Justified: The Pragmaticization of American Evangelicalism from Jonathan Edwards to the Social Gospel

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
(English Language and Literature)
in the University of Michigan
2020

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Acknowledgements

I want to thank my graduate committee, Gregg Crane, Julie Ellison, Kerry Larson, and Susan Juster. I also wish to thank Rackham Graduate School for their immensely helpful Rackham Humanities Research Dissertation Award, which took the financial burden off the dissertation writing process. Rackham's generous travel funds also enabled me to visit the archives at Oberlin College Library, Yale's Beinecke Rare Books and Manuscript Library, and Harvard's Houghton Library.

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List of Abbreviations

Jonathan Edwards

DCE	*Dissertation Concerning the End*
EW	*Ethical Writings*
FW	*Freedom of the Will*
LPW	*Letters and Personal Writings*
M	*The Miscellanies*
RA	*A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections*
SPW	*Scientific and Philosophical Writings*

William James

ECR	*Essays, Comments, and Reviews*
EPR	*Essays in Psychical Research*
ERE	*Essays in Radical Empiricism*
LWJ	*Letters of William James*
MT	*Meaning of Truth*
PU	*A Pluralistic Universe*
PP	*Principles of Psychology*
VRE	*Varieties of Religious Experience*
WB	*The Will to Believe*

Henry James, Sr

NE	*The Nature of Evil*
SS	*Substance and Shadow*
SoS	*Secret of Swedenborg*
SRF	*Society the Redeemed Form of Man*
CLC	*Christianity the Logic of Creation*

Charles G. Finney

LPC	*Lectures to Professing Christians*
LR	*Lectures on Revivals of Religion*
SIS	*Sermons on Important Subjects*
SGT	*Sermons on Gospel Themes*
ST	*Systematic Theology*

Charles Sanders Peirce

CP	*Collected Papers*

Emerson

JMN	*Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks*

RM	*Representative Men*

Swedenborg

AW	*Angelic Wisdom Concerning the Divine Love*
AC	*Arcana Caelestia*
LJ	*The Last Judgment*
TCR	*The True Christian Religion*

Abstract

This dissertation tracks the epistemological precursors, what I call the “pragmatic attitudes,” of William James’s pragmatism as they appear in liberal evangelical culture from the time of Jonathan Edwards to the postbellum Social Gospel movement. I examine what I take to be three major epistemological underpinnings of this tradition of evangelical theology – the privileging of direct experience, the practical identification of essence and praxis, and the emergent belief in God’s pervasive affection toward Creation – and their role in the shaping of a distinctively pragmatic ethos in American evangelical culture. By juxtaposing two different traditions – one putatively “secular” and one “sacred” – I offer an interdisciplinary bridge between American religion and philosophy while challenging assumptions that American history can be divided along secular or sacred lines.

I begin with Jonathan Edwards’s “latent pragmatisms,” certain epistemological attitudes toward religious conversion and the nature of God that lead Edwards to justify these ideas on logics fundamental to modern pragmatism, namely the integration of the “separate” faculties feeling and volition and the justification of religious experiences by their practical effects. The second chapter explores the antebellum revivalist Charles G. Finney and his interpretation of these Edwardsean pragmatic attitudes, making the case that Finney and the evangelical culture he represents merit a place in our understanding of the history of American pragmatism. Chapter three looks directly at the theology of William James’s father, Henry James Sr, and the extent to which its decidedly Swedenborgian influence reflected the pragmatic attitudes I outline in the first two chapters. The fourth and final chapter deals with the transatlantic Social Gospel movement, a self-consciously pragmatic evangelical reform movement whose theology and literature most visibly brought the realms of the sacred and the secular together for the common goal of bettering the condition of people here and now. The epilogue broadly addresses the implications of the sacred/secular binary in American culture.

Introduction

Adequacy for everyday life must be the test of all true religion. If it does not bear this test, then it simply is not religion. We need an everyday, a this-worldly religion. All time spent in connection with any other is worse than wasted. The eternal life that we are now living will be well lived if we take good care of each little period of time as it presents itself day after day. If we fail in doing this, we fail in everything.

Ralph Waldo Trine, *In Tune with the Infinite* (158)

The reason why the American New Thought philosopher Ralph Waldo Trine felt this way in 1897 has to do with shifts in American evangelicalism stretching back to the colonial theologian Jonathan Edwards. To our eyes, Trine's conception of "true religion" as "this-worldly," as subject to the "test" of everyday experience, and sensible to this life as anagogically continuous with eternity may not seem unusual. For Trine, however, and many nineteenth century believers, the "truth" of religion seemed to call for new criteria not necessarily discoverable in tradition or explicable by orthodoxy. How can we account for this shift to the practical consequences of religious belief? My suggestion for how these criteria of "adequacy for everyday life" emerged in liberal circles of American evangelical Protestantism is not separate from the story of American pragmatism, what Edward C. Moore called, in his memorably arguable terms, "the only unique contribution American philosophy has made to the tradition known as Western philosophy" (vii).

This is not an origin story of American pragmatism. It is a recontextualization of pragmatic logics and attitudes within the arena of American evangelicalism from Jonathan Edwards to the postbellum Social Gospel movement. As a work of intellectual history, this dissertation traces a series of ideas - and justifications made for those ideas - through a range of largely Protestant contexts, across nearly two centuries of American history. It is my goal to disclose a persistent tradition in eighteenth and nineteenth century American evangelicalism dealing with experience, action, and the nature of the divine that coalesces in the pragmatic philosophy of William James. Reconstructing this narrative will, consequently, also ask us to rethink the relationship between the religious and the secular, the sacred and the profane, as it is experienced in America.[1]

Though there has been some progress made in the last fifteen or so years concerning studies of religion in academia, what Tomoko Masuzawa said in 2005 about the state of the subject still holds some truth: "[i]n the social sciences and humanities alike, 'religion' as a category has been left largely unhistoricized, essentialized, and tacitly presumed immune or inherently resistant to critical analysis" (1-2). My feeling is that the assumption of religion as a monolithic or universalized domain of human experience constitutes the somewhat uneasy relationship between religion and academic studies Masuzawa points to. This dissertation works against assumptions of religion as monolithic and against any sense that the historicizing of belief is an inherently disrespectful exercise. Knowing how belief systems have shaped and have been shaped by historical events is not a reduction of their value, but an invitation to other ways we understand human history and experience. By situating the history of American evangelicalism in relation to that of pragmatism, I aim to show how the study of religion can be made relevant in a cross-disciplinarian context.

Unless otherwise specified, the pragmatism I refer to throughout is the pragmatism advocated by William James in the 1870s and developed in his later works such as *Pragmatism*, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, and *A Pluralistic Universe*.[2] I stress several elements of

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[1] "Protestantism" broadly refers to a variety of Reformed or sectarian denominations that emerged out of the sixteenth century Reformation; evangelicalism is a more modern, transdenominational movement within Protestantism that emphasizes the experience of conversion, Christ's saving atonement, activism, and biblicentrism (see Bebbington's "quadrilateral" in his *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*). Neither is necessarily liberal, though both are often associated with liberalism to some degree. The margins of overlap are complex and not always distinct, especially when scrutinizing a wide period of time.

[2] It will be apparent that the founder of American pragmatism, Charles Sanders Peirce, plays a walk-on role in the narrative I'm reconstructing. This choice has everything to do with the nature of the dissertation, which forefronts themes like Protestantism, individualism, and experiential immediacy. Peirce's pragmatism - an unfortunately under-represented facet of American philosophy - was designed to clarify ideas for their predictive values, aligning it more with science than James's individualistic and radically empirical pragmatism. Unlike James, Peirce was also a Christian theist who viewed his method as solely for intellectual elites, less open to the idea that pragmatism could be a democratic enterprise. For Peirce, the fundamental rule of pragmatism, that "by their fruits ye shall know them," should never be understood "in too individualistic a sense" (*CP*, V:402, n. P2). This isn't to say Peirce was unaffected by

James's method of clarifying the practical consequences of our abstract ideas: the practical identification of being with doing, the focus on human experience as the privileged zone of epistemological inquiry and verification (a trait pragmatism shares with Baconian induction, yet enhances in important ways), the sensitivity to a humanistic view of psychology as variable and unpredictable and the interpretation of this uncertainty as grounds for human endeavor, and the pragmatic conception of truth as not something existing in an abstract and timeless realm accessible through prodigious efforts at subjective reasoning, but as something susceptible to experiential and historical flux determined by how well it, to use James's word, *works* for us.[3]

Because in pragmatism a thing's working - making a concrete difference in experience - is the process of its *justification*, a critical epistemological term with its own storied history in Protestantism.[4] What mattered for Reformed theologians and lay practitioners – those who did

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some of the same influences as James. I discuss in chapter three, for example, how Peirce explicitly links pragmatism to the Swedenborgian theology of Henry James Sr, sometimes from the very same texts William James was reading. Cornel West's account of Peirce's "pragmatic swerve" in American philosophy is still cogent and relevant. See especially Ch. 2 in *The American Evasion of Philosophy*.

The other obvious gap in this dissertation is the palpable absence of John Dewey. This is due less to any intellectual contradictions between his pragmatism and James's (there were few), than it is to an effort to streamline the narrative. I also do not speak about the successors to pragmatism in the American academy, logical positivism, or the neopragmatists.

[3] This understanding of "pragmatic" as fixated on what "works" for us to the exclusion of more "noble" concerns haunted, as it continues to haunt, what we mean when we say pragmatism. Peirce, Dewey, and James had their own reservations about the name. Pragmatism was frequently mischaracterized by such intellectual leaders as Bertrand Russell, Alfred E. Taylor, and F.H. Bradley as coopting the hallowed name of philosophy to justify caprice and avarice. Russell repeats a common misconception of Jamesian pragmatism by labelling "the pragmatist definition of truth as that which has fruitful consequences" (279), which is only partly true. Confusing pragmatism with positivism, Martin Heidegger reportedly felt that pragmatism was "nothing but a '*Weltanschauung* for engineers and not for human beings in the full sense of the word'" (Oehler 33). About the selection of the word "pragmatism," James wrote to Dickinson S. Miller that "a most unlucky word it may prove to have been" (*LWJ, 2* 295). In a way, he was right. In a curious turn, the philosophy that was designed to rescue faith from outright dismissal became subject to the same line of criticism. To walk by capricious faith and not by empirical sight is virtually the same as acting "pragmatically" - in other words, in whatever way you like regardless of the moral consequences. An assumption still with us today, when the word pragmatist is more likely to call up, not James or Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr or Eugene William Lyman, but Machievelli's prince or Shakespeare's Iago. I'm very much of the opinion of Hunter Brown when he says that "[s]uch readings are as deeply erroneous as they are widespread. On the contrary, James was deeply committed to the importance in principle of restraining belief, or to the importance of evidence in the responsible conduct of the life of reason" (4).

[4] The Reformed doctrine of *sola fide*, or "by faith alone," was and is widely held by many Protestant denominations, following the Pauline dicta, popularized by reformers like Martin Luther and John Calvin, that "a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law" (*KJV* Rom 3:28) and in Ephesians (also

not let their salvation rest exclusively on adherence to creeds, doctrines, or sacraments – was the question of how one knew one was saved. If it was true, as Calvin argued, that we can never grasp the foreknowledge of God to determine who was saved and who wasn't, alternative epistemological criteria emerged to detect, even if only approximately, one's salvific status. This tension led to the longstanding dispute between justification by faith and by works. "The works of a man do not conciliate God's favour to his person" (113), Calvin asserted, leaving generations of the Reformed faithful uncertain about the usefulness of pious actions. For Calvin, practical action alone could never unequivocally certify one's salvific stance in the eyes of God, an epistemic rupture between behavior and being that pragmatism consistently seeks to close. For pragmatists of the Jamesian vein, positing a realm of ultimate truth to which the senses are our only available guides is little more than an outmoded Platonic rationalism. Rather, pragmatism argues, the significance and justification of what we call truth is sought in what that truth enables us to achieve for our own interests and values.[5] For this reason, the "truth" of a thing rests in the actions it produces, not in its approximation to some greater, if dimly perceived, reality "behind" phenomena. While it would be misleading to claim that justification by works emerged victorious in the dispute, pious works did indeed become a standard of truth-telling, however tentative, for both pragmatists and evangelical culture in the periods with which this dissertation is concerned. From Jonathan Edwards's insight that an atom *is* essentially what an atom *does* to the Social Gospel's linkage of Christian status to Christian conduct, we'll see how

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ascribed to Paul), that "by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God" (*KJV* Eph 2:8). Calvin himself leaves no room for debate: "[m]en, being subject to the curse of the law, have no means left of attaining salvation but through faith alone" (108). To be justified by works, on the other hand, was to place the task of salvation in the hands of sinners themselves, an antinomian doctrine that stemmed largely from the New Testament James: "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only" (*KJV* James 2:24), but more commonly from Christ's words: "Ye shall know them by their fruits" (*KJV* Matt 7:16).

[5] Rorty has suggested that where James used the word truth, he might have done better to use the term "justification:" "he could have gone on to say that we have no criterion of truth other than justification" (*Truth* 2). I am not conflating Rorty's use of justification with its theological definition, but drawing attention to the shared ambivalence of ultimate reality or "truth" between pragmatism and evangelical cultures. Whereas Rorty focuses on linguistic justification for pragmatic truths, evangelical and other Protestant movements adopted the experiential approach more characteristic of Jamesian pragmatism.

the Calvinist theory of truth succumbed in practice to the nonrepresentational and antidualist attitudes of evangelical practice and Jamesian pragmatism.[6]

This isn't to say, as Richard King does, that pragmatism "can be considered as a secularized version of justification by works" (55). Though provocative, this sounds like suggesting that the mere evacuation of religious content from putatively secular forms can sufficiently explain historical change. While the pragmatic conception of truth and justification by works both link truth to action, secularization theses like this lead to more distortion than clarification. One of my goals is to rethink what we mean when we say "religious" or "secular," and how falling on either side of this binary leads not only to historical and cultural misrepresentation, but more insidiously to the binary's hierarchization. It doesn't give us an account of belief as a human activity with appreciable historical effects on par with race, class, or gender; it gives us H.L. Mencken's notorious antireligious vituperations and the final scene in George Schuyler's *Black No More* (1931), which unabashedly links the ignorant superstition of Mississippi fundamentalists to the racist bloodlust of a lynch mob.

In many ways, Hilary Putnam's announcement in 1992 that "it is high time we paid attention to Pragmatism, the movement of which James was arguably the greatest exponent" (*Pragmatism* 6), inaugurated an entire field of study from which this dissertation takes inspiration. In the introduction to 1998's *The Revival of Pragmatism*, Morris Dickstein celebrates the return of "the most distinctive American contribution to philosophy" (1). Interest in the origins of pragmatic thought has generated a wide range of accounts in literary and cultural studies over the last several decades. In 1986, Myra Jehlen suggested that pragmatic thinking is commensurate with the discovery of America itself.[7] In 2001, Amanda Porterfield noted the "[t]he persistence of [a] Protestant-based fusion of spiritual idealism and pragmatic concern in

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[6] I use Calvin as an example here, but he was by no means the only figure who subscribed to the idea that the ultimate truth of our salvific destinies was locked up solely in the mind of God.

[7] Jehlen takes as symptomatic of his American identity James's anecdote of a camping trip in which he pragmatically addresses the question of whether, in the course of chasing a squirrel around a tree, a man goes around the squirrel or not. What is special to Jehlen about this episode is how abstract discussion is eschewed in favor of treating the concrete facts of the case. She concludes, "the first act in knowing 'America' is acknowledging it as a concrete fact. [...] [T]he decisive factor shaping the founding conceptions of 'America' and of 'the American' was material rather than conceptual; rather than a set of abstract ideas, the physical fact of the continent" (2-3).

American religious thought" (5). In 2002, Scott Pratt offered a "history of pragmatism that traces its origins along the border between Native and European America in a context significantly conditioned by Native American thought" (xi), implying that American pragmatism was not invented, but discovered. In 2006, Joan Richardson argued that an aesthetic "form of thinking brought by the Puritans to the New World" encountered "the pressure of conditions on the American strand" (1). And most recently, Giles Gunn has linked the development of pragmatism to what he calls the "spiritual imaginaries" of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century American religion and the American Enlightenment.[8] These varied accounts agree in one essential point: pragmatism is a uniquely *American* phenomenon.

But that's not what James thought. He did give public credit to Charles Peirce, once in his essay "Reflex Action and Theism" (*WB* 124), once in *Pragmatism* (23), and again in a footnote in *The Meaning of Truth* (40). But he really thought the basic logic of pragmatism originated from across the Atlantic, specifically with English and Scottish empiricism and French philosophy. The lectures that became *Pragmatism* were dedicated to John Stuart Mill, "from whom I first learned the pragmatic openness of mind." James regularly labeled the philosopher Shadworth Hodgson as one of the "forerunners of pragmatism" (*Pragmatism* 25).[9] And from the French philosopher Henri Bergson, as biographer Robert Richardson has shown, he found a rationale for refuting static concepts in favor of process and possibility (424-28). In *Varieties*, James was more explicit about "the chief glory of English and Scottish thinkers:" "[t]he guiding principle...has in fact been that every difference must *make* a difference, every theoretical difference somewhere issue in a practical difference, and that the best method of discussing points of theory is to begin by ascertaining what practical difference would result from one alternative or the other being true" (443). My adding to the chorus of modern academics interested in rethinking the intellectual ancestry of pragmatism doesn't intend to dismiss James's origin story, but offers another perspective on a frequently retold tale.[10] My method of recontextualizing pragmatic attitudes within the history of American liberal evangelicalism is at once a contribution to that chorus and an argument that the emergence of pragmatism features a much more complicated history than perhaps even James was aware, and that its basic epistemological tenets freely crossed any sacred/secular, or religious/philosophical divide.

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[8] In his work on the pragmatist turn in post-Revolutionary American writing, Gunn suggests that "if seventeenth-century American religion and the eighteenth-century American Enlightenment had managed to influence nineteenth- and twentieth-century American writing, they had succeeded in doing so...by undergoing what might be called a pragmatist refashioning" (1).

[9] James repeats this association in other works throughout his career. In *Meaning of Truth*, he asks "[w]hat is the precise fact that the cognition so confidently claimed is *known-as*, to use Shadworth Hodgson's inelegant but valuable form of words?" (43). In *Varieties*, James cites him alongside Dugald Stewart, Thomas Brown, James Mill, and Alexander Bain: "Shadworth Hodgson has used the principle [of pragmatism] with full explicitness" (443).

Pragmatic Attitudes

Because it would be misleading to cite pre-Jamesian moments of American history as instances of authentic pragmatism, I use the phrase *pragmatic attitudes* (or in some cases pragmatic logics) to identify these epistemological maneuvers in evangelicalism that address problems by referring them to experience and practical consequences. There are several reasons why I choose the word "attitude," rather than categorical terms like "Enlightenment philosophy" or even "pragmatism," as a more suitable candidate for explanatory work. *Attitude*'s Latin root of *aptus*, "fitness" or "posture," seems appropriate considering that much of the narrative I will be reconstructing has to do with attitudinal changes toward the world that "fit" its shifting contexts.[11] This word in fact seemed natural to James, for whom pragmatism was "[*t*]*he attitude of looking away from first*

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[10] This also isn't to say that James was wrong in his assessment. While he looked virtually exclusively to European sources, and while modern scholars make the case for American sources, the argument can be made that European sources like Locke, Berkeley, Scottish Common Sense, and anti-Humean sentiment *were* imported to America's intellectual landscape long before James pondered the origins of pragmatism and had traceable effect on important figures in the history of the method. In this sense, James and modern scholars are both right.

