back, as a souvenir, the lightly clipped English accent he spoke in for the rest of his life.[740]

When the *Africa* docked in Boston three weeks later, via the same Rowes Wharf where his Puritan kin once bought timber to build their meetinghouses, Brooks encountered a hometown under construction. As he drove up from the waterfront, new German, Irish, and Italian arrivals all pressed into view. Like their modernizing peers in Baltimore, Chicago, and Philadelphia, Bostonians sought to create a walkable, industrial center that embodied Christian, middle-class values and embedded natural beauty in the daily pedestrian experience.[741] Between 1860 and 1870, the total urban population surged from 177,840 to 250,526. The self-styled "Hub of the Universe" bustled with change, and the mayor annexed several harbor islands to accommodate its growth.[742] A quartet of new bridges knit together old neighborhoods. Thanks to the genesis of a metropolitan park system, Frederick Law Olmsted's leafy green pathways arched through a half-finished network of monuments, department stores, apartment buildings, and civic gathering spots

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[740] Henry Adams to Charles Francis Adams, Jr., 24 December 1863, Adams Papers.

[741] On the rise of the modern metropolis in America, see Alan Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982); Eric H. Monkkonen, *America Becomes Urban: The Development of U.S. Cities and Towns, 1780-1980* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988); David M. P. Freund, ed., *The Modern American Metropolis: A Documentary Reader* (Chichester and Malden: Wiley Blackwell, 2015); Thomas Bender, *Toward an Urban Vision: Ideas and Institutions in Nineteenth-Century America* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1975); Gunther Barth, *City People: The Rise of Modern City Culture in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980); William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1991); Sven Beckert, *The Monied Metropolis: New York City and the Consolidation of the American Bourgeoisie, 1850-1896* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001); and Jackson Lears, *Rebirth of a Nation.*

[742] On Boston's late nineteenth-century development, see Thomas H. O'Connor, *Civil War Boston: Home Front and Battlefield* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1997); Barbara F. Berenson, *Boston and the Civil War: Hub of the Second Revolution* (Charleston: The History Press, 2014); Walter Muir Whitehill, *Boston and the Civil War* (Boston: Boston Athenaeum, 1963); Michael Rawson, *Eden on the Charles: The Making of Boston* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014); and Theodore G. Clarke, *Beacon Hill, Back Bay, and the Building of Boston's Golden Age* (Charleston: The History Press, 2010).

like the Romanesque showstopper of Horticultural Hall. Catholic (Boston College) and Methodist (Boston University) college campuses emerged. "Horsecars" pulled along shoppers at a laggardly (and aromatic) five miles an hour, while local engineers raced New York rivals to develop an underground subway and thereby end the traffic mayhem.[743] Wealthy city-dwellers like the Adamses bankrolled a pipeline of new institutions (museums, libraries, academic societies) and technological marvels (railroads, transatlantic steamers) that ferried their cultural goods abroad. These urban efforts, in part, united the "genteel tradition" of Brahmin writers and thinkers who upheld social hierarchies and articulated conservative political views.[744] When Brooks landed in the new Boston of 1865, *that* was the intellectual club he longed to join.

Venerable Puritan-era institutions like Harvard University showed motley change, too. As Brooks trudged through his undergraduate rites, the Adamses' alma mater again evolved. University overseers shifted around resources to accommodate a swollen population of scholars. In President John Adams's day, for example, the college made do with a handful (10-12) of faculty members to guide 100 students. By contrast, his great-grandson Brooks was one of 1,097 undergraduate and graduate scholars steered by 40 professors. The old red brick quadrangles melted into cityscape. Side by side, two new

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[743] Freund, *The Modern American*; Doug Most, *The Race Underground: Boston, New York, and the Incredible Rivalry That Built America's First Subway* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2014). Bostonians began regular use of electric streetcars in 1888.

[744] George Santayana, *The Genteel Tradition in American Philosophy: And Character and Opinion in the United States* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009 ed.); John Tomsich, *A Genteel Endeavor: American Culture and Politics in the Gilded Age* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1971); Betty G. Farrell, *Elite Families: Class and Power in Nineteenth-Century Boston* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993); Frederic Cople Jaher, *The Urban Establishment: Upper Strata in Boston, New York, Charleston, Chicago, and Los Angeles* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982), 15-158; and Beckert, *The Monied Metropolis*.

spires rose to scratch the Cambridge sky. Echoing postbellum Americans' parallel interests in religion and science, the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology broke ground adjacent to the new Episcopal Theological School.[745] Brooks's tutors rejiggered their goals, too. As the modern university program superseded worn, antebellum modes of apprenticeship, higher degrees meant graduation from a school in morality. An army of men emerged from Cambridge with empty but unbiased and "supple" minds, Henry Adams noted in one *Education* rant. "Four years of Harvard College, if successful, resulted in an autobiographical blank," he wrote, "a mind on which only a water-mark has been stamped."[746] Imprinting intellectual and cultural standards on staple students like Brooks, Harvard labored on.

A popular student there until 1870, Brooks followed the family pattern of youthful agnosticism, and Harvard's increasingly secular curriculum enabled his way forward. In his formative academic choices, Brooks represented a transitional generation of Americans who met a modern campus reshaped by three factors: the explosive growth of respectable public universities, engendered by the land-use terms of the Morrill Act (1862); a fleet of faculty who imported formats of European (especially German) pedagogy; and the widespread application of scientific research methods and tools by fledgling humanities scholars like Henry and Brooks.[747]

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[745] Bainbridge Bunting, *Harvard: An Architectural History* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1985); Bernard Bailyn, *Glimpses of the Harvard Past* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986); and Samuel Eliot Morison, *Three Centuries of Harvard, 1636-1936* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1965).
[746] Henry Adams, *The Education of Henry Adams* (Cambridge: The Riverside Press, 1918), 55.
[747] Jon H. Roberts and James Turner, *The Sacred and the Secular University* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); George M. Marsden, *The Soul of the American University: From Protestant*

In tandem with his professoriate, Brooks's approach to achieving a liberal education thus meant shedding New England orthodoxy on two key points. First, he rejected God's—and also Protestant Christianity's—power to unify knowledge, and embraced specialized fields of study. Second, Brooks relied on science to explain episodes of human progress and historical failure. This method, Brooks thought, would mold him into the fair and principled civic man he hoped to be. Even his president, the education pioneer Charles William Eliot, agreed. "The whole work of a university is uplifting, refining, and spiritualizing," he lectured Brooks's class in 1869. In "The New Education" Eliot championed, one theme resounded: "A university cannot be built upon a sect, unless indeed, it be a sect which includes the whole of the educated portion of the nation."[748]

A bright but unfocused student, Brooks partied a lot, cheated on a Latin exam, and vied (in vain) at the local racing regattas. To win admission to the exclusive Hasty Pudding Club, he pranked a classmate by expertly forging private notes from a star professor—Henry Adams.[749] Notably few courses made an impression on Brooks, save history. At first he resented Harvard's "pigheaded" insistence on studying classical republics, but by senior year Brooks had grown to accept the intellectual value of

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Establishment to Established Nonbelief (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994; and James Tunstead Burchtaell, *The Dying of the Light: The Disengagement of Colleges and Universities from Their Christian Churches* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1998).

[748] Marsden, *The Soul of the American University*, 181-195. See also Charles William Norton, "The New Education," *The Atlantic Monthly* 23 (Feb. 1869): 203-220; and Hugh Hawkins, "Charles W. Eliot, University Reform, and Religious Faith in America, 1869-1909," *The Journal of American History* 51 (1964): 191-213.

[749] Beringause, *Brooks Adams*, 39-44.

analyzing the household gods.[750] His own life course was harder to discern. "I have no particular leaning toward any one kind," he wrote as graduation loomed, "and my education has not been such as to give me any reason to hope that I should succeed."[751] Presented with eight whole pages in the class yearbook to sketch his biography and future plans, Henry's little brother panicked and blanked. He mustered the minimum three lines. "Brooks Adams born 1848 at Quincy Mass. Entered college in Sept. 1866," he wrote. "I intend to study law."[752] Proceeding on to Harvard's heavily professionalized law school, where professors now taught via the new format of case studies, Brooks developed more of his long-term intellectual outlook on ethics. Slowly, he began to find his footing within the family dynasty of lawyers.

After a short stint in Geneva to aid his father with Anglo-American arbitration claims, Brooks set up residence in Boston in 1872.[753] The old family path of letters and law beckoned. Passing the bar one year later, he moved into the Adamses' Pemberton Square law offices. On the side, he acted as assistant editor of *The North American Review*. Throughout the 1870s and 1880s, Brooks published a series of critical essays on American government, history, and culture there and in other reform outlets of the Gilded

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[750] Brooks Adams to Charles Francis Adams, Sr., 24 March 1868, Adams Papers.
[751] *Ibid.*
[752] Anderson, *Brooks Adams*, 20.
[753] Charles Francis, Sr., secured a $15.5 million damages settlement in gold from Great Britain to compensate for British-built Confederate cruisers' attacks on Union ships. For the negotiations that resolved the "Alabama Claims," and for Brooks's service as his secretary, see Martin B. Duberman, *Charles Francis Adams, 1807-1886* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1961); Frank Warren Hackett, *Reminiscences of the Geneva Tribunal of Arbitration, 1872, The Alabama Claims* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1911); and Beringause, *Brooks Adams*, 50-53.

Age press.[754] His protean work shows traces of the political and economic theories for which he would earn controversy and fame, but national notoriety eluded Brooks during his twenties and thirties. In 1877 Brooks lost a bid for the Massachusetts legislature by two votes, when two of his uncles voted against him.[755] Straining to meet monumental family standards, he suffered a series of physical and emotional breakdowns due to overwork. Brooks traveled south and west for "rest cures," then sank into escapist reading.[756] At his lowest points, wholly uninterested in God and the therapeutic possibilities of communal religion, Brooks prayed to Henry for guidance. Anxious about how this melodrama might be portrayed in the growing family archive, his big brother "heartily sympathized" with Brooks's "troubles." Then Henry burned up the letters pleading for his help.[757] By the summer of 1885, Brooks Adams was ready to go his own way. He hunted for a history project.

