

# Unitarianism in America

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## **A History of its Origin and Development**

**George Willis Cooke**

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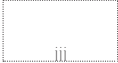
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## Preface

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**T**HE aim I have had in view in writing this book has been to give a history of the origin of Unitarianism in the United States, how it has organized itself, and what it has accomplished. It seemed desirable to deal more fully than has been done hitherto with the obscure beginnings of the Unitarian movement in New England; but limits of space have made it impossible to treat this phase of the subject in other than a cursory manner. It deserves an exhaustive treatment, which will amply repay the necessary labor to this end. The theological controversies that led to the separation of the Unitarians from the older Congregational body have been only briefly alluded to, the design

of my work not requiring an ampler treatment. It was not thought best to cover the ground so ably traversed by Rev. George E. Ellis, in his *Half-century of the Unitarian Controversy*; Rev. Joseph Henry Allen, in his *Our Liberal Movement in Theology*; Rev. William Channing Gannett, in his *Memoir of Dr. Ezra Stiles Gannett*; and by Rev. John White Chadwick, in his *Old and New Unitarian Beliefs*. The attempt here made has been to supplement these works, and to treat of the practical side of Unitarianism,—its organizations, charities, philanthropies, and reforms.

With the theological problems involved in the history of Unitarianism this volume deals only so far as they have affected its general development. I have endeavored to treat of them fairly and without prejudice, to state the position of each side to the various controversies in the words of those who have accepted its point of view, and to judge of them as phases of a larger religious growth. I

have not thought it wise to attempt anything approaching an exhaustive treatment of the controversies produced by the transcendental movement and by "the Western issue." If they are to be dealt with in the true spirit of the historical method, it must be at a period more remote from these discussions than that of one who participated in them, however slightly. I have endeavored to treat of all phases of Unitarianism without reference to local interests and without sectional preferences. If my book does not indicate such regard to what is national rather than to what is provincial, as some of my readers may desire, it is due to inability to secure information that would have given a broader character to my treatment of the subject.

The present work may appear to some of its readers to have been written in a sectarian spirit, with a purpose to magnify the excellences of Unitarianism, and to ignore its limitations. Such has not been the purpose I have kept before

me; but, rather, my aim has been to present the facts candidly and justly, and to treat of them from the standpoint of a student of the religious evolution of mankind. Unitarianism in this country presents an attempt to bring religion into harmony with philosophy and science, and to reconcile Christianity with the modern spirit. Its effort in this direction is one that deserves careful consideration, especially in view of the unity and harmony it has developed in the body of believers who accept its teachings. The Unitarian body is a small one, but it has a history of great significance with reference to the future development of Christianity.

The names of those who accept Unitarianism have not been given in this book in any boastful spirit. A faith that is often spoken against may justify itself by what it has accomplished, and its best fruits are the men and women who have lived in the spirit of its teachings. In presenting the names of those who are not in any way identified with Unitarian churches,

the purpose has been to suggest the wide and inclusive character of the Unitarian movement, and to indicate that it is not represented merely by a body of churches, but that it is an individual way of looking at the facts of life and its problems.

In writing the following pages, I have had constantly in mind those who have not been educated as Unitarians, and who have come into this inheritance through struggle and search. Not having been to the manner born myself, I have sought to provide such persons with the kind of information that would have been helpful to me in my endeavors to know the Unitarian life and temper. Something of what appears in these pages is due to this desire to help those who wish to know concretely what Unitarianism is, and what it has said and done to justify its existence. This will account for the manner of treatment and for some of the topics selected.

When this work was begun, the design was that it should form a part of the exhibit of Unitarianism in this country presented at the seventy-fifth anniversary of the formation of the American Unitarian Association. The time required for a careful verification of facts made it impossible to have the book ready at that date. The delay in its publication has not freed the work from all errors and defects, but it has given the opportunity for a more adequate treatment of many phases of the subject. Much of the work required in its preparation does not show itself in the following pages; but it has involved an extended examination of manuscript journals and records, as well as printed reports of societies, newspapers, magazines, pamphlets, and books. Many of the subjects dealt with, not having been touched upon in any previous historical work, have demanded a first-hand study of records, often difficult to find access to, and even more

difficult to summarize in an interesting and adequate manner.

I wish here to warmly thank all those persons, many in number and too numerous to give all their names, who have generously aided me with their letters and manuscripts, and by the loan of books, magazines, pamphlets, and newspapers. Without their aid the book would have been much less adequate in its treatment of many subjects than it is at present. Though I am responsible for the book as it presents itself to the reader, much of its value is due to those who have thus labored with me in its preparation. In manuscript and in proof-sheet it has been read by several persons, who have kindly aided in securing accuracy to names, dates, and historic facts.

G.W.C.

BOSTON, October 1, 1902.

## Contents

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Preface	iv
Unitarianism in America.	1
I. Introduction.—English Sources of American Unitarianism.	2
II. The Liberal Side of Puritanism.	27
III. The Growth of Democracy in the Churches.	62
Bibliography	93

# **Unitarianism in America.**

## **A History of Its Origin and Development.**



## I. Introduction.—English Sources of American Unitarianism.

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THE sources of American Unitarianism are to be found in the spirit of individualism developed by the Renaissance, the tendency to free inquiry that manifested itself in the Protestant Reformation, and the general movement of the English churches of the seventeenth century toward toleration and rationalism. The individualism of modern thought and life first found distinct expression in the Renaissance; and it was essentially a new creation, and not a revival. Hitherto the tribe, the city, the nation, the guild, or the church, had been the source of authority, the centre of power, and the giver of life. Although Greece

showed a desire for freedom of thought, and a tendency to recognize the worth of the individual and his capacity as a discoverer and transmitter of truth, it did not set the individual mind free from bondage to the social and political power of the city. Socrates and Plato saw somewhat of the real worth of the individual, but the great mass of the people were never emancipated from the old tribal authority as inherited by the city-state; and not one of the great dramatists had conceived of the significance of a genuine individualism.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Paul Lafargue, *The Evolution of Property from Savagery to Civilization*, 18, 19. "If the savage is incapable of conceiving the idea of individual possession of objects not incorporated with his person, it is because he has no conception of his individuality as distinct from the consanguine group in which he lives.... Savages, even though individually completer beings, seeing that they are self-sufficing, than are civilized persons, are so thoroughly identified with their hordes and clans that their individuality does not make itself felt either in the family or in property. The clan was all in all: the clan was the family; it was the clan that was the owner of property." Also W.M. Sloan, *The French Revolution and Religious Reform*, 38. "In the Greek and Roman world the individual, body, mind, and soul, had no place in reference to the state. It was only as a member of family, gens, curia, phratry, or deme, and tribe, that the ancient city-state knew the men and women which composed it. The same was true of knowledge: every sensation, perception, and judgment fell into the category of some abstraction, and, instead of concrete things, men knew nothing but generalized ideals."

## **Renaissance.**

The Renaissance advanced to a new conception of the worth and the capacity of the individual mind, and for the first time in history recognized the full social meaning of personality in man. It sanctioned and authenticated the right of the individual to think for himself, and it developed clearly the idea that he may become the transmitter of valid revelations of spiritual truth. That God may speak through individual intuition and reason, and that this inward revelation may be of the highest authority and worth, was a conception first brought to distinct acceptance by the Renaissance.

A marked tendency of the Reformation which it received from the Renaissance was its acceptance of the free spirit of individualism. The Roman Church had taught that all valid religious truth comes to mankind through its own corporate existence, but the Reformers insisted that truth is the result of individual

insight and investigation. The Reformation magnified the worth of personality, and made it the central force in all human effort.<sup>2</sup> To gain a positive personal life, one of free initiative power, that may in itself become creative, and capable of bringing truth and life to larger issues, was the chief motive of the Protestant leaders in their work of reformation. The result was that, wherever genuine Protestantism appeared, it manifested itself by its attitude of free inquiry, its tendency to emphasize individual life and thought, and its break with the traditions of the past, whether in literature or in religion. The Reformation did not, however, bring the principle of individuality to full maturity; and it retained many of the old

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<sup>2</sup> Francesco S. Nitti, *Catholic Socialism*, 74, 85, 86. "If we consider the teachings of the Gospel, the communistic origins of the church, the socialistic tendencies of the early fathers, the traditions of the Canon Law, we cannot wonder that at the present day Socialism should count no small number of its adherents among Catholic writers.... The Reformation was the triumph of Individualism. Catholicism, instead, is communistic by its origin and traditions.... The Catholic Church, with her powerful organization, dating back over many centuries, has accustomed Catholic peoples to passive obedience, to a passive renunciation of the greater part of individualistic tendencies."

institutional methods, as well as a large degree of their social motive. The Reformed churches were often as autocratic as the Catholic Church had been, and as little inclined to approve of individual departures from their creeds and disciplines; but the motive of individualism they had adopted in theory, and could not wholly depart from in practice. Their merit was that they had recognized and made a place for the principle of individuality; and it proved to be a developing social power, however much they might ignore or try to suppress it.