[11] "Fit" and "fitness," like "work," are words in the Jamesian lexicon that provoke seemingly endless discussion, if only because they all seem analytically vague. Nevertheless, James felt the word central to the pragmatic maxim, "that, to develop a thought's meaning, we need only to determine what conduct it is fitted to produce" (*Pragmatism* 23). Elsewhere, James says that pragmatism's "only test of probably truth is what works best in the way of leading us, what fits every part of life best" (38). The Darwinian echoes of "fitness" weren't lost on him: "Darwin opened our minds to the power of chance-happenings to bring forth 'fit' results if only they have time to add themselves together. He showed the enormous waste of nature in producing results that get destroyed because of their unfitness" (50).

things, principles, 'categories,' supposed necessities; and of looking towards last things, fruits, consequences, facts" (*Pragmatism* 27). The philosophical quality of your engagement with the world, in other words, depends on your posture, which way you're "*looking*." Insofar as "[t]he history of philosophy is to a great extent that of a certain clash of human temperaments" (6), stressing how American evangelicalism can also be seen as a history of attitudes toward salvation and the divine will illuminate its intellectual connections to pragmatism and the ways both demonstrate a rise in liberal humanism.[12] My guess is that it wasn't insignificant that Dewey, too, equated what he called the "religious" with faith-based "attitudes."[13]

Denying the label of "pragmatist" to figures prior to James or Peirce may satisfy a tendency to historical accuracy or a theoretical faithfulness to "real" pragmatists. But it doesn't help us understand these figures as participating in a history that clearly reflects the gradual emergence in America of a pragmatic way of solving problems, nor does it encourage us to consider these figures' contributions to fields outside of philosophy. If we assume that pragmatism "belongs" to philosophy, that assumption doesn't invite us to make interdisciplinary efforts. A too-stringent fixation on nomenclature, it turns out, reinforces the separation of the religious and the secular that this dissertation actively works against. As a pragmatist might say, the words used to differentiate "real" from "proto-" pragmatists are not as important as their practical differences. In this sense, emphasizing "attitudes" sustains focus on the human engagement with the world while rendering more visible the transit of ideas across ideological and institutional divides.

By isolating attitudes rather than citing broad historical and intellectual movements as the engines of historical change, this method forefronts individual human behavior and action without reducing these attitudes to any particular tradition or ideology. References in this dissertation to categories like "Enlightenment," "liberal Protestantism," "naturalism," and even

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[12] Pragmatism and humanism share some central features: an understanding of doubt as a common human experience, an emphasis on action and works that enable progress, rejection or at least a distrust with metaphysics or theology for their own sakes, respect for individual human experience, and an openness to melioristic reform.

[13] Dewey's *A Common Faith* (1934) is his memorable statement on a pragmatic approach to a non-individualized understanding of the "religious" as experientially valuable, when it's contrasted with "religion," which Dewey aligns with institutionalization, authoritarianism, tradition, and possibility-killing doctrine.

“pragmatism” to some extent, should be taken with a grain of salt. What I’m trying to avoid is the slippage involved in taking periodizations for granted, and to avoid equivocal historical claims like Garry Wills’s that “[w]ithout the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, with its emphasis on reason, benevolence, tolerance, and secular progress, there would have been no Disestablishment of religion in America” (2). This sentence implies that reason, benevolence, tolerance, and secular progress belong exclusively to a slice of western history referred to as the Enlightenment and, more problematically, suggests that American religious freedom could not exist without them. I’m not advocating a wholesale abandonment of these categories. Their unselfconscious use, though, especially in broad historical accounts like this one, can misrepresent the stories we want to tell. I have no doubt an august scholar like Wills is already aware of this; less historically astute readers, however, are another story. I aim to show how, its acknowledged limitations notwithstanding, intellectual history may still avoid charges of reductionism and generality while still making worthwhile contributions to our understanding of the historical transit of ideas.

The pragmatic attitudes I identify in American evangelical culture are not at all independent from their historical context, nor are the philosophers, theologians, novelists, or journalists I cite involved in the same philosophical project. I am more interested in tracking what I believe to be a pervasive trend shared by evangelical and philosophical cultures in America, rather than making judgments about where they got their ideas, or exposing “secular” thinking as essentially “sacred,” or vice versa.

As such, and in the spirit of pragmatism, I avoid making arguments about origins and causality. My starting point of Jonathan Edwards and colonial revivalism is more a matter of convenience than an argument that “pragmatism starts here” (which it doesn’t). Likewise, my choosing to end at the beginning of the twentieth century should be taken as intrinsic to the nature of a project like this, and not some implication that pragmatism emerged full and complete at the turn of the century (which it didn’t). Those expecting an explanation of the “roots” of pragmatism may come away with a fair amount of disappointment. My interest is in calling attention to the as-yet underappreciated elements of pragmatism in American evangelical theology and practice. This connection between pragmatism and theology, though, requires some elaboration.

Practical Theologies and Pragmatism

At first glance, the connection between theology and pragmatism might seem suspect. The former's apparent tendency toward doctrinal refinement designed to subordinate the interests of this world to the glories of the next seems to have less to do with practical experience than pragmatism would depend on. But for James, theological arguments on the nature of God or eschatology weren't necessarily contrary to pragmatism: "[o]n pragmatistic principles, if the hypothesis of God works satisfactorily in the widest sense of the word, it is true" (*Pragmatism* 131). The apparent discrepancy between religious eschatology and how believers actually behaved was observed by de Tocqueville, who, in his correspondence with American believers, noted that "it is often difficult to ascertain from their discourses whether the principal object of religion is to procure felicity in the other world or prosperity in this" (127). While it is true that a majority of Christian faiths warn against the temptations of worldliness, exemplified in the smooth-talking Mr. Worldly-Wiseman of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, it isn't true that evangelical culture fixates exclusively on the life to come, overlooking terrestrial concerns. As we'll see, the concept of Christian worldliness itself underwent a revaluation, from a cardinal pitfall of conversion narratives to the very grounds of practical Christian action which American liberal theology went to great lengths to defend.

In fact, it has been observed for some time that religious practice in America has always carried a hint of pragmatism's emphasis on practical effects over the origins, motives, or causes of those effects.[14] In the liberal tradition, fruits, not roots, are the primary justifiers of theological or abstract claims. Writing in 1928, the Dutch theologian Willem Visser 't Hooft wrote that Puritanism's "[e]mphasis on conduct leads to emphasis on the objective activity rather than on the motive which causes it" (74). If ’t Hooft's interpretation about Puritanism is dependable, it would seem that even from its Puritan beginnings a wide cross-section of American Christian practice endorsed a theory of action whose justifications depended on the differences those actions made in experience.[15]

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[14] I address the influence of pragmatic attitudes on theology more directly in chapters three and four. Theologians such as Henry James Sr, Walter Rauschenbusch, Lyman Abbot, and Eugene William Lyman adopted these attitudes - some more explicitly than others - in efforts to make theology appropriate for lived experience.

This emphasis on the practical became especially concerning for American theologians from the eighteenth century on. The common criticism against theology alleged that it focused too much on abstruse intellectual distinctions without addressing their practical value.[16] (This was also the same charge James and many of his like-minded contemporaries levelled against rationalistic philosophies, like monistic idealism.) Despite this criticism, however, Christian theological traditions weren't ignorant of the worldly utility of their conclusions. The sixth century philosopher Boethius's subordination of speculation to practicality, the Reformed theologian Petrus van Mastricht's assertion that every speculative claim has a practical application, or Richard Baxter's reminder to Christian saints that their everlasting rest depended on both grace and *works*, alert us to the fact that, historically, Christian theologies have only rarely pursued metaphysical speculation for its own sake.[17] The charge of theology's impracticality and obsession with logical accuracy, then, may suggest that it wasn't theology's content that failed to provide practical direction on the application of its principles, but that those directions were no longer sufficiently applicable in the shifting contexts of American culture.[18]

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[15] The alternative is that ’t Hooft, who looked at liberal Protestantism from a twentieth century post-pragmatism perspective, had simply read the pragmatic character of that Protestantism back into its history.

[16] We will see more clearly in chapter two how philosophy and theology were frequent targets of a wide-ranging assault against abstract speculation throughout the nineteenth century.

[17] In his *Consolation of Philosophy*, Boethius opposes two kinds of philosophy: the speculative and the practical, allegorized by the Greek letters Theta and Pi, respectively (36). For the influence van Mastricht's *Theoretica-Practica Theologia* had on Jonathan Edwards, see E. Brooks Holifield's *Theology in America* (103 and 117). In Baxter's enormously popular devotional, *The Saints' Everlasting Rest* (1650), he touches on the longstanding Protestant dilemma between grace and works: "it hath been the ground of a multitude of late mistakes in divinity to think that 'Do this and live' is only the language of the covenant of works. It is true in some sense it is; but in other, not. The law of works only saith, 'Do this' that is, perfectly fulfil the whole law, 'and live,' that is, for so doing' but the law of grace saith, 'Do this and live' too; that is, believe in Christ, seek him, obey him sincerely, as thy Lord and King" (30).

[18] Take for example the Unitarian minister William Ellery Channing's frustration with hell-fire homiletics. Channing grew to reject the Calvinist doctrine of total depravity as productive only of misery and hopelessness, and vilified its promulgators as concerned more with sadistically agitating sinners than

It will become clear that the differences between theology and pragmatism are less impactful than their similarities. Though American theologians never surrendered their commitments to absolute truth, preordained eschatologies, or the critical acceptance of Christ's sacrifice as necessary for conversion - concepts that, taken by the letter, are virtually alien to pragmatism - the ways evangelical theology addressed things like conversion, the experience of living in historical flux, and what it means to be a "true" Christian were conducted on and justified by largely pragmatic logics.

My inclusion of a wide range of Protestant theology in this dissertation is motivated by an awareness that an aura of exclusion from the humanities seems to linger around it. (When my interest studying American religion in a literature department comes up, I find the general response is some quizzical version of "what are you doing in an English department?" or "why don't you join a divinity school?") The rise of theological seminaries and divinity schools in the early American nineteenth century seemed to reinforce the view that theology belonged outside conventional university-wide curricula.[19] Historically, however, theology wasn't understood to be a discipline unto itself, but informed by and invested in the contemporaneous innovations in other disciplines like philosophy and science. I share the view of E. Brooks Holifield, that "[r]are was the discourse in early America in which theology had no role" (viii). It's not the intention of this dissertation to argue a return of theology to the humanities (though that possibility isn't completely off the table), but to assume that it has no proper place there is, I think, misguided and limiting to certain avenues of inquiry.

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shepherding them to salvation. Gary Dorrien provides a useful biographical examination of Channing's transformative experience with a "noted revival preacher" who painted a "lurid picture of 'the lost condition of the human race rushing into hell'" (8). In more general terms, the voluntarism of antebellum America, and the rise of social reform societies encouraging active human involvement in the destiny of God's country, contributed to the winnowing of deterministic Calvinist doctrines like predestination, total depravity, and limited atonement.

[19] The first theological seminary in America, Andover Theological Seminary opened in 1807, following the controversial appointment of Unitarian minister Henry Ware to Harvard's Hollis Chair of Divinity in 1805. The non-denominational Harvard Divinity School opened in 1816. A training school for Congregationalist ministers since its establishment in 1701, Yale formed its own separate theological seminary in 1822. While many of these establishments were conservative responses to liberal encroachments on academic curricula, this isn't to say that all seminaries and divinity schools remained as conservative retreats scornful of progressive religion.

Direct Experience and the Practical Identification of Being and Action

One of the major proximities between theologies of evangelicalism and pragmatism I cover is the attitudinal change toward experience. Though the category of "experience" has enjoyed sustained attention in histories of religion in America, and is absolutely central to discussions of pragmatism, few scholars have noted the ways in which experience provides an analytical bridge between the two fields. The late professor of divinity Randolph Crump Miller began *The American Spirit in Theology* (1974) by noting the dominance of "an appeal to experience, often more emotional than intellectual" (13) pertaining both to American theology and Jamesian pragmatism. This dissertation explores this epistemological bridge in more detail.

American evangelical practice and Jamesian pragmatism sought to reconfigure experience as a fundamentally irreducible phenomenon emerging in concert with the living body and prior to any attempt to categorize it.[20] Unlike Cartesian dualism, which assumed a fundamental divide between an experiencing mind and a material body, pragmatism's antifoundationalist attitude interpreted experience as continuous with matter. This epistemological move, though, wasn't taken as self-evident to lay or educated philosophers or theologians in the time period I cover, a fact our modern insistence on the primacy individual experience – in terms of race, class, or sexuality – can mask. As Jim Egan argues in his study of the category of experience in colonial America, "experience [is] a rhetorical category in need of legitimation" (7). Experience, then, isn't exempt from the need to argue its claims *as* valid experience, nor are such strategies of legitimation ideologically neutral or interest-free. The fraught nature of these zones of legitimation will become much clearer in the focus on conversion experiences in American revivalism and in James's reconfiguration of experience as the bedrock of philosophical investigation.

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[20] James's assumption that religion is most "pure" only in those intense "original experiences which were the pattern-setters to all this mass of suggested feeling and imitated conduct" (*VRE* 6) has seen its share of criticism, most notably by Charles Taylor, mainly on the grounds that James seems incapable of seeing experience in terms other than individualistic. Taylor argues that "[w]hat James can't seem to accommodate is the phenomenon of collective religious life, which is not just the result of (individual) religious connections, but which in some way constitutes or *is* that connection" (*Varieties* 24).

One of the great contributions of William James's writings on religion is the rejection of naturalistic or rationalistic attempts to explain religious experience. In *Pragmatism and the Philosophy of Religion,* Michael Slater valorizes Jamesian pragmatism for "its rejection of essentialist and *sui generis* views of religion, its principled anti-reductionism, and its attention to the psychological complexity and highly personal nature of religious belief, experience, and practice" (5). Variety, uncertainty, and idiosyncrasy became central features of the definition of experience with which pragmatism and American liberal evangelicalism deal. In calling attention to the forms of uncertainty in evangelical conversion models from Edwards to the Social Gospel, I offer a counter interpretation of what Paul Jerome Croce refers to as the "eclipse of certainty" as a uniquely Darwinian effect.

One of the reasons we'll see such a sustained emphasis on direct experience from Edwards to the Social Gospel has to do with a suspicion of mere intellectualism to effect change in individuals or institutions. The recurrence in religious literature, theology, and pragmatism of scenes of and appeals to direct experience are an immediate result of the idea that linguistic or intellectual acts like reasoning are, by their very attempts to universalize, prone to disconfirmation by individual experience. As Helen, the heroine of Margaret Deland's popular novel *John Ward, Preacher* (1888), put it, "argument never can result in conviction…for belief is a matter of temperament'" (74). Far from being a mere method for clarifying practical outcomes, Jamesian pragmatism assumes that direct experience, undergirded by radical empiricism, should be the grounds of epistemological validity.[21] What will become apparent is that figures like Jonathan Edwards, Charles G.

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[21] Radical empiricism was James's attempt to forge a metaphysics that would once and for all do away with a philosophical reliance on any form of a foundational psychological dualism. This empiricism is radical in that it respects the relations between empirical terms and not - as in classical empiricism - only the terms themselves. It was James's attempt to bypass the rationalist insistence on a "third term" artificially constructed to make sense of apparently disconnected particulars. Despite James's assertion in the preface to *Pragmatism* that "there is no logical connexion between pragmatism...and…'radical

Finney, Emanuel Swedenborg, and Jacob Riis employed a strikingly similar understanding of experience as justificatory of the truth of religious faith and a powerful motivator of pious action. Examining these sites of immediate experience will demonstrate how liberal evangelicalism and Jamesian pragmatism's ideas of experience are cut from the same epistemological cloth.[22]

Related to questions of immediate experience is the complex relationship between theory and practice (or in other terms, being and action). In some ways this distinction has always been philosophically fraught, but it was in the antebellum era when it became a common complaint among philosophers, theologians, and other writers. As chapter two will point out, it was philosophers like Francis Bowen and authors like Nathaniel Hawthorne who began in earnest to call into question – and at times to satirize – the utility of any theory that couldn't show its fruits in practical action. One of the ways pragmatism sought to overcome this hurdle was to posit a virtual identification of theory and practice, ontology and behavior, or as I'll periodically refer to it, the *is* and the *does*. Put another way, pragmatism does not trouble itself with abstract distinctions or speculations about "essences," but locates the justification for any ontological claim about a thing in how that thing acts. In other words, you *are* what you *do*.

This valuation of action (as opposed to mere cognition) forms the basis for much of James's psychology and shapes pragmatism in no small way. At the end of the "Habit" chapter

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empiricism'" (4), due to the shared features of their epistemology, I will in the course of this dissertation make occasional reference to James's metaphysics of radical empiricism. To that end, I trust to some extent in Nancy Frankenberry's memorable simile that "pragmatism without radical empiricism is like a menu without food: appetizing but not digestible" (88).

[22] Even though, in the Jamesian-Protestant matrix I'll be exploring throughout this dissertation, immediate experience was appreciated for its epistemological value, this view didn't go unchallenged. Not just from the obvious corner of religious conservatism, but even those from James's own camp, like the American philosopher and theologian Henry Nelson Wieman. Drawing from Jamesian philosophy of religion but repudiating the validity of immediate experience, Wieman argued for a return of religious experience to the scientific method: "[i]mmediate experience never yields knowledge. [...] To cling still to such a view with respect to discernment of God is to put the knowledge of God outside the field of scientific knowledge, where it can be neither tested nor examined. Such a position is fatal to religion. [...] [W]e believe it is precisely because this view has prevailed that knowledge of God has been so widely ignored in scientific circles" (22-3).

in *Principles of Psychology*, James memorably describes the interplay between action and ontology using one of his favorite examples: alcoholism:

> [t]he drunken Rip Van Winkle, in [Joseph] Jefferson's play, excuses himself for every fresh dereliction by saying, 'I won't count this time!' Well! he may not count it, and a kind Heaven may not count it; but it is being counted none the less. Down among his nerve-cells and fibres the molecules are counting it, registering and storing it up to be used against him when the next temptation comes. Nothing we ever do is, in strict scientific literalness, wiped out. [...] As we become permanent drunkards by so many separate drinks, so we become saints in the moral, and authorities and experts in the practical and scientific spheres, by so many separate acts and hours of work. (131)

Just as a drunkard becomes a drunkard by his actions, so a saint achieves the status of saintliness by sustained moral behavior. The insistent materialism of the passage - its insistence that cumulative actions are registered and stored in the very body of the actor - reinforces the pragmatic reasoning that all we know of being and becoming is, pragmatically, reducible to our actions. Implicitly, in a way significant for Protestant theologians, the passage is also a rationale for spiritual conversion. One may justify their status as a saint by acting like one.[23]

A Suffering God: Reimagining the Divine in Liberal Evangelicalism

One of the most persistent theological tendencies in the Reformed tradition has been to deny God any attributes deemed limiting to His absolute sovereignty. The refusal to assign "finite" factors to the nature of the almighty ensured God's eternal remoteness from the moral pollution of fallen Creation. This radical ontological separation, central to American Calvinist theology, had important implications for human action on earth, since it was alleged by many liberal theologians and James himself that meaningful action is impossible without some sense of affectionate connection to whatever we nominate as the divine. As we'll see, nineteenth century evangelicalism emphasized a notion of God not as the exacting Calvinist sovereign of Edwards's sermon "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," but a God of love, a predominantly affectionate deity immanent in history and who cares intimately for the destinies of His creatures.