Prolific Adams statesmen of the long nineteenth century had legitimated their scholarly credentials by examining the American past, and Brooks yearned to do the same. Rashly, he chose the first case study at his fingertips: the rise and fall of the Puritan patriarchy. "I am, for my sins, trying to write something about this state," Brooks told a friend in July 1885.[758] In many ways, city life had gifted Adams with his subject. For as the modern metropolis rose up around him, vestiges of its seventeenth-century residue

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[754] Many of Brooks's political editorials were unsigned or published with "anonymous" bylines, but two scrapbooks kept at the Adams National Historical Park confirm his authorship.
[755] Beringause, *Brooks Adams*, 63-67.
[756] *Ibid.*
[757] See, for example, Henry Adams to Brooks Adams, 3 March 1872, in eds. J.C. Levenson et al., *The Letters of Henry Adams*, 6 vols. (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1982-1988), 3:131-132.
[758] Brooks Adams to Charles Deane, 8 July 1885, Charles Deane Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

clung fast to cultural memory. Olmsted's city parks adopted old Native American names. At the Massachusetts Historical Society, the Boston Athenaeum, and the new Museum of Fine Arts, scholars collected piles of Puritan genealogies, artifacts, maps, diaries, and manuscripts.[759] Those troves were open for research to members only, and so popular literature—much of it manufactured a few blocks from Brooks's old dormitory—guided visions of the early American saga. Schoolchildren of the 1860s and 1870s learned of *The Courtship of Myles Standish*, *Evangeline*'s Acadian expulsion, and *Paul Revere's Ride* thanks to the busy pen of Cambridge native Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and a crew of "Fireside Poets" who more than matched the skillful prose and record sales of British and French authors.[760]

Squinting at the past, Brooks's Harvard tutors and neighbors perceived of the Puritans as bigoted "witch-burners" who must be, for propriety's sake, quietly elided within a nobler cohort of colony-builders known simply as "The Pilgrims."[761] When the Congregationalist churches met in Boston for a national council in 1865, even the local clergymen wavered over how to celebrate their seventeenth-century roots. "Standing by

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[759] Rawson, *Eden on the Charles;* Louis Leonard Tucker, *The Massachusetts Historical Society: A Bicentennial History, 1791-1991* (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society and Northeastern University Press, 1995); Hina Hirayama, *"With éclat": The Boston Athenaeum and the Origin of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston* (Boston: The Boston Athaenaeum, 2013). Brooks Adams was a member of and donor to all three institutions.

[760] Also known as the "Schoolroom Poets," Longfellow and William Cullen Bryant, John Greenleaf Whittier, James Russell Lowell, and Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr., all used early American storytelling and popular poetics to "teach" aspects of good moral character. See Thomas Wortham, "Bryant and the Fireside Poets" in *The Columbia Literary History of the United Sates*, ed. Emory Elliott et al. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 278-288.

[761] Gretchen A. Adams, *The Specter of Salem: Remembering the Witch Trials in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008); Bendroth, *The Last Puritans*; and Joseph A. Conforti, *Imagining New England: Explorations of Regional Identity from the Pilgrims to the Mid-Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

the Rock where the Pilgrims set foot upon these shores," the Massachusetts ministers equivocated in issuing a full "Declaration of Faith" that made modern use of the "grand peculiarity of our Puritan Fathers, that they held this Gospel."[762] Some clergy lashed out at the Puritan creed, and warned that Salem's sequel lay on the horizon, should religious toleration falter. "It is a creed that has done an immense amount of harm," the *Boston Investigator* reported, "and it is time that it was laid to rest forever in the grave of its first teacher John Calvin."[763] Fifteen years later, the same newspaper swung around on the topic with renewed vigor, observing that the "Puritan Sunday," thankfully, had been made extinct by the "progress of the age." Any restoration of Puritan thought might retrigger a darker time, when "no boy was allowed to live in Massachusetts unless he was dipped and salted down in Hopkinsian Orthodox brine."[764] Elsewhere, other American Christians peered back for lost lessons of piety. As the new city church model, laden with lavish art and fine music (but relatively light on good theology), morphed into an "aristocratic club house," several lay critics resurrected the hoary "Puritan example" as a way to measure modern forms of morality. "Congregationalists have lost much of the self-absorption in a holy cause that distinguished their Puritan ancestors," one op-ed

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[762] "THE CONGREGATIONALISTS: The National Council of Orthodox Congregational Churches," *The New York Times* (New York, N.Y.), June 18, 1865; "Declaration of Faith," *The Farmer's Cabinet* (Amherst, N.H.), June 29, 1865.
[763] "Orthodoxy and Puritanism," *Boston Investigator* (Boston, MA), July 5, 1865.
[764] "Sabbath Observance—Evangelicals," *Boston Investigator* (Boston, MA), January 21,1880. The author refers to the Congregationalist Samuel Hopkins (1721-1803), a Calvinist theologian active in John and Abigail Adams's era.

writer chided in 1868, managing to sound both horrified and relieved by the historical slippage.[765]

Bostonians like Brooks were at the heart of the battle over how to vet the Puritan legacy, but the question was hardly confined to New England. The prudent curation of a shared past was essential for the nation's survival. Professional history-writing, like Brooks's, was another form of the cultural labor that Victorians did to mend the fissures made by Reconstruction politics, union strikes, and conflicting crusades for social reform.[766] So what did the Puritans "look like" to Adams's prospective readers beyond New England? A survey of how diverse newspapers used the word "Puritan" between 1865 and 1885 hints at Brooks's views, and those of his audience. Overall, the men and women of Adams's era struggled to reframe a transatlantic, seventeenth-century community that exercised religious liberty *and* punished the dissenters within its walls. In print, Victorians praised Puritan congregationalism as an ideal that anticipated democracy. They were less committed, however, to modern Congregationalism as a denominational force.

Led by Longfellow's odes and a glitzy Centennial Exposition, Victorian Americans dragged the Puritans back into the cultural spotlight. With ambivalence, they lauded the great-great-grandfathers of "Revolutionary stock." Like one South Dakota

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[765] "Business in Religion and Religion in Business," *The Farmer's Cabinet* (Amherst, N.H.), November 12,1868. See Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, *Religion and the Rise of the American City: The New York City Mission Movement, 1812-1870* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1971); Tomsich, *A Genteel Endeavor*; and Jaher, *The Urban Establishment*. See also Chapter 4 for a discussion of related themes evident in Henry Adams's 1884 novel, *Esther*.

[766] On the professionalization of history-writing in Gilded Age America, see Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

clergyman, many saw the Puritans as a stern people who dared "all that human nature was capable of enduring, and even more for the sake of freedom to worship God—men who might be tyrants but could never be slaves."[767] The Puritan trope was so deeply entrenched in the national consciousness that when Longfellow's *Courtship of Myles Standish* hit the Texas stage in 1880, it was sufficient to say it starred "a characteristic Puritan, who will not suffer the rules of his household to be amended."[768] The rest of the plot unspooled easily enough. Despite the Puritans' sober, sour, and Salem-tainted legacy, most Victorians discovered they were reluctant to let go.[769] Many, like Brooks, did not know how. To do so meant cutting cherished ties to ancient ideals of liberty and dissent, as well as England's commonwealth tradition and the precepts of constitutional law. "Shall we give up our Puritan faith?" one newspaper editor thundered. "We say no! a thousand times NO! No, because this would be treason to the memory of the holy and heroic men from whom we have derived our ecclesiastical lineage."[770] Small-minded but hardy, the Puritans resisted real analysis.

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[767] "Oration Delivered by Hon. S. L. Spink at Yankton, D. T., July 4th, 1865," *The Union and Dakotaian* (Yankton, S. D.), July 15, 1865.
[768] "The City," *The Galveston Daily News* (Houston, TX), January 2, 1880.
[769] Bendroth, *The Last Puritans*; Conforti, *Imagining New England*; Sacvan Bercovitch, *The Puritan Origins of the American Self* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975); Joseph Alkana, *The Social Self: Hawthorne, Howells, William James, and Nineteenth-Century Psychology* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1997), 56-81; Lawrence Buell, *New England Literary Culture from Revolution through Renaissance* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Jan C. Dawson, *The Unusable Past: America's Puritan Tradition, 1830 to 1930* (Chico: Scholars Press, 1984); Dean Hammer, *The Puritan Tradition in Revolutionary, Federalist, and Whig Political Theory: A Rhetoric of Origins* (New York: P. Lang, 1998); and Elizabeth A. Clark, *Founding the Fathers: Early Church History and Protestant Professors in Nineteenth-Century America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011).
[770] "Shall We Give Up Our Puritan Faith?" *Vermont Chronicle* (Burlington, VT), July 1, 1865.

Lawyer and editor Brooks Adams waded into the fray in July 1885, mostly by accident. Over the past two decades, Brooks had kicked around a new formula for understanding history, and he was ready to test it on the page. Brooks's plan for his *Emancipation of Massachusetts* (1887) bore the stamp of his secularized liberal education, and his intellectual goals were high. First, like his fellow founders of the new American Social Science Association, Brooks was concerned that academics had ceded the presentation of historical "facts" to popular authors.[771] According to Brooks, evidence-based arguments and rigorous analysis must replace filiopietistic vignettes (like Longfellow's) of the American past. The *Emancipation* was his chance to reclaim cultural authority for "genteel" Brahmin scholars, and to shape future forms of history-writing.

Second, Brooks had a pet theory to promote, and he needed the Puritan case study to prove it. To Adams's way of thinking, civilizations were Darwinian by nature, with people adapting to different but cyclical phases of thought. Most societies underwent a bleak theocratic period, when an "autocratic priesthood" deadened a society's souls with their barbaric insistence on mechanical piety, superstition, and dogmatic instruction.[772] Once a civilization ran through Brooks's phases—including democracy—it achieved imperial wealth and then fell inevitably into moral decay.[773] The golden republics of the

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[771] Thomas L. Haskell, *The Emergence of Professional Social Science: The American Social Science Association and the Nineteenth-Century Crisis of Authority* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1977).
[772] Brooks Adams, *Emancipation*, 215-216, 349.
[773] Brooks persisted with this theory of history-writing throughout his life, most notably in the *Emancipation*, *The Law of Civilization and Decay*, and *The Theory of Social Revolutions* (New York: Macmillan, 1913). Several comprehensive studies of Brooks's theories appear in Anderson, *Brooks Adams*; Beringause, *Brooks Adams*; Donovan, *Henry Adams and Brooks Adams;* and Robert L. Beisner, "Brooks Adams and Charles Francis Adams, Jr.: Historians of Massachusetts, " *The New England Quarterly* 35 (1962): 48-70.

household gods, by Brooks's lights, were born to die. If Brooks could solder his theory of history to a discrete case study, he thought, then he would identify all the phases and laws that governed the human mind, and, in turn, piloted American progress. Luckily, he had an easy target at hand. The native drama of early Massachusetts, brimming with issues of orthodoxy and liberty, suited his plan. He did not set out to write a fair history, nor even to offer a half-decent analysis of Puritan theology. Rather, Brooks intended to blueprint *his* way of writing highly deterministic, scientific history, by using the Puritan clergy's trajectory as an "illustration" of the use and abuse of law. Diving blindly into the "gloomy bondage" of Puritan life, he sought to reframe how people broke free of orthodoxy's restraints.[774]

