New England Theology

By Frank Hugh Foster

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I. Definition and Characterization

New England theology, in the technical sense of these words, designates a special school of theology which grew up among the Congregationalists of New England, originating in the year 1734, when Jonathan Edwards began his constructive theological work, culminating a little before the Civil War, declining afterwards, and rapidly disappearing after the year 1880. During this period it had become the dominant school among Congregationalists, had led to a division among Presbyterians, resulting in the creation of a new denomination, the New School Presbyterian (1838-69), had founded all the theological seminaries of the Congregationalists and several of the Presbyterians, had furnished the vital forces from which had sprung the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, had established a series of colleges from Amherst in the East to Pacific University in the West, and led in a great variety of practical efforts for the extension of the kingdom of Christ. It may be formally defined as the Calvinism of Westminster and Dort modified by a more ethical conception of God, by a new emphasis upon the liberty, ability, and responsibility of man, by the restriction of moral quality to action in distinction from nature, and by the theory that the constitutive principle of virtue is benevolence. This article sketches its history genetically, details as to the individual men being remitted to the special articles upon them.

II. Preliminary Conditions

The Period of Settlement in America, 1620-69. The emigrants to New England were, in England, Calvinistic Puritans. In Holland, John Robinson had come in contact with the Arminians, and had taken sides against them. Arminianism was a recoil from the extreme positions of a scholastic Calvinism, but as it had no better psychology or philosophy by which to establish its objections than Calvinism had developed, it was unable to obtain the general assent of minds of the first rank which had been thoroughly trained in the old system. At a disputation which was held in the University of Leyden in 1613, Robinson had appeared for the Calvinistic party, and subsequently published a *Defence of the Doctrine Propounded by the Synod of Dort* (Leyden, 1624). Two years after the Westminster Confession had been prepared in England it was adopted in New England (1648) as the general theological standard of the new churches.…

But meantime this Westminster theology of the New England Fathers was working out its natural results. It was characteristic of Calvinism to lay so much stress upon the sovereignty of God as to neglect the freedom

of man. The tone of mind in New England was unphilosophic. The sovereignty of God was the great doctrine of theology in the popular estimation. Man was abased that God might be exalted; and hence the common preaching dwelt so much upon man's helplessness that the function of the pulpit to rouse the people to repentance and the exercise of vigorous faith was suspended, if not destroyed. Man's activity was so lost sight of in the contemplation of God's agency that faith was represented as something to be waited for as a mysterious gift from on high. It could not be understood as primarily an act of the will, for the will itself had not been separated from the other faculties of the mind so that theology could ascribe to it any independent activities. As was natural, a paralysis spread over the churches. Conversions were rare, and the second generation of New England was largely unconverted, and even failed to bring their children to baptism. The results were alarm and that effort to remedy the evil by outward means which was the first event with which the next period opens, the "Half-Way Covenant"; but the effort was vain.

The Period of Decline, 1660-1726. The religious paralysis continued, degeneration of the public character followed, indifference to religion increased, and immorality began to abound. Things grew so bad that in 1679 a "Reforming Synod" was called in Boston. The account given by the synod of the state of morals is so dark that some exaggeration must be suspected. But the positive sins mentioned, the increase of profanity, intemperance, and licentiousness, show that there was rising about the Church a community which the Church was not making its own. The causes of this decline were not all theological, for the roughness of frontier life, the perils and losses of the Indian wars, the deprivation of the privileges of education which the fathers had enjoyed in England, and even the effect in the new country of such untoward events in the old as the restoration of the Stuarts, are to be considered. But the theological currents of the times had contributed their part.

Latitudinarianism and … Arminianism … helped to loosen the hold of conviction upon the minds of men, producing a state of indecision and inactivity, accompanied by some new sense of the dignity of human nature, without performing any deep and thorough work of theological reconstruction. The tide soon set toward Arminianism; the Arminian theories were more or less accepted; the doctrine of the new birth which, in the forms of a theology of dependence upon a sovereign God, was inconsistent with the new feeling of freedom which was stirring in the thought of the times, was forgotten or denied; under the operation of the Half-Way Covenant and the theory of Solomon Stoddard that the communion should be opened to unbelievers as a converting ordinance, vital piety was neglected for an outward piety of good works; and thus not only the Calvinistic theology, but even the religious life of New England was endangered. An Increase Mather might still be found to preach powerful revival sermons and to protest against destructive innovations, but protest was rare and ineffectual. New England was in a bad way. The Puritan experiment of founding a pure

church to sustain and extend vital piety and pure doctrine from generation to generation was near utter failure. Who would or could save it?