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[23] It's no stretch to say that James is referring to "saints" not in the Catholic sense - as the chosen exemplars of Christian duty celebrated on feast days - but in a modified Protestant sense of the predestined elect. Modified, because though Calvinism asserts that one cannot behave their way into being elect, James suggests that sainthood is, in fact, open to common folk.

But this doctrine of affectionate immanence had another consequence: a God who loves can also suffer. In 1910, Christian pragmatist Eugene William Lyman cited this doctrine as having implications for meaningful human work: "[l]ife has its grinding toil...but the immanent God who toils and suffers with us has unmeasured resources for the accomplishment of his purposes" (17-18).[24] What does it mean that God can suffer with us? Along with tracking the historical shift expressed by Trine above, this dissertation also tracks an accompanying shift in the reimagining of God as capable of human-like suffering and the implications of that doctrine for human action. The concept of a God who loves and suffers with us, I show in chapter three, becomes central to James's pragmatic logics through the Swedish divine Emanuel Swedenborg and Henry James Sr's extensive collation of his spiritual system. The profound effects of this radical theological shift I explore more fully in chapter four. A God, immanent in human history and capable of love and suffering (even as that suffering was relayed through Jesus Christ via the Incarnation), energized and made meaningful human endeavors to establish God's kingdom on earth.

So in a significant way, this reimagining of the divine as invested with a human-like sensorium was not a mere theological development separate from the emergence of pragmatism. Its central logic, that meaningful Christian action is made so because that action is taken within a universe that responds to our affections, is also central to Jamesian pragmatism, which sees no significance in any action taken in a lifeless, interest-free universe. Their primary goal was to demystify the intellectual remoteness of abstruse concepts, subjecting them, as Trine advised, to the test of "[a]dequacy for everyday life."

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[24] Elsewhere Lyman praises the Christian philosopher Josiah Royce for explaining how a struggling God made our own struggles meaningful: "Royce renders a most valuable service to religion and theology, when he insists...that God is a sharer in all our struggles with evil…. From such a view-point our moral struggles gain a significance which transforms them" (178). Josiah Royce, a Christian philosopher and close friend of James, often receives an unfairly scant share of attention in histories of American philosophy and religion. Unfortunately, like Peirce and Dewey, an appreciation of Royce's role in the history of American pragmatism exceeds the boundaries of this dissertation, though some of my conclusions may provide useful material for such an exploration.

Rethinking the Secularization Thesis

Because this dissertation scrutinizes two particular traditions within American liberal evangelicalism and philosophy, it is also a project that scrutinizes the religious and the secular. Until recently, there has been throughout the twentieth century a somewhat uncritical acceptance of the notion that culture, especially western culture, was or is undergoing some degree of secularization. In 1976, for example, the historian Paul Johnson could get away with saying that "[d]uring the past half-century there has been a rapid and uninterrupted secularization of the West" (516). Five years later, David S. Reynolds identified in American religious fiction what he believed to be a "pattern of secularization" (71), an argument that, as reviewer Amy Lang was right to point out, "is presented in terms so broad that it offers no new insight into religious culture" (92). That broadness began to be addressed critically. Another five years - and not insignificantly right in the middle of the Reagan presidency - the tide had changed considerably: "[t]he truth is that we do not live in an uncomplicatedly secular age" (117), R. Laurence Moore reported. Indeed, even a cursory familiarity with religious cultures strongly suggests a more complicated story than the secularization thesis lets on. (Even more insidious is the perfunctory identification of secularization with progress.) Nowadays, it's a familiar mantra for those in Religious Studies and American Culture departments that claims to America's progression into some all-inclusive secularity are quite overblown.

Because this dissertation tries to rethink the distinction between "religious" and "secular," my use of these terms shouldn't be taken as uncomplicated. To my understanding, they function as a convenient shorthand for highly imbricated historical transformations and exchanges, whose "religious" or "secular" distinctiveness vanishes upon close-enough scrutiny. This is particularly true for religion, as Catherine Albanese soberly points out: "[i]t is in the act of defining that religion seems to slip away" (3). It is almost always the case in the history of what was and still is referred to as secularization that religious and secular thinkers borrowed freely from one another. The boundaries between these terms and the cultures they are purported to represent are not as stable - nor quite as illuminating - as the secularization thesis would have us believe. This point holds true, I submit, for a pragmatic philosophy often deemed secular and for the faithful commitments of evangelicalism.

My own position regarding the role of faith in other aspects of a culture takes the same temperament from R. Laurence Moore: "[t]he notion that religious commitment is escapist, a *faute de mieux* strategy for the weak...is nonsense" (*Religious Outsiders* 120). Seeing religious belief as, at best, an impediment to understanding the broader culture, any explanation of which would do well to ignore citizens' faith-based contributions to that culture, seems to me not only ideologically misguided but also prone to misrepresentations of a variety of cultural zones - political, economic, academic - as rigidly secular enterprises dismissive or mistrustful of anything religious. My primary goal on this head is to join other current attempts to disabuse ourselves of the notion that not only is the world not rigidly divided into religious and secular, but that the category of "secular" and its popular use as "nonreligious" has failed to provide an adequate explanatory framework for a historical or cultural understanding of faith. I will return more thoroughly to the issue of secularity in the epilogue, but readers should bear in mind throughout that the history I move through is no triumphalist tale of either what seems religious or secular. This dissertation, in fact, is deeply skeptical of accounts that suggest history, religious or otherwise, can be explained in terms of progressive ideological conquest.[25]

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[25] This skepticism lies in tension with even recently published histories of western secularity. To take one very recent example, Margaret Jacob's *The Secular Enlightenment* (2019) surveys the eighteenth century movement for how it sought "answers in secular terms – even to many religious questions – [and] vastly expanded the sphere of the secular" (1). Taking "secularization" as an undiluted process, Jacob repeats twentieth century scholarly presumptions of religion's taking little part in post-Enlightenment history, as well as suggesting that this process was unproblematically good.

Interdisciplinarity and Methodology

[A] religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and surrounded by prohibitions - beliefs and practices that unite its adherents in a single moral community called a church.

Émile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (46)

Durkheim's well-known definition of religion makes several assumptions, few of which will come to bear on the kinds of religious experiences and practices I'll be looking at in this dissertation. I quote him here because, as a project cognizant of current debates about the appropriate nature of religious studies, much of my discussion will involve questions of what counts as religion and how those accounts are justified.

Another reason I quote Durkheim is to alert readers to highly contested efforts to define religion, to isolate its essence, or at least its essential features. A sociologist, Durkheim saw religion as an inherently social phenomenon, bound up with moral prescription and conformity for the good of common ends. It is unclear, if, for example, modern individualistic interfaith or nondenominational groups would qualify as religions in Durkheim's estimation. The shortcomings of definition are immediately clear, then - even for immoderately broad ones like Alfred North Whitehead's, that "[r]eligion is what the individual does with his own solitariness" (16). Even James's definition of religion, which I discuss in chapter one, doesn't fully satisfy me (even in spite of its self-conscious arbitrariness).[26] I personally have little investment in definitions like these beyond their historical values, and find it far more useful to pay close attention to how the coterie of historical figures I'm interested in understood their relationship to whatever they felt was sacred in life. My only methodological assumption on this head is that religious belief has exerted considerable force - as it continues to do - on historical events, and in order to understand those events the best we can do is to take those expressions of belief at face value, without reducing them to things like denominational affiliation or to a reductive "medical materialism."[27]

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[26] The reason being is that James's definition of religion, while nuanced, seems oblivious to the ways religion can be for some a distinctly social experience: "[r]eligion...shall mean for us *the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine*" (*VRE* 31).

With its emphasis on the theology behind practical effects of direct religious experience and sensitivity to belief as a human activity not necessarily reducible to ideological or denominational affiliation, this dissertation also, incidentally, provides an intellectual background for the practice theory of historians and sociologists like David Hall, Meredith B. McGuire, and Robert Orsi.[28] Phenomenologically and empirically oriented, "[p]ractice theory enjoins historians to see the Christian life within a dense pattern of cultural actions, dispositions, regimens, hierarchies, habits, resistances, and appropriations" (3), explains the introduction to *Practicing Protestants*. According to McGuire, scholarly "concepts for describing and analyzing individuals' religions simply fail to capture how multifaceted, diverse, and malleable are the beliefs, values, and practices that make up many...persons' own religions" (5).[29] This emergent focus on religious practice as *lived* - rather than explanatory gestures toward denominational allegiance or ethnic background - is an effort to recover the practical substance of religious belief.

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[27] What James called "medical materialism" refers to a set of reductive scientific theories that he is quick to disparage. As he memorably put it,

> [m]edical materialism finishes up Saint Paul by calling his vision on the road to Damascus a discharging lesion of the occipital cortex, he being an epileptic. It snuffs out Saint Teresa as an hysteric, Saint Francis of Assisi as an hereditary degenerate. George Fox's discontent with the shams of his age, and his pining for spiritual veracity, it treats as a symptom of a disordered colon. (*VRE* 13)

Regardless of James's innovatively empirical approach to religion, the twentieth century seemed deaf to the explanatory potential of his approach. Modern scholars like Russell McCutcheon, as Michael Slater points out, "have even gone so far as to argue that methodological naturalism - the view that only naturalistic explanations should be admitted for the purposes of doing scientific or scholarly inquiry - should be a basic commitment in the academic study of religion" (*Pragmatism* 27).

[28] In the introduction to his volume *Lived Religion in America*, David Hall calls attention to the fact that, "while we know a great deal about the history of theology and (say) church and state, we know next-to-nothing about religion as practiced and precious little about the everyday thinking and doing of lay men and women" (vii), a gap in scholarly knowledge that the field of lived religion attempts to close. In his contribution to that volume, Robert Orsi agrees that "'religion' cannot be neatly separated from the other practices of everyday life, from the ways that human beings work on the landscape, for example, or dispose of corpses, or arrange for the security of their offspring. Nor can 'religion' be separated from the material circumstances in which specific instances of religious imagination and behavior arise and to which they respond" (6-7).

The fact that "religion-as-lived...needs to make sense in one's everyday life, and…needs to be effective, to 'work'" (McGuire 15), highlights the impact pragmatic attitudes have had on the development of modern critical attempts to understand religious practice.[30] Lived religion's focus on practical effects of beliefs and not the origins or essentials of faith, and the method's openness to a multiplicity of perspectives whose validity is judged based on their "workings" makes the field the rightful heir to Jamesian pragmatism, a legacy that this dissertation explores in the imbricated proximities between American evangelicalism and pragmatism.[31] While its intersection with the methodology of lived religion is intellectual and not sociological or ethnographical, this dissertation does draw from the wealth of empirical research conducted in the sociology of religion and related fields.

But this is not to suggest that some of these practices are necessarily Protestant in nature, though they have often been routinely associated with Protestantism broadly conceived. Revivalism, which I focus on in the first half of the dissertation, has often been understood to be a distinctly Protestant phenomenon, but as Jay P. Dolan has shown, revivalism was just as much a part of Catholic cultures in the nineteenth century.[32] And modern movements that seek to reinvigorate people's commitments to faith - such as Jewish Renewal and Islamic *tajdid* - challenge prevailing assumptions that religious efforts at personal or social renewal are innate to Protestantism alone. The same Protestant normativity has been noted in James, specifically regarding the emphases in *Varieties* on conversion, a higher power that responds (potentially) to human desires, the curious celebration of religious individualism, and the largely Protestant sources he uses to argue his claims.[33] This dissertation situates itself alongside recent efforts to understand the often staggering complexity of religious affiliations and devotional practices, while being sensitive to the reality that many of these affiliations can be conducted in the blind spots of our academic radars.

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[29] This focus on lived religion, headed by such disciplines as sociology, anthropology, and economics, is the latest phase in the development of scholarly interest in "popular religion," religion as experienced by the historical actors who shaped current religious landscapes. In his introduction to *Religion and American Culture*, David G. Hackett points out that the "new area of 'popular religion'" emerged around the 1960s and 70s when scholars began to realize that church history - until that time the major sources for our understanding of religious history - provided insufficient and potentially skewed explanations of social change (ix-x).

[30] For those who visit the grotto at St. Lucy's in the Bronx, as Orsi shows, the source of the water or the fact that the grotto is a *replica* is irrelevant to pilgrims' beliefs that the water is, indeed, invested with curative powers. The ritual of gathering water *works* for those who believe in it ("Everyday Miracles" 4-7).

[31] The relationship between Protestant traditions and current trends in religious studies and American spiritual practice has been recognized by Amanda Porterfield: "[w]hile neither religious studies nor current American interest in the therapeutic benefits of spirituality is by any means limited to people identify themselves as Protestants, they carry important vestiges of Protestant thought and thus exemplify its shaping role in the larger context of American religious thought" (200).

If there are in fact moments in which James took Protestant to stand for religion in general, as it seems most James scholars think he did, tracking Protestant theology alongside the development of Jamesian pragmatism would just be taking the next step in providing a historical account of how Protestant evangelicalism exerts influence on the culture that informed pragmatism. What is needed, and what I aim to provide with this dissertation, is an account of exactly *what* these attitudes are and how they transform over time. My opening gambit is that attitudes can be located, specifically in the Protestant evangelicalism of Edwards and Finney, the utility-based cosmology of Swedenborg and Henry James, Sr, and most self-consciously in the evangelical reforms of the Social Gospel movement.

In an effort to get a comprehensive sense of an emerging pragmatic temper from Edwards to the Social Gospel, I quote widely and across a variety of fields: theology, literature, philosophy, psychology, biography, diaries, and others. In this sense, this dissertation is an interdisciplinary intellectual history, though one that is wary of the method's pitfalls of generalization, simplification, and the ever-present threat of mistaking a case of multiple discovery for a possible historical causality (take Edwards and Swedenborg's pragmatizing of space and time, which I discuss in chapter three). Though I cite compelling biographical connections between religious and philosophical domains where I deem them important, I'm as overall uninterested in causal arguments as Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr was when he deliberately neglected to tell us the ultimate cause of Elsie Venner's hypnotic power over snakes.[34] Like pragmatism and Holmes, Sr's tale of concealed causes, it's the effects we now live with that matter.

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[32] In his *Catholic Revivalism*, Jay P. Dolan focuses on the evangelical crusades of the Catholic denominations of the Jesuits, Redemptorists, and Paulists. See his introduction.

[33] Several commentators have noted the striking Protestant character of the *Varieties*. David Hollinger provides a useful examination of this aspect of the *Varieties*. See "Damned for God's Glory: William James and the Scientific Vindication of Protestant Culture" in *William James and a Science of Religions*, Ch. 1.

This dissertation will also be useful to those interested in the intellectual background of pragmatism as it pertains to other aspects of American life and history. While I steer clear of causal claims regarding religion's role in the shaping of pragmatism, I don't think it's a tenable position to claim that religious phenomena had *zero* impact on the kinds of ideas and methods - and their limits - that constitute the pragmatic method. "Although James was not a Christian in any traditional sense," Michael Slater reminds us, "his thinking about religion was shaped in important ways by the predominantly Protestant culture and society of his time" (*Philosophy* 10).

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[34] In Holmes, Sr's "medicated novel" *Elsie Venner* (1861), the cause of Elsie's power over snakes is only hinted at. A woman in a relationship of hypnotic seduction with snakes - obvious Garden of Eden imagery - points to original sin as a potential cause. But there is also the fact Elsie's mother was bitten by a snake while pregnant, suggesting a medical explanation. Perhaps Elsie is one of those gifted "magnetizers" who, like spirit-rappers and clairvoyants, could bridge the gap between the natural world and the spiritual, and who filled the pages of commission reports, popular magazines, and scientific journals. The novel is candid about its purpose - "to test the doctrine of 'original sin' and human responsibility for the disordered volition coming under that technical denomination" (xii).

It seemed common in American nineteenth century fiction to conceal the specifics of the very thing that sets the narrative in motion. In Charles Brockden Brown's *Wieland* (1798), the spontaneous combustion of Wieland, Sr is the first major event in the novel. Yet Brown and his characters are less interested in solving that mystery than the one that comes in the form of Carwin, a ventriloquist whose own motives are as ambiguous as the thing that led to Wieland Sr.'s death. Nathaniel Hawthorne would deploy a similar narrative technique. What sets the moral drama of *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) in action is a crime we never see, which is only referred to obliquely, and whose definitive proof is the preternatural "little elf" (90), Pearl, a figure infamous for her symbolic ambiguity. Hawthorne seems less interested in the lurid details of an adulterous liaison exposed than in the very real social and psychological effects produced by it. While Brown was interested in the limits of knowledge and Hawthorne in the human relationship to symbols, both attempted to deal with a world in which knowledge of motive, causation, or creation are beyond apprehension, if not unthinkable.

This dissertation is an effort to appreciate those formative influences without reducing them to dubious causalities.

A Note on Limitations and Some Implications of Pragmatic Attitudes

Though this dissertation is an intellectual history that tries to focus on attitudes and ideas, it recognizes the complications in sustaining such a focus. One of the criticisms of intellectual history is its tendency to sidestep contexts in pursuit of irreducible ideological components, "unit ideas," as Arthur Lovejoy called them. So an intellectual history about pragmatism that ignored context - without which a pragmatic account of experience could not exist - would be a contradiction. Feminist scholarship, recognizing pragmatism's contextual limitations, has performed a great service in reminding pragmatism that such contexts include race, gender, class, and sexual preference in the interpretations of experience.

The most obvious limitation of this dissertation is that it tends to repeat the white male canonicity of intellectual histories of old. Jonathan Edwards, Charles Finney, Lyman Beecher, Henry and William James, Jacob Riis, Charles Sheldon are the major players. But this hardly unfamiliar cast of white male characters has enjoyed the privilege of being seen as the intellectual and religious backbone of American history for some time, to the exclusion of historically documented contributions of other groups.[35] This dissertation is not ignorant of the cultural implications in which evangelicalism and pragmatism are entangled, and each chapter makes an effort to account for how problematic those entanglements have been and still are to this day.

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[35] See Cornel West's *The American Evasion of Philosophy* for a consideration of pragmatism and race. For a still-relevant examination of the contributions of women and feminism to pragmatism, see Charlene Haddock Seigfried's *Pragmatism and Feminism* (17-66). For follow-up attempts to forge a feminist pragmatist perspective that self-consciously builds on Seigfried's work, see Erin McKenna's *The Task of Utopia: A Pragmatist and Feminist Perspective* (2001), Richard Rorty's "Feminism and Pragmatism" in *Truth and Progress* (1998), and Sean Epstein-Corbin's "Pragmatism, Feminism, and the Sentimental Subject" (2014).

Though James and other first-wave pragmatists deeply respected the role of context in shaping knowledge, these contexts tended not to include race, gender, or class. James's major works on the epistemology behind pragmatism - *Pragmatism, Essays on Radical Empiricism, A Pluralistic Universe* - say next to nothing about such cultural categories as formative of individuals' experiences. He is, for example, virtually silent on race. For Peirce, the "practical bearings" of his pragmatic maxim seem to belong exclusively to trained (male) specialists. In Dewey's writings, too, Charlene Seigfried observes, "[w]ith the exception of [his] brief polemical addresses supporting women's issues, women as such do not figure much in pragmatist writings, not even in those of women writing in the pragmatist tradition" (31).[36] Considerations of class as well tend to appear only as occasional anecdotes in James's writings, when he isn't being outright dismissive of the impoverished.[37] Moreover, the radical part of radical empiricism includes the suggestion that experience itself can be detached from human actors. In that case, not only are cultural contexts irrelevant to experience, there aren't even any people to experience them.