Laden down with unwieldy agendas, Brooks encountered a new roadblock: He did not know enough about religion to begin. "There are of course, to a man so ignorant of church history, in particular, as I, a number of points I should much like to get cleared up, on which I can't find much light in the books," Brooks wrote to local antiquarian and dry-goods heir Charles Deane.[775] With his mentor Henry far away on nirvana's trail in Japan, he begged Deane and a few other scholars to meet, either at the Historical Society or at the Athenaeum, for tea and research assistance. In the end, Brooks's citations stemmed from a set of well-trod sources including John Winthrop's journal, the Massachusetts Bay court records, the sermons and testimony of Mather clergymen and suspected witches. Brooks wrote like the amateur historian that he was, pasting in blocks

[774] Brooks Adams, *Emancipation*, 213.
[775] Brooks Adams to Charles Deane, 8 July 1885, Charles Deane Papers. See also his letters to Deane of 13 January 1886, 26 January 1886, and 14 September 1887.

of primary-source text when he lacked the analytical dexterity to place Puritan voices in broader cultural context. Chunks of Anne Hutchinson's cross-examination, for example, glossed the theological nuances of the Antinomian Controversy.[776] An embedded chronology of Quaker persecution and transcriptions of related correspondence, more research notes than polished text, padded the book's middle.[777] Much of the scientific rigor that Brooks intended was undermined by his agitated tone in the text. The *Emancipation* rattled along at a hysterical pitch, as Adams feverishly indicted clergy for shuttering American minds and perverting Christianity in the process. Far from his purported scientific history, the *Emancipation* became Brooks's fiery prosecution of his Puritan kin for the sins of stifling free inquiry and dissolving social bonds.[778]

Brooks launched his opening arguments of the *Emancipation* at a wide audience of savvy readers who already knew how to spot "a characteristic Puritan" from several centuries away. He spent the first part of the *Emancipation* sketching the English traditions, legal and religious alike, where the Puritans flourished and some later fled.[779] Next, he demonstrated the significance of their guild charters and the theological ingenuity of the Protestant Reformation, isolating the first Puritans as catalysts for larger religious change. When it came to the Adamses' old nemesis, the Archbishop William Laud, Brooks turned surprisingly kind. Finding the prelate to be a maligned man "as

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[776] Brooks Adams, *Emancipation*, 235-248; David D. Hall, ed., *The Antinomian Controversy, 1636-1638: A Documentary History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990), i-xvii; and Timothy D. Hall, "Assurance, Community, and the Puritan Self in the Antinomian Controversy, 1636-38," in *Puritanism and Its Discontents*, ed. Laura Lunger Knoppers (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2003), 197-209.
[777] Brooks Adams, *Emancipation*, 311-348.
[778] Brooks Adams, *Emancipation*, 212, 397; Beringause, *Brooks Adams*, 80-94.
[779] See Chapter 1.

reasonable as Calvin," Brooks forgave Laud, who "only did what all have done who have attempted to impose a creed on men."[780] Here, Brooks paused on the same historical ground that his great-grandfather John had passed through in 1765, and he imparted a strikingly different perspective. Brooks, a nascent economist, saw in the Puritans' Great Migration another facet, namely, the inherent value of transferring successful English business models to uncolonized American shores.[781] In his origins story of Massachusetts, the Puritans' creation of companies, charters, and the regulations of a General Court showed them to be cosmopolitan entrepreneurs. To Brooks, *this* was the part of the Puritan paradox that connected to the urban realities of *his* day, the rabid drive to consolidate temporal and spiritual power at any cost. Enter the clergy.

The Puritan priesthood, mainly signified by Increase or Cotton Mather, served as villain. A well-educated but power-hungry lot, these "party orators" dominated an early America that lacked newspapers, roads, and a solid sense of community.[782] Their influence, even for the seventeenth century, eclipsed normative bounds of church and state. In Brooks's retelling of events, Puritan clergymen served as trusted government

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[780] Brooks Adams, *Emancipation*, 174.
[781] Alison Games, *Migration and the Origins of the English Atlantic World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999); Virginia DeJohn Anderson, *New England's Generation: The Great Migration and the Formation of Society and Culture in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991); David Hackett Fischer, *Albion's Seed: British Folkways in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); Darren Staloff, *The Making of an American Thinking Class: Intellectuals and Intelligentsia in Puritan Massachusetts* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998); Francis J. Bremer, *The Puritan Experiment: New England Society from Bradford to Edwards* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1995); David Grayson Allen, *In English Ways: The Movement of Societies and the Transfer of English Local Law and Custom to Massachusetts Bay, 1600-1690* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1981); Bernard Bailyn, *The Barbarous Years: The Peopling of British North America: The Conflict of Civilizations, 1600-1675* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012); and Alden T. Vaughan, *The Puritan Tradition in America, 1620-1730* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1997).
[782] Brooks Adams, *Emancipation*, 197.

consultants without holding office, and they rivaled the Massachusetts Bay magistrates in dispensing justice. By disciplining dissenters (Antinomians, Quakers, Baptists) and practicing tactics of exclusion via their baptismal rites, the Puritan clergymen chose to "keep alive unreasoning prejudice…to serve their selfish ends."[783] Brooks abhorred the rule that prospective church members give a public testimony of faith and receive communal consensus before earning admission into the local Christian enclave. Joining the "visible saints" meant enduring months of social and spiritual limbo. "To sensitive natures the initiation was appalling," he wrote, adding that clergy duly investigated every protest.[784]

Puritan life, to Brooks's mind, was an age of priestly oppression. Promoting superstition over enlightenment, the clergy fined, branded, whipped, mutilated, banished, and hanged any fellow Christians who challenged their power. Nodding briefly to the horrors of the Salem witchcraft trials, Brooks set his bloodiest chapter in Boston, describing in graphic detail the physical and psychic torture that early Quakers suffered.[785] Significantly, when he reintroduced their stories, Brooks sympathized with the female martyrs.[786] The ugly hardships of Margaret Brewster, Mary Dyer, Sarah Gibbons, Mary Prince, and Elizabeth Hooton featured in his tale. Often, he sounded more like a prosecutor than an objective historian. When he narrated the bouts of Cambridge

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[783] Brooks Adams, *Emancipation*, 209-212, 249-274.
[784] Brooks Adams, *Emancipation*, 249.
[785] On the Quaker experience in early America, see Thomas. D. Hamm. *The Quakers in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003); Carla Gardina Pestana, *Quakers and Baptists in Colonial Massachusetts* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991); and Mary Maples Dunn, "Saints and Sisters: Congregational and Quaker Women in the Early Colonial Period," *American Quarterly* 30 (1978): 582-601.
[786] Brooks Adams, *Emancipation*, 298-348.

imprisonment and public whipping that Hooton endured for her Quaker beliefs, Adams pointed at the Puritan clergy's "savage-professors" and declared that, "The intent to kill is obvious."[787] No detail was too gruesome for Brooks to shock readers with; he reminded them that when winter weather made hangings difficult, the clergymen mandated that floggings be staged across three towns in order to afflict "properly" a dissenter's frozen, striped skin as she lay naked in an open cart.[788] If you just shuddered and recoiled, then Brooks made his point: to perceive both the Puritan priesthood's instinct for raw cruelty, and the need for the laity to rise up in social revolution and end it. "This, then, has been the fiercest battle of mankind;" he wrote, "the heroic struggle to break down the sacerdotal barrier, to popularize knowledge, and to liberate the mind, began ages before the crucifixion upon Calvary; it still goes on."[789]

By the time he arrived at the events of 1692 and 1693, in a chapter ominously titled "The Witchcraft," Brooks had built a persuasive saga of depraved clergy who preyed on the faithful. Now Adams needed to find a hero to counter the clergy's actions and to prove his theory that a civilization could surmount a theocratic phase and move into democracy. He returned to Salem. As the first accusations of witchcraft sped across Danvers, Ipswich, and Andover, the bulk of the village worshippers turned to their educated priest "caste" to confirm or dispel spectral evidence. And at this moment, Brooks decided, the Puritan clergymen precipitated the final social crisis that led to their

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[787] Brooks Adams, *Emancipation*, 319.
[788] Brooks Adams, *Emancipation*, 318-319.
[789] Brooks Adams, *Emancipation*, 212.

downfall—a historical view that many scholars after Brooks would support.[790] For when "the people stood poised upon the panic's brink, their pastors lashed them in," he wrote.[791] Amid the mania of mob brutality, Brooks managed to identify a few level-headed saviors of early American Christianity, praising the Brattle Street Church leadership, the Harvard faculty, and the Boston-born lawyers who contested the witch-hunters' work.[792] Then he suddenly leapt forward in time, eager to link liberal Protestant thought to the colonial crusade for independence.

Brooks's pet theory, not research, drove the final sociology of religion that he produced. "My book is not a history, it is not intended for one," he explained. "It is an attempt to set forth a scientific theory of the action of the mind, illustrated by a section of history which happens to be taken from Massachusetts, but which might as well be taken from India."[793] Rushing from Salem's atrocities to the Boston Massacre, Brooks hastily pinned together several historical developments to hold up his theory. At *Emancipation*'s end, Brooks wrapped up his case by annihilating the Puritans' dual legacy of religion and education. Reviewing his own forebears' historical contributions in a new light, he ruled that the cultural differences between theological ("conservative") and scientific ("liberal") training were "irreconcilable." Pulpits harbored the dogmatists who stifled

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[790] Brooks Adams, *Emancipation*, 386-406. The literature on the Salem witchcraft trials and their legacy is immense, but see for example: Gretchen Adams, *Specter of Salem*; Emerson W. Baker, *A Storm of Witchcraft: The Salem trials and the American Experience* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014); Paul S. Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed: The Social Origins of Witchcraft* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974); Carol F. Karlsen, *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman: Witchcraft in Colonial New England* (New York: Norton, 1987); Mary Beth Norton, *In the Devil's Snare: The Salem Witchcraft Crisis of 1692* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002); and Perry Miller, *The New England Mind*, 2 vols. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961 ed.).
[791] Brooks Adams, *Emancipation*, 393.
[792] Brooks Adams, *Emancipation*, 407-483.
[793] Brooks Adams to Charles Deane, 26 January 1886, Charles Deane Papers.

human curiosity. Alternatively, universities nurtured the pioneers who led interrogation and invention.[794] In the course of civilization, he concluded, liberal communities thus prospered (for a time) by displacing the religious rites that cemented a corrupt priesthood. Such a long-term commitment to liberty, Brooks Adams claimed, characterized his native region well into the Civil War era, "for it is her children's heritage that, wheresoever on this continent blood shall flow in defence of personal freedom, there must the sons of Massachusetts be." [795]