### **Reformation.**

In its earliest phases Protestantism magnified the importance of reason in religious investigations, although it used an imperfect method in so doing. All doctrines were subjected more or less faithfully to this test, every rite was criticised and reinterpreted, and the Bible itself was handled in the freest manner. The individualism of the movement showed

itself in Luther's doctrine of justification by faith, and his confidence in the validity of personal insight into spiritual realities. Most of all this tendency manifested itself in the assertion of the right of every believer to read the Bible for himself, and to interpret it according to his own needs. The vigorous assertion of the right to the free interpretation of the Word of God, and to personal insight into spiritual truth, led their followers much farther than the first reformers had anticipated. Individualism showed itself in an endless diversity of personal opinions, and in the creation of many little groups of believers, who were drawn together by an interest in individual leaders or by a common acceptance of hair-splitting interpretations of religious truths.<sup>3</sup>

The Protestant Church inculcated the law of individual fidelity to God, and declared that the highest obligation is that of personal

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<sup>3</sup> See David Masson, *Life of John Milton*, III. 136; John Tulloch, *Rational Theology and Christian Philosophy in England*, II. 9; John Hunt, *Religious Thought in England*, I. 234.

faith and purity. What separated the Catholic and the Protestant was not merely a question of socialism as against individualism,<sup>4</sup> but it was also a problem of outward or inward law, of environment or intuition as the source of wholesome teaching, of ritualism or belief as the higher form of religious expression. The Protestants held that belief is better than ritual, faith than sacraments, inward authority than external force. They insisted that the individual has a right to think his own thoughts and to pray his own prayer, and that the revelation of

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4 The word socialism is not used here with any understanding that the Catholic Church accepts the social theories implied by that name. It is used to indicate that the Roman Church maintains that revelation is to the church itself, and that it is now the visible representative of Christ. The Protestant maintains that revelation is made through an individual, and not to a church. See Otto Gierke, *Political Theories of the Middle Age*, translated by F.W. Maitland, 10, 22. "In all centuries of the Middle Age Christendom is set before us a single, universal community, founded and governed by God himself. Mankind is one mystical body; it is one single and internally connected people or fold; it is an all-embracing corporation, which constitutes that Universal Realm, spiritual, and temporal, which may be called the Universal Church, or, with equal propriety, the Commonwealth of the Human Race.... Mediæval thought proceeded from the idea of a single whole. Therefore an organic construction of human society was as familiar to it as a mechanical and atomistic construction was originally alien. Under the influence of biblical allegories and the models set by Greek and Roman writers, the comparison of mankind at large and every smaller group to an animate body was universally adopted and pressed. Mankind in its totality was conceived as an Organism."

the Supreme Good Will is to all who inwardly bear God's image and to every one whose will is a centre of new creative force in the world of conduct. They affirmed that the individual is of more worth than the social organism, the soul than the church, the motive than the conduct, the search for truth than the truth attained.

These tendencies of Protestantism found expression in the rationalism that appeared in England at the time of the Commonwealth, and especially at the Restoration. All the men of broader temper proclaimed the use of reason in the discussion of theological problems. In their opinion the Bible was to be interpreted as other books are, while with regard to doctrines there must be compromise and latitude. We find such a theologian as Chillingworth recognizing "the free right of the individual reason to interpret the Bible."<sup>5</sup> To such men as Milton, Jeremy Taylor, and Locke the free spirit was essential, even though they

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5 Tulloch, *Rational Theology in England*, I. 339.

had not become rationalists in the modern philosophical sense. They were slow to discard tradition, and they desired to establish the validity of the Bible; but they would not accept any authority until it had borne the test of as thorough an investigation as they could give it. The methods of rationalism were not yet understood, but the rational spirit had been accepted with a clear apprehension of its significance.

### **Toleration.**

Toleration had two classes of advocates in the seventeenth century,—on the one hand, the minor and persecuted sects, and, on the other, such of the great leaders of religious opinion as Milton and Locke. The first clear assertion of the modern idea of toleration was made by the Anabaptists of Holland, who in 1611 put into their Confession of Faith this declaration of the freedom of religion from all state regulation: “The magistrate is not to

meddle with religion, or matters of conscience, nor compel men to this or that form of religion, because Christ is King, and Lawgiver of the church and conscience." When the Baptists appeared in England, they advocated this principle as the one which ought to control in the relations of church and state. In 1614 there was published in London a little tract, written by one Leonard Busher, a poor laborer, and a member of the Baptist church that had recently been organized there. The writer addressed the King and Parliament with a statement of his conviction "that by fire and sword to constrain princes and peoples to receive that one true religion of the Gospel is wholly against the mind and merciful law of Christ."<sup>6</sup> He went on to say that no king or bishop is able to command faith, that it is monstrous for Christians to vex and destroy each other on account of religious differences.

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<sup>6</sup> David Masson, *Life of Milton*, III. 102.

The leading Protestant bodies, especially the established churches, still held to the corporate idea of the nature of religious institutions; and, although they had rejected the domination of the Roman Church, they accepted the control of the state as essential to the purity of the church. This half-way retention of the corporate spirit made it impossible for any of the leading churches to give recognition to the full meaning of the Protestant idea of the worth of the individual soul, and its right to communicate directly with God. It remained for the persecuted Baptists and Independents, too feeble and despised to aspire to state influence, to work out the Protestant principle to its full expression in the spirit of toleration, to declare for liberty of conscience, the voluntary maintenance of worship, and the separation of church and state.

After the Restoration, and again after the enthronement of William and Mary, it became a serious practical problem to establish

satisfactory relations between the various sects. All who were not sectarian fanatics saw that some kind of compromise was desirable, and the more liberal wished to include all but the most extreme phases of belief within the national church. When that national church was finally established on the lines which it has since retained, and numerous bodies of dissenters found themselves compelled to remain outside, toleration became more and more essential, in order that the nation might live at peace with itself. From generation to generation the dissenters were able to secure for themselves a larger recognition, disabilities were removed as men of all sects saw that restrictions were useless, and toleration became the established law in the relations of the various religious bodies to each other.

### **Arminianism.**

The conditions which led to toleration also developed a liberal interpretation of the

relations of the church to the people, a broader explanation of doctrines, and a rational insight into the problems of the religious life. One phase of this more comprehensive religious spirit was shown in Arminianism, which was nothing more than an assertion of individualism in the sphere of man's relations to God. Calvinism maintained that man cannot act freely for himself, that he is strictly under the sovereignty of the Divine Will. The democratic tendency in Holland, where Arminianism had its origin, expressed itself in the declaration that every man is free to accept or to reject religious truth, that the will is individual and self-assertive, and that the conscience is not bound. Arminius and his coworkers accepted what the early Protestant movement had regarded as essential, that religion should be always obedient to the rational spirit, that nature should be the test in regard to all which affects human conduct, and that the critical spirit ought to be applied to dogma and Bible. Arminius reasserted this

freedom of the human spirit, and vindicated the right of the individual mind to seek God and his truth wherever they may be found.

As Protestantism became firmly established in England, and the nation accepted its mental and moral attitude without reserve, what is known as Arminianism came to be more and more prevalent. This was not a body of doctrines, and it was in no sense a sectarian movement: it was rather a mental temper of openness and freedom. In a word, Arminianism became a method of religious inquiry that appealed to reason, nature, and the needs of man. It put new emphasis on the intellectual side of religion, and it developed as a moral protest against the harsher features of Calvinism. It gave to human feelings the right to express themselves as elements in the problem of man's relations to God, and vindicated for God the right to be deemed as sympathetic and loving as the men who worship him.

While the Arminians accepted the Bible as an authoritative standard as fully as did the Calvinists, they were more critical in its study: they applied literary and historical standards in its interpretation, and they submitted it to the vindication of reason. They sought to escape from the tyranny of the Bible, and yet to make it a living force in the world of conduct and character. They not only declared anew the right of private judgment, but they wished to make the Bible the source of inward spiritual illumination,—not a standard and a test, but an awakener of the divine life in the soul. They sought for what is really essential in religious truth, limited the number of dogmas that may be regarded as requisite to the Christian life, and took the position that only what is of prime importance is to be required of the believer. The result was that Arminianism became a positive aid to the growth of toleration in England; for it became what was called latitudinarian,—that is, broad in temper,

inclusive in spirit, and desirous of bringing all the nation within the limits of one harmonizing and noble-minded church.

### **English Rationalists.**

It was in such tendencies as these, as they were developed in Holland and England, that American Unitarianism had its origin. To show how true this is, it may be desirable to speak of a few of the men whose books were most frequently read in New England during the eighteenth century.

The prose writings of Milton exerted great influence in favor of toleration and in vindication of reason. Without doubt he became in his later years a believer in free will and the subordinate nature of Christ, and he was true to the Protestant ideal of an open Bible and a free spirit in man. Known as a Puritan, his pleas for toleration must have been read with confidence by his coreligionists of

New England; while his rational temper could not have failed to have its effect.

His vindication of the Bible as the religion of Protestants must have commended Chillingworth to the liberal minds in New England; and there is evidence that he was read with acceptance, although he was of the established church. Chillingworth was of the noblest type of the latitudinarians in the Church of England during the first half of the seventeenth century; for he was generously tolerant, his mind was broad and liberal, and he knew the true value of a really comprehensive and inclusive church, which he earnestly desired should be established in England. He wished to have the creed reduced to the most limited proportions by giving emphasis to what is fundamental, and by the extrusion of all else. It was his desire to maintain what is essential that caused him to say: "I am fully assured that God does not, and therefore that man ought not, to require any more of any man than this—

to believe the Scripture to be God's word, to endeavor to find the true sense of it, and to live according to it."<sup>7</sup>

He would therefore leave every man free to interpret the Bible for himself, and he would make no dogmatic test to deprive any man of this right. The chief fact in the Bible being Christ, he insisted that Christianity is loyalty to his spirit. "To believe only in Christ" is his definition of Christianity, and he would add nothing to this standard. He would put no church or creed or council between the individual soul and God; and he would direct every believer to the Bible as the free and open way of the soul's access to divine truth. He found that the religion of Protestants consisted in the rational use of that book, and not in the teachings of the Reformers or in the confessions they devised. It is the great merit of Chillingworth that he vindicated the spirit of toleration in a broad and noble manner, that he was without sectarian

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7 The Religion of Protestants, II. 411.

prejudice or narrowness in his desire for an inclusive church, and that he spoke and wrote in a truly rational temper. He applied reason to all religious problems, and he regarded it as the final judge and arbiter. Religious freedom received from him the fullest recognition, and no one has more clearly indicated the scope and purpose of toleration.