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[36] Self-consciously writing against the virtual silence on women pragmatists in works like Cornel West's *The American Evasion of Philosophy* - an influential work that nevertheless heavily suggests the emergence of pragmatism to be a male-dominated history beginning with Emerson - Charlene Seigfried pays homage to the women who made significant contributions to pragmatism: Louise M. Rosenblatt, who developed reader-response theory in 1938 (30); Charlotte P. Gilman (41); Christine Ladd-Franklin, who studied under Peirce at Johns Hopkins (completing the requirements for but not receiving her PhD) (45-6); Elsie Ripley Clapp, who served as graduate assistant to Dewey from 1911-27, and, like Jane Addams, demonstrably influenced Dewey's form of pragmatism (51); and several others.

[37] There's a marked ambivalence in James's writings on how he viewed the issue of class. On the one hand, he seems grateful for the (somewhat) direct experience of manual labor shocking him out of a romanticized sense of heroism. While on a "train toward Buffalo...the sight of a workman doing something on the dizzy edge of a sky-scaling iron construction brought me to my senses very suddenly. And now I perceived, by a flash of insight, that I had been steeping myself in pure ancestral blindness, and looking at life with the eyes of a remote spectator. [...] Not in clanging fights and desperate marches only is heroism to be looked for, but on every railway bridge and fire-proof building that is going up to-day" (*Talks* 175). On the other hand, James fails to see the same kind of heroism in the struggle to survive, even after a literal earth-shattering cataclysm. Surveying the damage following the 1906 San Francisco earthquake, James reports that "[t]he only very discreditable thing to human nature that occurred was later, when hundreds of lazy 'bummers' found that they could keep camping in the parks, and...even in some cases getting enough of the free rations in their huts or tents to last them well into the summer. This charm of pauperized vagabondage seems all along to have been Satan's most serious bait to human nature" ("Some Mental Effects 283). This aversion to the poor in the midst of disaster sounds like a moral misstep from the same man who claimed that "[t]he solid meaning of life is always the same eternal thing, - the marriage, namely, of some unhabitual ideal, however special, with some fidelity, courage, and endurance, with some man's or woman's pains" (*Talks* 189).

One would also be remiss to be tight-lipped about James's own Victorian views of the roles of women and men.[38] His criticism of Horace Bushnell's mealy-mouthed liberation politics toward women, for example, focused more on the minister's "redundant and careless" writing style than his posing a kind of halfway membership for women interested in government positions (*ECR* 247). Citing the same review, Seigfried comments that James "actually believed that 'the universal sense of mankind' confirms such subordination in women as an ideal" (116). When faced with the challenge that a living, breathing wife and an "automatic sweetheart" (what we might call a robot clone) would be pragmatically identical, James retreated to a "masculine" perception of what a woman provides a man: "[w]ould any regard her as a full equivalent? Certainly not, and why? Because...our egoism craves above all things inward sympathy and recognition, love and admiration" (*MT* 189).[39] Furthermore, it's no secret in James scholarship that the invigoration of the human will was decidedly one of masculine virility.[40]

Nor is pragmatism's theory of "the transformation of genius into practical power" ("Experience" 262), as Emerson envisaged it, without its racial implications. The tendency to hitch biology to ability, as Cornel West has shown, was true of Emerson, who linked the capacity of one's power or "genius" to one's race.[41] My own disclosure of a tradition of practically identifying the is and the does - pragmatism's linkage of being to action - also carries the makings of the insidious logics of determinism and essentialism. If it is true that one's alleged essence necessarily manifests in action, it follows that action necessarily manifests essence. Behavior provides the signature account of one's "essential" interior. Misapplied, the identification of the is and the does can reinforce stereotypes, justifying policies that further discrimination and disenfranchisement. What pragmatism seems to offer in the way of an essentialist doctrine, however, is curtailed by its abiding respect for variable experience and the human capacity for self-making (though as I address in the epilogue, neither is this respect for individual experience free of complications). Rorty has already noted how easy it is for culture to look like nature, a problematic conflation exposable as disingenuous by those who can articulate compelling counter-theories to naturalized oppression.[42]

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[38] It was true that James admired women writers and activists like Jane Addams, Annie Payson Call, and the clairvoyant who mystified his scientific sensibilities, Leonora Piper. But his "explicit support of the ideology of separate spheres," as Charlene Seigfried puts it, situates James within a tradition that deliberately excluded women from, or left tenuously susceptible to male power, their hard-won academic positions (111-13).

[39] Seigfried calls this episode in James's writing his "imaginary anticipation of 'The Stepford Wives' (119), citing it as one example of James's underexplored sexism.

[40] See for example West. James's essays, such as "The Energies of Man," "The Powers of Man," and "The Moral Equivalent to War" "reveal the degree to which James promotes notions of martial spirit and masculine virility in order to reinvigorate and regenerate individuals for moral purpose" (58). It is unclear how women would figure into this conception.

[41] Nonetheless dubbing Emerson a "liberal 'racist,'" West concludes in his reading of Emerson's *English Traits* (1856) that "Emerson's notion of power [is] inextricably bound with...personality and racial domination" (35).

But James's wasn't completely silent on these issues. He does, in fact, suggest that the distinction between a philosophy of elite rationalism and a philosophy appropriate to everyday life can be understood as a distinction of class. During the composition of the second lecture of *Varieties*, James wrote to Frances R. Morse that "[t]he problem I have set myself is a hard one: *first*, to defend (against all the prejudices of my 'class') 'experience' against 'philosophy' as being the real backbone of the world's religious life" (*LWJ, 2* 127). Here, James clearly sides with non-academics in legitimating the particulars of "experience," whereas "philosophy" (presumably the elite version separate from lived experience) belongs to the "vicious intellectual[s]" (*PU* 60). The radical empiricism bolstering the pragmatic method is a philosophy for the people. Not only that, James's writing style, drawing as it does from well-known literature and personal anecdotes and distrustful of esoteric philosophical jargon, is a style accessible to a broad audience. It certainly makes his mammoth 1100+ page *Principles of Psychology* more readable than tomes of comparable bulk.

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[42] It's probably no surprise that Rorty makes this argument in his chapter on "Feminism and Pragmatism," and his commentary on the feminist legal scholar Catharine MacKinnon's point that normalized inequality of women is overcome when we listen to "what women as women would have to say." See *Truth and Progress*: "injustices may not be perceived as injustices, even by those who suffer them, until somebody invents a previously unplayed role. Only if somebody has a dream, and a voice to describe that dream, does what looked like nature begin to look like culture, what looked like fate begin to look like a moral abomination. For until then only the language of the oppressor is available, and most oppressors have had the wit to teach the oppressed a language in which the oppressed will sound crazy - *even to themselves* - if they describe themselves *as* oppressed" (202-3). Emancipation politics depend on compelling arguments to disabuse the "naturalness" of oppression. However, the caveat needs to be addressed that, while Rorty does side with MacKinnon and other feminists to some extent, he doesn't go so far as claiming emancipation politics are goods in the hard realist sense: "I hope that feminists will continue to consider the possibility of dropping realism and universalism, dropping the notion that the subordination of women is *intrinsically* abominable, dropping the claim that there is something called 'right' or 'justice' or 'humanity' that has always been on their side, making their claims true" (210). Rorty's point is that feminists' claims to a universal or intrinsic humanity risk repeating the essentialist logic that enforces subordination in the first place.

James, along with many of the classical pragmatists, had a complex relationship with the cultural issues that today we find so urgent. I don't excuse James or any of the figures I examine for what seem like objectionable views. But neither do I denounce them. As Rorty put it, "[w]e have to stop talking about the need to go from distorted to undistorted perception of moral reality, and instead talk about the need to modify our practices so as to take account of new descriptions of what has been going on" (*Truth and Progress* 206). A faithful account tells us far more than measuring the past for its "truth" or "goodness." I don't pose this history of pragmatic attitudes against any moral backdrop, any monolithic surround of rightness or wrongness approximated more or less by the claims of a given generation. What I think is more important is appreciating these figures for the ways they sought to tackle problems specific to their own complex moments.

James existed before cultural studies departments, before it became customary to see experience as inseparable from the race, gender, or class of the experiencer. Dewey was a little more explicit about why he didn't talk about it; *A Common Faith*, for example, was intended to identify the "elements for a religious faith that shall not be confined to sect, class, or race" (87). If the separating out of experience from cultural categories is a blind spot on the part of classical pragmatism, it's incidental to its epistemological project, to get down to the substrate of experience, beyond the explanatory categories that gave experience communicable coherence, yes, but such categories that also threatened to distort its pure, empirical validity. Of course, the obvious tension here is the one Charles Taylor points out in James's stress on preconceptual experience, that "one might make the more radical...point, that the very idea of an experience that is in no way formulated is impossible" (26), that experience and interpretation of the experience are operations so proximate that any distinction urged between them is meaningless.[43] That may be the case, but James's concern - along with pragmatists in general - isn't that people aren't having pure experiences, but that the categorization of those experiences become, almost by a cognitive sleight-of-hand, value judgments which must be evaluated for how they shape the experience.

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[43] The extent to which direct experience is preconceptual and what possible evidential value that preconceptual state could proffer is one of the most well-known debates in criticism about James. See Slater's *Pragmatism and the Philosophy of Religion* for a lucid synopsis of the major figures in this debate, which include Richard Gale and Charles Taylor (12-13).

Summary of Chapters

In chapter one, I begin with the colonial theologian Jonathan Edwards, arguing that his adoption of pragmatic attitudes provides American evangelical theology with a logic for justifying religious experience based on its effects, putting him in direct conversation with later revivalists and Jamesian pragmatism. As such, this chapter's thesis challenges Cornel West's claim "that Emerson is the appropriate starting point for the pragmatist tradition" (6). Rather than focusing on his staggeringly voluminous "sermon mill," as Wilson H. Kimnach memorably put it, I give more space to Edwards's defense of the types of religious experience he encountered during the revivals of the Great Awakening as well as his less-read late theology. In works such as *Religious Affections* and the posthumously published *Two Dissertations,* Edwards retools Lockean sensory psychology and Calvinist orthodoxy to legitimate a model of experience and action that enabled believers' interactive commerce with God. My claim isn't that Edwards is a pragmatist, but that, in his attempt to wrest human experience away from the limitations of Lockean psychology and Calvinist determinism, he found himself making pragmatic moves. The elements of Edwards's theology I highlight will provide a convenient origin point for tracking these pragmatic attitudes through nineteenth century evangelicalism to the Social Gospel movement.

Chapter two brings the discussion to antebellum revivalism, focusing on the ministry of Charles Grandison Finney. In almost all histories of American pragmatism, this space would normally be filled by Emerson, whose inheritance from Edwards and legacy for James has been extensively written on. I don't challenge that genealogy; rather, I make the case for Finney's inclusion in it. I find useful William G. McLoughlin's still-relevant assessment of Finney, in his introduction to the latter's *Lectures on Revivals*: "[h]e believed...that a Christian nation must be based upon the devout personal faith in the revealed truth of God of each individual citizen. In this respect it might justly be claimed that he was more truly a spokesman of his age than any of the religious liberals or churchly Whigs who have commonly been granted that role" (vii).[44] To my mind, Finney embodies a distinctively pragmatic form of revivalism drawn from Edwards, but also from the intellectual climate of antebellum America - a climate that was becoming increasingly impatient of philosophical verbiage at the expense of immediate action and practical consequences of speculative claims.

Chapter three puts William James front and center, examining the extent to which religious movements in his proximity - specifically Swedenborgianism, Unitarianism, and Mind Cure - reflected pragmatic logics. As Ann Taves writes, "[i]n his effort to mediate between religion and psychology, James shared much with new religious movements, such as Spiritualism, Theosophy, and, especially New Thought" (272). Two figures will stand out as exemplary in the shift I want to explore: Emanuel Swedenborg and James's father, Henry James, Sr, a largely understudied figure in American intellectual history. This chapter makes the case that there are clear threads between the theology of Swedenborg - which Henry James, Sr thoroughly absorbed - and William's budding pragmatic philosophy.

In chapter four, I examine the pragmatic attitudes of the postbellum Social Gospel movement, a transatlantic phenomenon whose proximity to Jamesian pragmatism - and not least that of Peirce and Dewey - gives us perhaps the clearest picture of the relationship between pragmatism and the postmillennialism that largely defined many aspects of evangelical culture. In my view, the interdenominational movement - relatively underexplored outside of religious studies and histories of American religion - exerted tremendous influence on many aspects of American culture into the twentieth century, and it did so by adopting a self-consciously pragmatized Christianity. The question driving chapter four will ask: what if we were to think of Jamesian pragmatism not as a phenomenon separate from nineteenth century evangelicalism, but as a branch of the postmillennial spirit that so captivated Social Gospel audiences?

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[44] McLoughlin wasn't the only scholar who thought so. Mark Noll alleged - and I'm inclined to agree with him - that "a good case can be made that Finney exerted a more significant influence on American life, and certainly on American religion," than figures like Emerson, Daniel Webster, Horace Mann, and Henry Adams (177).

As I elaborate in the epilogue, this dissertation is more broadly an exploration of what I take to be the permeable boundary between the sacred and the secular. What scholars have referred to as the secularization thesis has seen a good amount of criticism over the past few decades, and to my understanding, there is still some distance to travel.[45] Beginning with a rejection of the rigid sacred/secular binary, the epilogue looks at some of the ways the category "secular" not only fails to explain non- or anti-religious aspects of American culture, but, once spoken, its polysemantic nature tends to produce more confusion and caricature of just what the person using it means. The epilogue will also discuss the fate and lingering implications of some of the key ideas and attitudes I will track in this dissertation.

The story I will tell is about pragmatic attitudes in American Protestant evangelical theology and practice from Edwards to the Social Gospel. In broad strokes, we will see the mobilization of these attitudes as defenses against the delegitimation of certain kinds of religious experiences, up until the Social Gospel movement, when theologians began invoking pragmatism by name and using strategies familiar to Edwards, Finney, and Henry James Sr. "American theology after James...began to take science seriously, to test ideas according to pragmatism, to appeal to experience, to develop an empirical methodology, to accept a degree of risk and tentativeness in their beliefs, to stress the importance of the individual, and to call upon some consensus of the community of leaders in formulating a theology" (14), said Crump Miller. All of this is true, except that "American theology" - by which I take Miller to intend a liberal Protestant, evangelical theology - didn't have to wait for James to arrive. As we'll see, each one of these theological shifts was operative in some degree from the period between Edwards and the Social Gospel.

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[45] The sociologist Steve Bruce, a proponent of the secularization thesis, argues that "modernization generates secularization except where religion finds or retains work to do other than relating individuals to the supernatural" (62). Intrinsically, then, religion's work is supernatural. Other sociologists like Peter Berger have called for a complete abandonment of the term secularization, replacing it with what he calls a "new paradigm...with two pluralisms - the co-existence of different religions and the co-existence of religious and secular discourses" (ix). While Bruce has a nuanced understanding of secularity - one that doesn't reduce it to simply mean "not religious" - Berger's "two pluralisms" paradigm is sensitive to the complexities of coexisting and ambiguously compatible discourses while avoiding the internal contradictions to which various uses of "secular" are prone.

Chapter I

The Pragmatic Attitudes of Jonathan Edwards and Colonial Revivalism

Introduction – Edwards Scholarship Through the Twentieth Century

> *[W]hen William James reverted to 'the good Locke' in order to rescue the empirical method from the Spencerian charnel house and attempted to restate the psychological relation of subject and object in terms that would discount a whole century of preoccupation with the thing-in-itself, he was unwittingly resuming where Edwards had been forced to leave off.*
>
> Perry Miller, "Jonathan Edwards on the Sense of the Heart" (124-5)

Perry Miller, the historian perhaps most associated with Edwards scholarship in the twentieth century, saw Edwards and James participating in the same intellectual endeavor - to "discount" the philosophical "preoccupation with the thing-in-itself." No stranger to a variety of fields of philosophical inquiry since Kant, the thing-in-itself - a concept referring to the ideal, transhuman ultimate "being" of a thing independent of human interaction or observation – came under scrutiny in American philosophy. The question for James, as it was for Edwards, seemed to be: of what *use* was a concept whose very nature was beyond human apprehension? Miller wasn't wrong to put Edwards and James on the same philosophical team. This humanistic approach to philosophy is where the theologian Edwards meets the agnostic James. For my purpose, Miller's essay, which in no small way helped establish the intellectual genealogy between Edwards and James, gives us a view of where we begin and where we're going, as this chapter will explore.[46]

Miller wasn't the only one who saw Edwards as patient zero of Jamesian thought. In 1939 Paul Anderson and Max Fisch described what H.S. Thayer simply referred to as Edwards's "latent pragmatisms" (6).[47] William Dean, writing in 1982, in language clearly echoing Miller's, felt that James had unconsciously channeled the Edwardsean spirit: "[radical empiricism] was in large part an unwitting resumption of Edwards' own epistemology" (115).[48] The historian William A. Clebsch wrote that the philosophical concerns shared by Edwards and James made them "eponyms of American religious thought and experience" (4), while San Hyun Lee drew a connection between Edwards's "dispositional ontology" and the ways Peirce and James conceived of habitual behavior as constitutive of identity.[49] Gregory Jackson observed that it was

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[46] While Miller's pivotal role in Edwards scholarship is virtually undisputed, his assessments of certain areas of Edwards's thought are not. Conrad Cherry's 1966 intervention *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards: A Reappraisal*, for example, rued the fact that "Miller frequently minimizes themes of Calvinist thought which were at the forefront of Edwards' reflective concerns" (3). Unconvinced by Miller's insistence that Edwards was a Lockean empiricist, Paul Helm argued that Miller's view was "an exaggeration of Locke's acknowledged influence over Edwards" (54). James Hoopes - more forceful than most - saw Miller's interpretation of Edwards's intellectual context as not just "oversimplified," but "grossly inaccurate" (850). Like these scholars, I understand Edwards's theistic beliefs to be inseparable from other aspects of his thinking.

[47] Anderson and Fisch make much of Jonathan Edwards and Benjamin Franklin's respective departures from Calvinism. See 74-81 and 124-29. Edwards considered himself a Calvinist, but with certain reservations: "I should not take it at all amiss, to be called a *Calvinist*, for distinction's sake: though I utterly disclaim a dependence on Calvin, or believing the doctrines which I hold, because he believed and taught them; and cannot justly be charged with believing in every thing just as he taught" (*Freedom* 13).

[48] There are reasons to agree with William Dean's claim here. Edwards does try to revise classical empiricism in order to tackle epistemological problems surrounding religious experience, though a more thoroughgoing examination of that connection is beyond the scope of this chapter. I'm inclined, however, to agree with James's student and early biographer Ralph Barton Perry, who, in his preface to James's *Essays in Radical Empiricism* (quoting James's own words no less), observed how pragmatism and radical empiricism shared a common epistemology: "if pragmatism be defined as the assertion that 'the meaning of any proposition can always be brought down to some particular consequence in our future practical experience,...the point lying in the fact that the experience must be particular rather than in the fact that it must be active'…; then pragmatism and [radical empiricism] come to the same thing." (xxi-ii).

[49] "Dispositional ontology" is Lee's phrase for the philosophical system Edwards develops as a means of getting away from classical theism, the doctrine of God's immutability and remoteness from Creation. According to Lee, "Edwards departed from the traditional Western metaphysics of substance and form and replaced it with a strikingly modern conception of reality as a dynamic network of dispositional

Edwards's "reconfiguration of Lockean epistemology" that "[reappeared]...in William James's defense of the pragmatism of faith" (69). Joan Richardson tied Edwards to William James via a series of stylistic turns in the American confrontation with an infinitely variable natural world.[50] Andrea Knutson traced how the Puritan conversion process "established the epistemological contours" (4) of what she refers to as "conductive imaginaries" from Edwards to James.[51] Most recently – though emphasizing less James than Charles Peirce – Ryan White explores a similar trajectory concerning these figures' interest in psychology.[52] Despite what must seem like a crowded field of scholars who can at times take Edwards as the undisputed progenitor of a variety of American intellectual traditions, my aim in this chapter is to manifest some of these "latent pragmatisms" in Edwards's theology and considerations of what counts as true religious experience.[53]

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forces and habits. Dispositions and habits, conceived as active and ontologically abiding principles, now play the role substance and form used to fulfill" (4). See also Lee's Ch. 2.