III. The Founders—1. Jonathan Edwards the Elder

His Fundamental Position. By birth and early training belonging to the strictest circles of the old theology, and by nature and religious experience inclined to the heartiest acceptance of the great central doctrine of Calvinism, the sovereignty of God, Jonathan Edwards the Elder was essentially a defender of the old, with little sympathetic appreciation of the new thought which was struggling for expression. Much less was his work a new movement, beginning at a new point, and producing a theology which by its very radicalness was able to replace the old with something destined to mark one of the great advances of the human spirit. The times were not ripe for any such work.…

Edwards accordingly set himself, first for his own people, and then for the community at large, to the task of overcoming Arminianism, and he performed it by presenting the old theology afresh, but in such a form as he believed would carry the assent of his generation. He formed the distinct purpose of proving every proposition he advanced with so cogent logic that every consistent thinker should be compelled to accept it. His premises were Scriptural, but his method was purely rational, however it may seem now and then to clothe itself in the form of consecutive interpretation; and by this he introduced a new force into American theology. It was to prove at last more powerful than any other element of this theology. He began his work by preaching that series of sermons upon justification by faith which led to his first revival in 1734. It may be said that there is nothing new in these sermons. They present the old doctrine in the old formulas, but with the intensity of a man who had an independent grasp upon the thought he was urging. But there was something in the earnestness of the preacher, something in his exaltation of the work of Christ, which evoked action, and thus introduced a new element into the religious life of New England. It became natural to look for conversion as the result of preaching, and so the doctrine of the new birth was reintroduced into New England as a living idea, and soon became a controlling theological principle. By logical necessity the next step was the re-erection of the fact of the new birth as the indispensable condition of church-membership, the original peculiarity of the New England churches. Edwards took it, and it led to his dismissal from his parish.

His Doctrine of the Will. In the retirement of Stockbridge the work went on. Driven now by a mental necessity, he went into a more fundamental refutation of Arminianism. He attacked it in his most famous treatise, that upon the *Freedom of the Will.* The book is not that of an investigator, or even that of an impartial judge. It is the work of an advocate. Edwards was firmly fixed upon the basis of the Calvinistic doctrine of the divine sovereignty, which he viewed as a doctrine not only glorious

but unspeakably sweet and precious. He perceived the necessity of philosophical determinism to that conception of the divine government which he had formed, and it was, therefore, determinism which he embraced and advocated. He believed the Arminian position to be thoroughly opposed to that sound philosophy which everybody accepted and which was already before the world in the works of John Locke. All that was necessary to banish it from the earth was elaborately to exhibit this fact. He did not condescend to notice Locke's own suggestion of a threefold division of the mind, whereby the will obtained a separation from the other faculties which seemed to suggest its independent operation. He reverted to the standard twofold division which had come down from Calvin, and, simply taking Locke's theory, as it was presented in the *Essay concerning Human Understanding,* without the addition of a single important element or even argument, he set it forth in contrast with Arminianism, and exposed Arminianism in the light of it, till for himself and the majority of his age there was no reply to be made.

Indeed, grant him his postulate, and there is no answer. This postulate is that the law of causation reigns in the intellectual world as completely as it does in the natural. There can be no such thing as an uncaused event. Hence the will is moved by causes, and these are the motives which operate upon it. The will always is as the greatest apparent good. Freedom consists in the power to do what the will has chosen. There is no liberty of the will apart from this. The self-determination of the Arminians is an impossible hypothesis. A self-determined volition is an uncaused event, an impossibility, or it is caused by some previous action of the will. But if a previous action of the will determining it is necessary to constitute it free, then an action still previous is necessary to make that act free, or else it, being unfree, can not give rise to a free act, and so on ad infinitum. This is his reduction of his adversaries' position to absurdity, repeatedly employed in his work.

The Arminians were more nearly correct upon the main point than Edwards was; and yet they had so mingled their real advance with errors of excess in the direction of other anthropological doctrines that they seemed as much to ignore the agency of God in man's religious life as the Calvinists ignored that of man. In spite of his main position, which would have reduced man to a mere machine, Edwards gave to him a real activity, and laid great emphasis upon the fact that moral agency consists in choosing. He also introduced a distinction between natural and moral ability, which, though fallacious, as he stated it, was seized upon by his successors and made the basis of effective preaching. But, faulty as was the book in these respects, it was a marvel of acuteness in dialectic. So thorough-going and minute discussion of this theme had never yet been had. It made the greatest sensation in the literary world and remains to this day the main support of Edwards' literary fame as one of the greatest of Americans.

Original Sin and Virtue. But Edwards' strictly theological work did not stop here. In his treatise upon *Original Sin* he advanced a step by laying

down the principle that all sin is voluntary. In this book he becomes the investigator and innovator. However defective his definition of the word *voluntary* might be, sin consisted in choosing and choosing wrongly. While retaining the doctrine of original sin, and thus of man's connection with Adam, he thought it necessary to explain it in such a way as to give room for this new principle, which he did by substituting mediate for immediate imputation, teaching that we must consent to Adam's sin by voluntarily sinning before his sin can be imputed to us. This idea went down to his successors, as well as the idea of connection with Adam by a "divine constitution," under which idea Edwards taught a certain identity of all men with Adam, spending some energy upon a discussion of personal identity and the possibility of embracing Adam and his descendants in such identity. This treatise is, then, no mere piece of reaction. Edwards learns as he writes. What he opposes are for the most part real errors. He says nothing about other principles of Taylor's (whose work he is reviewing) which were later to form a large part of the working materials of the school. And he has put the theology more markedly upon an ethical basis by making corruption of nature an ethical corruption, consisting principally in deprivation of the presence of the Holy Spirit—nothing physical, nothing merely mysterious.