Another English religious leader, much read in New England, was Archbishop Tillotson. It has been said of him that "for the first time since the Reformation the voice of reason was now clearly heard in the high places of the church."<sup>8</sup> He was an Arminian in his sympathies, and held that the way of salvation is open to all who choose to accept its opportunities. He expressed himself as being as certain that the doctrine of eternal decrees is not of God as he was sure that God is good and just. His ground for this opinion was that it is repugnant to the convictions of justice and goodness natural to

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8 John Hunt, *Religious Thought in England*, II. 99.

men. He maintained that we shall be justified before God by means of the reformation that is wrought in our own lives. We have an intuition of what is right, and a natural capacity for living justly and righteously. Experience and reason he made concomitant spiritual forces with the Bible, and he held that revelation is but a republication of the truths of natural religion. Tillotson was truly a broad churchman, who was desirous of making the national church as comprehensive as possible; and he was one who practised as well as preached toleration.

Not less liberal was Jeremy Taylor, who was numbered among the dissenters. In the introduction to his *Liberty of Prophesying* he said, "So long as men have such variety of principles, such several constitutions, educations, tempers, and distempers, hopes, interests, and weaknesses, degrees of light and degrees of understanding, it was impossible all should be of one mind." Taylor justly said that in heaven there is room for all faiths. His *Liberty*

of Prophecy, Chillingworth's Religion of Protestants, and Milton's Liberty of Unlicensed Printing are the great expressions of the spirit of toleration in the seventeenth century. Each was broad, comprehensive, and noble in its plea for religious freedom. It has been said of Taylor that "he sets a higher value on a good life than on an orthodox creed. He estimates every doctrine by its capacity to do men good."<sup>9</sup>

Another advocate of toleration was John Locke, whose chief influence was as a rationalist in philosophy and religion. While accepting Christianity with simple confidence, he subjected it to the careful scrutiny of reason. His philosophy awakened the rationalistic spirit in all who accepted it, so that many of his disciples went much farther than he did himself. While accepting revelation, he maintained that natural knowledge is more certain in its character. He taught that the conclusions of reason are more important than anything given

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<sup>9</sup> John Hunt, *Religious Thought in England*, I. 340.

men in the name of revelation. He did not himself widely depart from the orthodoxy of his day, though he did not accept the doctrine of the Trinity in the most approved form.

One of the rationalistic followers of Locke was Samuel Clarke, who attempted to apply the scientific methods of Newton to the interpretation of Christianity. He tried to establish faith in God on a purely scientific basis. He declared that goodness does not exist because God commands it, but that he commands it because it is good. He interpreted the doctrine of the Trinity in a rationalistic manner, holding to its form, but rejecting its substance.

These men were widely read in New England during the eighteenth century. In England they were accounted orthodox, and they held high positions either in the national church or in the leading dissenting bodies. They were not sectarian or bigoted, they wished to give religion a basis in common sense and ethical

integrity, and they approved of a Christianity that is practical and leads to noble living.

When we consider what were the relations of the colonies to England during the first half of the eighteenth century, and that the New England churches were constantly influenced by the religious attitude of the mother-country,<sup>10</sup> it is plain enough that toleration and rationalism were in large measure received from England. In the same school was learned the lesson of a return to the simplicity of Christ, of making him and his life the standard of Christian fellowship. The great leaders in England taught positively that loyalty to Christ is the only essential test of Christian duty; and it is not in the least surprising the same idea should have found noble advocacy in New England. That a good life and character are the true indications of the possession of a saving faith was a thought too often uttered in England not to find advocacy in the colonies.

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<sup>10</sup> John Hunt, *Religious Thought in England*, I. 340.

In this way Unitarianism had its origin, in the teachings of men who were counted orthodox in England, but who favored submitting all theological problems to the test of reason. It was not a sectarian movement in its origin or at any time during the eighteenth century; but it was an effort to make religion practical, to give it a basis in reality, and to establish it as acceptable to the sound judgment and common sense of all men. It was an application to the interpretation of theological problems of that individualistic spirit which was at the very source of Protestantism. If the individual ought to interpret the Bible for himself, so ought he to accept his own explanation of the dogmas of the church. In so doing, he necessarily becomes a rationalist, which may lead him far from the traditions of the past. If he thinks for himself, there is an end to uniformity of faith—a conclusion which such men as Chillingworth and Jeremy Taylor were willing to accept; and, therefore, they desired an all-inclusive church,

in order that freedom and unity of faith might be both maintained.

In its beginning the liberal movement in New England was not concerned with the Trinity. It was a demand for simplicity, rationality, and toleration. When it had proceeded far on its way, it was led to a consideration of the problem of the Trinity, because it did not find that doctrine distinctly taught in the New Testament. Accepting implicitly the words of Christ, it found him declaring positively his own subordination to the Father, and preferred his teaching to that of the creeds. To the early liberals this was simply a question of the nature of Christ, and did not lessen for them their implicit faith in his revelation or their recognition of the beauty and glory of his divine character.

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## II. The Liberal Side of Puritanism.

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UNITARIANISM was brought to America with the Pilgrims and the Puritans. Its origins are not to be found in the religious indifference and torpidity of the eighteenth century, but in the individualism and the rational temper of the men who settled Plymouth, Salem, and Boston. Its development is coextensive with the origin and growth of Congregationalism, even with that of Protestantism itself. So long as New England has been in existence, so long, at least, Unitarianism, in its motives and in its spirit, has been at work in the name of toleration, liberty, and free inquiry.

The many and wide divergences of opinion which were an essential result of the spirit

and methods of Protestantism were shown from the first by the Pilgrims and Puritans. In Massachusetts, stringent laws were adopted in order to secure uniformity of belief and practice; but it was never achieved, except in name. Antinomianism early presented itself in Boston, and it was quickly followed by the incursions of the Baptists and Friends. Hooker did not find himself in sympathy with the Massachusetts leaders, and led a considerable company to Connecticut from Cambridge, Watertown, and Dorchester. Sir Henry Vane could not always agree with those who guided the religion and the politics of Boston; Roger Williams had another ideal of church and state than that which had come to the Puritans; and Sir Richard Saltonstall would not submit himself to the aristocratic methods of the Boston preachers.

These are but a few of the many indications of the individualistic spirit that marked the first years of the Puritan colonies. It was a part of

the Protestant inheritance, and was inherent in the very nature of Protestantism itself. Although the Puritans had only in part, and with faltering steps, come to the acceptance of the individualistic and rational spirit in religion, yet they were on the way to it, however long they might be hindered by an autocratic temper. In fact, the Puritans throughout the seventeenth century in New England were trying at one and the same time to use reason and yet to cling to authority, to accept the Protestant ideal and yet to employ the Catholic methods in state and church. In being Protestants, they were committed to the central motive of individualism; but they never consistently turned away from that conception of the church which is autocratic and authoritative.

## **The Church of Authority and the Church of Freedom.**

Looked at from the modern sociological point of view, there are two types of church,

the one socialistic or institutional and the other individualistic, the one making the corporate power of the church the source of spiritual life, the other making the personal insight of the individual man the fountain of religious truth. Such a church as that of Rome may be properly called socialistic because of its corporate nature, because it maintains that revelation is to, and by means of, an institution, an organic religious body.<sup>11</sup>

Catholicism, whether of Rome, Greece, or England, makes the church as a great religious corporation the organ of religious expression.

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11 Kuno Francke, *Social Forces in German Literature*, 105. "No mediæval man ever thought of himself as a perfectly independent being founded only on himself, or without a most direct and definite relation to some larger organism, be it empire, church, city, or guild. No mediæval man ever doubted that the institutions within which he lived were divinely established ordinances, far superior and quite inaccessible to his own individual reason and judgment. No mediæval man would ever have admitted that he conceived nature to be other than the creation of an extramundane God, destined to glorify its creator and to please the eye of man. It was reserved for the eighteenth century to draw the last consequences of individualism; to see in man, in each individual man, an independent and complete entity; to derive the origin of state, church, and society from the spontaneous action of these independent individuals; and to consider nature as a system of forces sufficient unto themselves. When we speak of individualism in the declining centuries of the Middle Ages, we mean by it that these centuries initiated the movement which the eighteenth century brought to a climax."

Such a corporation is the source of authority, the test of truth, the creator of spiritual ideals. On the other hand, such a church as the Protestant may be called individualistic because it makes the individual the channel of revelation. It emphasizes personality as of supreme worth, and it makes religious institutions of little value in comparison.

Practically, the difference between the socialistic and the individualistic church is as wide as it is theoretically. In all Catholic churches the child is born into the church, with the right to full acceptance into it by methods of tuition and ritual, whatever his individual qualities or capacities. In all distinctly Protestant churches, membership must be sought by individual preference or supernatural process.<sup>12</sup> The way to

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<sup>12</sup> Williston Walker, *The Creeds and Platforms of Congregationalism*, 246. "From the first the fathers of New England insisted that the children of church members were themselves members, and as such were justly entitled to those church privileges which were adapted to their state of Christian development, of which the chief were baptism and the watchful discipline of the church. They did not enter the church by baptism; they were entitled to baptism because they were already members of the church. Here then was an inconsistency in the application of the Congregational theory of the constitution of a church. While affirming that a proper

it is through individual profession of its creed or inward miraculous transformation of character by the profoundest of personal experiences. In all socialistic or Catholic churches—whether heathen, ethnic, or Christian—young people are admitted to membership after a definite period of training and an initiation by means of an impressive ritual. In all Protestant churches, initiation takes place as the result of personal experiences and mature convictions, and is therefore usually deferred until adult life has been reached.

When we bring out thus distinctly the ideals and methods of the two churches, we are able to understand that the Puritans were theoretically Protestants, but that they practically used the methods of the Catholics. This will be seen more clearly when we take the individualistic tendencies of the Puritans into

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church consisted only of those possessed of personal Christian character, the fathers admitted to membership, in some degree at least, those who had no claim but Christian parentage." That is, in theory they were Protestants, but in practice they were Catholics.

distinct recognition, and place them in contrast with their socialistic practices. The Puritan churches were thoroughly individualistic in their admission of members, none being accepted into full membership but those who had been converted by means of a personal experience. In theory every male church member was a priest and king, authorized to interpret spiritual truth and to exercise political authority. Therefore, in 1631 the General Court of Massachusetts (being the legislative body) established the rule that only church members should exercise the right of suffrage. This law was continued on the statute books until 1664, and was accepted in practice until 1691.