[50] Richardson's argument deals more heavily with Edwards's reading of Newton, especially his *Opticks* (1704), than mine, which focuses largely on Edwards's theological writings. But she is right, I think, to indicate the ways Edwards's sense of natural variability and his sense of individual conversion were catalysts for an epistemology not unlike that bolstering James's pragmatism and radical empiricism: "[a]stutely aware and respectful of the infinite variety of natural forms, including minds, Edwards understood that true conversion could only be an individual, idiosyncratic experience, *dependent*, like the myriad varieties, shades, hues and tones of color perceived, on the accidental composition of each being. His was, in other words, a *naturalized* version of election" (25).

[51] Knutson defines a "conductive imaginary" as "a conscious space organized, or that self-organizes, around the dynamics and tensions between emergent and stored up truth, uncertainty and certainty, and perception and objects perceived." These conductive imaginaries are, in Knutson's view, essentially the engines of perceptive power, drawn from the Puritan *ordo salutis* ("order of salvation"), in Edwards's "sense of the heart," Emerson's "transparent eyeball," and James's "uncertain universe," that express the "advancing spirit" in American religious and philosophical culture (3-4).

[52] In *The Hidden God*, White links Edwards, Emerson, and Peirce to a tradition characteristic of modernity, "that a paradoxical incorporation of the negative, hidden, or excluded side of the distinction" (8) between the revealed and the hidden God is what "modernity must evade in order to posit the necessity of its own claims to knowledge in the absence of divine guarantees" (3).

[53] Not that I believe situating Edwards at the helm of these traditions is unwarranted. But it's also worth pointing out the sources of Edwards's own thought. Locke, Berkeley, and the Cambridge Platonists are usually the most cited. See Holifield (102-26) for a useful review of the complex and largely European sources of Edwards's theology.

The goal in doing so isn't to nominate Edwards as a pragmatist.[54] Instead, I want to look closely at certain of his reinterpretations of Enlightenment psychology and Calvinist theology that lead him to conclusions that introduce into evangelicalism a series of pragmatic logics, logics whose reemergence in various contexts throughout nineteenth century American intellectual and evangelical cultures give rise to what will become Jamesian pragmatism. In this way, I join other scholars like Conrad Cherry, Sang Hyun Lee, Douglas A. Sweeney, and more recently Amy Plantinga Pauw in reappraising Edwards's theology for its role in the shaping of evangelical thought in America.[55] Doing so will not only illuminate this theology's intellectual connections to pragmatism, but – more to the broader purposes of this dissertation – help to reinstate the role of religion within a putatively secular history. Edwards's writings on the nature of God, the experiential dimensions of spiritual conversion, and his radical reinterpretation of the relationship between action and being are the primary – and to my mind underexplored – threads that will occupy this chapter.

The Reconciliation of Science and Religion

In addition to their preoccupation with calling the thing-in-itself to practical account, a key thread linking Edwards to James is the effort to reconcile scientific and religious modes of experiencing the world. As did many of his day, Edwards followed close on the heels of Newton, but also William Whiston, a strenuous advocate for what James E. Force has called the "Newtonian rapprochement between science and religion" (2).[56] To modern ears cued to the presumed incompatibility of scientific and religious epistemologies and accustomed to the specialization of professional disciplines, the endeavor to find the common thread linking disparate disciplines may sound counterintuitive.[57] Exploring Edwards's position at the nexus of what today we refer to separately as philosophy, theology, and science will help us see how his position as an intellectual broker incentivized the adoption of pragmatic attitudes in addressing theological disputes. By attempting to reconcile these seemingly disparate offices of thought, Edwards joined an intellectual movement centered on the irreducibility of experience and committed to the recovery of a unified world sundered by Cartesian dualism.

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[54] Though my interest here is to identify Edwards's pragmatic attitudes, it would be misleading to call Edwards a pragmatist. In his day, "pragmatic" still held onto its pejorative connotations of officious meddling and an excessive worldliness that could, in fact, endanger one's chances at salvation ("pragmatic"). A copy of a letter sent by "an association of ministers" to Edwards concerning how best to promote religion warns against "pragmatical, factious spirits, fomenting division" (*Letters* 280).

[55] Amy Plantinga Pauw's *The Supreme Harmony of All: The Trinitarian Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (2002) argues that "in [Edwards's] trinitarian thought the various facets of his life and genius – his philosophical explorations, his vital interest in discerning true religious affections, his critical appropriation of the Reformed tradition, and the affective, mystical element in his faith – moved toward harmonious resolution" (3). For the shaping of an antebellum theological culture shaped largely by reinterpretations of Edwards, see Sweeney's *Nathaniel Taylor, New Haven Theology, and the Legacy of Jonathan Edwards* (29-45).

Consequences of suturing science to religion include viewing the natural world as a field in which material facts are seen not as isolated, atomistic phenomena, but as meaningful manifestations of underlying divine action. Read rightly, according to the dictates of Reason and Revelation, the natural world manifests or *justifies* divine truths, making them practically apprehensible by human actors. [58] Because Jamesian pragmatism justifies the abstract truths of concepts by their empirically verifiable effects, the existence of this attitude in early eighteenth century Edwardsean theology reminds us that such theology had a hand in the shaping of

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[56] Edwards's absorption of Newtonian science is often cited in Edwards scholarship. Less noticed, though, is Edwards's research on Newton's student and successor to Cambridge's Lucasian Chair of Mathematics, William Whiston. An inspection of Edwards's reading lists at Beinecke Rare Books and Manuscript Library reveal that the eighteenth century divine had read Whiston at about the same frequency as he did Newton ("Reading List"). See also Wallace E. Anderson's introduction to Edwards's *Scientific and Philosophical Writings* (19).

[57] Considering the word "Newtonian" tends to call up images of a mechanical universe driven by inexorable laws, it seems surprising to some to learn of Newton's theism. Locke, too, is known more for his innovations in philosophy than for his Christian faith, two poles of his thought whose questionable compatibility resulted in his attempt to reconcile them in *The Reasonableness of Christianity* (1695). Another figure known less for his interest in the natural sciences than for his uncompromising Puritanism, Cotton Mather sought a similar reconciliation in *The Christian Philosopher* (1720).

[58] That James himself thought pragmatism could also be called naturalism is telling. In yet another place where he pits pragmatism against rationalism (this time critiquing the English Hegelian F.H. Bradley), James writes, "Mr. Bradley...turns his back on finite experience forever. Truth must lie in the opposite direction, the direction of the Absolute; and this kind of rationalism and naturalism, or (as I will now call it) pragmatism, walk thenceforward upon opposite paths" (*ERE* 99-100). My aim here isn't to make the dubious claim that pragmatism and revelatory naturalism are in reality identical, but only to note that they share a fundamental logic of manifestation.

American intellectual culture. I am interested in looking at Edwards via Jamesian pragmatism for just this reason: his rejection of the idea that some ultimate reality lies "behind" the observable universe and which is essentially distinct from human apprehension leads him, like Newton, to view force (his word was "habit" or "tendency") as meaningful *only in relation to* matter, and which is of a piece with his incredulity toward rational absolutes and things-in-themselves. As we'll see when we consider the pragmatic logic of his theory of atoms, Edwards confined the significance of a force to its manifestation in experience.

Arbitrating between science and religion demands that one rethink what counts as legitimate evidence. Paul's epistemological dictum that "we walk by faith, not by sight" (*KJV* 2 Cor. 5:7) doesn't also mean that one walks without evidence. To the problem of how sincere faith was related to experience, James suggested an answer. At a time when atheism became a social possibility, James appreciated the evidentiary possibilities for believers: "the active faiths of individuals in [religious hypotheses], are the experimental tests by which they are verified, and the only means by which their truth or falsehood can be wrought out" (*WB* xii). Experimental (i.e., experienceable) evidence can be made hospitable to the evidence of faith. Beliefs being rules for action, according to Peirce, James cited action in the "objective" world as the best evidence we have to garner the "truth" of our condition.[59] A guiding belief for both Edwards and James is that belief compels us to act, that belief can be pragmatically justified by those actions. "[W]e may undoubtedly infer," Edwards professed, "that mens works...are the highest evidences by which they ought to try themselves" (*RA* 410). Here, as elsewhere, Edwards makes practice itself constitutive of being; how a thing behaves is the best test of what a thing *is*, a conclusion that is the result of reconciling different modes of epistemological inquiry.[60] This relaying the claims of various disciplines to the substrate of experience is the primary logic by which Edwards and James sought to harmonize the various faculties of human knowledge. And while the question of salvation certainly meant different things for Edwards and James, they pursued their destination using remarkably similar paths. "[P]ragmatism," James says, "may be be a happy harmonizer of empiricist ways of thinking with the more religious demands of human beings" (*Pragmatism* 33), but pragmatism's relay through experience could also be applied to fields beyond empiricism and religion.

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[59] In "The Fixation of Belief," Peirce writes that what "distinguishes doubt from belief...is a practical difference. Our beliefs guide our desires and shape our actions" (9-10), an idea whose origin he was quite transparent about. Depicting a meeting of the Metaphysical Club, Peirce relates that one of the members, the lawyer and "disciple of Jeremy Bentham," Nicolas St. Green, "often urged the importance of applying [Alexander] Bain's definition of belief, as 'that upon which a man is prepared to act.' From this definition, pragmatism is scarce more than a corollary; so that I am disposed to think of him as the grandfather of pragmatism" (*CP* 5:12). See also Max H. Fisch's "Alexander Bain and the Genealogy of Pragmatism" (413).

[60] The question of how to certify inner grace occupied Edwards's grandfather, Solomon Stoddard, whose influence shows in his sermon *The Tryal of Assurance* (1698): "[i]f there be no act of grace, there is no sincerity; therefore if he sees no act of grace, he sees no sincerity; when there is no act of grace, there is no principle of grace" (9). Elsewhere, Edwards extends his dynamic philosophy to the action of grace on

On its surface, the conjunction between the anti-rationalism of pragmatism and religion would seem counterintuitive, considering the latter's historical allegiance to theological absolutes and predetermined eschatologies. This apparent incompatibility though is disarmed by Protestantism's authorization of individual experience over and against institutional and dogmatic means of salvation. Respect for the possibilities of human experience is the diplomatic link between ostensibly irreconcilable systems. As James put it in a letter to his friend Thomas Davidson, "I sometimes find myself wondering whether there can be any popular religion raised on the ruins of the old Christianity without the presence of that element which in the past has presided over the origin of all religions, namely, a belief in new *physical* facts and possibilities" (*LWJ, 1* 236). To James's mind, popular religion in its origin is conducive to an empiricism that respects "facts and possibilities" pursued independently of the dogmas of "the old Christianity." The effort, then, to reconcile separate domains of thought – science, nature, the material world; and human faith – lead both Edwards and James to their common epistemological denominator: the field of direct experience in all its variability and possibility. Idiosyncratic religious experiences, the practical effects of heterodox belief, the potential for new truths to reshape a past conversion – to name a few – become epistemologically valid. This is not to ignore the clear historical differences between Edwards and James, but exploring this denominator highlights the ways in which Jamesian pragmatism and the evangelicalism tradition I am scrutinizing should not be seen as entirely distinct.

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the human soul: "all grace leads to practice" (*EW* 294). The genuine meaning of grace - God's active engagement with an individual - rests in that individual's actions in the world.

James's on the Will and Edwards's "Sense of the Heart" as Intuitive Experience

God, I own, cannot be denied to be able to enlighten the understanding by a ray darted into the mind immediately from the fountain of light.

John Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (533).

One interpretation of how the concept of experience developed in America is deceptively simple: the Puritans simply carried Baconian empiricism over the Atlantic.[61] But the experience with which Jamesian pragmatism concerns itself is a far cry from that which provides the empirical data for Baconian science. For one, the radical empiricism informing pragmatism accepts a much wider view of experience than science. And while both science and pragmatism stress empirically verifiable effects, science does so in order to make more refined predictions, whereas pragmatism would consider such predictions forever in a state of revisability according to shifting contexts. Pragmatism, too, has room for highly individualized or faith-based accounts of reality – visions of the afterlife, for example – that make practical differences in the lives of believers, whereas the same cannot be said for scientific validation that rests on the *repeatability* of experimental phenomena. In Baconian science, experience is commensurate with the five senses, while rejecting the overemphasis on syllogistic logic.[62] But James's exponential amplification of the field of experience argues that the possible repository of experiences confirmed by the senses or individual faith does not exhaust our notion of reality.[63]

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[61] This is true, in part. But as Sarah Rivett has shown, the sense-based epistemology of Bacon encountered challenges of its own on the American strand, specifically in the process of disclosing the validity of conversion experiences of colonists (see *Science of the Soul*, Ch. 1, especially 40-4).

[62] In *Novum Organum* (1620), Bacon established the epistemological groundwork for what would come to be the scientific method: "[o]ur method...consists in determining the degrees of certainty, while we, as it were, restore the senses to their former rank, but generally reject that operation of the mind which follows close upon the senses, and open and establish a new and certain course for the mind from the first actual perceptions of the senses themselves" (6). James hoped to radicalize this empiricism, greatly widening the field of what counted as experience, even beyond the five senses. "To be radical," James declares, "an empiricism must neither admit into its constructions any element that is not directly experienced, nor exclude from them any element that is directly experienced" (*ERE* 42)

James recognized the distinction between the criteria of scientific empiricism and those of the supernatural claims of religious experience. The latter don't necessarily conform to the former. In many Protestant denominations, for example, authenticity of devotion is linked to its privacy. "[L]et us never forget," Rev. James Bennett said in his 1818 tract *Religion of the Closet,* "that the secret devotion of the closet is so essential to the life of our public services, that without it the most specious appearances are but splendid hypocrisy" (1). Hence, the most important religious experiences are not necessarily subject to corroboration, unrepeatable outside of individual reportage and secondhand accounts. The fact that "[t]rue religion disposes persons to be much alone in solitary places," as Edwards puts it, tends to instantly marginalize religious experiences as being exempt from verification by consensus, a hallmark of scientific empiricism. This separation between the scientific and the religious/metaphysical would have satisfied Chauncy Wright, James's intellectual confrère and fellow member of the Metaphysical Club. For Chauncy,

> the whole nature of the modern civilized man includes both these opposing tendencies in speculation, the metaphysical and scientific…. A conflict between them arises, however, only where either disposition invades the proper province of the other. (249)

In response to this epistemic segregation, James posits a "system that will combine...the scientific loyalty to facts…, but also the old confidence in human values and the resultant spontaneity, whether of the religious or of the romantic type" (*Pragmatism* 12).[64] The emergence of pragmatism in the postbellum moment is an indication that the longstanding nineteenth century conflict between scientific empiricism and the claims of religious experience had come to an insurmountable head.

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[63] This is why Michael Slater (in agreement with Hilary and Ruth Anna Putnam) calls James a metaphysical realist (659). See also James's *Meaning of Truth* (190-97). I return to the Jamesian account of reality and its connection to the Social Gospel movement in chapter four.

[64] Not that James wasn't influenced by Chauncey in powerful ways. In a still relevant examination of Chauncey's contribution to the founding of pragmatism, Edward Madden notes the ways in which James's doctrine of the will to believe was shaped by the thought of the agnostic Chauncey. See Ch. 2.

Another problem that arose for James was one that concerned Edwards: the segregation of the senses themselves. A hallmark of Enlightenment psychology argued that faculties existed in discrete forms with their own particular functions, linked in a unidirectional and rational chain of causality.[65] In his examination of the affections' role in religious experience, however, Edwards refuses to accept this interpretation at face value:

> [t]he will and the affections of the soul are not two faculties; the affections are not essentially distinct from the will, nor do they differ from the mere actings of the will and inclination of the soul, but only in the liveliness and sensibleness of exercise. (*RA* 17)[66]

What distinguishes a faculty from others is its particular "liveliness and sensibleness of exercise," its sensorially *felt* function in experience. The only warrant we have for distinguishing between faculties is with reference to the *effects* they produce, not in reference to an abstract psychological model imposed on experience and independent of human action. Belief is meaningful only with respect to how we act on it.

James too made affections central to how we understand the will. In his effort to move beyond the limitations of faculty psychology, James understands humanity's "willing nature" as fundamentally entangled with our "passional nature:"

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[65] As James points out in *Talks to Teachers* (1892), "Locke introduced this theory in a somewhat vague form. Simple 'ideas' of sensation and reflection, as he called them, were for him the bricks of which our mental architecture is built up" (31). Rightly or wrongly interpreted, Locke's sensory psychology was one of James's obstacles in his attempt to formulate a system of how direct experience works - not by discrete mental entities, but by an irreducible substrate of "pure experience" to which we *apply* the categories of will, reason, etc.

[66] Edwards's use of the key term "affection" can be easily misunderstood, as "affect" ranges variously from deeply rooted feeling to the mere performance of such, from a fondness of a thing to the sensory impressions of that thing upon the mind. McClymond and McDermott gloss Edwardsean affections as "the source and motivating power of thoughts and feelings" (32), without being the thoughts and feelings themselves. Instead, the affections "represent the fundamental disposition and inclination of the human self - a complex synthesis of emotion, volition, and intellect" (70).

> When I say 'willing nature,' I do not mean only such deliberate volitions as may have set up habits of belief that we cannot now escape from, - I mean all such factors of belief as fear and hope, prejudice and passion, imitation and partisanship, the circumpressure of our caste and set. (*WB* 9)

That James felt the need to clarify what he meant by "willing nature" indicates some of his audience were thinking of the mind in the terms of Enlightenment psychology, as a container for discrete mental faculties. What this means for pragmatism is that the practical distinctions of a conception must be *felt* distinctions, that the "deliberate volitions" that shape our conduct are inseparable from the affectional matrix. Exploring how James and Edwards understood the will as a faculty whose operation is entangled with feeling will illuminate the ways in which they represent the tradition I'm disclosing.

What we are seeing – and what will become central to pragmatism later in the nineteenth century – is the assessment of human affections, not as the fallen sensorium irrevocably polluted by original sin, but as that which connects us to whatever it is we call divine, the chief conduit between the creature and the creator. A cornerstone of American revivalism, the valorization of the affections as a litmus test of true religion will also come to occupy a central place within pragmatic attitudes regarding religion; it's the felt distinctions of a belief that make it significant and, for James, "true." The way to God is through the heart of human believers. Though Edwards very nearly comes to the opinion of his revivalist descendants, he always remained committed to doctrines that sustained the insurmountable divide between human and divine natures, such as original sin and total depravity.[67] But if recognizably Calvinist texts like *Original Sin Defended* and *Freedom of the Will* kept closed the door between the corporeal and divine, the material and spiritual, it was Edwards's most enduring and influential text, *Religious Affections*, that left it unlocked.

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[67] After exhaustively arguing against Arminian notions of a self-determining will in *Freedom of the Will*, Edwards makes sure to remind his readers that his argument has left intact the five pillars of Calvinist orthodoxy: total depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement, efficacious grace, and perseverance of the saints (282-87). While I've noted the similarities between Edwards and James on their rethinking of the human will, a crucial difference rests in Edwards's insistence on necessity. The same cannot be said of James, for whom the will always involved an element of risk, and which scientific skepticism tended to enervate: "[t]o preach skepticism to us as a duty until 'sufficient evidence' for religion be found, is tantamount therefore to telling us, when in presence of the religious hypothesis, that to yield to our fear of its being error is wiser and better than to yield to our hope that it may be true" (*WB* 26-7).