The greatest constructive work of Edwards' life, however, was done in a little treatise, commonly left unmentioned, the *Nature of Virtue*, in which he arrives at the principle that benevolence is the constitutive element of true virtue. The idea is not original with him, but is derived from Hutcheson and Cumberland. But Edwards rises at once upon a plane of rational intuition upon which his predecessors had no footing. Indeed, he does not so much prove his position as unfold it. And thus beginning with the idea of harmony, which is the ideal condition of the universe, he proceeds at once to bring the idea of virtue into connection with it; and when that connection is established, his work is done. Virtue, he teaches, is something beautiful, or some kind of beauty. It is a moral kind of beauty, one belonging to the disposition and will. Nor is it any "particular" beauty, or beauty in a limited sphere, but one which is still beautiful when viewed in the most comprehensive manner. Now, "beauty does not consist in discord and dissent, but in consent and agreement; and if every intelligent being is in some way related to being in general, and is a part of the universal system of existence, and so stands in connection with the whole, what can its general and true beauty be but its union and consent with the great whole?"

That is substantially the whole argument. Virtue is beauty, and beauty is harmony. Virtue, then, is harmony, or the choice of harmony. It is agreement to being, or consent to being. This being is general being, and hence virtue is love to being in general, or disinterested benevolence. A volition is virtuous when it is the exemplification of such benevolence; an act is virtuous when it rests upon the motive of love. Both Edwards and his school thought their conception to be identical with that of Jesus when he said that the whole law hung on the two commandments, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart; and thy neighbor as thyself. This

theory is the central root from which grew most that was distinctive of New England theology, and may be said to be that theology in germ; and yet its importance was not perceived by its originator, nor did he make any recognizable application of it to the system.

Thus Edwards revivified the doctrine of the new birth, introduced the work upon the theory of the will which was to occupy so much of the strength of his successors, made one application of it in the way of an improvement in the doctrine of imputation, and propounded the theory of virtue. These were his contributions of material to the New England school: but his theological work was far wider than this. Through his personal contact with a number of young minds in their formative period he did much to instill his spirit, the spirit of unfettered, rational inquiry, into the next generation of ministers, and to form a "school." Among those who resorted to his house to study theology with him for a longer or a shorter time were especially two, who remained his intimate friends and advisers throughout his life, Joseph Bellamy and Samuel Hopkins.

2 . Edwards' Successors, Bellamy and Hopkins

Bellamy fully adopted Edwards' theory of virtue, and made extensive applications of it in his principal work, *True Religion Delineated* (Boston, 1750). This work defines religion as consisting in conformity to the law of God and compliance with the Gospel of Christ. The law is fulfilled by love. Under the Gospel, Bellamy considers the principal points of theology, and here the effects of Edwards' influence begin to appear. Ability is emphasized, and men are exhorted to immediate repentance, as a thing wholly within their powers. Their inability is recognized, but it is an inability arising from a want of a good disposition, and therefore culpable. "The more unable to love God we are," he says, "the more are we to blame." Under original sin he says that "our corruptions" are "free, spontaneous inclinations." Election is founded upon God's goodness.

In the doctrine of the atonement, Bellamy made the transition for the school from the Calvinistic theory that the sufferings of Christ were a satisfaction to justice, rendered to God as the offended party, to the Grotian theory that they are a penal example, and that God in this matter is to be considered as a moral governor. He performed a very great service also in discussing the *Wisdom of God in the Permission of Sin* (1758), justifying it on the ground that evil is the necessary means of the greatest good. And, above all, he so preached the Gospel, under the influence of the new conceptions, as to stir men powerfully to spiritual activity, and to do much to enlarge the influence of the revivals which had begun under Edwards.

Hopkins began his career in a storm of opposition called out by his adherence to high Calvinism. His first published work was entitled *Sin through the Divine Interposition an Advantage to the Universe* (1759). The title was enough for most readers. It occupied substantially the position of Bellamy. More serious was the opposition to his views upon conversion and

regeneration. Over against this new theology of the new birth was a tendency which sought to win men to God by presenting something less radical than an entire, immediate, and voluntary surrender to God as the condition of the divine acceptance.… [Hopkins expressed his views in] the *Inquiry into the Nature of True Holiness* (1773), which presented the theory of Edwards, but in an original way, and modified it by making all sin to consist in selfishness, as all holiness in benevolence.

By all this work Hopkins was finally brought to the preparation of his *System* (1793). It was the first system of theology prepared in New England which could be called original; but it followed quite strictly the conventional selection and arrangement of topics. The modifying elements are Edwardsean, that moral agency consists in choice, that man possesses true ability to repent, that love is the essence of virtue. Hopkins advances upon Edwards in the emphasis which he lays upon the real freedom of man. He grounds his doctrine of the divine decrees distinctly upon the divine love. He defends the freedom of men under the decree by asserting that the decree includes freedom, though he does not say how. He really fails to deliver himself from the supralapsarianism of his predecessors. The doctrine of sin he improves by teaching that "there is, strictly speaking, no other sin but actual sin." And upon the atonement, he teaches the Grotian theory distinctly as to what is accomplished by the sufferings of Christ, but holds that there is another part of Christ's work, which he accomplished by his obedience. This is, however, not imputed to believers, as in the old theology, but by a merit of congruity Christ procures the gift of the Holy Spirit for believers, by whom they are sanctified and made meet to receive eternal life. Thus the new ideas have begun to work; and thus there has appeared before the second century of American life has closed a system which, for comprehensiveness, thoroughness, high tone, power of reasoning, independence, ethical and spiritual value, and solid contributions to the advancing school, deserves to be called a great work.