Because the individual Christian was accounted a priest, however humble in learning or social position, he had the right to join with others in ordaining and setting apart to the ministry of God the man who was to lead the church as its teacher or pastor, though this practice was abandoned as the state-church

idea developed, as it did in New England by a process of reaction. Every man could read the Bible for himself, and give it such meaning as his own conscience and reason dictated. By virtue of his Christian experience he had the personal right to find in it his own creed and the law of his own conduct. It was not only his right to do this, but it was also his duty. Revivalism was therefore the distinct outgrowth of Puritanism, the expression of its individualistic spirit. It was the human means of bringing the individual soul within reach of the supernatural power of God, and of facilitating that choice of the Holy Spirit by which one was selected for this change rather than another. The means were social, it is true; but the end reached was absolutely individual, as an experience and as a result attained. What confirmation was to the Catholic, that was conversion to the Puritan.

The Puritans in New England, however, inherited the older socialism to so large an extent that they proceeded to establish what

was a state church in method, if not in theory. Though they began with the idea that the churches were to be supported by voluntary contributions (and always continued that method in Boston), yet in a few years they resorted to taxation for their maintenance, and enacted stringent laws compelling attendance upon them by every resident of a town, whatever his beliefs or his personal interests. They forbade the utterance of opinions not approved by the authorities, and made use of fines, imprisonment, and death in support of arbitrary laws enacted for this purpose. These methods were the same as those used by the older socialistic and state churches to compel acceptance of their teachings and practices. They were based on the idea of the corporate nature of the church, and its right to control the individual in the name of the social whole.

The harshness of the Puritan methods was the result of this attempt to maintain a new idea in harmony with an old practice. The

Baptists were consistently individualists in rejecting infant baptism, accepting conversion as essential to church membership, maintaining freedom of conscience, and practising toleration as a fundamental social law. The Puritans inconsistently combined conversion and infant baptism,—the Protestant right of private judgment with the Catholic methods of the state church,—a democratic theory of popular suffrage with a most aristocratic limitation of that suffrage to church members. As late as 1674 only 2,527 men in all had been admitted to the exercise of the franchise in Massachusetts. One-sixth or one-eighth of the men were voters, the rest were disfranchised. The church and the state were controlled by this small minority in a community that was theoretically democratic, both in religion and politics.

It is not surprising that there began to be mutterings against such restrictions. It shows the strength of character in the Puritan

communities of Massachusetts and New Haven that a large majority of the men submitted as long as they did to conditions thoroughly undemocratic. As a political measure, when the grumblings became so loud as to be no longer ignored, what is called the half-way covenant was adopted, by means of which a semi-membership in the churches could be secured, that gave the right of suffrage, but permitted no action within the church itself.<sup>13</sup> Many

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<sup>13</sup> The ecclesiastical historians say that the half-way covenant had no effect on suffrage. Dexter, *Congregationalism as Seen in its Literature*, 468, says: "I am aware of no proof that half-way covenant members of the church by that relation did acquire any further privileges in the state." Williston Walker, *New Englander*, cclxiii., 93, February, 1892, takes ground that "added political privilege was no consequence of the dispute." On the other hand, the secular historians as strongly assert that the suffrage was widened. John Fiske, *Beginnings of New England*, 250, says the half-way covenant "entitled to the exercise of political rights those who were unqualified for participation in the Lord's Supper." Alexander Johnston, *Connecticut*, 227, says "it really gave every baptized person voice in church government." J.A. Doyle, *The Puritan Colonies*, II., 98, asserts that "it broke down the hard barrier which fenced in political privileges." The true explanation is given by George H. Haynes, *Representation and Suffrage in Massachusetts, 1620-1691*, 54, published in *Johns Hopkins University Studies in Historical and Political Science*, Vol. XII., Nos. VIII. and IX. Haynes says that the half-way covenant, as first formulated in 1657, "virtually recognized a partial church-membership in persons who had made no formal profession and subscribed to no creed. In 1662 the same opinion was reaffirmed by the clergy, and the General Court ordered the result of the Synod to be printed and 'commended the same unto the consideration of all the churches and people of this jurisdiction.' Here ended legislative action on the matter. This was no statutory change of the basis of the franchise; but, as individual churches gradually adopted

writers on this period fail to understand the significance of the half-way covenant; for they attribute to that legislation the disintegrating results that followed. They forget that these half-members were not admitted to any part in church affairs; and they refuse to see that the methods employed by the Puritans were, because of their exclusiveness, of necessity demoralizing. In fact, the half-way covenant was a result of the disintegration that had already taken place as the issue of an attempted compromise between the institutional and the individualistic theories of church government.

### **Seventeenth-century Liberals.**

By arbitrary methods the Puritans succeeded in controlling church and state until 1688, when the interference of the English authorities compelled them to practise toleration and to widen the suffrage. The words of Sir Richard

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more liberal conditions of admission and were therein sanctioned by the General Court, it resulted that the operation of the religious test became less odious and the suffrage was not a little broadened."

Saltonstall to John Cotton and John Wilson show clearly that these methods were not accepted by all, and even Saltonstall returned to England to escape the restrictions he condemned. "It doth not a little grieve my spirit to hear what sad things are daily reported of your tyranny and persecutions in New England," he wrote, "as that you fine, whip, and imprison men for their consciences. First you compel such to come into your assemblies as you know will not join with you in your worship, and when they show their dislike thereof or witness against it, then you stir up your magistrates to punish them for such (as you conceive) their public affronts. Truly, friends, this your practice of compelling any in matters of worship to do that whereof they are not persuaded is to make them sin, and many are made hypocrites thereby, conforming in their outward man for fear of punishment. We pray for you and wish you prosperity in every way, hoped that the Lord would have given you so much light and

love there, that you might have been eyes to God's people here, and not to practise those courses in wilderness which you went so far to prevent. These rigid ways have laid you very low in the hearts of the saints."<sup>14</sup>

Another man who withdrew to England from the narrow spirit of the Puritans was William Pynchon, of Springfield, one of the best trained and ablest of the early settlers of Massachusetts. In 1650 he published a book on the Meritorious Price of our Redemption, in which he denied that Christ was subject to the wrath of God or suffered torments in hell for the redemption of men or paid the penalty for all human sins; but such teachings were too liberal and modern for the leaders in church and state.<sup>15</sup> What is now orthodox, that Christ's sacrifice was voluntary, was then heretical and forbidden.

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14 Henry Bond, *Early Settlers of Watertown*, II. 916; Convers Francis, *Historical Sketch of Watertown*, 135.

15 Mason A. Green, *History of Springfield*, 113; E.H. Byington, *The Puritan in England and New England*, 185.

If during the first half-century of New England no liberalism found definite utterance, it was because of its repression. It was in the air, even then, and it would have found expression, had there been opportunity or invitation. There were other men than Williams, Saltonstall, Pynchon, and Henry Vane, who believed in toleration, liberty of conscience, and a rational interpretation of religion. In a limited way such men were Henry Dunster and Charles Chauncy, the first two presidents of Harvard College, who both rejected infant baptism because it was not consistent with a converted church membership. It was a small thing to protest against, and to suffer for as Dunster suffered; but the principle was great for which he contended, the principle of individual conviction in religion.

The better spirit of the Puritans appears in such a saying as that of Sir Henry Vane, the second governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, that "all magistrates are to fear

or forbear intermeddling with giving rule or imposing their own beliefs in religious matters."<sup>16</sup> To a similar purport was the saying of Thomas Hooker, the founder of Connecticut, that "the foundation of authority is laid in the free consent of the people."<sup>17</sup> In the writings of John Robinson, the Pilgrim leader, a like greatness of purpose and thought appears, as where he says that "the meanest man's reason, specially in matter of faith and obedience to God, is to be preferred before all authority of all men."<sup>18</sup> Robinson was a very strict Calvinist in doctrine; but he was tolerant in large degree, and thoroughly convinced of the worth of liberty of conscience. His liberality comes out in such words as these: "The custom of the church is but the custom of men; the sentence of the fathers but the opinions of men; the determinations of councils but the judgments

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16 A Healing Question.

17 Alexander Johnston, *Connecticut: A Study of a Commonwealth-Democracy*, 72, Hooker's sermon preparatory to forming a government.

18 *The Works of John Robinson*, American edition of 1851, I., 53.

of men.”<sup>19</sup> How strong a believer in individual reason he was appears in this statement: “God, who hath made two great lights for the bodily eye, hath also made two lights for the eye of the mind; the one the Scriptures for her supernatural light, and the other reason for her natural light. And, indeed, only these two are a man’s own, and so is not the authority of other men. The Scriptures are as well mine as any other man’s, and so is reason as far as I can attain to it.”<sup>20</sup> When he says that “the credit commending a testimony to others cannot be greater than is the authority in itself of him that gives it nor his authority greater than his person,”<sup>21</sup> he puts an end to all arbitrary authority of priest and church.

It will be seen from these quotations that the spirit of liberality existed even in the very beginnings of New England, and in the convictions of the men who were its chief

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 54.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 56.

prophets and leaders. It was hidden away for a time, it may be, though it never ceased to find utterance in some form. The breadth of the underlying spirit finds expression in the compacts by which local churches united their members. The liberality was incipient, a promise of the future rather than a realization in the present.