It did so by articulating a theory of direct experience Edwards called the "sense of the heart," a concept that Perry Miller made much of and which has been a staple of debates in Edwards scholarship.[68] In his 1734 sermon, *A Divine and Supernatural Light*, Edwards describes it like this: "a true sense of the divine excellency of things revealed in the Word of God," contrasting it with "speculative or notional" knowledge (Smith 111). It is "a kind of intuitive and immediate evidence" (113) unobtainable by natural means yet "makes use of...human faculties" (114) by sanctifying the reason and clarifying judgment. Its central function is the purification of the understanding so that ideas flourish in their full reality unclouded by the fallen human sensorium: "that notion that there is a Christ, and that Christ is holy and gracious, is conveyed to the mind by the Word of God: but the sense of the excellency of Christ by reason of that holiness and grace, is nevertheless immediately the work of the Holy Spirit" (115). The Holy Spirit, then, operates as the affectional contact between divinity and human subjectivity. The sense of the heart vitalizes the rational architecture of the mind, providing an epistemologically valid form of knowledge linked directly to the affections.[69]

The sense of the heart as an intuition is foremost a feeling of radical conviction. Rather than keeping separate the various faculties in their respective mental compartments, Edwards's sense of the heart functions as the affectional space within which faculties likes the senses and the understanding are blended into an original singularity in which the elements of experience have yet to be differentiated into subject/object, idea/thing, creature/creator:

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[68] For a concise history of the variety of theories surrounding the sense of the heart in Edwards scholarship, see McClymond, "Spiritual Perception" 195-97.

[69] And *vitalize* is the right word, since this intuitive power functions the same for James:

> What really *exists* is not things made but things in the making. Once made, they are dead, and an infinite number of alternative conceptual decompositions can be used in defining them. But put yourself *in the making* by a stroke of intuitive sympathy with the thing and, the whole range of possible decompositions coming at once into your possession, you are no longer troubled with the question which of them is the more absolutely true. (*PU* 263-64)

By inserting oneself "*in the making*" of an ongoing, living, shifting reality, James argues, "a stroke of intuitive sympathy" will animate one's senses so that the apprehension of truth will be possible. James doesn't tell us *how* one should activate this intuition aside from putting oneself in the way of it. James's language of decomposition and death to describe a purely rational world is one side of the antithesis; the phenomenon of intuition, whenever it comes, puts us in commerce with living realities and grants us what Edwards would call "an actual and lively discovery of this beauty and excellency" (113).

> I say, a sense of heart; for it is not speculation merely that is concerned in this kind of understanding; *nor can there be a clear distinction made between the two faculties of understanding and will,* as acting distinctly and separately, in this matter. (215, my emphasis)

We remember: “the will and the affections of the soul are not two faculties; the affections are not essentially distinct from the will, nor do they differ from the mere actings of the will and inclination of the soul, but only in the liveliness and sensibleness of exercise” (17). Edwards’s “sense of the heart,” then, functions as a form of intuition powerful enough to maintain the original homogeneity of faculties prior to their rational partitioning into specialized faculties. For saints elected by the Spirit for this spiritual sight – and it was most certainly the *elect* for whom this intuition was reserved – there is no difference between understanding and volition, as the sense of the heart overcomes any faculty imbalance by aligning human affections with will and, ultimately, aligning the human will with God’s to manifest one’s sanctified status in pious behavior.

“Not speculation merely,” since the sense of the heart relies on intuitive perception rather than ratiocination. In other words, you can’t reason your way into a flash of intuition. The sense of the heart’s hyperacute spiritual discernment exceeds what reasoning is capable of: “[t]his holy relish is a thing that discerns and distinguishes between good and evil, between holy and unholy, without being at the trouble of a train of reasoning.” (*RA* 226). Breaking with the Enlightenment emphasis on the use of reason, Edwards’s sense of the heart carries the force of immediacy, of radical intuitive conviction superior to the philosophical tools with which Edwards and his fellow intellectuals were trained.[70] The truth felt in an instant, intuitively and without the deliberative effort of ratiocination is anterior to our attempts to systematize it. Thus, Edwards's sense of the heart is an explicit attempt to provide an epistemological psychological model unhampered by the rigid empiricism of Enlightenment rationalism. In this way, James and Edwards, by seeking a way out of such rationalism, authorize intuitive perception as a means of garnering truth.

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[70] As the epigraph to this section indicates, though Locke didn’t deny the possibility of immediate revelation to certain persons, he was deeply suspicious of it. His psychology accepted both reason and revelation as coimplicated modes by which we come to knowledge, but denounced “enthusiasm: which, by laying by reason, would set up revelation without it; whereby in effect it takes away both reason and

The sense of the heart is also a contextualist and non-foundationalist perception, as David Jacobson has shown. According to Jacobson, Edwards's "theory of affections adumbrates a pragmatic logic, which implicates the demands of reason and will in a broad theory of action" (384). In another example of his effort to revise the empiricism of the time, Edwards reconceives human psychology along pragmatic lines, linking the significance of affections to the contextualized conduct they produce. In opposition to Harold Bloom's assertion that the "American difference" in western philosophy began with Emerson, Jacobson contends – as does this chapter – that this pragmatic difference "begins at least with Edwards, who already recognized the inadequacy of universals models of epistemology" (384).

In his discussion of the new spiritual sense imparted to the saints by the Holy Spirit, Edwards is careful to distinguish between that sense and the "ordinary influences" (*RA* 139) specific to natural, i.e. unsanctified, men:

> so many...ways might be mentioned wherein the Spirit acts upon, assists, and moves natural principles; but after all, it is no more than nature moved, acted and improved; here is nothing supernatural and divine. But the Spirit of God in his spiritual influences on the hearts of his saints, operates by infusing or exercising new, divine, and supernatural principles; principles which are indeed a new and spiritual nature, and principles vastly more noble and excellent than all that is in natural men" (140).

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revelation, and substitutes in the room of it the ungrounded fancies of a man's own brain, and assumes them for a foundation both of opinion and conduct" (532). Though Edwards tended to follow Locke closely, he sought the epistemological means by which conversion activated by immediate revelation and rooted in the affections could be made possible for believers.

The insoluble uncertainty about what is truly supernatural and what is merely natural dogs *Religious Affections*. But because "it was never God's design to give us any rules, by which we may certainly know who of our fellow professors are his" (123), what Edwards is describing is something for which there can be no conclusive evidence apart from grace-laden intuition and the actions it produces. This new spiritual principle exists in an epistemological limbo - unfalsifiable, but undismissable.[71] Importantly, however, Edwards's attempt to reconcile the Calvinist doctrine of election and the science of sensory psychology leads him to adopt pragmatic attitudes in order to approach a reasonable - yet never fully guaranteed - assurance of the state of one's soul.

Unfalsifiable, undismissable, but definitely not a miracle. Edwards goes to a curious amount of effort to insist that "this new spiritual sense is not a new faculty of understanding, but it is a new foundation laid in the nature of the soul, for a new kind of exercises of the same faculty of understanding" (*RA* 137-8). What difference it makes whether this "new spiritual sense" is a "new faculty" or a "new foundation" has to do with the convention in Reformed theology that God discontinued miraculous works after the apostolic age – or at least allowed them to continue in a highly qualified manner. But it has more specifically to do with Edwards's assertion that the supernatural cannot be made manifest in a merely natural vessel: "God is pleased often to make use of men as instruments in working miracles. But when he makes use of intelligent voluntary agents in such an affair, he will use 'em in a manner that is agreeable to their nature, not as senseless, lifeless instruments" (*M* 1150). Edwards doesn't deny that miracles can take place, but he importantly makes them limited to the operations of the human sensorium already in place. Accentuating the natural part of supernatural and making the potency of a miracle commensurate with the Lockean conception of the mind as a "container" with limited sensory parameters, Edwards shows the extent to which he can imagine the reconciliation of faculty psychology with Christian theology.

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[71] There are strong parallels between the elusiveness of Edwards's sense of the heart and James's references in *Varieties* to the subliminal self, a concept he draws from Frederic W.H. Myers. "If the grace of God miraculously operates, it probably operates through the subliminal door" (270). Though its existence has been questioned in modern psychology, the subliminal region of the mind was an attempt, like Edwards's, to explain experiences that seemed to exceed ordinary human consciousness. Both the sense of the heart and the subliminal self, both imperceptible to empiricism and knowable only by their effects, encouraged a pragmatic temper to evaluate their phenomena.

So in what way can a saint have a reasonable assurance of their election status? For Edwards, the answer to that question is simple:

> The strong and lively exercises of a spirit of childlike, evangelical, humble love to God, give clear evidence of the soul's relation to God as his child, which does very greatly and directly satisfy the soul. (*RA* 178)

Invested with a greater immunity to falsification, intense love is the primary conduit between the saint and the divine, and the "strong and lively exercises" vitalized by that love are the "clear evidence" of its truth. Note that in this claim - as well as throughout *Religious Affections* - Edwards says nothing about the intellect as a means to a union with God. While Richard Hofstadter was accurate to maintain that "[i]t is to certain peculiarities of American religious life...that American anti-intellectualism owes much of its strength and pervasiveness" (56), Edwards's turn toward the affections wasn't a populist revolt against intellectualism, but an argument that the intellect could not by itself serve as the primary conduit between human thought and the intuition that led to holiness. In this way, the anti-intellectualism that Hofstadter is right to see characteristic of American evangelical religion may have less to do with a perceived populist disdain of academic elites than with theological attempts to make personal conversion an affair of the heart.

But Edwards then makes a further refinement to his theory of the affections' relation to intuition:

> though it be far from being true, that the soul, in this case, judges only by an immediate witness, without any sign or evidence...yet in this case the saint stands in no need of multiplied signs, or any long reasoning upon them. And though the sight of his relative union with God, and his being in his favour, is not without a medium, because he sees it by that medium, viz., his love; yet his sight of the union of his heart to God is immediate. (178)

Edwards has tossed aside "multiplied signs" and "long reasoning" in favor of an unmediated, affectionate connection to God. But Edwards's tortuous syntax embeds an influential doctrinal shift that reemerges in his later writings and will become central to James's epistemological project. Simplifying the formulation, that "the sight of his...union...is not without a medium…; yet his sight of the union of his heart to God is immediate," exposes what sounds like a contradiction.[72] The saint's relation to God is both immediate, yet conducted by a medium (love). As it would be for popular evangelicalism, the *heart* is the locus of immediacy that puts the saint beyond intractable doubts indivisible from lukewarm affections and mere ratiocination: "[l]ove, the bond of union, is seen intuitively: the saint sees and feels plainly the union between his soul and God; it is so strong and lively that he can not doubt of it" (178). This is what Perry Miller referred to when he spoke of Edwards and James's reconstitution of "the psychological relation of subject and object." By situating love as the "bond of union," a medium unmediated, Edwards provides an experience-based alternative to the subject/object distinction so problematic to efforts to get beyond Cartesian philosophy.

But this Edwardsean conception of religious experience wasn't accepted wholesale by either the clerical elite or lay believers; its claims to immediacy and productive uncertainty required justification. James too attempts to dismantle the dualism he felt had plagued western philosophy. In his reinterpretation of consciousness, James resolves the dualism of idea and thing with an empiricism more "verifiable and concrete:"

> The entering wedge for this more concrete way of understanding the dualism was fashioned by Locke when he made the word 'idea' stand indifferently for thing and thought, and by Berkeley when he said that what common sense means by realities is exactly what the philosopher means by ideas. Neither Locke nor Berkeley thought his truth out into perfect clearness, but it seems to me that the conception I am defending does little more than consistently carry out the 'pragmatic' method which they were the first to use. (*ERE* 10-11)

For James, Locke and Berkeley apparently unwittingly originated the pragmatic method when they saw no practical distinction between idea and thing, between realities and ideas. But James did not have to look across the Atlantic. He identifies a linguistic ambivalence in Locke and Berkeley that, in fact, was a theological implication followed out by Edwards.[73]

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[72] I take Edwards's tortuous syntax here as an effect of what James Lilley refers to as Edwards's attempt to think a "possibility of a new mode of 'imagining'" (32) that seeks to reconcile apparent disparities, preserving the singular subject and the impersonal in one stroke.

Recently, Gregg Crane has argued that the "unseen thread" connecting James to Emerson was their shared understanding of the human capacity for intuition. While it's unlikely James absorbed Edwards to the extent he did Emerson, I have tried to show how this interpretation of intuition also links James to Edwards.[74] Edwards's sense of the heart was an attempt to formulate a doctrine of direct experience that would enable a meaningful connection between God and humanity, exciting the potential for meaningful and vital action in the process. By orienting the extent of human knowledge within the field of direct, intuitive, and fundamentally variable human experience, emphasizing the practical effects of those experiences, Edwards's sense of the heart as intuition turns the acquisition of truth in a recognizably pragmatic direction.

Justifying Religious Experience and the Function of Uncertainty

Religion...shall mean for us the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine. *Since the relation may be either moral, physical, or ritual, it is evident that out of religion in the sense in which we take it, theologies, philosophies, and ecclesiastical organizations may secondarily grow.*

James, *Varieties of Religious Experience* (31)

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[73] Both Locke and Berkeley, incidentally, were avid readers of William Whiston's scientific works. See Force, Ch. 1.

[74] As Crane notes, James's voluminous marginalia of Emerson's works reveals that "James's sympathy for intuition...turns out to be the key for opening up the Emerson-James relation" (66), as both attempted to address "the problem of modernity - the problem of locating a source of value that is both of the self and beyond the self" (69). James did, in fact, copy out a large portion of Edwards's *Original Sin Defended*, and puzzled over the possibility of justice for people's *de facto* moral condemnation ("Notebook 4497"). See also Robert Richardson 52-3.

What is striking in James's highly diplomatic definition of religion is its indebtedness to what some have identified as a *Protestant* understanding of religion. Protestant, because James's definition treats religious institutions as secondary to the personal and immediate experience of one's spirituality. Protestant, especially, because a salient feature of this experience is its individualist nature. It's clear that James has in mind the religious experiences found in conversion narratives such as John Bunyan's *Grace Abounding* (1666) and Edwards's *Life of David Brainerd* (1749) – no less because the Quaker George Fox is James's ur-convert throughout *Varieties* – in which the spiritual journey to grace is a deeply personal endeavor tailored to individuals' salvation.[75]

James's understanding of religion is also uncannily Edwardsean. The central thesis of Edwards's *Religious Affections* argues that "true religion lies very much in religious affections" (51), adding that "[t]rue religion disposes persons to be much alone in solitary places, for holy meditation and prayer" (332). One longstanding feature of evangelical experience in America is its intensely individualistic nature, a legacy of Edwardsean revivalism that respects the infinite variety of personal experiences while citing those experiences as potential justifiers for a sincere state of grace. "Experience plainly shows," Edwards writes, "that God's Spirit is unsearchable and untraceable, in some of the best of Christians, in the method of his operations, in their conversion" (90). While in practice, Protestant religion does take a powerfully social character - in the form of meetinghouse prayer, election sermons, and feast days - the beginning of one's conviction, the originary moment when one "gets religion," is understood to occur on a one-to-one basis between the potential convert and the divine, whose access to the convert consists, importantly, in purposive affections.

Purposive, because feeling unmanifested in action carries no genuine meaning. In *Varieties*, James suggests that "if you wish to grasp [religion's] essence, you must look to the feelings and the conduct as being the more constant elements. It is between these two elements that the short circuit exists on which she carries on her principal business" (504). This connection between vitality and conduct was critical for Edwards: "[t]rue grace is not an unactive thing;

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[75] James's uncompromising individualism has been noted by commentators such as John J. McDermott and James O. Pawelski. Pawelski, especially, has scrutinized James's "dynamic individualism" across the philosopher's career, analyzing how he treats individuals in "social," "psychological," and "metaphysical contexts" (xiv-xv).

there is nothing in heaven or earth of a more active nature; for it is life itself, and the most active kind of life…. [...] Godliness in the heart has a direct relation to practice" (*RA* 359). That relation for Edwards consisted in action and conduct as the best justifiers of salvific grace. Edwards's contribution to American Protestantism, as William Clebsch recognized, "turned the attention of Americans to the outward manifestation, the sensibility, the palpability of religious experience in concrete human lives" (20).

In *Religious Affections*, Edwards is not only out to determine what a distinguishing mark of conversion is, but to make the affections the key feature of conversion experiences. In this scheme, any distinction between things and thoughts becomes less important than the sensible effects they generate:

> [w]hen the mind is sensible of the sweet beauty and amiableness of a thing, that implies a sensibleness of sweetness and delight in the presence of the idea of it: and this sensibleness of the amiableness or delightfulness of beauty, carries in the very nature of it the sense of the heart. (215)

It is entirely possible Edwards had read the same passages that led James to conclude Locke left ambivalent the difference between idea and thing. That the sense of the heart could be activated by either idea or thing, as Edwards thinks it can, casts any distinction between them as insignificant considering the certainty garnered by newfound spiritual perception. What is ultimately valuable, as he put it in "The Mind," is the "sensibleness" which prepares the individual convert to receive spiritual truths. Edwards's logic for this is quite simple: "[t]he truth that is in a mind must be, as to its object, and everything pertaining to it, in that mind; for what is perfectly without the mind, the mind has nothing to do with" (*SPW* 340).

Yet perhaps not so simple. Edwards's assertion that "what is perfectly without the mind, the mind has nothing to do with" isn't quite a defense of subjectivism. Edwards doesn't deny the possible existence of an out-there that exceeds our sensory apparatus, only that our apparatus - fallen as it is – has no practical commerce with it. All that we can know of "what we call 'truth'" (340) are the relations between ideas that come to us in experience, and *only* in experience. This is in keeping with Edwards's turn away from rational argumentation and his appreciation of the evidential capacities of experience and history.[76] Far from banishing the potential reality of extra-sensory concepts, he merely suggests that their practical utility in reference to our minds is not immediately justified. Whatever "truth" they can have for us, in other words, carries a pragmatic tentativeness.

To accept experience as such isn't the same as accepting experience *tout court* as self-authorizing. On the contrary. The bulk of the 400+ pages of *Religious Affections* is occupied with what *doesn't* count as a sure sign of grace. "Very high" (50) religious affections such as intense love and joy, "great effects on the body" (55), and an uncontainable glibness about "the things of religion" (59) may for Edwards be evidences of grace but are by no means incontrovertible proofs. Indeed, "false affections, if they are actually strong, are much more forward to declare themselves, than true" (62). The intellectual drama of *Religious Affections* lies in the philosophical effort of hunting down just what we can be sure of concerning outward effects, effects which may truly signify the presence of the Holy Spirit, or the masquerades of Satan.[77] "'Tis evident that there may be great religious affections, that may in show and appearance imitate gracious affections, and have the same effects on their bodies, but are far from having the same effect in the temper of their minds, and course of their lives" (*LPW* 126). For Edwards, it isn't only the outward effects of affections that certify their "gracious" status, but the effects on interior psychology as well. An insistence on interior sincerity alongside outward behavior and habits is key to this pragmatic attitude's defense against accusations that it merely endorses crass or unscrupulous materiality.