IV. The Development—1. The Younger Edwards to Samuel Harris

The Doctrine of the Atonement. Up to this point the new theology had been wrought out by patient thinkers in the retirement of quiet studies, but their results had commonly been produced in reply to some distinct call, some error which had arisen, some need which had been felt. This continued to be the case; and the development of the school was always conditioned by controversy. The doctrine of the atonement was no exception. There arrived in America in 1770 an English Universalist, John Murray, who began to advocate universal salvation upon the basis of the theory of James Relly, of London, which he called "union." It was nothing but the old Calvinism of satisfaction and imputation plus the proposition that Christ died for all. Relly concluded that Christ's merits were imputed to all, and therefore that all were saved. This conclusion could not be accepted by the New England divines. Their views upon the subject of the future had been settled by long consideration. But the logic of the Universalist

argument was good, and hence the trouble must lie in the premises. It could not lie in the proposition that Christ died for all. Bellamy had shown this. It must therefore lie in the proposition that Christ's merits are imputed to us. The Grotian theory of the atonement had already been introduced into the New England thinking on account of its closer agreement with the theory of virtue, and the idea was already familiar that God does not act in the matter of sin as the offended party, chiefly concerned in the satisfaction of his own attribute of justice, and that the sufferings of Christ are not the payment of the sinners' debt but a penal example, opening the way for the free exercise of God's merciful love of men.

Following this suggestion, a group of thinkers … set forth almost simultaneously the New England theory of the atonement as the answer of New England to Universalism. Jonathan Edwards the Younger was the chief of these, and his sermons at New Haven in 1785 are to be regarded as its first adequate presentation. As presented by Grotius, the theory was legal in its forms and without the ideal side. That ideal was given by the Edwardsean theory of virtue. God's government rests upon his character, and that character is love. Love puts men under a moral government, and controls them by motives. It prescribes just penalties for disobedience; but these will not be exacted simply because God is just. There is no virtue in an act of justice apart from love. Hence God will act from love—that is, from a regard for the general good of the universe. His character must be shielded, his law maintained, because love to men demands all this. But if this can be done, authority maintained, sinners forgiven, and yet no moral influence exerted thereby upon the sinner calculated to result in his hurt, love demands that it shall be done. All this is actually effected by setting forth Christ as a penal example. Thus public justice, or love, is satisfied by the atonement, but distributive justice not; and it is rendered consistent with the good of the universe to forgive repentant sinners, but the debt of man is not paid nor are the merits of Christ imputed to him. Thus the major proposition of the Rellyan argument is taken away.

From this time on the words "moral government" are found on many a page of the New England writers.…

Regeneration. From the time of Edwards the doctrine of regeneration had excited continual attention. It was the doctrine of the most immediate practical importance. The doctrine of the will was fundamental hence, the subject of the will and particularly Edwards' great work, was subjected to long study, and passed through a development of great interest to the thinker, and of fateful significance for the school itself.…

[Various works challenged Edwards' ideas, one of which was by Stephen West.] This work was replied to by the younger Edwards in a *Dissertation concerning Liberty and Necessity* (1797). He comes stoutly to the defense of his father, though modifying the position of motives, making them occasions rather than causes of the action of the will. His favorite method of reply is to show that West really meant, and often said,

just what Edwards said. Fundamentally it is rather a verbal than a material answer. He follows Stephen West in making God the cause of men's volitions, and then banishes true efficient causation not only from the finite world but also from the universe, saying that God "is no more the efficient cause of his own volitions than of his own existence."

Thus the tendency of New England theology was still to exalt the agency of God at the expense of that of man. Nathanael Emmons closed this branch of the development and expressed the dependence of man in the extremest forms. God creates our volitions. But in Emmons the other tendency, which was found in Bellamy and Hopkins, also reappears, and the freedom of man is asserted with the most unflinching disdain of apparent inconsistency. Men are as free as if God did not act in their volitions. If their volitions are created, they are created free.

But at this point of paradox and contradiction there appeared a book which was finally to reverse the current and set the Edwardsean school upon the road to a doctrine of true freedom, Asa Burton's *Essays on Some of the First Principles of Metaphysicks* (Portland, 1824).… The "taste," as Burton calls the sensibility, is entirely separated from the will, the two faculties being completely distinct; but for the sake of preserving the same certainty for which Edwards labored, and which was supposed to be necessary to the divine sovereignty, an "infallible connection" is declared to have been established by God between the taste and volition. The action of the taste is necessary. It is the "spring of action in all moral agents," and operates as the cause of volitions. Burton leaves man in the toils of Edwards' necessity. He has corrected one by one the minor errors of his predecessors—of Hopkins that freedom consists in voluntariness, of Emmons that the mind is a chain of exercises, and that volitions are created by God. He has distinguished between the kind of necessity with which the intellect operates, and that by which the will is determined.