The earliest churches of New England were not organized with a creed, but with a covenant. Occasionally there was a confession of faith or a creedal statement; but it was regarded as quite unnecessary because it was implied in the general acceptance of the Calvinistic doctrines, and the use of the Cambridge platform or other similar document. The covenant of a church could not be a statement of beliefs, because it was a vow between Christ and his church, and a pledge of the individual members of the church with relation to each other. The creed was implied, but it was not expressed; and, although all the churches were Calvinist at

first, the nature of the covenant was such that, when men grew liberal, there was no written creedal test by which they could be held to the old beliefs. When Calvinism was outgrown, it could be slowly and silently discarded, both by individual members of a church and by the church itself, because it was not explicitly contained in the covenant. The creed was rejected, but the covenant was retained.

As soon as authority was withdrawn from the Puritan leaders by the English crown, the spirit of liberty began to show itself in many directions. In a sermon preached in 1691, Samuel Willard, the minister of the Old South Church in Boston, and afterwards president of Harvard College, gave utterance to what was stirring in many minds at that time. He said that God "hath nowhere by any general indulgence given away this liberty of his to any other authority in the world to have dominion over the consciences of men or to give rules of worship, but hath, on the other hand, strongly

prohibited it and severely threatened any that shall presume to do it." He earnestly asserted that no authority is to be accepted but that of the Bible, and that is to be free for each person's individual interpretation. "Hath there not," Willard questions, "been too much of a pinning our faith on the credit or practice of others, attended on with a woful neglect to know what is the mind of Christ?" Here was a spirit that not many years later was showing itself in the liberal movement that grew into Unitarianism. The effort to free the consciences of men, and to bring all appeals to the Bible and to Christ, was what gave significance to the liberal movement of the next century.

### **Growth of Liberty in Church Methods.**

There also began a movement to bring church and state into harmonious relations with each other, and to overcome the inconsistency of being individualist and socialist at the same moment. The theory of

conversion being retained, it was proposed to make the ordinances of religion free to all, in order that they might bring about the supernatural change that was desired. This is the real significance of the position taken by Solomon Stoddard, of Northampton, who taught that the Lord's Supper is a converting ordinance, and who in practice did not ask for a supernatural regeneration as preparatory to a limited church membership, though he regarded this as essential to full admission. The half-way covenant had been adopted before Mr. Stoddard became the pastor of the church; but soon after his settlement this limited form of admission was more clearly defined, and he admitted persons into what he described as a "state of education."<sup>22</sup> This "large congregationalism," as it was called, was in time accepted as meaning that those who have faith enough to justify the baptism of their children have enough to admit them to full communion

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<sup>22</sup> J.R. Trumbull, *History of Northampton*, I. 213.

in the church. Mr. Stoddard appealed to the English practice in his defence of the broader principle which he adopted. He also vindicated his position by reference to the practices of the leading Protestant countries in Europe. His methods, as outlined and interpreted in his *Appeal to the Learned*,<sup>23</sup> were based more or less explicitly on the corporate idea of the church.

Although Stoddard was a strict Calvinist, there can be no doubt that his method of open communion slowly led to theological modifications. Not only did it have a tendency to bring the state and church into closer relations with each other, by making the membership in the two more nearly the same, but it led the way to the acceptance of the doctrine of moral ability, and therefore to a modification of Calvinism. If it was a practical rather than a theological reason that caused Stoddard to

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23 *An Appeal to the Learned*, being a vindication of the right of visible saints to the Lord's Supper, though they be destitute of a saving work of God's Spirit in their hearts, Boston, 1709. See also his *Doctrine of Instituted Churches*, Boston, 1700.

adopt open communion, it almost inevitably led to Arminianism, because it implied, as he presented its conditions, that man is able of his own free will to accept the terms of salvation which Calvinism had confined to the operation of the sovereignty of God alone.

Another way in which the spirit of the time was showing itself may be seen in the fact that the parish, towards the end of the seventeenth century, on more than one occasion refused to the church the selection of the minister; and church and parish met together for that purpose. This was the case in the first church of Salem in 1672, and at Dedham in 1685. So long as church members only were given the right of suffrage, the selection of the minister was wholly in their hands. As soon as the suffrage was extended, there was a movement to include all tax-payers amongst those who could exercise this choice. In 1666 such a proposition was discussed in Connecticut, and not long after it became the law. In 1692 the Massachusetts laws gave

the church the right to select the minister, but permitted the parish to concur in or to reject such choice. During the next century there was a growing tendency to enlarge the privileges of the parish, and to make that the controlling factor in calling the minister and in all that pertained to the outward life of the church and congregation. The result will be seen more and more in the influence of the parish in the selection of liberal men for the pulpit.

A notable instance of the more liberal tendencies is seen in the formation of the Brattle Street Church of Boston in 1699. Although this church accepted the Westminster Confession of Faith and adopted the practices common to the New England churches at this period, it insisted upon the reading of the Bible without comment as a part of the church service. The relation of religious experiences as preparatory to admission to the church was discarded, all were admitted to communion who were approved by the pastor, and women

were permitted to take part in voting on all church questions. These and other innovations occasioned much discussion; and a controversy ensued between the pastor Benjamin Colman and Increase Mather.<sup>24</sup> The Salem pastors, Rev. John Higginson and Rev. Nicholas Noyes, addressed a letter to the Brattle Street congregation, in which they criticised the church because it did not consult with other churches in its formation, because it did not make a public profession of repentance on behalf of its members, because baptism was administered on less stringent terms than was customary and too lax admission was given to the sacraments, and because the admission of females to full church activity had a direct tendency "to subvert the order and liberty of the churches." Though the Brattle Street Church was for a time severely criticised, it soon came into intimate relations with the other churches of Boston, and it ceased to appear as in any way

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<sup>24</sup> Dwight, *Life of Edwards*, 300.

peculiar. That it was organized on a broader basis of membership indicates very clearly that the old methods were not satisfactory to all the people.<sup>25</sup>

### **A Puritan Rationalist.**

The influence of similar ideas is seen in the books of John Wise, of Ipswich, whose *Churches' Quarrel Espoused* was published in 1710, and his *Vindication of the Government of the New England Churches* in 1717. His first book was in answer to the proposition of a number of the ministers of Boston to bring the churches under the control of associations. By this remonstrance the plan was defeated, and the independence of the local church fully established. In republishing his book, he added the *Vindication*, in order to give his ideas a more systematic expression. The *Vindication* is the most thoroughly modern book published

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<sup>25</sup> S.K. Lothrop, *History of Brattle Street Church*, 7-40; E. Turrell, *Life of Benjamin Colman*, D.D., 96, 125, 178, 180.

in America during the eighteenth century. It has a literary directness and power remarkable for the time. Wise gives no quotations indicating that he had read the great liberal writers of England, but he was familiar with Plato and Cicero.

In his first book he speaks of "the natural freedom of human beings,"<sup>26</sup> and says that "right reason is a ray of divine wisdom enstamped upon human nature."<sup>27</sup> Again, he says that "right reason, that great oracle in human affairs, is the soul of man so formed and endowed by creation with a certain sagacity or acumen whereby man's intellect is enabled to take up the true idea or perception of things agreeable with and according to their natures."<sup>28</sup> In such utterances as these Wise was putting himself into the company of the most liberal minds of England in his day, though he may not have read one of them. The considerations that were

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26 The Churches' Quarrel Espoused, edition of 1860, 140.

27 Ibid., 143.

28 Ibid., 145.

influencing Milton, Chillingworth, and Jeremy Taylor, in favor of toleration and a broad inclusiveness of spirit, evidently were having their effect upon this New England pastor.

It is not to be assumed that John Wise was a rationalist in the modern sense; but he gave to the use of reason a significance that is surprising and refreshing, coming from the time and circumstances of his writing. In his *Vindication* we find him accepting reason and revelation as of equal validity. He appeals to the "dictates of right reason"<sup>29</sup> and the "common reason of mankind"<sup>30</sup> with quite as much confidence as to the Bible. He says that all questions of government, religious as well as political, are to be brought to "the assizes of man's own intellectual powers, reason, and conscience."<sup>31</sup> He assumes that God has created man capable of obeying his will and living in conformity with his law; for he says that, "if God did not

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29 The Churches' Quarrel Espoused, edition of 1860, 32.

30 *Ibid.*, 58.

31 *Ibid.*, 72.

highly estimate man as a creature exalted by his reason, liberty, and nobleness of nature, he would not caress him as he does in order to his submission."<sup>32</sup>

Wise says that the characteristic of man which is of greatest importance is that he is "most properly the subject of the law of nature."<sup>33</sup> He uses this expression frequently and in a thoroughly modern sense.

The second great characteristic of man, according to Wise, "is an original liberty enstamped upon his rational nature."<sup>34</sup> He indicates that he is not inclined to discuss the merely theological problem of man's relations to God, but, considered physically, man is at the head of creation, "and as such is a creature of a very noble character."<sup>35</sup> All the lower world is subject to his command, "and his liberty under the conduct of right reason is equal

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<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

with his trust.”<sup>36</sup> “He that intrudes upon this liberty violates the law of nature.”<sup>37</sup> The effect of such liberty is not to lead man into license, but to make him the rational master of his own conduct. Every man is therefore at liberty “to judge for himself what shall be most for his behoof, happiness, and well-being.”<sup>38</sup>

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The third great characteristic of man is found in “an equality amongst men,”<sup>39</sup> which is to be respected and vindicated by governments that are just and humane. “By a natural right,” he says, “all men are born free; and, nature having set all men upon a level and made them equals, no servitude or subjection can be conceived without inequality.”<sup>40</sup> Again he says that it is “a fundamental principle relating to government that, under God, all power is originally in the people.”<sup>41</sup> This is true of the church as well as of

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36 Ibid., 33.

37 Ibid., 33.

38 The Churches' Quarrel Espoused, edition of 1860, 34.

39 The Churches' Quarrel Espoused, edition of 1860, 34.

40 Ibid., 37.

41 Ibid., 64.

the state, and Wise says the Reformation was a cheat and a schism and a notorious rebellion if the people are not the source of power in the church.