In this way, Edwards's intellectual context was not too different from James's. Edwards sought to harmonize the particulars of religious experience with the empiricism, inherited from Locke and Hume, that informed much of his thinking and practice. Importantly, though, Edwards articulated these pragmatic attitudes to justify certain religious experiences, not, as James does, to democratize religious expression and challenge secular science's tendency to dismiss belief.[78] Edwards was very much a Calvinist who believed in the divine election of predetermined saints to salvation. While his intellectual endeavor to justify these experiences echoes James's, his revision of this scientific empiricism was a particular response to the epistemological problems encountered during the Great Awakening of the 1730s and 40s, namely the problems of how to explain divine manifestation with reference to the human sensorium.[79] His debate with the Boston Old Light minister Charles Chauncy centered on what ultimately counted as the legitimate evidence of the Holy Spirit's work in the process of conversion.

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[76] See also Pauw's introduction to *The Supreme Harmony of All* for a discussion on how Edwards redirects proofs of trinitarianism from rational argument to historical evidence (10).

[77] The laborious mining for credible evidences of grace is a longstanding Puritan tradition. The diaries of early New England figures like Sarah Osborn, Thomas Hooker, and Cotton Mather depict the relentless self-examination and searching for possible evidences of grace that would seem to testify to their election. See Catherine A. Brekus's "Writing as a Protestant Practice: Devotional Diaries in Early New England," in *Practicing Protestants* (19-34).

The New England revivals of the 1730s and 40s weren't the first revivals in the colonies, but they did signal the rise of American popular revivalism.[80] In addition to being a profound shift in the American practice of Christian religion, revivals were also focal points for debates on human psychology. How the human mind experienced a state of grace, what constituted a right reaction to divine promptings, and, ultimately, what counted as a legitimate religious experience, were the crucial questions orbiting the revivals and the theological, philosophical, and scientific domains that sought to account for them. The hermeneutic tradition to which Edwards belongs views experience - specifically religious experience - as original and autonomous, most authentically known via the immediacy of the affections. Tracking this individualistic tradition in

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[78] For a useful overview of intellectual parities between Edwards and James, see Richard Hall's "Jonathan Edwards and William James on Religion." Published in 2012, articles and book chapters like this tell us that there are still vibrant areas of study between these two thinkers worth exploring.

[79] In using the phrase "Great Awakening," I'm cognizant that Edwards himself never did – not in the periodizing sense modern academics tend to use. His descriptions of the revivals ranged from "general awakening," "flourishing of religion," "revival of religion," "awakenings and encouragements," among others. While he does use "great awakening," at no point does he capitalize it, nor would he have viewed it as anything but a uniquely religious phenomenon consequential for professing Christians. Though I'm skeptical of periodizing schema, my use of the phrase is purely for the sake of convenience.

[80] The spiritual "refreshings" of Edwards's grandfather, Solomon Stoddard, represented an earlier movement of revivalism. Likely because of the stature of Edwards himself, the revivals surrounding Northampton, Massachusetts have received the most scholarly attention. It would be difficult anyway to find a generation in American history that didn't see some form of revivalism: the New Jersey revivals of the 1720s spearheaded by the Presbyterian Tennent clan and the ministers of their Log College; the tent revivals organized at Cane Ridge, Kentucky in 1801; the western New York camp meetings engineered and promoted by Charles Grandison Finney throughout the 1820s; another revival movement in the late 1850s; the postbellum urban revivals of Dwight L. Moody; the Asuza Street revivals of Los Angeles in 1906; and the calls for renewed spiritual awakenings by twentieth-century preachers like Billy Sunday, Billy Graham, and Lester Roloff.

Protestantism, Wayne Proudfoot observed that such religious experience “cannot be understood by representation but only by participation” (51). The question surrounding the Edwards-Chauncy conflict centered on justifying how that participation should be conducted and precisely what kinds of experience were legitimate in the conversion of souls to Christ.

Minister of Boston’s First Church, Charles Chauncy is known to history as Edwards’s leading opponent in the war on religious enthusiasm that swept the first decades of the eighteenth century. Memorably satirized in such works as Hogarth’s *Credulity, Superstition, and Fanaticism* (1762), religious enthusiasm wasn’t associated with possible evidence of conversion, but violent religious delusion and potential social disorder.[81] Though Chauncy would gradually turn toward the more democratic doctrine of universalism, he was a staunch Congregationalist, the namesake of his grandfather who served as second president of Harvard.[82] Chauncy’s commitments to the Congregationalist standing order ran deep.

Published three years before *Religious Affections*, Chauncy’s *Seasonable Thoughts* set out “to exhibit...a distinct and clear Idea of a Work of God, with the Appearance it will make; especially, when it is remarkable” (4). In response to reports of frontier enthusiasm (and likely still haunted by the memory of French Camisards and overzealous Methodists), he shows little more than incredulous pity for

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[81] Hogarth’s target in his famous satirical print is the Methodist movement, known for its style of popular preaching. The print depicts a zealous minister in a garishly ornate pulpit preaching to a congregation whose members are in various states of swooning, fainting, indulging in sexual immorality, or suffering from physical disorder bordering on the bizarre (including one ragged man vomiting on an unconscious woman while rabbits dash from her undercarriage). One cross-eyed minister - an obvious caricature of the itinerant Methodist George Whitefield - stands with a distorted face while “Whitfields Journal” sits in a bucket atop a book of “Demonology” by “K. James 1st,” a reference to the Catholic king’s belief in the occult. The image’s carnivalesque depiction of “enthusiasm” was precisely the kind of display Old Light theologians and ministers denounced as counterfeit expressions of religious fervor no different than mob insanity.

[82] Chauncy is best known for opposing the “liberal” strain of revivalism represented by Edwards, but his relationship to the changing tide of doctrine in the eighteenth century is somewhat more complex. We know, for example, that he harbored the democratic view of universal salvation decades before his *Salvation for All Men* (1784) was published. Several New England clergymen, too, shared the belief, but due to cultural constraints, were bound to adhere to Reform doctrine (see McClymond and McDermott 58).

> the Terror so many have been the Subjects of; Expressing it self in strange Effects upon the Body, such as swooning away and falling to the Ground, where Persons have lain...speechless and motionless; bitter Shriekings and Screamings; Convulsion-like Tremblings and Agitations, Strugglings and Tumblings, which, in some Instances, have been attended with Indecencies I shan't mention. (77)[83]

Chauncy's argument against religious experience of excessive variety implies that God, the most immutable force in the universe, logically will not manifest himself in mutable ways. Whereas "habitual Conduct" would denote the state of a person's soul, the spontaneity of "strange Effects upon the Body" look to Chauncy more like the fits and starts of a broken machine, leading the fallen human form to the commission of acts, at best, indecent and, at worst, too foul to mention. More the pluralist (to a point) and adopting an attitude of productive skepticism, Edwards faults Chauncy with not giving the ruler of the universe enough credit: why *can't* the divine manifest himself as he sees fit?

The New Light embrace of variety and productive uncertainty was implicitly a means of getting around the problem of latent error and skepticism in Enlightenment rationalism. If this rationalism were the generator of skepticism, how do we account for the phenomena of intuition and apparently innate moral knowledge? Generations after Edwards would meet this same challenge in the face of Scottish Common Sense's claim of a universal moral sense and the objectivity of truth. But the vaunted reliability of common sense and objective truth was undercut by the persistence of error. Edwards's acceptance of experiential variety introduced a liberalized understanding of individual conversion that didn't reject the possibility of reason so much as it left open the possibility of its idiosyncrasy.

Like Chauncy's *Seasonable Thoughts*, Edwards's *Religious Affections* ventures to ask: what are "*the distinguishing notes of that virtue and holiness that is acceptable in the sight of God?*" (iii). Whatever qualifies as a note, *Religious Affections* interprets them outside of conventional models of conversion, emphasizing instead the experienced particulars.[84] By definition, these "notes" stand in ambiguous relation to common experience - not interventions of the miraculous (as we've seen) or the delusive bodily exaggerations described by Chauncy, and not the conventional behaviors associated with proper religious practice: performing of the sacraments, prayer, paying church taxes, etc. A distinguishing mark is distinguished *from* mundane experience just enough to trigger faith in its supernatural provenance, but not so much that the mark cannot be cycled back to experience in the form of justifying conduct.

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[83] A writer known only as "anti-enthusiasticus" penned a 1742 tract entitled *A Faithful Account of the French Prophets, their Agitations, Extasies, and Inspirations*, with an appendix that compared the "excesses" of the Camisards to those of the New England revivals. By some accounts, "anti-ethusiasticus" was none other than Charles Chauncy himself (Taves 15).

But for all its fixation on what is and what is not a "distinguishing note" of saving grace, Edwards reminds us that the experience of conversion is, at bottom, shrouded in uncertainty:

> The manner of the Spirit's proceeding in them that are born of the Spirit, is very often exceeding mysterious and unsearchable: we, as it were, hear the sound of it, the effect of it is discernible; but no man can tell whence it came, or whither it went. [...] Experience plainly shows, that God's Spirit is unsearchable and untraceable, in some of the best of Christians, in the method of his operations, in their conversion. Nor does the Spirit of God proceed discernibly in the steps of a particularly established scheme, one half so often as is imagined. (*RA* 89-90).

"Experience plainly shows" our incapacity to determine beyond doubt God's methods of enlightening his elect. This staggering degree of uncertainty, while endemic to Edwards's Calvinism, is reinterpreted here as a productive means of opening the possibilities for individual conversion.[85] What Edwards does is take a theological mainstay and turn the field of experience into a zone of salvific possibility. The incapacity for systematic knowledge about one's salvific status here does not produce debilitating ambivalence or sterile skepticism, but a productive uncertainty that, while it gives very little to go on, at least does not foreclose every possibility that the Holy Spirit may, in fact, act for our salvation in ways we can't predict.[86]

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[84] William Perkins, the highly influential sixteenth century English divine, outlined a ten-stage process whereby a believer could ascend to a state of faith. Prominent Puritan divines like Thomas Hooker and John Cotton also mapped out complex processes of regeneration in such works as *The Application of Redemption* (1637) and *The Unbeleevers Preparing for Christ* (1638). Such elaborate systems were often simplified to a three-step process of "awakening" to one's true relation to God, "humiliation" for backsliding into a sinful relation, and, finally, "regeneration" into habits of faithful works. For a discussion of this three-step conversion process inherited not only by Edwards, but by his father and grandfather, see Marsden 26-28. For the Puritan inheritance of conversion morphologies, see Alfred Habegger's "Preparing the Soul for Christ."

[85] Because we have no grounds to refute any particular experience, because of the endemic haze of uncertainty surrounding every joyful outcry or cataleptic fit or episode of glossolalia, Edwards's amplification of empiricism to accommodate those very real behaviors *despite* the uncertainty of their

Nor can believers depend solely on some "particularly established scheme" that suggests spiritual certainty can be achieved by adherence to predetermined conversion models. What Edmund S. Morgan refers to as the Puritans' "morphology of conversion" (69) becomes destandardized in Edwards - less morphology than amorphism. Since no two cases of spiritual transformation can be the same, the process of conversion becomes personalized according to individuals' idiosyncratic experiences.[87] There are no guides to the truth of the heart; it must be known "experimentally," in other words, by experience. The insufficiency of Puritan conversion models inherited by figures like Edwards and Brainerd throws the emphasis of valid spiritual knowledge onto the flux of experience itself. One need only recall Edwards's attempt in his most famous sermon, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God." The thrust of that sermon was to generate a visceral experience of a yawning hellscape ever ready to swallow parishioners whole. In other words, doctrine took a secondary role to that of providing a virtual experience with the intent of frightening believers back into the spiritual fold. Willing but frustrated colonial converts

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origin, incentivizes the creation of a space of radical empiricism, a space knowing no absolute origins but founded on what James calls "pure experience."

[86] Rather than an irresolvable gap in knowledge awaiting a proper solution, uncertainty in Edwards and in the Protestant-evangelical tradition I'm disclosing functions as a productive category that doesn't cancel the possibility of human action, but grants it a field of actionable potential. If the imaginable substance of a concept - such as the kingdom of God, as I discuss in chapter four - persists in uncertainty, balking believers' attempts to realize it, its vagueness nevertheless renders it workable by human thought and action. Importantly, however, Edwards's postmillennialism differs from the human-oriented eschatology of later revivalist movements in that Edwards was still committed to a view of compatibilism regarding the human will. In this scheme, the human will is divided into natural and moral necessity, both of which reject any possibility that volition can be self-determining. See *Freedom of the Will* (32-33).

[87] There are biographical reasons why Edwards finds the tripartite scheme of Puritan conversion inadequate. We know from his diary that one of the major spiritual quandaries undergone by the young Edwards was his "not having experienced conversion in those particular steps, wherein the people of New England, and anciently the Dissenters of Old England, used to experience it" (Dwight, *Life* 93). Edwards could speak with the spiritual exemplar and his future son-in law David Brainerd, who after reading Solomon Stoddard's *Guide to Christ* (1714) lamented that "I was not effectually and experimentally taught, that there could be no way prescribed, whereby a natural Man could, of his own Strength, obtain that which is supernatural" (10).

like Edwards and David Brainerd found themselves in a position similar to James's, whose chief criticism of western philosophy was its consistent failure to account for experience as it is really lived in the here and now.

Because of this recruitment of uncertainty, I'm arguing, consequences that make some practical difference in the lives of converts function as the justifiers of "gracious affections." Action is the best defense against the imposition of counterfeit affections. This validation of ambiguous interiors by practical effects is another reason why Perry Miller thought James "was unwittingly resuming where Edwards had been forced to leave off." In order to determine the validity of an experience, Edwards subordinated ratiocination to an epistemology based on the practical equivalence of action and being. The next section will explore the logical corollary of this understanding of conduct: whatever we can know about a thing's essential nature is inseparable from how it behaves.

Edwards's Atom and a Realist Limbo

As early as the 1720s, and about the time he began having intense religious experiences of his own, Edwards wrestled with the apparent disjunction between ideas and things. Just how are these constituents of reality related? As we saw before, there existed the possibility for Edwards that, "[w]hen the mind is sensible of the sweet beauty and amiableness of a *thing*, that implies a sensibleness of sweetness and delight in the presence of the *idea* of it. (*RA* 215, my emphasis). In "The Mind," Edwards allows the linguistic ambiguity between idea and thing to stand:

> we are to remember that the human body and the brain itself exist only mentally, in the same sense that other things do. [...] Therefore things are truly in those places, for what we mean when we say so is only that this mode of our idea of place appertains to such an idea. [...] [T]he case is the same...whether we suppose the world only mental in our sense, or no. (*SPW* 353)

The real target of this passage seems to be Berkeley's immaterialism, thought by some at the time to be the outright denial of the existence of material substance.[88] Pragmatically considered, "the case is the same" whether we're talking about objects in the external world independent of our perception or our ideas of them. There is a short step from this correspondence of idea and thing to their practical equivalence. The claim "that the human body and the brain itself exist only mentally, in the same sense that other things do," drives Edwards's understanding of psychology into territory familiar and conducive to pragmatism.

"The case is the same" for praxis and ontology as well. In his analysis of what it means to be an atom, Edwards argues that, in principle, a thing cannot be understood apart from its idiosyncratic and nonfungible activity. We need not trace the labyrinthine turns of logic that get Edwards to this quasi-pragmatist conclusion in "Of Atoms;" it is enough to say that

> [s]ince...solidity is the resisting to be annihilated, or the persevering to be of a body, or to speak plain, the being of it…, it follows that the very essence and being of bodies is solidity…. [...] [A]nd since...indivisibility and solidity are the same, it follows that the solidity of bodies and the being of bodies is the same, or that body and solidity are the same" (*SPW* 211).

The language of resistance and perseverance was for Edwards characteristic of the Newtonian universe he saw himself and his parishioners inhabiting. Importantly, it views a thing's qualities as active - not passive or abstract - properties. Existence, "the very essence and being" of a thing, is inseparable from its actions within a matrix of relations.[89] A quality can only be understood in relation to others; solidity is a meaningless concept apart from its palpable activity of "resisting" and "persevering."

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[88] The English man of letters Samuel Johnson famously rejected what (he thought) was the implication of Berkeley's claim that there is no such thing as matter, only minds and ideas. Kicking a stone to disprove Berkeleyan immaterialism, Johnson is reported to have exclaimed, "I refute it thus," an episode that gives western rhetoric the ad lapidem fallacy.

[89] This is a version of an argument Edwards will put forth in "Of Being:" "if there is no solidity, there is no extension, for extension is the extendedness of the solidity. Then all figure and magnitude and proportion immediately ceases." In other words, a universe in which there was no movement or action of bodies on other bodies would "not differ from the void" (Anderson 205).

All the way down to its indissoluble and indestructible components, matter is indistinguishable from the way it acts in relation to the things around it. This practical identification of the is and the does is a variation on pragmatism's central theme of truth being inseparable from its relations to the surrounding context: "[t]he truth of an idea is not a stagnant property in it. Truth *happens* to an idea. It *becomes* true, is *made* true by events" (*Pragmatism* 89). What truth *is* can only be understood as a process of dynamic relations unfolding in human experience, a process preserved in Edwards's atom, which doesn't just resist, but is in a state of continuous resist*ing* and persever*ing*. Edwards's practical identification between a thing's ontology and its praxis provides him with a pragmatic logic that transcends Cartesian dualism while at the same time vindicating a model of conversion that could both respect idiosyncratic variety and justify sincere religious conduct.

Edwards makes a second attempt at linking existence to action in "Of Being," written one or two years after "Of Atoms." An uncompromising bid for the sheer impossibility of conceiving of absolute nothing - a feat of imagination akin to thinking of what "the sleeping rocks dream of" - "Of Being" ends with the unambiguous statement that "[a] state of nothing is a state wherein...all...eternal truths are neither true nor false" (*SPW* 206). About a decade later, though, Edwards softens his youthful certainty, adding a final paragraph that demonstrates the extent to which his thinking had moved in a more pragmatic direction. He still believes that "[w]hen we go to inquire whether or no there can be absolutely nothing we speak nonsense." But he makes an important distinction that a younger Edwards hadn't considered:

> [t]here is no other way, but only for there to be existence; there is no such thing as absolute nothing. There is such a thing as nothing with respect to this ink and paper. There is such a thing as nothing with respect to you and me. [...] But there is no such thing as nothing with respect to entity or being, absolutely considered. (*SPW* 207)

During the ten or so years before Edwards returned to amend his former essay, he developed an appreciation for the role of language in our perception of reality. In his emendation, he no longer considers the absoluteness of nothingness abstractly, but relatively. "There is no such thing as absolute nothing," unless you're talking about it in relation to something else; only "with respect" to other things in experience does it have any meaning. The attempt to define "nothing" requires a pragmatic clarity, not at all dissimilar from the clarity James sought in his anecdote of whether or not someone circumambulates a squirrel while it spirals up a tree.[90] For the more mature Edwards, the significance of abstract concepts depends on their relation to things of experience. The difference between the "Of Being" of Edwards's youth and that of a decade later is the difference between strict metaphysics and a burgeoning pragmatic attitude toward rational abstractions.

Edwards apparently found a formidable philosophical tool in this pragmatic attitude, since he tended to repeat it in his denser philosophical works. In his discussion of the word "action" in relation to the freedom of the will, he argued that "the word *Action* is frequently used to signify something not merely *relative*, but more *absolute*, and a real existence; as when we say an *Action*; when the word is not used transitively, but absolutely, for some motion or exercise of body or mind, without any relation to any object or effect" (*FW* 202). For Edwards, the use of a term of abstraction independent of any anchoring in experience is one of the primary reasons why he believed metaphysics and rationalism alone were insufficient to cultivate one's understanding.