Not all of Brooks's reasoning was firm in the *Emancipation*, and most reviewers deemed the result to be more provocation than scholarship. Many passages caused historical whiplash. Take Adams's nonchalant logic that, "gradually the secular thought of New England grew to be coincident with that of the other colonies," thereby achieving the "phase" of the American mind needed to secure independence.[796] Or his blanket assertion that *all* of the Puritan clergy's "strong but narrow minds burned with fanaticism and love of power."[797] Brooks knew his sources were patchworked together, but he liked the overall effect, and was stunned when reviewers panned it. "I wanted to make a small book," Brooks retorted. "And I do not pretend to large reading."[798] The criticism mounted. Throughout the late 1880s, more than fifty scholars weighed in on the book's merits and flaws, marking out the *Emancipation* as a Puritan attack piece. Many, like his good friend E. L. Godkin, then at *The Nation*'s helm, were staggered to see a

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[794] Brooks Adams, *Emancipation*, 407-408.
[795] Brooks Adams, *Emancipation*, 533-534.
[796] Brooks Adams, *Emancipation*, 486.
[797] Brooks Adams, *Emancipation*, 205.
[798] Brooks Adams to Charles Deane, 26 January 1886, Charles Deane Papers.

revolutionary scion like Brooks lacing the early American past with such venom. "It may be that Massachusetts needed to be scourged," *The Nation* reflected, "but it does not follow that an Adams should wield the rod."[799] Brooks grew irate. Readers had seized on his *Emancipation* as a quarrelsome book about Puritans, and thoroughly missed the new, high-flying theories of history-writing and civilization that he put on trial there. Brooks implored Henry to intervene, since he "could by about ten lines to *The Nation* put me in the position which I want to hold."[800] Again, his brother declined.

The *Emancipation* earned Brooks a measure of notoriety, just as family duties closed in. When his mother Abigail lay dying in 1889, Brooks quickly consented to court his wife, Evelyn ("Daisy") Davis (1853-1926), the Episcopalian daughter of a prominent U.S. Navy rear admiral. Despite his nervous disposition, the two seemed to suit.[801] Daisy left a light shadow in the family archive, likely a result of her husband's methodical purging of their papers. Childless, the pair spent the 1890s flitting between exotic destinations abroad as Brooks researched his next book. The *Emancipation* had not won Brooks the professional recognition he desired from historians, but he became a marketable author and, like so many Adams men before him, a popular civic speaker at home on key questions of government, culture, and currency.[802] As the new century dawned, Brooks tunneled even farther into his theory of history. He amassed data on

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[799] "Adams's *Emancipation of Massachusetts*," *The Nation* (1887): 189-190. For a wider view of the book's critical reception, see also Perry Miller's "Introduction" to the 1962 edition, xviii-xxvii.
[800] Brooks Adams to Henry Adams, 10 March 1887, Henry Adams Papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University.
[801] "Adams-Davis," *Boston Daily Globe* (Boston, Mass.), September 9, 1889. It was a three-week courtship.
[802] See, for example, "Women Were Interested. Pres Andrews and Hon. Brooks Adams Enlighten Them on 'Honest Money' at the Mystic Valley Club Dinner," *Boston Daily Globe* (Boston, Mass.), May 22, 1895.

ancient civilizations via European archival work and long exchanges with Henry, then in the South Seas.

Balancing supervision of the Adams family estate with his own intellectual pursuits, Brooks turned back to fill in the gaps of religious knowledge that had plagued his *Emancipation*. His new work, *The Law of Civilization and Decay* (1895), demanded greater familiarity with basic theological principles. Brooks tried to mend the error by following old Harvard guidelines. He asked Henry to put him in touch with "any German swells who know ecclesiastical history."[803] Henry, turning eastward to chase after Buddhas, came up empty. Brooks, beset by tedious family responsibilities and obsessed with his new project, did what many Adamses had done. He ran.

II. To "Leap the Chasm"

Europe was a second home for America's first family, and Brooks embraced it in the 1890s, relishing side trips with Daisy to their vacation home near Mumbai for his rest cures.[804] Brooks's opportunities for travel were curtailed by the Adams estate's crumbling wealth, but he found India's warmer climate soothed his health, and he shared Henry's breakneck wanderlust for sampling foreign faiths.[805] It was Brooks, after all, who visited the cathedral of Le Mans in 1890 and prompted Henry's landmark survey of medieval church life in northwestern France.[806] Wandering in with Daisy, the 40-year-old Brooks realized he had never heard a great mass in a Gothic church. He sat down in the

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[803] Brooks Adams to Henry Adams, 22 March 1887, Henry Adams Papers, Houghton Library.
[804] Anderson, *Brooks Adams*, 44-100; and Beringause, *Brooks Adams*, 95-210. Brooks's comments on Indian culture and economy appear most in his letters to Henry, dated 23 December 1895 to 22 April 1896, Henry Adams Papers, Houghton Library.
[805] The Adams family suffered serious losses in the financial panic of 1893, for which see Chapter 4.
[806] For a discussion of Henry Adams's *Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres*, see Chapter 4.

nave to listen. Rainbow light sifted in through the twelfth-century windows. The boys' choir sang ancient hymns. And, as Brooks wrote in wonder, he suddenly sensed a spiritual communion that transcended the usual sacrament of wafers and wine. "I felt for half an hour as I know the men must have felt who stained those windows, and built those arches. I really and truly did believe the miracle, and as I sat and blubbered in the nave, and knelt at the elevation I did receive the body of God," Brooks recalled. "That…was the day on which I resolved to go to Palestine, and to see there at Jerusalem, what it was that had made the crusades."[807] Beginning in the 1890s, odd bits of Brooks's "lived religion" seeped into his scholarship on world economy and history, transforming how he analyzed faith and civilization.

Henry mocked him, but as Brooks kept touring Gothic churches, his agnosticism melted. Along the way, he looked for signs of urban blight. It was an odd confluence of interests, even for Brooks, but he was determined that his second book would better reflect the operation of religion—not necessarily religious truths—in world history. For, to his surprise, a mature Brooks savored the sensation of "being Christian" at Le Mans. In the cathedral's mix of prehistoric stone and bright glass, he sourced all-new evidence to illustrate his economic and historical theories.

"To fill the brush I have had to read so much theology from the earliest days that I know more divinity than I do history," he wrote to a friend at *Emancipation*'s end.[808] The publication and its mixed reviews had pushed Brooks to rethink how religion played into

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[807] Brooks Adams to Henry Adams, 21 September 1895, Henry Adams Papers, Houghton Library.
[808] Brooks Adams to Charles Deane, 26 January 1886, Charles Deane Papers.

the laws and sequences of history that he wished to set down. Traveling through North Africa, India, Asia, Russia, and Europe, Adams mined foreign cultures for research. He collected currency rates and tallied several centuries' worth of religious membership statistics. He mapped ancient borders.

His result, *The Law of Civilization and Decay* (1895), was a compact tour-de-force of economic theory and early modern history that also prophesied how urban communities rose and fell. As Brooks tracked backward from Puritans to Palestine throughout the spring and summer of 1895, he isolated the *Law*'s main argument. There he observed that "religious enthusiasm" was the motivating factor that drove pilgrimage, created communication networks, and built up centers of trade. These phenomena bloomed briefly and then "phased" into bloody crusades, priestly oppression, and social disintegration.[809] Vaulting from Roman case studies to Tudor commerce, Brooks's finale endorsed a new socio-political model of "modern centralization."

Cloaked in pseudoscientific jargon, Brooks's work on world economy was (is) prophetic but also nearly unreadable, and exceedingly grim.[810] Daisy read the raw chapters and proposed as a title, "The Path to Hell: A Story Book."[811] Brooks, busy polishing drafts at the ancestral farm in Quincy, sounded glib in his report to Henry. "I rather like the title only I think it promises too much," he wrote. "How can I assure my

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[809] Brooks Adams, *Law*, 3-7.
[810] Anderson, *Brooks Adams*, 44-72; Beringause, *Brooks Adams*, 104-143; Gary Marotta, "The Economics of American Empire: The View of Brooks Adams and Charles Arthur Conant," *The American Economist* 19 (1975): 34-37; and Madison, "Brooks Adams, Caustic Cassandra."
[811] Brooks Adams to Henry Adams, 14 May 1895, Henry Adams Papers, Houghton Library.

readers that I will show them anything so good as a path to 'Hell.'"[812] Written on the cusp of Brooks Adams's reassessment of religion's utility in his own life, his *Law* also reveals a Victorian scholar who abruptly cared, *contra* his idol Henry, that he might not be "sufficiently Christian" enough for the grand "American Century" that lay ahead.

In reinterpreting how cities formed and why that process mattered for the American soul, Brooks joined with other Gilded Age laity and church leaders to debate where to anchor modern Christianity amid a rising tide of unions, mergers, and monopolies. By the time Brooks got to work on his project in earnest, around 1893, a host of Protestant-authored books, articles, and reform campaigns had blossomed, the bulk of them centering on the application of Christian ethics to social sins.[813] Nearby in Adams's backyard of Springfield, Massachusetts, for example, the Congregationalist pastor Washington Gladden exhorted workers to unionize and thereby improve living conditions. Modernity bred chaos, and it followed that nurturing all forms of communal membership, sacred and spiritual alike, instilled some form of social order. There was, Gladden warned in 1876, a "fissure now running through the social world, and threatening to become a great gulf fixed between the employing and the laboring classes" which would "divide the church as well."[814] Setting up shop in the hardscrabble New York City neighborhood of Hell's Kitchen in 1886, the new pastor Walter

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[812] *Ibid.*
[813] Susan Curtis, *A Consuming Faith: The Social Gospel and Modern American Culture* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991); Ronald C. White and C. Howard Hopkins, *The Social Gospel: Religion and Reform in Changing America* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1976); and Sydney E. Ahlstrom and David D. Hall, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 785-804.
[814] Washington Gladden, *Working People and Their Employers* (London and Toronto: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1894 ed.).