But he has not given a true freedom. This work was performed by Nathaniel William Taylor, who had come under the influence of the Scotch school and seized upon the new division of the mind as giving a neutral point in humanity, not corrupted by original sin, to which the Gospel could appeal. He made man the efficient, though not the sole efficient, agent of his own actions. In possessing agency, man has a "power to the contrary," or capacity of alternate choice. Motives have influence but not causative power to produce volitions. But the certainty of future moral events is not relinquished, though left unexplained. Charles Grandison Finney and James Harris Fairchild, at Oberlin, cleared this position of some unnecessary complications. And Samuel Harris, the Sir William Hamilton of the school, brought this development to its highest point by defining the will as the power of a person "to determine the end or objects to which he will direct his energy and the exertion of his energy with reference to the determined end or object." Man "has the power of self-direction, self-exertion, and self-restraint." He distinguishes between

choice as self-direction and volition as self-exertion and self-restraint. And, upon the basis of consciousness, criticism, and history, he affirms that "freedom is inherent in rationality." Edwards was wrong, he says, in considering the will from the point of view of efficient causation and forgetting that it might be exercised (in choice) prior to all causation.

2. The Great Controversies

The Universalist Controversy. The first of these to take a distinct form was the Universalist, beginning, as already said, with John Murray in 1770. Other leaders followed him, some of whom came from the Congregational such as Huntington, whose posthumous *Calvinism Improved* was entirely upon the basis of Relly, and Charles Chauncy, who published a *Salvation of All Men* (1782). The general reply to Rellyanism was the theory of the atonement, as explained above. But elaborate replies to these and other Universalist publications were made by John Smalley, the younger Edwards, and others. After a time whatever danger there may have been that Universalism would invade the Congregational ranks passed by, and the interest of divines in this discussion slackened, as another occupied their attention more and more.…

The Unitarian Controversy. But this controversy, interesting as it is in itself, was of little importance in comparison with the Unitarian controversy. This has its roots in the early divergence to Arminianism against which Edwards set himself. Successful as he was in recalling the majority of the ministers and churches back to Calvinism, there were circles in which the *Freedom of the Will* was regarded with great objection from the first. In view of the development of the Edwardsean school itself toward a doctrine of more genuine freedom, it may be said that Edwards made a great theological blunder when, for the sake of avoiding certain unevangelical concomitants of self-determinism, he turned his back upon so plain and simple a truth as freedom. He missed the opportunity of carrying New England forward in a common movement to a better theology, and founded a school instead of guiding a church. Many of the Edwardsean ideas were accepted by theologians who would not suffer the name of Edwardsean to be applied to them. This was particularly true of the theory of virtue. And when Arminianism began to turn in the direction of Unitarianism in New England, Edwards and his successors had for a long time nothing really helpful to say. They do not seem to have understood the issue presented, though that issue was clearly enough put in the first book of a Unitarian sort which obtained any influence in America, Thomas Emlyn's *Humble Inquiry into the Scripture Account of Jesus Christ* (5th ed., Boston, 1756). Was the theory of two natures in the one person of Christ correct? Was it so managed as to meet the difficulties raised by the evident limitations laid upon the attributes of Christ? Calvinism had been open from the time of Calvin down to the charge of substantial Nestorianism, for it had never been able to do more than assert the Chalcedon doctrine of the unity of Christ's person, and had treated the divinity and humanity in such a way as to render

any true unity impossible. The old theology was now summoned either to justify its exegesis by a satisfactory rationale, or surrender its doctrine of Christology and the Trinity.

The Unitarian Position and the Answer. This issue was not at all met in New England. Half a century after the appearance of the book on this side of the water, Henry Ware, believed to be a Unitarian, was made Hollis professor of divinity in Harvard College (1805). But during this period Unitarianism was progressing by private reflection and study, not by open controversy. The public debate began after 1815 when the large departure from the old theology became known, and after 1819, in particular, when William Ellery Channing preached his Baltimore sermon on "Unitarian Christianity." On the orthodox side the debate was carried on by Moses Stuart and Leonard Woods, professors at Andover Seminary, and closed by Nathaniel William Taylor. On the Unitarian side, Ware and Norton came to Channing's support. Among lesser men the controversy spread over a large territory and a long time.

But the Unitarian argument was completely stated by Channing. He said, "According to this [Trinitarian] doctrine, there are three infinite and equal persons, possessing supreme divinity, called the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. They love each other, converse with each other, and delight in each other's society. They perform different parts in man's redemption, each having his appropriate office, and neither doing the work of the other. Here, then, we have three intelligent agents, possessed of different consciousnesses, different wills, and different perceptions, performing different acts, and sustaining different relations; and if these things do not imply and constitute three minds or beings, we are utterly at a loss to know how three minds or beings are formed." Of the nature of Christ he said: "According to this doctrine, Jesus Christ, instead of being one mind, one conscious, intelligent principle, whom we can understand, consists of two souls, two minds; the one divine, the other human; the one weak, the other almighty; the one ignorant, the other omniscient. Now we maintain that this is to make Christ two beings." Thus was again set forth the rational issue exactly as Emlyn had done.

Stuart's reply sought, first, to remove certain misunderstandings, and make certain qualifications. In these he himself left the orthodox ground of his time and approached Channing. He dropped the separation of functions of Father and Son to which Channing objected, rejected the "eternal son-ship" of Christ, gave up the word "person," and reduced the Trinity to an otherwise undefined eternal "distinction " in the divine nature. He did nothing to clear up the doctrine of the person of Christ. The weight of his argument was, however, exegetical; and here in the estimation even of a Unitarian critic (Ellis) he proved his main point, that the doctrine of the true deity of Christ is the doctrine of the New Testament. The contest was a drawn battle. The Unitarians made a demand for a rationale which the orthodox did not meet, although they substantially taught that whatever was

Biblical was rational. Not to meet the demand was, therefore, in a measure to fail. The orthodox made a Biblical argument which the Unitarians could not invalidate, although they were bound, by their own adherence to the inspiration of the Scriptures, to show that their new positions were the true meaning of the Bible. The orthodox were still maintaining the principle of Biblical authority in theology, and their thinking was being lamed by it, unconsciously to themselves. The Unitarians had already substantially passed over upon the ground of pure rationalism, but were hampered by their supposed adherence to the inspiration of the Scriptures. The time had not come on either side for complete clearness of thought.