Two other ideas presented by this leader show his modernness and his originality. He says that "the happiness of the people is the object of all government,"<sup>42</sup> and that the state should seek to promote "the peculiar good and benefit of the whole, and every particular member, fairly and sincerely."<sup>43</sup> "The end of all good government," he assures his readers, "is to cultivate humanity, and promote the happiness of all, and the good of every man in all his rights, his life, liberty, estate, and honor, without injury or abuse done to any."<sup>44</sup> That government will seek the good of all is likely to be the case, because man has it as a fundamental law of his nature that he "maintain a sociableness with

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<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.

others."<sup>45</sup> "From the principles of sociableness it follows as a fundamental law of nature that man is not so wedded to his own interest but that he can make the common good the mark of his aim, and hence he becomes capacitated to enter into a civil state by the law of nature."<sup>46</sup> This attraction of man to his kind enables him to yield so much of his freedom as is necessary to make the state an efficient social power, "in which covenant is included that submission and union of wills by which a state may be conceived to be but one person."<sup>47</sup> This thoroughly modern idea of the social body, as being analogous in its nature to the individual man, is nobly expressed by Wise, who says that "a civil state is a compound moral person, whose will is the will of all, to the end it may use and apply the strength and riches of private persons toward maintaining the common peace, security, and well-being of all, which

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45 *Ibid.*, 32.

46 *The Churches' Quarrel Espoused*, edition of 1860, 32.

47 *Ibid.*, 39.

may be conceived as though the whole state was now become but one man."<sup>48</sup>

It is not surprising that the writings of John Wise had no immediate effect upon the theological thinking of the time, but they must have had their influence. Just before the opening of the Revolution they were republished because of their vindication of the spirit of human liberty and democracy. What Wise wrote to promote was congregational independence, and this may have been the reason why his theological attitude was never called in question. It is true enough that he questioned none of the Calvinistic doctrines in his books; but his political views were certain to disturb the old beliefs, and to give incentives to free discussion in religion.

## **Harvard College.**

The centre of the liberalizing tendencies of the last years of the seventeenth century

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 40.

was Harvard College. That institution was organized on a basis as broad as that of the early church covenants, with no creed or doctrinal requirements. The original seal bore the motto *Veritas*; but, as the state-church idea grew, this motto was succeeded by *In Christi gloriam*, and then by *Christo et Ecclesiae*, though neither of these later mottoes was authoritatively adopted. The early charters were thoroughly liberal in spirit and intent, so much so as to be fully in harmony with the present attitude of the university.<sup>49</sup> Under the Puritanic development, however, this liberality was discarded, only to be restored in 1691, when William and Mary gave to Massachusetts a new and broader charter. From that time a new life entered into the college, that put it uncompromisingly on the liberal side a century later. Even under the rule of Increase Mather, seconded by the influence of his son Cotton,

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49 Josiah Quincy, *History of Harvard University*, i. 44–54.

a broader spirit declared itself in the culture imparted and in the method of free inquiry.<sup>50</sup>

Samuel Willard, the successor to Increase Mather in the presidency, was of the liberal party in his breadth of mind and in his sound judgment. He was followed in 1708 by John Leverett, one of the founders of the Brattle Street Church, a man in whom the liberal spirit became a controlling motive in his management of the college.<sup>51</sup> It is not strange that the men who had been shut out from the suffrage and from active participation in the management of the churches, should now come forward to claim their rights, and to make their influence felt in college, church, and state. It was the distinct beginning of the liberal movement in New England, the time from which Unitarianism really took its origin.

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<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 65, 200.

<sup>51</sup> Josiah Quincy, in the seventh chapter of his *History*, gives a detailed account of this movement. It is also dealt with by Brooks Adams in his chapter on the founding of the Brattle Street Church, in his *Emancipation of Massachusetts*, though he gives it a somewhat exaggerated and biased importance. Most of the facts appear in Lothrop's *History of the Brattle Street Church*.

### III. The Growth of Democracy in the Churches.

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**F**ROM the moment when the Puritan control of the church and state in New England was so far weakened as to permit of free intellectual and religious activity the democratic spirit began to manifest itself. The old régime had so fixed itself upon the people that the progress was slow, but none the less it was steady and sure. So far as the new spirit influenced doctrines, it was called Arminianism, the technical theological name for democracy in religion at this time.

#### **Arminianism.**

Arminianism is a dead issue at the present day, for the Calvinists have accepted all that it

taught when the name first came into vogue. Every kind of reaction from Calvinism in the New England of the first half of the eighteenth century took this designation, however; and to the Calvinists it was a word of disapproval and contempt. Toleration, free inquiry, the use of reason, democratic methods in church and state, were all named by this condemning word. Vices, social depravities, love of freedom and the world, assertion of personal independence, had the same designation. It is now difficult to understand how bitter was the feeling thus produced, how keen the hurt that was given the men who tried to defend themselves and their beliefs from this odium.

What the word "Arminian" legitimately meant, then, is what we now mean by liberalism. Primarily theological and doctrinal, it meant much more than the rejection of the doctrine of decrees and the autocratic sovereignty of God or the acceptance of the freedom of the will and the spiritual capacity of man. First of all,

it was faith in man; and then it was the assertion of human liberty and equality. In a theological sense it did not have so wide a purport, but in a practical and popular sense it grew into these meanings.

In order fully to comprehend what Arminianism was in the eighteenth century, the student must remember that it was the theological expression of the democratic spirit, as Calvinism was of the autocratic. The doctrine of the sovereignty of God is but the intellectual reflection of kingship and the belief that the king can do no evil. The doctrine of decrees, as taught by the Calvinist, was the spiritual side of the assertion of the divine right of kings. On the other hand, when the people claim the right to rule, they modify their theology into Arminianism. From an age of the absolute rule of the king comes the doctrine of human depravity; and with the establishment of democracy appears the doctrine of man's moral capacity.

## The Growth of Arminianism.

As early as 1730 Arminianism had come to have an influence sufficient to secure its condemnation and to awaken the fears of the stricter Calvinists. Jonathan Edwards said of the year 1734 that "about this time began the great noise that was in this part of the country about Arminianism."<sup>52</sup> At Northampton the leader of the opposition to Jonathan Edwards was an open Arminian, a grandson of Solomon Stoddard, and a cousin of Edwards. He was a young man of talent and education, and well read in theology. In a letter written in 1750, Edwards said, "There seems to be the utmost danger that the younger generation will be carried away with Arminianism as with a flood." In another letter of the same year he said that "Arminianism and Pelagianism<sup>53</sup> have made a strange progress within a few years."<sup>54</sup> In his farewell sermon, Edwards spoke of the

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52 Narrative of Surprising Conversions, edition of 1808, 13.

53 Denial of original sin, from Pelagius, an ascetic preacher of the fifth century.

54 Dwight, Life of Edwards, 307, 336, 410, 413.

prevalence of Arminianism when he settled in Northampton, and of its rapid increase in the succeeding years. He said that Arminian views were creeping into almost all parts of the land, and that they were making a progress unknown before.<sup>55</sup> In a letter of 1752 Edwards said that the principles of John Taylor, of Norwich, one of the early English Unitarians, were gaining many converts in the colonies. Taylor's works were made use of by Solomon Williams in his reply to Edwards on the qualifications necessary to communion.<sup>56</sup>

It was owing to the rapid growth of Arminianism that Edwards undertook his work on free will. In the preface to that work he said that "the term Calvinistic is, in these days, among most, a term of greater reproach than the term Arminian." That Edwards exaggerated the extent of this defection from Calvinism is probable, and yet it is very plain that it was

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<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 649.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 495.

this more liberal attitude of the Northampton church which caused his dismissal. What Stoddard had taught and practised was as yet powerful there, and Edwards's opposition to his grandfather's teachings undoubtedly led to the failure of his local work.

### **Robert Breck.**

The council which dismissed Edwards from Northampton decided against him by a majority of one; and that one vote may have been cast by Robert Breck, of Springfield. If this were the case, there was something of poetic justice in it; for only a few years earlier Edwards had used his influence against the settlement of Breck because the latter was an Arminian. In 1734 a fierce church quarrel took place in Springfield, that involved many of the ministers of Massachusetts and Connecticut, invoked the aid of the county court, and was finally settled by the legislature of Massachusetts,

when Mr. Breck was ordained.<sup>57</sup> He was charged with denying the authenticity of parts of the Bible, with discarding the necessity of Christ's satisfaction to divine justice for sin, with maintaining that the heathen who live up to the light of nature would be saved, and that the contrary doctrine was harsh. Breck refused to admit that he held these opinions, as thus stated; but he was regarded by many as an Arminian and a heretic. It was said of him that he would read any book, orthodox or otherwise, that would clear up a subject. That he departed to any considerable extent from the generally accepted faith of the time there is no evidence, but he was probably what was often called "a moderate Calvinist." He did not favor the methods of Whitefield, and he thoroughly distrusted the revival introduced by him. Soon after Breck's settlement the Springfield church followed the Brattle Street Church of Boston in discarding the relation of religious experiences

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57 Green, History of Springfield.

as preliminary to admission to the church. It voted that it "did not look upon the making a relation to be a necessary term of communion."<sup>58</sup> At the very time that Edwards was preaching of the awful fate of sinners in the hands of an angry God, Breck was teaching that God is good and loving, and that his salvation is freely open to all who may wish for it. It has been truly said of these two men that "one had the heart and the other the intellect of theology." With all his logic and power of thought and marvellous spiritual insight, Edwards failed at Northampton because of conditions beyond the control of his strenuous will. Robert Breck gained year by year in his personal influence in Springfield, his cheerful and progressive teaching made a deep impression on the community, and before he died he saw a great change for the better in the people for whom he diligently labored. Perhaps we could not have a plainer indication of the change that

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<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 255.

was going on than is found in the experiences of these two men.<sup>59</sup>

When Whitefield visited Harvard College in 1740, he was received in a most friendly manner; yet he afterwards criticised the teaching there on the ground that it was not sufficiently devout and earnest, and that the pupils were not examined as to their religious experiences.<sup>60</sup> These charges were denied by the president and tutors, and he was not again welcomed to the college.