Rauschenbusch struggled to aid his flock at the Second German Baptist Church. He found many congregants to be "out of work, out of clothes, out of shoes, and out of hope."[815] From coast to coast, women reformers of the "Social Gospel" movement bonded to save the American city from vice. "Common-core" Christian rhetoric permeated the Chicago settlement houses founded by Jane Addams, the temperance crusades of Frances Willard, the Methodist-inflected suffrage work of the Reverend Anna Howard Shaw, the labor activism of Florence Kelley, and the tireless efforts of welfare activist Vita D. Scudder.[816]

When Brooks wrote his *Law*, then, he took aim at a nationful of metropolitan readers who were broadly Christian, ardently American, and deeply reform-minded. Many, like Brooks, were still reeling from a widespread depression caused by the railroads' overreach. As gold drained away, roughly 500 banks closed and some 15,000 companies failed, all factors that ripened Adams's readership for his pessimistic view of history.[817] Rather than crafting another positive appeal to citizens by heralding American adaptability and ingenuity, he turned to a different Darwinian notion—extinction—to chart how (religious) fear and (commercial) greed repeatedly ground down humanity into

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[815] Rauschenbusch, quoted in White and Hopkins, *Social Gospel*, 36.
[816] Wendy J. Deichman Edwards and Carolyn De Swarte Gifford, *Gender and the Social Gospel* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003); Kathryn Kish Sklar, "Hull House in the 1890s: A Community of Women Reformers," *Signs*
10 (1985): 658-677; Curtis, *A Consuming Faith*; White and Hopkins, *Social Gospel.*
[817] Milton Friedman and Anna Jacobson Schwartz, *A Monetary History of the United States, 1867-1960* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 108-122; W. Jett Lauck, *The Causes of the Panic of 1893* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1907).

"automata."[818] For the agnostic Henry and others, Brooks's *Law* became *the* "Bible of Anarchy" with which to navigate the social crises of modern life.[819] Why?

In contrast to most Gilded Age takedowns of city life, Brooks abandoned the prospect of reform and embraced the concept of degradation. Simultaneously tracing the social "place" of religion in cities of the past, he predicted why civilizations including America were fated to fail. This time, he knew better than to bill his *Law* as a work of history. "I can't masquerade as a scholar seeking truth at the bottom of a well," Brooks wrote to Henry as the book took shape. "I am dealing with all the burning questions of our time, and I must just face the music."[820] Over the course of a dozen chapters, Brooks demonstrated that human progress accelerated around the creation of cities. Energy, money, people, and culture clustered around big centers of trade like Athens, London, or New York. Two forms of cultural authority—the soldier and the monk—then battled for control of the popular mind. As Brooks explained to the psychologist William James, these two forces dueled to operate on the soft social intellect: "fear of the unseen, the spiritual worlds, represented by the priest; fear of the tangible world represented by the

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[818] Brooks Adams, *Law*, 3-7; and see also Brooks Adams to William James, 16 April 1887, William James Papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University. On the wide-ranging reaction to and use of English scientist Charles Darwin's theories of natural selection in American thought and culture, see for example Jon H. Roberts, *Darwinism and the Divine in America: Protestant Intellectuals and Organic Evolution, 1859-1900* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988); and Ronald L. Numbers and John Stenhouse, eds., *Disseminating Darwinism: The Role of Place, Race, Religion, and Gender* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

[819] Brooks Adams, "The Heritage of Henry Adams," in Henry Adams, *The Degradation of the Democratic Dogma* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1920), 99.

[820] Brooks Adams to Henry Adams, 30 June 1895, Henry Adams Papers, Houghton Library.

soldier. It is the conflict between these forces which has made civilisation."[821] Moral damages naturally ensued.

In each episode of Brooks's *Law*, then, capitalist greed and poverty surged as priests or soldiers laid ruin to urban progress. Adams's downward cycle enjoyed eternal rotation, as the agents of God and trade succumbed to profit and vice. One of Brooks's most eloquent examples lay in Istanbul, a center of trade and a clearinghouse for ancient faiths. Pointing to the Hagia Sophia—by turns an Orthodox showpiece, a Roman Catholic cathedral, a mosque when Brooks saw it, and soon after that a public museum—Adams inclined again to his theory that both sacred and secular civilizations were destined for dust. Byzantine beauty aside, Brooks wrote, "the most significant phenomenon about the church is its loneliness; nothing like it was built elsewhere."[822]

Brooks's narrative tone in his *Law* was noticeably calmer than that of the *Emancipation*, but his prognosis of human progress was much darker and indicated his deepening pessimism. Brooks wrote with an oddly robotic fury, wholly persuaded of world doom by his own limited datasets. The language of his *Law* resonated with fin-de-siècle readers, who often felt they were living in a slow-motion catastrophe. His message on how the country must proceed was muddier. Brooks made little effort to counteract the *Law* that he presented, gesturing hazily at a plan of "centralized administration" that might make America's downfall feel slightly softer. Three years after Ellis Island opened as the federal immigration center, Brooks's readers likely puzzled over the *Law*'s visceral

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[821] Brooks Adams to William James, 16 April 1887, William James Papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University.
[822] Brooks Adams, *Law*, 304.

advice to pump in a new "stream of barbarian blood" and fuel progress.[823] They resisted Brooks's idea to hire on the militaristic officers of a centralized civil administration in order to lead them through the global emergencies that he (correctly) predicted: American competition with Russia and Asia, two world wars, and the rise of several African independence movements. Against a tide of Gilded Age writers who preached reform, Brooks looked at the last days of the American republic and prophesied that positive change was futile.

As a masterpiece meant to feature his theory more than history, Brooks's *Law* provoked strong reactions, notably in the genteel intellectual circles that he and Henry inhabited at home. Referencing the contemporary nocturnes painted by James Abbott McNeil Whistler and Frederic Remington—controversial for their lack of light and "worthiness" as artworks—the jurist Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., struggled with what it was that his friend's second major work elucidated about the long-promised "phases" of the human mind. Brooks's *Law* "hardly strikes me as a science," Holmes wrote, "but rather as a somewhat grotesque world poem, or symphony in blue and gray, but the story of the modern world is told so strikingly that while you read you believe it."[824] Brooks's nocturne divided the critics. Still holding fast to the idea that history must be organized around his *Law*, Brooks ran stacks of archival research, mechanically, through the theory he had programmed. Stitched together with his notion that history swung in cycles, the

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[823] Brooks Adams, *Law*, 285-208; and Vincent J. Cannato, *American Passage: The History of Ellis Island* (New York: Harper, 2009).
[824] Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr., to Sir Frederick Pollock, 21 October 1895, in ed. Mark A. DeWolfe Howe, *Holmes-Pollock Letters: The Correspondence of Mr. Justice Holmes and Sir Frederick Pollock, 1874-1932*, 2 vols. (Littleton: F.B. Rothman Co., 1994 ed.), 1:64.

Law's prophecy turned out "blacker and gloomier" than even Brooks expected. "My book works out this time in such a ghastly way that it knocks the stuffing out of me," he wrote, revising for the London and Paris editions. "I am not aware that I am anything more than an automaton, I certainly have no conscious volition, and yet the stuff comes one way, only always more so."[825]

Reviewers called it a forced triumph, reliant on Adams's inexorable contortions of history and snarled syntax. In his authorship of a *Law* enslaved by theory, Brooks embodied "a certain class of economic writers who have treated history somewhat as the old theologians used to treat the Scriptures," one critic observed, "as a sort of rusty nail box out of which they selected odds and ends…to tack some framework of doctrine together, the likeness of which was never to be found in the thought of God or man."[826] Henry loved it. Brooks's *Law* marked "the first time that serious history has ever been written," the senior Adams wrote to friends in Washington, D.C.[827] Emboldened, Brooks Adams rushed to reissue his theoretical stamp on three more works: *America's Economic Supremacy* (1900), *The New Empire* (1902), and *The Theory of Social Revolutions* (1913). As the *Law* entered reprints around the world, Brooks soaked up his "overnight" success, just as Henry's literary fame drew into a final eclipse. Editors at *The Boston Daily Globe* (finally) heralded Brooks as a hometown Socrates, the sharp-eyed critic who kept the "Athens of America" in line. "One of the principal occupations of the Adams

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[825] See, for example, Brooks Adams's letters to Henry Adams of 26 February, 17 August, and 28 October 1896, Henry Adams Papers, Houghton Library.
[826] Benjamin S. Terry, "Review: *The Law of Civilization and Decay*," *American Journal of Sociology* 2 (1896): 467-472.
[827] Henry Adams to Elizabeth Cameron, 4 October 1894, Adams-Cameron Letters, Massachusetts Historical Society.

family has been to tell the community what it needed to know, but did not desire to hear," the *Globe* wrote of Brooks's many "essays on history" in 1915. "All honor to the gadfly. Let him sting us again."[828]

Brooks's treatment of faith as part of civilization's downfall in the *Law* was sobering, and it coincided with his personal revaluation of Christianity's role in a cosmopolitan lifestyle. Increasingly, religion was a mobile force in Brooks's approach to crafting historical critique, a public evolution that aligned with his private "seeking" in the early part of the twentieth century. As was the case with many Adamses, cosmopolitan travel regenerated his religious curiosity, and the *Law*'s generous book sales funded Brooks's exotic journeys to Russia, India, and Europe. Abroad, Brooks acquired new devotional habits from itinerant contact with Hindus, Catholics, and Episcopalians. With Daisy, the gentleman scholar and habitual neurasthenic traveled widely in the 1910s and 1920s, becoming a citizen of the world who unearthed iterations of American identity among the ruins of foreign faith. He bypassed Boston winters to monitor forms of coal development in India. He "wallowed" in Cairo's new museums, seizing on Howard Carter's impromptu offer to attend a preview opening of the Egyptian pharaoh Tutankhamun's tomb. To Brooks, sampling foreign faith only gave more credence to the discrete laws that governed his economic theory, and thus, world history. Religious tourism helped to build up his case studies.

From 1904 to 1911, Brooks imparted his radical geopolitical views to the younger crowd, by serving as a full-time faculty member of Boston University's new School of

[828] "Mr. Brooks Adams, Gadfly," *The Boston Daily Globe* (Boston, Mass.), November 20, 1915.

Law and raising his profile as a participant in the old family church. "The nineteenth century abandoned unity and elected chaos," Professor Brooks Adams told his students as the centuries changed hands.[829] The subject of God rarely (if ever) made it into his lectures, but, increasingly, Brooks now relied on an admixture of Protestant and Catholic practices to cope privately with greater social change.[830] "We are nationally approaching, very rapidly, our culmination…to be greater in our particular way than we ever dreamed it possible for us to be,—and by God, I like it," Brooks wrote in 1901. "I'm for the new world. I go with it, electric cars, mobiles, plutocracy and all."[831] On weekends away from BU, Brooks began to worship again at the family church in Quincy. Privately, his rediscovered sense of Christianity gave Brooks a fresh outlook on family duties. Religion, once a terse "illustration" to bolster Brooks's historical theories, became his solace when Henry's long decline began in April 1912. Between 1900 and 1927, Brooks criticized the reigning theology at First Church, but bailed out the impoverished congregation when a wave of panics threatened its closure. As his siblings slipped away, Brooks clung to old Boston ways and pews. *He* was not wholly sure why. More than anyone, Brooks was dazed by the depth and breadth of his piety.