The Separation of the Unitarians. Yet the antagonists had come so near to one another in respect to the Trinity and Christology that one questions why they did not come nearer. The answer is to be seen in the further development of the controversy, particularly in the writings of Ware and Woods. The difference between the two parties lay deeper than has yet appeared. The Unitarians were full of the thought of the dignity of human nature, and they greatly softened the idea of sin and guilt. They were thus out of sympathy with the spiritual and experiential attitude of the orthodox, with their practices of worship and service, with revivals and missionary efforts. They were religiously sterile and cold. In fact these defects had appeared long since, for in the time of Edwards the same religious community out of which Unitarianism ultimately sprung had opposed the revivals; and when James Freeman carried King's Chapel in Boston (1785) over to Unitarianism, a certain detachment from the sterner and sadder realities of life marked the new preaching. What theoretical dogmatics might not have been able to do, difference of tone and estrangement of sympathies effectually accomplished, and the two parties separated in church fellowship as well as theology, and a new denomination was produced. The result is the stranger since the Unitarians were, after all, children of the same theological home as the Trinitarians, had as generally adopted the distinguishing feature of the Edwardsean school, the principle of benevolence, as their opponents, and emphasized many of the cardinal maxims of the other tendency, even anticipating sometimes results to which the Edwardseans were finally to come.

V. The Ripened Product

"Taylorism." The name of N. W. Taylor has already been mentioned, who seized upon the suggestions of Burton to develop a better doctrine of the will than New England had yet had. A large part of his active life was passed in theological controversy, to which he was introduced by a *Concio* [sermon] which he preached at New Haven in 1828 to an assembly of clergymen. In this sermon he incidentally introduced the topic of the prevention of sin, as to which he advanced the view, arising from his new conception of the will as free under whatever pressure of motives might be brought to bear upon it, that, possibly, owing to the nature of moral agency, God could not prevent sin, or at least the present degree of sin, in the moral system.…

[Taylor's views led to a] serious … controversy … with Bennet Tyler, which had its roots in the distant past, in the long interest of New England in the theory of conversion, and was set in motion by a *Dissertation on the Means of Regeneration* (1827) by Gardiner Spring. Upon the basis of Emmons' theology, Spring taught that no motives presented to men can produce in them holy love to God. Taylor had been a great revival preacher, and he felt this doctrine to be bad because so paralyzing to all human effort, and he therefore opposed it upon the basis of his new views of human nature. There was in man a neutral point to which motives might appeal, and this point gave courage to the preacher and effectiveness to his words. He found this neutral point in man's natural desire for happiness (which he styled self-love, following Hopkins and others), to which the motives of the Gospel could certainly appeal since they really urge to what is the highest happiness of man. He conceived regeneration as taking place after this method: the Spirit of God suspended the "selfish principle" in man, that is, broke the control of sinful purpose, the motives of the Gospel appealed to the native desire for happiness, a choice was made by the act of the free will which choice was "using the means of regeneration," and thus the man was regenerated, the whole complex operation being "instantaneous."

Tyler failed to get his point of view. He did not grasp the idea of freedom which Taylor had introduced, classified him with the Arminians and Socinians, and from that moment lost all capacity for understanding him. Out of all this confusion came, however, the good result of greater clearness upon the moral government of God, which had been over and over again confounded with his physical government, and the fact that it is a government by means of motives, while the other is a government by forces. Taylor at last broke away from the subjection to Edwards in which the school had heretofore lain, and controverted the position of the great leader as to moral inability. In his lectures he further modified his position upon the prevention of sin, teaching finally that the freedom necessary to a moral system, unchecked by influences which may be inconsistent with the highest perfection of that system, may lead to that degree of sin which is actually found in the world. "Taylorism" when finally developed might be defined as an attempt, while maintaining the principal doctrines of Calvinism, including the previous certainty of every moral act, to introduce a philosophy into the explanation and defense of the system which should be true to the facts of human consciousness. Its prominent feature, which could never be hid and seemed to most men utterly inconsistent with Calvinism, was the freedom of the will, which was now made for the first time in New England the real working theory of theology and practice. It therefore led to powerful attacks upon the whole New England school, particularly from Princeton, and was the great theological reason for the disruption of the Presbyterian Church in 1838.