That there was a substantial basis for some of Whitefield's criticisms of Harvard there can be no doubt. In 1737, when Edward Holyoke was proposed as a candidate for the presidency, he met with a strong opposition from the strict Calvinists. After the opposition had spent itself, he was elected unanimously; and this act was received with marked approval by the General

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59 E.H. Byington, *The Puritan in England and New England*, devotes a chapter to the controversy over Breck's settlement; but he does not treat of the theological problems involved.

60 Whitefield's *Seventh Journal*, 28.

Court, from which body his maintenance was obtained. President Quincy says of President Holyoke that his religious principles coincided with the mildness and catholicity which characterized the government of the college. This evidently refers to the growing liberality of the college, and its unwillingness to lend its aid to extreme theological opinions. That moderateness of temper and that attitude of toleration which characterized the leading men in England had shown themselves at Cambridge, and with a strength that could not be overcome. "In Boston and its vicinity and along the seaboard of Massachusetts, clergymen of great talent and religious zeal," says President Quincy, "openly avowed doctrines which were variously denounced by the Calvinistic party as Arminianism, Arianism, Pelagianism, Socinianism, and Deism. The most eminent of these clergymen were alumni of Harvard, active friends and advocates of the institution, and in habits of intimacy and professional

intercourse with its government. Their religious views, indeed, received no public countenance from the college; but circumstances gave color for reports, which were assiduously circulated throughout New England, that the influences of the institution were not unfavorable to the extension of such doctrines.”<sup>61</sup>

At the commencement of 1737 candidates for degrees proposed to prove that the doctrine of the Trinity was not contained in the Old Testament, that creation did not exist from eternity, and that religion is not mysterious in its nature. Much alarm was caused to the conservative party by the negative form given these questions, which, it was said, “had the plain face of Arianism.” This criticism the faculty tried to quiet, but their sympathies were evidently on the side of the graduates.<sup>62</sup> In 1738, when a professor of mathematics was chosen, it was proposed to examine him as to “his

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<sup>61</sup> History of Harvard University, 52.

<sup>62</sup> History of Harvard University, 23, 26.

principles of religion"; but, after a long debate, this proposition was rejected. After these and other efforts to control the religious position of the college the strict Calvinists for the time withdrew their efforts and concentrated them upon Yale College, in which institution the faculty were now required for the first time to accept the Assembly's Catechism and Confession of Faith.

When the legislature of Connecticut, during the great awakening, passed a law prohibiting ministers from preaching as itinerants, several of the members of the Senior Class subscribed the money necessary for the publication of an edition of Locke's essay *On Toleration*. When this was known to the faculty, they forbade the publication; and all the students apologized but one, who learned a few days before commencement that his name was to be dropped from the roll of graduates. He went to the faculty with the statement that he was of age, that he possessed ample means, and that

he would carry his case to a hearing before the crown in England. In a few days he was quietly informed that he would be permitted to graduate. This is but a straw, and yet it shows clearly enough the direction of the current at this time. A demand for toleration was made because it was felt that there was a need for it.

### **Books Read by Liberal Men.**

The names of no less than thirty-three ministers have been given who, during the period from 1730 to 1750, did not teach the Calvinistic doctrines in their fulness, and who had adopted more or less distinctly some form of Arminianism or Arianism. These men were among the best known, most successful, and most scholarly men in Eastern Massachusetts, though they were not wholly confined to that neighborhood. We find here and there some hint of the books these men read; and in that way we not only ascertain the cause of their departure from Calvinism, but we also obtain

some clew to the nature of their opinions. Among the charges brought by Whitefield against Harvard in 1740 was that "Tillotson and Clarke are read instead of Shepard and Stoddard, and such like evangelical writers."<sup>63</sup> Dr. Wigglesworth, the divinity professor at Harvard, said that Tillotson had not been taken out of the college library in nine years, and Clarke not in two; and he gave a long list of evangelical writers who were frequently read. In spite of this disclaimer, however, it is evident that the methods of the rationalistic writers were coming into vogue at Harvard, and that even Dr. Wigglesworth did not teach theology in the manner of the author of the Day of Doom.

Writing in 1759, Dr. Joseph Bellamy, one of the chief followers and expositors of the teachings of Jonathan Edwards, said that the teachings of the liberal men in England had crossed the Atlantic; "and too many in our churches, and even among our ministers, have fallen in

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<sup>63</sup> Whitefield's Journal, seventh part, 28.

with them. Books containing them have been imported; and the demand for them has been so great as to encourage new impressions of some of them. Others have been written on the same principles in this country, and even the doctrine of the Trinity has been publicly treated in such a manner as all who believe that doctrine must judge not only heretical, but highly blasphemous."<sup>64</sup>

It is said of Charles Chauncy, of the First Church in Boston, that his favorite authors were Tillotson and Baxter.<sup>65</sup> Far more suggestive is the account we have of the books read by Jonathan Mayhew of the West Church in Boston, the first open antagonist of Calvinism in New England. Soon after 1740 he was reading the works of the great Protestant theologians of the seventeenth century, including Milton, Chillingworth, and Tillotson; and the eighteenth-century works of Locke, Samuel Clarke, Taylor, Wollaston, and

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<sup>64</sup> Historical Magazine, new series, IX. 227, April, 1871.

<sup>65</sup> W.B. Sprague, Annals of the Unitarian Pulpit, II.

Whiston. He also probably read Cudworth, Butler, Hutcheson, Leland, and other authors of a like character, some of them deists. Not one of these writers was a Calvinist for they found the basis of religion either in idealism or in rationalism.

The biographer of Mayhew says it "is evident from some of his discourses that he was a great admirer of Samuel Clarke, whose voluminous works were in his day much read by the liberal clergy." Clarke's Boyle lectures, delivered in 1704-5, showed that natural and revealed religion were essentially one, that moral action in man is free, and that Christianity is the religion of reason and nature. At a later period he defended the two propositions, that "no article of Christian faith delivered in the holy Scriptures is disagreeable to right reason," and that "without liberty of human actions there can be no real religion or morality." Even if one such man as Jonathan Mayhew read Clarke's work in the Harvard Library, it justified the alarm felt

by Whitefield lest the students should be led away from their Calvinist faith.<sup>66</sup>

## **The Great Awakening.**

It was “the great awakening” that showed how marked had been the growth of liberal opinions throughout New England in the forty years preceding. Silently, a great change had gone on, with little open expression of dissent from Calvinism, and without a knowledge on the part of most of the liberal men that they had in any way departed from the faith of the fathers. It was only with the coming of Whitefield and the revival that this change came to have recognition, and that even the slightest separation into parties took place.

The revival was an attempt to reintroduce the stricter Calvinism of the earlier time, with

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<sup>66</sup> Levi L. Paine, *A Critical History of the Evolution of Trinitarianism*, 99. “Samuel Clarke and others took the ground that God is unipersonal, and hence that the Son is a distinct personal being, distinguishing God the Father as the absolute Deity from the Son whom they regarded as God in a relative or secondary sense, being derived from the Father, and having his beginning from Him.”

its doctrines of justification by faith alone, supernatural regeneration, and predestination made known to the believer by the Holy Ghost. The liberal party objected to the revival because it was opposed to the good old customs of the Congregational churches of New England. The itinerant methods of the revivalists, the shriekings, faintings, and appeals to fear and terror, were condemned as not in harmony with the established methods of the churches. In his book against the revivalists, Dr. Chauncy said that "now is the time when we are particularly called to stand for the good old way, and bear testimony against everything that may tend to cast a blemish on true primitive Christianity."<sup>67</sup>

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When the great awakening came to an end, the liberal party was far stronger than before, partly because the members of it had come to know each other and to feel their own power, partly because men had been led to declare themselves who had never before perceived

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67 Seasonable Thoughts, 337.

their own position, and partly because the agitation had set men to thinking, and to making such scrutiny of their beliefs as they had never made before. The testimonies of Harvard College and various associations of ministers against the methods of the revivalists were signed by sixty-three men, while those in favor of the revival were signed by one hundred and ten. These numbers represent the comparative strength of the two parties. It must be said, however, that the leading men in nearly every part of New England were among those opposing the revival methods, while in Eastern Massachusetts at least two-thirds of the ministers were of the liberal party.<sup>68</sup>

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68 Alden Bradford, in his *Memoir of the Life and Writings of Rev. Jonathan Mayhew, D.D.*, gives a list of "the clergymen who openly opposed or did not teach and advocate the Calvinistic doctrines" at the time of Mayhew's ordination, in 1747. These were: Dr. Appleton, Cambridge; Dr. Gay, Hingham; Dr. Chauncy, Boston; William Rand, Kingston; Nathaniel Eelles, Scituate; Edward Barnard, Haverhill; Samuel Cooke, West Cambridge (now Arlington); Jeremiah Fogg, Kensington, N.H.; Dr. A. Eliot, Boston; Dr. Samuel Webster, Salisbury; Lemuel Briant, Braintree; Dr. Stevens, Kittery, Me.; Dr. Tucker, Newbury; Timothy Harrington, Lancaster; Dr. Gad Hitchcock, Pembroke; Josiah Smith, Pembroke; William Smith, Weymouth; Dr. Daniel Shute, Hingham; Dr. Samuel Cooper, Boston; Dr. Mayhew, Boston; Abraham Williams, Sandwich; Anthony Wibird, Braintree (now Quincy); Dr. Cushing, Waltham; Professor Wigglesworth, Harvard College; Dr. Symmes, Andover; Dr. John Willard, Connecticut; Amos Adams,

The strong feeling caused by the revival soon subsided, and no division between the Calvinist and the Arminian parties took place. The progressive tendencies went quietly on, step by step the old beliefs were discarded; but it was by individuals, and not in any form as a sectarian movement. The relations of the church to the state at this time would have made such a result impossible.