By 1907, Brooks had gone public in prodding church leaders to do more than "scavenge" for followers; he insisted they reclaim an ecumenical place at the

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[829] Brooks Adams, "Unity in Modern Education: General View, Historical and Psychological," *Boston University School of Law Bulletins of Year, 1908*, 9-11.
[830] Brooks Adams and Melville M. Bigelow, *Centralization and the Law: Scientific Legal Education, An Illustration* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1906).
[831] Brooks Adams to Henry Adams, 13 October 1901, Henry Adams Papers, Houghton Library.

"headwaters" of civic affairs.[832] Shortly after witnessing the mobilization of Paris in summer 1914, Brooks returned to Quincy, sure that his theories of central administration must be planted firmly in American Christianity. In October, to express his support for new minister Adelbert Lathrop Hudson, the ultra-private Brooks Adams delivered an extraordinary public testimony of faith, proclaiming his support for "revealed religion" in the same breath as the pressing need for Americans to accept "civil administration."[833]

Given Brooks's contrarian nature, it is hard to know *why* he embraced the same Puritan initiation rite he had damned so effectively in the *Emancipation* as "appalling." Perhaps he saw some similarities between his own religious biography and that of Adelbert Hudson. A Brahmin scion who initially rejected the old Unitarian pulpit for a booming Sioux City law practice, Hudson traced his roots back to 1638 and a cohort of London forebears who fled Archbishop Laud's tyranny. Religion and liberal education ran in the Hudson family lines, too. Six of his relatives currently served as Unitarian ministers and five sat on Harvard's faculty. Adelbert reignited his interest in theology around the same time that Brooks had, and for some of the same reasons, perceiving that while he "could not honestly teach the old creeds," modern Unitarianism opened a new intellectual door. Venturing inside, Hudson "found himself in a church whose attitude toward truth was in entire harmony with the scientific progress of the time," allowing him to "use all his energies in noble service without sacrificing his individual convictions."[834]

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[832] "Many Evils to Right," *The Boston Daily Globe* (Boston, Mass.), November 29, 1907.
[833] Brooks Adams, *Address by Brooks Adams at the 275th Anniversary of the First Parish Church, Quincy, 11 October, 1914* (Quincy: s.n., 1914).
[834] "Assumes His New Pastorate: Rev. Adelbert L. Hudson Becomes Pastor of First Church," *Quincy Daily Ledger* (Quincy, Mass.), March 4, 1912.

Adelbert quit his law firm and enrolled in Harvard Divinity School, where he studied from 1893 to 1895. After stints at parishes in Salt Lake City, Buffalo, and Florida, the lawyer-turned-prelate was called to Quincy in March 1912. Hudson was greeted by a refurbished church, a solidly bourgeoisie membership, and, in Row 54, patron Brooks Adams, a presidential descendant and the sole proprietor of a $20,000 annual fund promised to Hudson's new home.[835] A keen pastor and businessman, Hudson naturally called on Adams to stand and profess his faith.

When he borrowed the Quincy pulpit for his remarkable oration, world events had shifted Brooks onto firmer Christian ground, and he spied a chance to promote his theories once more. To fellow congregants, Brooks renounced the "false" agnostic philosophy of his youth. Adams pledged to adhere to Protestant Christianity—*not* to the agnostic scientific ideals endorsed by brother Henry—in order to sustain his morality as he explored the gross decay of civilization. The author of the *Emancipation* reminded fellow worshippers that they need not "cavil to the ecclesiastical tradition" in order to prevent American decline. A society *must* have religion in order to cohere, he argued, echoing a common plea of his Christian peers. Family bonds, he added, were vital to that relationship. To press his point, Brooks invoked examples from filial and local history. "In this church we stand at the very core and heart of protestantism, but well I know that John Wheelwright protested not against Christ and his revelation, but against the

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[835] Records, Registers, and Scrapbooks of United First Parish Church, Quincy, Massachusetts. See also Sheldon W. Bennett, *Freedom, Friendship, and Faith: A Noble Heritage through 350 Years* (Quincy: United First Parish Church [Unitarian], 350th Anniversary Booklet, 1989); and Peggy A. Albee et al., *United First Parish Church (Unitarian) Church of the Presidents Historic Structure Report* (Lowell: Northeast Cultural Resources Center for National Park Service).

performance of their trust by the guardians of his law," Brooks stated in his profession of faith, which he printed and circulated as World War I lit up Europe. "I rest tranquil in the conviction that [the Church] will, to her utmost, defend that moral standard which I believe to be vital to my country and my age."[836] Speaking from the Gospel of Mark, Brooks drew his final plea: "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."[837] Anxious to continue seeking God beyond Quincy's familiar borders, Brooks mailed checks to Hudson, but let his religious interest drift in a new direction.

Catholic and Episcopalian rites sparked Brooks's interest as he entered his final years. Back in Boston throughout the 1920s, Brooks began to spend regular weekly retreats at an Episcopal monastery in Harvard Square. Henry would not willingly cross a church threshold to pray, but Brooks longed for a sincere invitation to join new forms of Christian community, a religious trait he shared with his great-grandfather John. Donating a crisp $20 bill wherever he paused to pray, Brooks apologized to Roman Catholic clergy (whom he called his "benefactors") with characteristic gloom: "I have no real belief. I stand at the door—I prefer to stand outside—and I am then one of yourselves. When I talk with you apart from your chapel I am a pagan."[838] While researching and writing his *Law*, Brooks began to take religion seriously. He chose to experiment with his innate skepticism, ready for a reprieve from the pressure of agnosticism. Brooks's half-hearted quest for Catholic conversion reflected a generation of Americans who journeyed between Christianities, anxious to incorporate some

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[836] Brooks Adams, *Address*. For Wheelwright, see Chapter 1.
[837] Gospel of Mark, 9:24.
[838] Beringause, *Brooks Adams*, 385-386.

spirituality into modernity.[839] Around him, other Americans joined in the cultural project, scouring a "free market" of faiths that invited them to speak in tongues, attend fundamentalist bible colleges, and mull over the meaning of a nascent "muscular Christianity."[840] Brooks's religious universe must have felt vast.

Once again it was the well-traveled Adamses' connections to other laity, and not what they heard from stray pulpits, that connected them with new religious ideas and foreign rites. At home, Brooks used Boston's religious ecosystem to establish social credentials and to keep his centuries-old political networks current. Daisy threw herself into lector duties at the high-society Episcopal cathedral of St. Paul's in downtown Boston, steps away from Brooks's law school.[841] Between 1910 and 1922, Brooks struck up a friendship with U. S. Congressman Bellamy Storer, a prominent Roman Catholic convert and Massachusetts Republican.[842] As Storer recalled, the pair traded thoughts on faith and doubt. In Adams, Storer glimpsed another American soul "homesick" for God. Ironically, Storer diagnosed Brooks as an intellectual who was "the product of New England Puritanism—its forbidding doctrines converted into Unitarian formlessness, yet their old poison lingering on." By 1920, and within his closest circle of Brahmin friends,

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[839] Philip Goff and Paul Harvey, eds., *Themes in Religion and American Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Randall Balmer, *Religion in Twentieth Century America* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); Hulsether, *Religion, Culture and Politics in the Twentieth-Century United States*; Stout and Hart, *New Directions in American Religious*; Lacey, *Religion and Twentieth-Century American Intellectual Life*; Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace*; idem, *Rebirth of a Nation;* and Carter, *The Spiritual Crisis of the Gilded Age.*
[840] Goff and Harvey, *Themes in Religion and American Culture.*
[841] "Obituary, Mrs. Brooks Adams," *The Boston Daily Globe* (Boston, Mass.), December 15, 1926.
[842] For the nature of Brooks's relationship with Bellamy Storer and the friars of Portsmouth Abbey, described here and below, see Leonard Sargent, "An Adams in a Monastery," *Commonweal* (1920): 9-11.

the 72-year-old Brooks found he was unable to shed the old burden of New England church history.

Storer recommended Brooks to the religious care of Dom Leonard Sargent, who was then inaugurating a Benedictine friary of Anglo-American monks in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. In long talks with Sargent, a former Episcopalian, Brooks's queries about Christianity resonated.[843] "The whole world is upset. Nobody seems to know how to set it right," Brooks grumbled to Sargent, who offered to throw open the monastery's sanctuary doors. "Why shouldn't I come," the Unitarian stalwart replied, "as you tell me others do, and try to catch a little of your peace?" Once arrived at the Catholic retreat, Brooks hovered in the chapel doorway to observe, refusing to partake in the sacrament of Holy Communion. Like his grandfather John Quincy had done a century earlier in St. Petersburg, Brooks was content to stand and watch a foreign faith unfold. Throughout the summers of the 1920s, Brooks became a familiar figure at Portsmouth Abbey, dining with the black-robed monks every night in full evening dress. He carried around the *Fioretti*, a set of popular legends about St. Francis of Assisi's works, but the Brahmin critic stirred up surprisingly few theological debates. Rather, Brooks confessed to Sargent that he and others longed to "leap the chasm," if only the Catholic clergy could somehow "help us over."[844]

Conclusion: A Moses for the American Century

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[843] Gordon Beattie, *Gregory's Angels: A History of the Abbeys, Priories, Parishes and Schools of the Monks and Nuns Following the Rule of Saint Benedict in Great Britain, Ireland and Their Overseas Foundations* (Leominster: Gracewing, 1997), 149.
[844] Sargent, "An Adams in a Monastery"; and Beringause, *Brooks Adams*, 385-386.

As the American Century gave way to world war and popular struggle, Brooks continued the family's long traditions of public service, congregational membership, and religious research. In 1917, he served as a delegate to the Massachusetts constitutional convention. In the debates, Brooks spoke out as a conservative reformer who upheld his great-great grandfather's original legislative design of 1780.[845] Back in Quincy, mostly alone in his guardianship of the colonial farm and its priceless papers, Brooks revised portions of his misunderstood *Emancipation*. In July 1919 he reissued the book with a lengthy biographical preface about Moses, intended to be a shadow portrait of grandfather John Quincy. To Brooks and to many Adamses, Moses was the biblical figure with whom they identified most: an itinerant lawgiver, the shepherd to a fractious people, and God's sometime favorite.[846] At the end, Brooks segued into the themes of modern centralization and civil administration once espoused in his *Law*, an awkward new starting point for a story that condemned Puritan theocracy. "For it has become self-evident that the democrat cannot change himself," Brooks wrote, decreeing that "democracy in America has conspicuously and decisively failed."[847] In 1926, aping Henry's fictional heroine, Brooks fled to the Holy Land.