Bushnell, Smith, and Finney. Later writers connected more or less intimately with the Divinity School of Yale University carried on the work of theological development in more or less accord with the prevailing line

of New England thought. Among these one of the most important was Horace Bushnell. In his *God in Christ* (New York, 1849) he dwelt on the defects of human language and forms of thought, and hence maintained a great degree of reticence as to the nature of the immanent Trinity and of the divinity of Christ, while affirming both. He did much to save the doctrine of Christ's real, consubstantial humanity from the reaction of orthodoxy against Unitarianism by which it might have been lost. He emphasized the method of nurture in religious training whereby a "child was to grow up as a Christian and never know himself as being otherwise." His work upon *Nature and the Supernatural* (1858) did much to establish the realm of the supernatural as the realm where free will prevails. But perhaps his greatest work was in his contribution to the doctrine of the atonement, where, while neglecting the objective side of it, and formally denying the governmental theory, the substance of which he held, he emphasized as had never been done in theological history the direct work of Christ in saving men, his loving service by which he moves their souls toward holiness.…

The Oberlin theologians were very productive, especially in the early years of the institution. Charles Grandison Finney had early come to the adoption of the great New England principles in a substantially original manner. In its matured form, his theology was substantially Taylorism. An early discussion in Oberlin upon sanctification and the possibility of perfect holiness in this life led to the formulation of a principle which was long current in Oberlin, to which the name of "the simplicity of moral action" was given. Supposing that there could be at any instant but one moral choice of the will, it was affirmed that that single and indivisible moral act must be either wholly sinful or entirely holy. And, since the will is free, the possibility of an uninterrupted series of perfectly holy choices, and hence of perfect holiness, must be maintained. James Harris Fairchild closed the line of New England theologians at Oberlin with *Elements of Theology* (1892), which was the summing-up of the previous growth, stated with great simplicity and clearness, a moderate and sensible working theology for the average minister.

Edwards Amasa Park. The New England system received its fullest, most comprehensive, and most representative expression in the lectures of Professor Edwards Amasa Park. There is scarcely a great and certainly no great contribution to the growing system in any his predecessors, which he did not take up and give its due place and influence in his own theology. He was of that line of theological descent which, beginning with Edwards, flowed through Hopkins, Emmons, and Woods; but he was greatly modified by Taylor, and took up, with one great and fatal exception, all of the results of his study into his own thought. From his system as a point of view the meaning of the whole development becomes plain.

As thus constituting the key to the whole school and embracing it all, Park's theology may be considered the culmination of the school. It is,

first of all, a "system," a structure in which course is built upon course till all is complete. Adopting the Scotch philosophy, Park began with the doctrine of causation and built upon this the argument for the existence of God. He thus obtains, not a perfect conception of God, but an elemental idea, upon which the rest of the argument may be founded. He then proceeds to the proof of the benevolence of God, and here he discusses the prevention of sin, and, as a lemma [subsidiary point] to this argument, the immortality of the soul. His argument here is generally the later position of Taylor, that perhaps God can not consistently prevent sin in the best moral system. He did not follow Taylor into indeterminism, but remained more nearly with Edwards, accepting, however, Taylor's discriminations in respect to the moral government of God. Park then proceeds to the positive arguments for the benevolence of God, the greatest of which is man's moral nature, which makes it certain that God can not occupy a lower level than we. The structure of his argument never flinches, and never advances propositions for which a preparation has not been made before. The fact that God is benevolent is made the basis of an argument to show that his benevolence comprises his entire moral nature, and that all his acts are referable to this motive. This is the consistent and full application of the Edwardsean theory of virtue. The love of God is thus made the determinative principle of Park's theology.

In his treatment of the Bible, Park prepared for the next stadium of American theology, though not himself entering upon it. The discovery of various readings of the original texts, Stuart's treatment of minor forms of error in the Bible, the rumor of the higher criticism, and the influence of the *Origin of Species,* had combined to make Park first reject the doctrine of the verbal inspiration of the Bible, and then limit its inspiration to its "religious and moral impression and teaching" as to the matter, and to "suggestion" and "superintendence" as to the manner. Thus some of the most objectionable features of the idea of Biblical authority were removed. Miracles were accepted and defended principally from their necessity to revelation, which makes them so probable that they need very little evidence to commend them to present acceptance. As to the Trinity and Christology, Park left these doctrines where Stuart had left them. The weight of his argument is expended in maintaining the divinity of Christ. He does nothing to advance the rationale of either doctrine. This was itself an almost fatal omission, for the questioning which the Unitarians began in the middle of the preceding century had now become so insistent that not to attempt to meet it was a confession of incompetence to meet the issues of the day. But Park was still hindered from perceiving the full demand of the times by his reliance upon the sufficiency of the Biblical argument to prove any position of theology, although in practice his proof was almost entirely a rational one for the doctrines which he really discussed.

Summary of Park's Theology. These favorite doctrines of Park, and of New England, are met in the anthropological group. He was a high Calvinist. He maintained the "previous certainty of all events which actually

occur." To maintain this, he also maintained Edwards' theory of the will, not following Taylor into his modifications in the interest of freedom. Hence he also defended the doctrine of election, which he founded in God's benevolence by adopting the general principle that God elected as many as he consistently could, that is, as many as he could without interfering too much in the system which he had established. Park taught that all sin is voluntary, and that original sin is not sin "properly so called." The "proximate" occasion of man's sinning is the corruption of his nature; but this proceeds from the sin of Adam, which is therefore the "remote" occasion of man's sinning. As to the theory of the connection existing between Adam and his descendants, Park observed silence.