### **Cardinal Beliefs of the Liberals.**

Looking over the whole field of the theological advance from 1725 to 1760, we find that three conclusions had been arrived at by the men of the liberal movement. The first of

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Roxbury; Dr. Barnes, Scituate; Charles Turner, Duxbury; Dr. Dana Wallingford, Conn.; Ebenezer Thayer, Hampton, N.H.; Dr. Fiske, Brookfield; Dr. Samuel West, Dartmouth (now New Bedford); Dr. Hemenway, Wells. Among those who took part in the ordination of Jonathan Mayhew, and therefore presumably of the same theological opinions, were Hancock, Lexington; Cotton, Newton; Cooke, Sudbury; Prescott, Danvers (now Salem). To these may be added, says Bradford, though of a somewhat later date: Dr. Coffin, Buxton; Drs. Howard, West, Lathrop, and Belknap, Boston; Dr. Henry Cummings, Billerica; Dr. Deane, Portland; Thomas Cary, Newburyport; Dr. Fobes, Raynham; Timothy Hilliard, Cambridge; Thomas Haven, Reading; Dr. Willard, Beverly. Dr. Ezra Ripley added the names of Hedge, of Warwick, and Foster, of Stafford. This makes fifty-two in all, but probably as many more could be added by careful search.

these was that what they stood for as a body was a recovery and restoration of primitive Christianity in its simplicity and power. It was said of Dr. Mayhew by his biographer that he "was a great advocate of primitive Christianity, and zealously contended for the faith once delivered to the saints."

The second opinion, to which they gave frequent utterance, was that the Bible is a divine revelation, the true source of all religious teaching, and the one sufficient creed for all men. In his sermon against the enthusiasm of the revivalists, Chauncy said that a true test of all religious excitement, and of every kind of new teachings, was to be found in their "regard to the Bible, and its acknowledgment that the things therein contained are the commandments of God." "Keep close to the Scripture," was his admonition to his congregation, "and admit of nothing for an impression of the spirit but what agrees with that unerring rule. Fix it in your minds as a truth you will invariably abide

by, that the Bible is the grand test by which everything in religion is to be tried."

The third position of the men of the liberal movement was that Christ is the only means of salvation, and they yielded to him unquestioning loyalty and faith. Turning away from the creeds of men, as they did in so far as they could see their way, they concentrated their convictions upon Christ, and found in him the spiritual and vital centre of all faith that lives with true power to help men. Mayhew held that God could not have forgiven men their sins without the atonement of Christ, for his life and his gospel are the means of the great reconciliation by which man and God are brought into harmony with each other.

### **Publications defining the Liberal Beliefs.**

In three publications may be seen what the Arminians had to teach that was opposed to Calvinism. In 1744 appeared in Boston a book of two hundred and eight pages by Rev.

Experience Mayhew, one of a devoted family of missionaries to the Indians of Martha's Vineyard. He called his book "Grace Defended, in a Modest Plea for an important Truth: namely, that the offer of Salvation made to sinners comprises in it an offer of the Grace given in Regeneration." Mr. Mayhew claimed that he was a Calvinist, yet he rejected the teaching that every act of the unregenerate person is equal in the sight of God to the worst sin, and claimed that even the sinner can live so well and so justly as to favor his being accepted of God. Mayhew maintained that Christ died for all men, not for the elect only.<sup>69</sup> He claimed that "God cannot be truly said to offer salvation to sinners without offering to them whatsoever is necessary on his part, in order to their salvation."<sup>70</sup> Mayhew was usually credited with being an Arminian; for he positively rejected the doctrine of election,

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69 Grace Defended, 43.

70 Ibid., 60.

and he defended the principle of human freedom in the most affirmative manner.

In 1749 Lemuel Briant (or Bryant), the minister in that part of Braintree which became the town of Quincy, published a sermon which he entitled *The Absurdity and Blasphemy of Depreciating Moral Virtue*. It condemned reliance on Christ's merits without effort to live his life, and showed that it is the duty of the Christian to live righteously. Briant said that to hold any other view was hurtful and blasphemous. He claimed that "the great rule the Scriptures lay down for men to go by in passing judgment on their spiritual state is the sincere, upright, steady, and universal practice of virtue." "To preach up chiefly what Christ himself laid the stress upon (and whether this was not moral virtue let every one judge from his discourses) must certainly, in the opinion of all sober men, be called truly and properly, and in the best sense, preaching of Christ."

A pamphlet of thirty pages appeared in 1757, written by Samuel Webster, the minister of Salisbury, with the title "A Winter Evening's Conversation upon the doctrine of Original Sin, wherein the notion of our having sinned in Adam, and being on that account only liable to eternal Damnation, is proved to be Unscriptural." It is in the form of a dialogue between a minister and three of his parishioners, and gives, as few other writings of the eighteenth century do, a clear and explicit statement of the author's opinions in a readable and interesting form. That all have sinned in Adam the minister pronounces "a very shocking doctrine." "What! make them first to open their eyes in torment, and all this for a sin which certainly they had no hand in,—a sin which, if it comes upon them at all, certainly is without any fault or blame on their parts, for they had no hand in receiving it!" That Adam is our federal head, and that we sinned because he sinned, he calls "a mere castle in the air." "Sin and guilt are personal things as

much as knowledge. I can as easily conceive of one man's knowledge being imputed to another as of his sins being so. No imputation in either case can make the thing to be mine which is not mine any more than one person may be another person." He declares that this doctrine of imputation causes infidelity. "It naturally leads men into every dishonorable thought of God which gives a great and general blow to religion." It impeaches the holiness of God, "for it supposes him to make millions sinners by his decree of imputation, who would otherwise have been innocent." That it was his decree alone "that made all Adam's posterity sinners is the very essence of this doctrine." "And so Christians are guilty of holding what even heathen would blush at." That God "should pronounce a sentence by which myriads of infants, as blameless as helpless, were consigned over to blackness of darkness to be tormented with fire and brimstone forever, is not consistent with infinite goodness."

“How dreadfully is God dishonored by such monstrous representations as these!” Such a being cannot be loved by us, for every heart rebels against it. “All descriptions of the Divine Being which represent him in an unamiable light do the greatest hurt to religion that can be, as they strike at love, which is the fulfilling of the law. I am persuaded that many of those who think they believe this doctrine do not really believe it, or else they do not consider how it represents their heavenly Father.” The pamphlet concludes with the acceptance of this broader teaching by the parishioners, but it was the cause of controversy in pulpits and by means of pamphlets. Bellamy denied the teachings of Webster, and Chauncy defended them. So bold a pamphlet as this showed how men had come to reason without compromise about the old doctrines, and gave evidence that the growing spirit of humanity would no longer accept what was harsh and cruel.

## Phases of Religious Progress.

The New England churches were thus not standing still as regards doctrines, moral conduct, the methods of worship, or the relations they held to the state; but step by step they were moving away from the methods and the ideas of the fathers. The "lining out" of hymns was slowly abandoned, and singing by note took its place. The agitation that followed this attempt at reform was great and widespread. The introduction of an organized and trained choir was also in the nature of a genuine reform. When the liberal Thomas Brattle offered an organ to the new church in Brattle Street, it was voted "that they do not think it proper to use the same in the public worship of God." The instrument was, however, accepted by King's Chapel; and an organist was secured from London. It was not until 1770 that the church in Providence procured an organ, the first used in a Congregational church in New England.

When Dr. Jonathan Mayhew died, in 1766, Dr. Chauncy prayed at his funeral; and this was said to have been the first prayer ever made at a funeral in Boston, so strong was the Puritan dislike of the customs of the Catholic Church.<sup>71</sup> In this way, as well as in others, the new liberalism broke down the old customs, and introduced those with which we are familiar. Perhaps the most marked tendency of this kind was the introduction of the reading of the Bible into the services of the churches as a part of the order of worship. This innovation was distinctly due to the liberal men and the high esteem in which they held the Scriptures as a means of giving sobriety and reasonableness to their religion. The First Church in Boston, in May, 1730, voted that the reading of the Scriptures, instead of the old Puritan way of expounding them, be thereafter discretionary with the ministers of that church, but "that the mind of the church

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<sup>71</sup> Alice Morse Earle, *Customs and Fashions in Old New England*, 364, 367. See H.M. Dexter, *Congregationalism as seen in its Literature*, 458.

is that larger portions should be publicly read than has been used.”<sup>72</sup> As we have seen, the Brattle Street Church had already led in this reform, having adopted this practice in 1699. This custom of reading the Bible as a part of the service of worship came slowly into general acceptance, for there was a strong feeling against it. When a Bible was presented to the parish in Mendon, in 1767, a serious commotion resulted because of the strong feeling against the Church of England then prevalent; and the donor gave it to the minister until such time as the church might wish to use it. It was as late as 1785 that a copy of the Bible was given to the First Church in Dedham, with the request that the reading of it should be made a part of the exercises of the Lord’s day; and the parish instructed the minister to read such portions of it as he thought “most desirable” and of “such length as the several seasons of the year and other circumstances” might render proper. In

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72 A.B. Ellis, *History of the First Church in Boston*, 199.

the West Church of Medway it was not until 1806 that this practice was established, and two of the Salem churches began it the same year. The reading of the Bible at ordination services did not become customary until an even later date.<sup>73</sup>

Such are some of the practical innovations which accompanied the doctrinal development that was taking place. Liberality in one direction brought toleration and progress in others. Some of these changes were due to the fact that the prejudices against the Catholic Church and the Church of England had, in a measure, disappeared, because there was nothing to keep them alive. Others were due to the intellectual influences that came into the colonies from England. Still others resulted from the shifting relations of church and state, and were the effect of attempts to adjust those relations more satisfactorily.

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