He was joined in Jerusalem by a wave of Anglo-American antiquities hunters, pilgrims, and investors who saw the chance to "walk the Bible" and rejuvenate their faith

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[845] *Journal of the Constitutional Convention of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, 1917* (Boston: Wright & Potter Printing Co., 1917-1919); John Allen Hague, "The Massachusetts Constitutional Convention: 1917-1919. A Study of Dogmatism in an Age of Transition," *The New England Quarterly* 27 (1954): 147-167; Augustus Peabody Loring, "A Short Account of the Massachusetts Constitutional Convention 1917-1919," *The New England Quarterly* 6 (1933): 1-99; and Hirschfeld, "Brooks Adams and American Nationalism."
[846] Brooks Adams, *Emancipation*, 3-168.
[847] Brooks Adams, *Emancipation*, 167, 168.

in a sacred land. Visiting Israel and Palestine was a religious rite of passage that many Americans would continue throughout Brooks's quarter of the twentieth century, and well beyond.[848] Brooks carted along his father's books for use on the trip, referring often to the same cumbersome volumes of Johann Lorenz von Mosheim's *Ecclesiastical History* that Charles, Sr., had so despised.[849] Standing on the Summit of the Mount of Olives, the elderly Brooks paused to recite, from memory, one of his great-grandfather John's favorite lessons from Scripture, "The Sermon on the Mount." Brooks had found a way to pay tribute to ancient family memories, while testing out a new hybrid faith that incorporated strands of both Protestant and Catholic experience. Completing his political and private pilgrimages, Brooks Adams returned home to sign over the house and family papers to the public before his death in February 1927.[850]

Overall, Brooks's flickers of faith and doubt illuminate a last shift in what he and Henry called "the family mind." His "Christianization" saga, from Puritans to Palestine, suggests that even the inherited Protestant processes of liberal education and "finding faith" through inquiry could not remedy the cracks of American culture. Brooks's vision of godly republicanism, led by civil administrators and preset cycles of wealth and decline, was a far cry from his forebears' ideas of a providentially blessed nation. As a

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[848] Lester I. Vogel, *To See A Promised Land: Americans and the Holy Land in the Nineteenth Century* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993); Stephanie Stidham Rogers, *Inventing the Holy Land: American Protestant Pilgrimage to Palestine, 1865-1941* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2011); and Hillary Kaell, *Walking Where Jesus Walked: American Christians and Holy Land Pilgrimage* (New York: New York University Press, 2014).

[849] See Chapter 3. Charles, Sr.'s set resides at the Adams National Historical Park, just outside Brooks's bedroom.

[850] Marc Friedlaender, "Brooks Adams 'en Famille,'" *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, 3d ser., 80, (1968): 77-93; and Wilhelmina S. Harris, *Adams National Historic Site: A Family's Legacy to America* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Dept. of the Interior, National Park Service, 1983).

result of his scholarship, travel, and filiopietistic work to enshrine America's first family in the Quincy homestead, Brooks journeyed from frigid skeptic to rigorous seeker. He offered a distinctively American (if highly pessimistic) perspective on how to "keep the faith" as social norms swayed. Brooks fought to reconcile modern life with mores of Christian practice. By his own measure, he failed. Yet Brooks's religious interests and related dilemmas illustrate how many Puritan heirs—erudite, liberal Protestants who disdained theology and traveled widely across religious worlds—met the modern era with murky faith.

It would have been easier to cap this family biography with the skeptic Henry, thereby reasserting the secularization narrative of modern American history. It would have been simpler to pin the family's distancing from religion on the mercurial shifts in modernization, communication, and transportation that changed how they lived, worked, and prayed. Brooks's paradoxical passion for shoehorning God back into his life and scholarship complicates the tale. A fatalist who loved celebrating Easter, Brooks veered away from his siblings, drawn to researching and reconnecting with holy ways. Once again, individual exploration reoriented the family's religious trajectory.

One last example, drawn from Brooks's cathedral tours in Jazz Age France, will suffice. Like Henry, Brooks praised Gothic architecture as "spontaneous, elevated, dignified, and pure." The two scholars diverged, though, on how they experienced forms of religious beauty. Henry preferred to contextualize artistic emotion in the medieval past; Brooks longed to feel its power in the present. Take how each man walked up to the same church, and recorded it for history. Henry's approach to the Gothic glory of

Chartres varied little from how he juggled perspectives on Japan's roofs. His *Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres* opens from the archangel's view and sweeps down across farmland. Years after Henry's death, Brooks carried that book to France as his guide. But Brooks approached Chartres from the low road, eager to retrace how the town's farmers, tradesmen, and their families must have climbed *up*, from the heart of civilization, to receive Holy Communion. In 1922, Brooks and his social secretary Wilhelmina Harris returned to Chartres. The latter recalled: "One morning he looked at the two eleventh- and fourteenth-century bell towers with spires, as he said, rising higher than the hill upon which the city stands and pointing to Unity beyond space."[851] Brooks's fondness for lay prophecy and his casual reference to the Puritan John Winthrop's message reveal him to be a complex critic of capitalism who still found solace in religion as a triumphant force. Poised between his Puritan past and an uncertain American future, Brooks Adams thus gains new meaning, as a modern man who found greater purpose in "crossing" between faiths while "dwelling" on the doorstep of Christianity.[852]

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[851] Friedlaender, "Brooks Adams 'en Famille.'"
[852] Thomas A. Tweed, *Crossing and Dwelling: A Theory of Religion* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006).

CONCLUSION

America's first family was always on the move, and they had to pray *somewhere*. Rarely together, their religious views ranged across the Christian spectrum. Tirelessly planting and pulling up their New England roots for 300 years, the Adamses as a group felt most at home in the world. Nourishing Christianity was a constant challenge, with or without Providence's help. In and out of political office, Adams family members saw their own story reflected in that of the nation. Over five chapters, this dissertation has demonstrated that most Americans experienced religion not through high theology and clerical instruction, but via vibrant episodes of personal encounter and cultural exchange. The traditions that many nineteenth-century families like the Adamses chose to create depended mainly on how and why other laity introduced them to new ways of worship. Nineteenth-century America was often heralded as a triumph of congregationalism as a practice, one that successfully gathered in disparate social classes and granted the clergy some measure of cultural authority, while encouraging individual spiritual exploration.

As this study has shown, most Americans learned about new religious ideas from other laypeople, not through the pulpit. The key prism to understand American Christianity, as the country transitioned from revolution to republic, is the complex process of personal encounter, experience, and exchange. The unique way in which America's liberalizing Protestants met the world was a multifaceted practice wholly evident in the cosmopolitan Christianity of this well-traveled family. Prolific statesmen and critics who consolidated Protestant power, the Adamses were leading interpreters of

a democratic culture in which citizens repeatedly remade their worship politics to meet the needs of the nation.

This family's history of faith and doubts reminds us what is so distinctive about American religion in the new republic, namely, that religious voluntarism meant more than denominational mobility; it carried the intellectual freedom to sample many gods. They were surprised, startled, amused, and enticed by the new faiths they saw and heard. Gradually, the Adamses imprinted their own template of American religious experience. They pursued liberal education at Harvard and toured foreign religions in conjunction with prestigious diplomatic work. Then they returned to their native ecosystem of New England Unitarianism, maturing into fierce critics of national government, faith, and culture. Worldliness and appreciation for higher forms of culture, culled from their nonstop travel, sharpened the literature that they produced. Either on the page or at a July 4th town-hall speech, the Adamses deployed Christian rhetoric with innovative flexibility, using it to muster political power, or to express curiosity, irony, or shame. Religion gave structure to home life, too, and outlined the duties of Christian mothers like Abigail. And, although they enjoyed roaming beyond Unitarian roads of thought, Christianity remained the political dynasty's constant for three centuries, just as John Adams estimated in 1812.

Religion was the main arena in which each generation of Adamses grappled with the successive ideologies that swept through the nineteenth-century American republic: providentialism, Christian republicanism, and agnosticism. Repeatedly, they reconsidered what church membership meant for the American citizenry. To a degree, these decades of intense deliberation culminated in the religious path of Brooks Adams. For, Brooks's

trajectory highlights a guiding question of American life, namely, how to belong to a community without sacrificing individualism.[853] Over the course of several generations, this was a particularly knotty issue for a train of public office-holders like the Adamses, who thought of their family drama as both embedded in and representative of national growth. Even an 1875 mayoral race, to Brooks, signified a "trial of strength between those who have a stake in the community and those who have none."[854] The question of how church and state might partner in modern society was one that Brooks thought he had finally settled—for himself and for the Adams family—by the busy spring of 1912.

Within the next few weeks, Brooks's world would be upended. All of it lay just ahead: the *Titanic*'s sinking, the wild chaos of a four-way presidential race, the Red Sox baseball team's first World Series championship streak, and his brother Henry's final descent. But on 7 April 1912, Brooks sat in the family pew at the Unitarian church in Quincy and listened to the new pastor, Adelbert Hudson, give a rousing Palm Sunday sermon. There was big church news, too. For the first time since 1639, when their Puritan heirs had regathered the church, the community had revised its covenant. Now the language was more in keeping with that of other twentieth-century Unitarians, as crafted by Charles Gordon Ames (a distant Adams cousin) in 1880. "In the freedom of truth, and

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[853] See, for example: Andrew Delbanco, *The Puritan Ideal* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989); Robert N. Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985); Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000); Thomas Bender, *Community and Social Change in America* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1978); Christopher Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations* (New York: Norton, 1978); and David Reisman et al., *The Lonely Crowd: A Study of the Changing American Character* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950).