In his treatment of the atonement, Park followed closely his predecessors in the nature and scope of the doctrine, and in the forms under which it was presented, retaining and employing the old governmental analogies. He thus failed to ethicize the theology, and made the idea of atonement unreal to the modem mind. But he powerfully refuted the idea that God is an angry God to be placated by a blood-offering; he enlarged the idea of sacrifice; he made the whole universe, and not merely this little globe, the theater of the atonement; and he strips from the older forms of the theory many merely adventitious elements. And he defines it formally thus: "The atonement exhibits and honors the holiness, distributive justice, and law of God, and it promotes the holiness and happiness of the universe, so as to make the conduct of God in forgiving men consistent with the honor of his holiness, distributive justice, and law , and so as to satisfy his general justice in rescuing sinners from unconditional punishment, in adopting measures for inducing them to repent, and in eternally rewarding them if they do repent." The underlying idea of punishment which determines this theory is that punishment is an expression of the divine disapproval of sin, eternal in its very nature as the disapproval is eternal, for the ultimate object of preventing further sin in the universe. Thus while the idea that punishment is a satisfaction to justice is outgrown, the idea that it is essentially for the reformation of the criminal himself has not yet appeared.

To dispatch remaining elements more briefly: Park's treatment of regeneration did not reach the height of Taylor's discussions, because he did not follow Taylor in modifying Edwards' theory of the will, feeling apparently no necessity for a "neutral point" in the mind to which motives might be addressed; he made the truth the means of regeneration; sanctification is progressive, and men do not actually become perfectly holy in this life; justification is synonymous with forgiveness: and the future punishment of those who die without having surrendered themselves to the claims of apprehended duty, will be eternal.

VI. The Collapse of the School

The theology of Park was a highly elaborated and finished structure and the source of great light to many minds; but, like a great lighthouse, it was placed among the waves, and those waves were destined to rise to an

unexampled height and to sweep the edifice away. It is a simple historical fact that in 1880 the New England theology was taught at all the Congregational seminaries with the possible (and only partial) exception of Hartford, and that in about fifteen years, the great professors who represented it had all passed away and were succeeded in every case by men who anxiously sought to separate themselves from all identification with it. And this collapse was the more complete in that no one appeared to maintain the system by formal and careful exposition or defense. And within ten more years the theological tone of the whole denomination had completely altered. The New England theology, as constituting a distinct school, having recognized leaders, conscious of its own worth and able to resist encroachments and perform the theological service demanded by the day, had passed away.

It remains to ask whether there is anything in the history here traced to explain this remarkable end of so long and great a movement. (1) It will be evident that with all its brilliant modifications and substantial "improvements" in theology, the New England theology was essentially defensive, conservative, immovably Calvinistic. Edwards had no thought of innovation. He did innovate, but it was by the internal necessity of his own thinking, a fact which was largely hidden from himself. To the end, the leaders in general supposed themselves to be saying substantially what had been said, only in better ways, with the removal of this or that error, supposed in every case to be incidental rather than central and vital. And at the end the main features of the Calvinistic view of the world, the sovereignty of God, determinism, and human helplessness, remained unaffected so as to give to the whole system, in the eyes of a world where humanity had begun to find itself, an air of abstractness and unreality which could not be suited to the actual needs of men. The world had passed on into another atmosphere in the three hundred years since Calvin's death, and his great doctrines seemed to have no reality to men now living.

(2) But the difficulty was more specific than this. The new philosophy of the day was evolutionistic. Professor Park had done his best to be just to Darwin, but it may be said that the Darwinian idea never once entered his mind, was never comprehended by him. Evolution magnifies law, it rejects miracles. It consequently rejects the idea of a miraculous revelation of religion from God to man. It explains even the Bible as a development. Hence it is the foe of authority in the sphere of religion, and acknowledges only such an authority as the evident truth has, however discovered and in whatever department of human thought. New England theology did nothing essential to meet this condition. It yielded the point of verbal inspiration, it admitted a modified development in the Old Testament, it retired within the very citadel of theology by concentrating the inspiration of the Bible upon its religious message alone; but it did not consider the facts about the Biblical miracles, it contented itself with an untenable apology, and it did not once raise the question of any such necessity of revelation as it had always assumed. With all this it preserved the authority

of the Bible, and when it was faced, as in the Unitarian controversy, with a demand for a rationale or a surrender of its doctrine, it took shelter behind this authority, which the age no longer acknowledged, and refused a rationale. A new conception of revelation was what the new age demanded; and when New England theology showed itself unable even to comprehend the question, it pronounced its own sentence.

(3) And then the system, by the exigencies of a rational defense of the several doctrines, which it was not willing to modify, had depotentiated [decreased the power or effect of] the old system which it sought to replace, and had become at many points lean and meager. Its Trinity was a Trinity of "distinctions" which lent itself little to the worship of the Church which had long been addressed to "the Father of an infinite majesty, his adorable, true, and only Son, also the Holy Ghost." Its Christ was too entirely a God and not a man in any conceivable way. Even its work of atonement had become so abstract as to seem superfluous, and yet it was not recognized as superfluous. In no place was it full, warm, living, palpitating with life, except in its purely ethical and psychological portions, where it dealt at first hand with accessible facts. No wonder that men educated by it, who felt the breath of the new life of the new age, accepted its silent lesson, more powerful than its open one, rejected what it had minified, and took its ethics for its true message, thus superseding it. It is so full of the most valuable instruction on every point that no man can master it without becoming a theologian; and no man can become a theologian in this day, even by its help, without finally rejecting it for something simpler, more in touch with realities, and sounder in its rational processes.

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