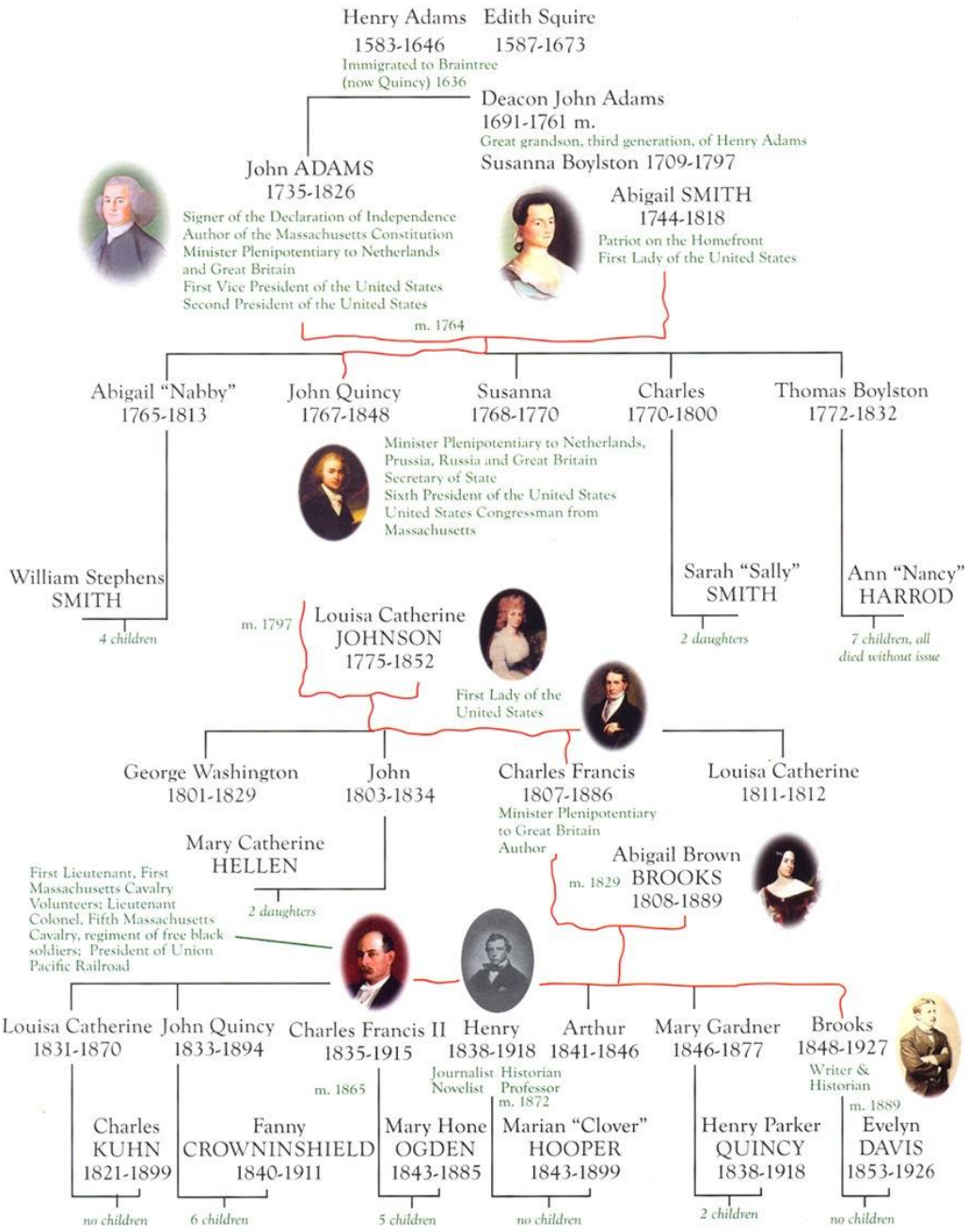
[854] Brooks Adams, "The Alternative" and "The Contest," *Boston Daily Advertiser* (Boston, Mass.), December 9 and 11, 1875.

in the spirit of Jesus Christ, we unite for the worship of God and the service of man," ran the text. Six feet away from Brooks's pew lay the marbled book where congregants could, if they chose, initial assent to the new pledge after the communion service.[855] It was a step that Brooks, like many of his forebears, had weighed with each new faith he encountered—whether or not to commit to *this* version of Christianity, or even at all. Around him, families filed out pews, putting their names to the text in the shadow of the Adams memorial plaques. In a few years, many of the signatures bore annotations like "moved" or "killed in World War I." When Brooks rose, he did so as a seeker who preferred to join the Unitarian community, and as an Adams who trusted that Christianity yet steered the American republic. His decision represented the three centuries' worth of religious explorers who had resolved, finally, to rest in modern Unitarianism. Brooks walked toward the pulpit, and picked up the minister's pen. Adams signed the covenant.

[855] Records, Registers, and Scrapbooks of United First Parish Church, Quincy, Massachusetts.

APPENDIX

Adams Genealogical Chart (Source: C.F. Adams Trust)



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Stone Library, John Adams Birthplace Site, Peacefield

American Bible Society (New York, New York)
Organizational records and correspondence

Boston Public Library (Boston, Massachusetts)
John Adams' Library

Houghton Library, Harvard College Library, Harvard University (Cambridge, Massachusetts)
Brooks Adams-Henry Adams correspondence, 1861-1920

Massachusetts Historical Society (Boston, Massachusetts)
Adams Family Papers, 1639-1889

Adams Family Papers, Additions, 1889-present

Adams Papers Editorial Office Files and Accessions, 1638-present

Adams-Hull Collection, 1775-1856

Adams-Johnson-Clements Papers

Adams-Thoron Papers, 1844-1992

Adams-Thoron Photographs, ca. 1861-1914

Charles Francis Adams, Jr., Papers, 1860-1933

Henry Adams Papers, 1843-1938

Henry Adams Photographs

Marion Hooper Adams Photographs

Abigail Adams Homans Photographs, ca. 1860-1966

Warren-Adams Papers, 1767-1822

Charles Deane Papers

Henry Cabot Lodge Papers

Smith-Carter Family Papers, 1669-1880

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Winterer, Caroline. *The Culture of Classicism: Ancient Greece and Rome in American Intellectual Life, 1780-1910.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002.

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Wright, Conrad Edick, ed., *American Unitarianism, 1805-1865*. Boston: The Massachusetts Historical Society and Northeastern University Press, 1989.

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Yothers, Brian. *The Romance of the Holy Land in American Travel Writing, 1790-1876.* Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate, 2007.

Youngs, Tim, ed. *Travel Writing in the Nineteenth Century: Filling the Blank Spaces.* London: Anthem Press, 2006.

Zagarri, Rosemarie. *Revolutionary Backlash: Women and Politics in the Early American Republic.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007.

Zboray, Ronald J. and Mary Saracino. *Everyday Ideas: Socioliterary Experience among Antebellum New Englanders.* Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2006

CURRICULUM VITAE

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Education

Ph.D. Candidate in U.S. History, Oct. 2012 – present, Boston University, Boston, Mass.

M.A. in U.S. History, 2009, Boston University

B.L.S. in History, 2007, Boston University, *Summa cum laude*

B.S. in Journalism with Concentration in History, 1997, Boston University

Professional Experience

Tiffany and Company, Boston, Mass., 1997-2008
Sales Professional and Registry Consultant (full-time)

The Adams Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, Mass., Nov. 2008 – present
Series Editor, The Papers of John Adams, April 2016 – present
Assistant Editor II, The Papers of John Adams, July 2011 – March 2016

Boston University, Boston, Mass., 2006 – present
Research Assistant, History Department (American cultural and intellectual history)
Teaching Assistant, History Department (European history; women's studies; Russian and Soviet history)

Selected Conferences and Presentations

Organization of American Historians, 2016; "The Cultural Diplomacy of John Adams."

DHI Paris, Institut Historique Allemand, 2016; "The Adams Papers @ Work: Rewiring Preservation, Access, and Early American Archives in the Digital Age."

National Council on Public History, 2016, Roundtable Chair; "Drafting History for the Digital Public."

American Society of Church History, 2016; "Charles Francis Adams the Burden of New England Church History."

U.S. Society of Intellectual History, 2015; "A New North."

C-SPAN, "Supreme Court Landmark Cases: Marbury *v.* Madison," 2015.

Conference Chair, "Digital Humanities @ BU Symposium," Boston University, 2015.

"Liberty & Slavery," Documentary interview, Inertia Films, 2015 release.

Adams National Historical Park, 2015; "From Queen Victoria's Court to Quincy: The Nineteenth-Century Adamses and the Making of Modern America."

Boston University, History Graduate Student Organization, 2015; "Decoding Digital Humanities."

University of Sheffield, British Group in Early American History, 2015; "John Adams for the *Defence*."

Association for Documentary Editing, 2015; "An Adams-Jefferson Civil War."

Roger Williams University, Joshua B. Stein Works-in-Progress Seminar Series, 2015; "Household Gods: Creating Adams Family Religion, 1583-1927."

American Historical Association, "*Blogging and the Future of Scholarship" Roundtable*, 2015; "Rewiring the Historian's Craft."

Society for U.S. Intellectual History, 2014; "The Transatlantic 'Shelf Life' of Charles Francis Adams."

University of Edinburgh, British Group in Early American History, 2014; "Fasts, Feasts, and Freedoms in Colonial New England."

American Society of Church History, 2014; "Higher than a City upon a Hill: The Cosmopolitan Christianity of Brooks and Henry Adams."

Association for Documentary Editing, 2013; "Inside Lyman Butterfield's 'Rubbish Book.'"

American Society of Church History, 2013; "John Quincy Adams at Prayer."

University of Edinburgh, British Scholar Society, 2012; "Glory to God in the High Street: Christianity in British and American Magazines, 1945–1960."

Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, 2011; "Caesar's Church: The African American Influence in Massachusetts Anglicanism."

Workshop Leader, Johns Hopkins Center for Talented Youth Family Day, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, Massachusetts, 2010-2012; "The World of the Civil War in Five Objects."

Boston University American Political History Graduate Conference, 2011, Boston, Massachusetts; Planning Committee.

C19, The Society for Nineteenth-Century Americanists, 2010; "The Poetry of Taste and Power: Reading Southern Prospects and Literary Wants in the Confederate *Index*."

Durham University, England, "National Worship in International Perspective," 2010; "God Pleading with America: The Nexus of Providence, State, and Prayer in Antebellum Fast Day Worship."

Awards

Short-Term Fellowship, Institute of Advanced Study, Durham University, England, 2015.

Graduate Student Paper Award, American Society of Church History, 2014.

NEH Stipend, Maryland Institute for Technology in the Humanities, 2013.

HASTAC Scholar, 2013-2014 (Humanities, Arts, Science, and Technology Alliance, and Collaboratory).

Antiquarian Booksellers Association, London, England, Bursary, London Rare Books School, 2012, 2013.

Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media, George Mason University, THATCamp New England fellowship, 2011.

Graduate Student Travel Award, Society for Historians of the Early American Republic, Annual Meeting, 2011.

Scholar-in-Residence, 2009–2010, The Old North Foundation, Boston, Massachusetts; Research Report: "The New World of Old North: Boston's Christ Church and the Roots of Transatlantic Anglicanism."

Professional Development and Service

Organization of American Historians, Chair, Marketing and Communications Committee, 2016–2020.

Conference Program Committee, 2017 Meeting, Society for U.S. Intelletcual History.

New England Historical Association, Nominating Committee, 2015–2018

National History Day Judge, 2012– .

Co-founder and contributor, The Junto: A Group Blog on Early American History, 2012– and to Society for U.S. Intellectual History Blog, 2015–

NEH Data Curation Institute, Maryland Institute for Technology in the Humanities, 2013.

London Rare Books School, University of London, England, June –July 2012. Courses completed: History of Maps and Mapping; History of Handwriting; June 2013: Mapping Land and Sea to 1900.

Association for Documentary Editing: Meetings Committee, 2010 – 2013; Publications Committee, 2012– ; Local Arrangements Committee, 2013– 2015.

Institute for the Editing of Historical Documents, sponsored by the NHPRC, Wisconsin Historical Society and University of Wisconsin, Madison, 2010.