Edwards's relational ontology is of a piece with his reluctance to grant merely rational concepts the status of intrinsic reality. Just as it is impossible for us to imagine nothing, it is impossible for us to imagine what "the sleeping rocks dream of" – in other words, their *ideas* apart from the person who exists in relation to them. But even on this point Edwards finds a reason to hedge. In his reading of the category of the impersonal, James D. Lilley argues that Edwards keeps open "the possibility of a new mode of 'imagining' that preserves the impossible austerity of the impersonal [i.e., imagining what sleeping rocks dream of] at the same time that it makes a home for and a community of the singular" (32). We've seen how, in his attempts to reconcile seeming disparities such as subject and object, Edwards is often at pains to argue their fundamental compatibility. To Lilley's argument, I would add that Edwards is inclined to do so because of his openness to the plural realities of human experience, that what is truly *impossible* to imagine – epistemologically or ethically – is a system that outright cancels the potentials for human experience.[91] Why I think it's worth calling this a pragmatic attitude is because of its refusal to foreclose possibilities whose practical significance for us remains in a tentative state, a realist limbo of as-yet pragmatically justified abstractions.

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[90] At the beginning of the second lecture of *Pragmatism*, James relates the anecdote drawn from a camping trip. If a man, trying to get sight of a squirrel circling a tree, "*[d]oes the man go round the squirrel or not?*" In an effort to resolve the metaphysical dispute, James's answer is that "[w]hich party is right...depends on what you *practically mean* by 'going round' the squirrel" (22).

Edwards's insistence on the practical equivalence of a thing and its action has more than just an intellectual value. The justification of a thing's identity or essence by how it behaves is crucial to the legitimation of conversion experiences conducted in a zone of epistemological ambiguity. It was not the degree to which a spiritual experience corresponded to prefabricated conversion models that leant credence to the experience, but the practical differences made and the conduct shaped by undergoing it. We saw in the section on Edwards's defense of revivalism how it was the change in *practice* of religious affections that gave them their strongest accreditation as aspects of a successful conversion. Whereas Jamesian pragmatism attempted to suture action to being so as to make materiality relevant to philosophy, Edwards was invested in justifying the practical consequences of saints' conversions and the meaningfulness of God's engagement with Creation.

The Edwardsean innovation of the practical identification of the is and the does will become more explicit in the nineteenth century.[92] As such, it's easy to miss the wider consequences of this ontological turn. If good works provide reasonable evidence of one's interior essence, it's also true that evil works can be ascribed to the same source. In other words, evil acts belong not to an inherited sinful nature to which we all may succumb, but to one's individual interior state. Edwards does not go so far as to say we're individually accountable for *willing* such evil acts - as later revivalists would - but we can witness in his thoughts on the atom an important shift away from a communal understanding of sin to one that emphasizes personal responsibility. Whereas popular execution sermons of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries focused attention on the crime itself, ontologically distinct from the criminal because rooted in a common sinful nature, the philosophy of Edwards exemplifies an emergent shift toward sin as applicable to the individual - inseparable, in fact, from their unique and nonfungible nature. Edwards's atom, put another way, demonstrates the beginnings the judiciary preoccupation with criminal motive and the rise of what Karen Haltunnen calls the "moral monster" (5).[93]

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[91] In chapter two, we'll see how Charles Grandison Finney continues this tradition of resisting philosophical or psychological attempts to exhaust the possibilities of experience. For Finney, as it was for Edwards, there can be no system that excludes the variety of means with which God may induce conversion in believers, an embrace of possibility that calls for pragmatic assessments of their effects when they emerge.

[92] In chapter two, I discuss the ways in which the muscularization of the will in Charles Finney's revivalism and Nathaniel Taylor's New Haven theology led to the identification of sin not with an inborn, sinful nature we all share, but with individually willed sinful action.

Edwards wrote "Of Atoms" early in his life. But the essay's central idea – the practical identification of action and being – remained an abiding concern even into the last decade of his life. God's being is constituted by His actions, a theme he articulates in one of his final works whose theology is as imposing as its name, *A Dissertation Concerning the End for which God Created the World* (hereafter simply *DCE*, and not to be confused with its companion piece *The Nature of True Virtue*, published together in 1765 as *Two Dissertations*). It is in this dense and often abstruse text - some passages of which could rival the notorious opacity of Hegel - where Edwards reconceives the Calvinist God, not in the terms of jealousy or wrath that made him famous in works like "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," but in the terms of abundant, overflowing, and affectionate creativity. I argue that Edwards's central point in the *Dissertation*, that the purpose of Creation is to manifest the attributes of God, is grounded in a pragmatic logic that unless an essence issues in visible and distinct action, it is as good as insignificant. If it was *Religious Affections* that left unlocked the door between God and His saints, the *Dissertation* kicked it wide open.

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[93] For a discussion on the New England cultural shift from communal sin to individual motivation to sin, especially as it was depicted in execution sermons of the time, see Karen Haltunnen's *Murder Most Foul*: "if the crime of murder tended to evoke statements of shock and outrage in New England execution sermons, the murderer himself generally did not; execution sermons drew a clear distinction between the sin and the sinner. No matter how terrible the crime, New England clergymen believed that its underlying cause was the same as that of every other sin known to postlapsarian humanity: innate and total depravity" (13). I complement this argument by adding that the emergent pragmatic identification of the is and the does had a powerful hand in decoupling sin from a common nature and identifying it with the individual sinner.

Consent, Proportion, and an Immanent God

This is an universal definition of excellency: The consent of being to being.

Edwards, “The Mind” (*SPW* 336)

In addition to a model of how to reconcile science and religion, Edwards inherits from Newton and Whiston a model for describing how God interacts with Creation. In the *Dissertation*, Edwards makes the case for God’s effectual and ongoing communicativeness with his “creatures,” and the purposive creativity that is inseparable from his being.[94] This idea of “communications” - holy emanations of virtue and happiness to his elect - is central to the *Dissertation* and constitutes one of the more underappreciated ways Edwards reinterprets his otherwise stalwart Calvinism.

But at certain points in the *Dissertation*, it becomes apparent that Edwards is attempting to straddle the boundary between a possible contradiction. “For tho’ these communications of God...are in time; yet his joy in them is without beginning or change” (*DCE* 35). The God Edwards describes maintains his timeless, omniscient character while his “communications” operate in the temporal and finite realm.[95] Edwards’s balancing act of logic - sometimes tortuously so - throughout the *Dissertation* is between this transcendent God, whose sovereign majesty is preserved, yet a quasi-immanent one who can emanate his glory directly to his elect.[96]

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[94] As we will see in chapters three and four, belief in a divinity that establishes and maintains contact with Creation - as opposed to the changeless and remote deity of classical theism - is a crucial component of the pragmatic justification of human action. The Social Gospel takes Edwards’s scarcely recognized theological contribution and turns it into a transatlantic program of Christian renewal.

[95] Compare these two passages that exemplify the fine line Edwards is walking between God’s absolute sovereignty and what that sovereignty means for human actors: “it is evident, by both scripture and reason, that God is infinitely, eternally, unchangeably, and independently glorious and happy; that he stands in no need of, cannot be profited by, or receive any thing from the creature; or be truly hurt, or be the subject of any sufferings or *impair* of his glory and felicity from any other being” (*DCE* 12). God seems to have no real need of any created thing. But that isn’t totally conceivable to Edwards: “communication of virtue and holiness to the creature. This is a communication of God’s holiness; so that hereby the creature partakes of God’s own moral excellency. [...] And then it must be considered wherein this holiness consists; viz. in love, which is the comprehension of all true virtue” (29-30).

The *Dissertation*, then, finds Edwards attempting to reconcile Calvinism and novel theological conceptions that both preserve Calvinist orthodoxy while keeping open the possibilities of human experience. The ultimate purpose of Creation is God's uncontainable expressivity infinite goodness and holiness, a communication it is possible for us (i.e., the elect) to be sensible of and that can make real differences in our conduct. This is not the notorious God of "Sinners," whose mere pleasure holds back a threateningly unsympathetic universe from devouring incorrigible sinners. This is a God of quasi-pantheistic presence, no longer inscrutable and no longer residing hidden on the other side of an insuperable cosmic divide.[97]

How the creature can partake in God's "moral excellency" is possible because, to Edwards, the underlying structure of Creation isn't absolute, but relative. In "The Mind," Edwards defined "excellency" as "[t]he consent of being to being," reframing the nature of being (or existence) as constituted by the relation, or "consent," among entities. Edwards's highly specialized use of this word is one of the key ideas linking his thought to Jamesian pragmatism.[98]

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[96] The extent to which God is immanent in Creation grew out of an Enlightenment debate on the nature and function of God's providence - His direct intervention in human history. In Enlightenment parlance, "general providence" referred to God's cosmic power in sparking the universe into existence. Whereas Deists stopped here, thinkers like Newton and Whiston sought to explain the function of God's "special providence," His active engagement in the world and concern for individual lives. Edwards's explanation of this kind of providence involves, I will show, a decidedly pragmatic logic. For an examination on how Newton and Whiston aimed to synthesize general and special providence, see Force (123-37).

[97] Perry Miller once claimed that "[i]t is no exaggeration to say that the whole of Edwards' system is contained in miniature within some ten or twelve pages of ['A Divine and Supernatural Light']," an overstatement this chapter has hopefully helped to undercut. The changing conception of the possible attributes of God pointed out here should remind us that it was simply not the case that "[h]is whole insight was given him at once, preternaturally early, and [that] he did not change: he only deepened" (*Jonathan Edwards* 44). Aside from Miller's questionable suggestion that a "deepening" doesn't qualify as change, it's reasonable to assume that, like most people, Edwards underwent great change throughout his life.

[98] As we'll see in chapter two, the freedom of human agency to contribute to its own salvation becomes a critical component of the antebellum revivalism of Charles Grandison Finney and characterizes a major distinction between Unitarianism and Calvinism. As Finney understood it, the salvation of one's soul depends specifically on voluntarily *consenting* to the conversion: "God first draws, the sinner yields" (*ST* 513). This centralizing of volition in the conversion process even affects the very nature of sin: "there is either no sin, or there is voluntary sin" (127).

His notion of consent implicitly rejects the Scholastic-rationalistic preoccupation with forms and substances, the thing-in-itself, and absolutes as having a specialized existence apart from the finite world. A thing's true nature, in other words, rests not in an absolute essence independent of its relations, but in its manifold relations, its degree of proportions with the remainder of existence.

Edwards's system of how this communication works is onerously elaborate, but its fundamental logic is pragmatic: "[a] sufficiency for any act or work is no farther valuable, than the work or effect is valuable" (*DCE* 20).[99] Here, it's *effects* that determine the value of sufficiency, not the sufficiency that determines the value of the effect. The Protestant doctrine of God's sufficiency - His complete adequacy for performing divine acts independent of outside assistance - is here questioned as to its pragmatic value. The outcome of the action (providential intervention, for example), Edwards argues, governs the scope of our knowledge about the force that induced it, or as Peirce, using similar logic, would say, "our conception of these effects is the whole of our conception of the object" (31).

Edwards goes on:

> It seems to be a thing in itself fit and desirable, that the glorious perfections of God should be known, and the operations and expressions of them seen by other beings besides himself. If it be fit, that God's power and wisdom, &c. should be exercised and expressed in some effects, and not lie eternally dormant, then it seems proper that these exercises should appear, and not be totally hidden and unknown. For if they are, it will be just the same as to the above purpose, as if they were not. (*DCE* 21)

If one were to try to argue that Edwards was a pragmatist (in a much stronger sense than I'm doing) this would be the passage to substantiate that claim. The core idea of this passage suggests that "God's power and wisdom" have a *fit*ness to be known. Had these attributes remained "eternally dormant," not "seen by other beings besides himself" – hence unrealized in human experience – "it will be just the same...as if they were not." Edwards makes the existence of these attributes dependent on their perception by beings other than the divine. This is not the same as saying that the "glorious perfections of God" are not "true" in the Jamesian sense, but Edwards's reduction of divine attributes to their practical effects shifts evangelical theology in a more pragmatic direction.

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[99] Edwards wasn't the only one who thought so. He footnotes Gilbert Tennent, who says as much: "[t]he end of wisdom...is design; the end of power is action; the end of goodness is doing good. To suppose these perfections not to be exerted, would be to represent them as insignificant" (*DCE* 20-21).

Whereas the God of the Calvinist scheme Edwards inherited remained aloof from the fallen corruption of His creation, the God of the *Dissertation* cannot but interact with it.[100] In the *Dissertation*, Edwards recovers a practical meaning of divinity by coimplicating God and Creation. Unmoored from a dependence on the rationalists' Absolute, Edwards's notion of excellency preserves the empiricist's respect for experiential variety and openness to relativity:

> One alone, without any reference to any more, cannot be excellent; for in such a case there can be no manner of relation no way, and therefore, no such thing as consent. Indeed, what we call "one" may be excellent, because of consent of parts, or some consent of those in that being that are distinguished into a plurality some way or other. But in a being that is absolutely without any plurality there cannot be excellency, for there can be no such thing as consent or agreement. (*SPW* 337).

For Edwards a thing's excellence is a measure of its proportionate relations to other things, and not in its unqualified or abstract singularity.[101] Just as he made it a condition of understanding spiritual experience, so Edwards made pluralism a condition of excellence by insisting that the meaning of a thing consists in its relations to other things.[102] For a single entity to stand apart from the matrix of relations that constitute being is to remove itself from the possibility of consent, hence foregoing participation in excellency.[103] This is all very abstract, but its practical implications become apparent when Edwards uses it as a model for understanding God's relationship to Creation. William McLoughlin observed years ago, this new light theology "found the world open to the miraculous - unconditioned, full of new possibilities and unrealized potentials" (75). And as I've tried to show, these features of Edwards's metaphysical realism - excellency and consent - provide the logic for a pluralistic universe, that the possibilities of human experience are practically inexhaustible. That Edwards did in fact believe in deterministic causality and Christian teleologies is beside the point when we consider his receptivity to the variability of conversion experiences and the pluralistic nature of divine excellence.

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[100] One version of this view is the Deists' conception of a God who had created the universe and left it in the keeping of his immutable laws. Edwards's problem with this view is its suggestion that the universe did not actually require God to sustain it. His concept of excellency, with its systems of relations and proportions stitched together by consent, was intended to avoid separating God from His Creation.

[101] Etymologically, the congruence Edwards makes between excellence and existence makes sense, given that the general meaning of both is to stand out, rather than remaining undifferentiated and nonrelational. Importantly, though, this standing out is an entry into a matrix of relations that constitutes experience (yet another word whose etymology denotes a movement outwards).

[102] There's an important caveat to this. Edwards doesn't give up the idea that attributes can exist and retain meaning independent of human experience. Discussing the "wonderful and unparalleled grace of God" in *Religious Affections*, Edwards quickly points out that such grace "is infinitely glorious in itself…. This would be glorious, whether it were exercised towards us or not" (188). A pragmatist would go the extra mile to claim that the glory of God, unless practically useful for humans, isn't pragmatically relevant to an account of the divine.

But, again, Edwards believed in a Christian teleology whose cosmic finale, while undatable, is nevertheless predetermined. If the finite world's relation to God's infinity can be called pluralistic, it's a tentative diversity that will eventually issue in an ultimate monistic unity. For all its openness to variety and productive uncertainty, Edwards's notion of excellency never forgets the eternal creative entity to which it refers:

> [God's various communications to his creatures] at first view may appear entirely to be distinct things: but if we more closely consider the matter, they will all appear to be one thing, in a variety of views and relations. They are all but the emanation of God's glory; or the excellent brightness and fullness of the divinity diffused, overflowing, and as it were enlarged; or in one word, *existing ad extra*. (*DCE* 116)

Many in the one. Edwards's account of excellency resists the strict empiricist move of perceiving discrete phenomena as isolated events having no explicable unity.[104] They "may appear entirely to be distinct," but properly trained spiritual sight - a mature sense of the heart aligned with divine holiness - can discern the cosmic unity of Creation and its ultimate purpose. Despite this reminder of the ultimate unity of God's providential design, the terms on which the Christian life is lived in the finite material world are pragmatic, pluralistic ones. Human action is meaningful because of the whole of Creation reflects divine animation; not one part is void of potential significance. The diffusion, overflowing, and enlargement of loving glory are the actions of an immanent God perpetually active not only in the maintenance of Creation, but in its ever-increasing development into new possibilities.[105] This is not Wordsworth's "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings," but, in Edwards's description of hypercharged affections, that of Jeremiah: "[h]is word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones."[106] The God-in-nature paradigm, I'm suggesting, is traceable to Edwards's posthumous theology, and furthermore to antebellum Transcendentalism and the liberal Christianity of Unitarianism, both of which provided the intellectual climate in which James developed his ideas on pragmatism. "For we are anew created every moment" (*M* 18), Edwards wrote soon after graduating from Yale,[107] and that perpetual revitalizing of the world is what cathects the meaningfulness of our actions in it.

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[103] Ethically considered, standing apart from the relations of being is a form of self-love: "the consent of spirits consists half in their mutual one to another, and the sweet harmony between the various parts of the universe is only an image of mutual love. But yet a lower kind of love may be odious, because it hinders or is contrary to a higher and more general" (*SPW* 338). Aesthetically considered, such isolation from being in general is a counterfeit beauty: "[t]hat which is beautiful considered by itself separately...or beautiful only with respect to itself and a few other things, and not as a part of that which contains all things - the universe - is false beauty, and a confined beauty" (344).

[104] James himself never tired of tackling this abiding philosophical problem, and his radical empiricism was designed to overcome it. "Because the *names* of finite things and their relations are disjoined," he writes, turning the problem into a nominalist matter, "it doesn't follow that the realities named need a

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deus ex machina from on high to conjoin them" (*PU* 66). He faulted idealists like Josiah Royce and F.H. Bradley for inventing "transexperiential agents of unification" (*ERE* 43) like the Absolute and Substances that would harmonize the finite events and experiences of an apparently disconnected empiricist universe.

[105] The idea of God's progressiveness saw considerable duration in Edwards's thought. In "Miscellanies" 547, dated at 1731, he argued that "Providence makes a continual progress, and continually is bringing forth things new in the state of the world, and very different from what ever were before." Importantly too for an older Edwards, this progressiveness in individuals' attempts to unite with God proceeds toward an infinitely receding point: "[w]e may judge of the end that the creator aimed at, in the being, nature and tendency he gives the creature, by the mark or term which they constantly aim at in their tendency and eternal progress, though the time will never come, when it can be said it is attained to, in the most absolutely perfect manner" (*DCE* 114). Because one of God's divine attributes is infinity, it follows that the aim of uniting with such an entity for non-infinite creatures must remain indefinitely asymptotic.

[106] The imagery of fullness and levee-breaking overflow has less to do with - even predates - the Romanticism that made its way to American shores several decades later. As Ryan White "calls into question the interpretation of American pragmatism...as an extension of romanticism" (18), so too does my reading of Edwards's anticipation of Jamesian pragmatism question the extent to which that pragmatism was indebted to European sources.

[107] This idea of perpetual Creation was a consequence of unmooring the historical event of Creation from a distant past and reinterpreting it as an ongoing activity of divine creativity. In chapter three, I look at

And if “we are anew created every moment,” history and time are then not static concepts in the field of experience, but living realities in which the pluralistic variety of human experience and action is made consequential. By revaluing temporality in this way, Edwards gives credence to the sanctification of action both human and divine. The difference between a God that transcends Creation, remaining distant (except in cases of punitive measures) and a God of immanence, remaining close and intimate, is not insignificant for how Jamesian pragmatism understands the potential power of human agency. James was no theist, but he understood that meaningful human action isn’t - can’t be, rather - performed in an interest-free vacuum or in a void populated by mere intellectual abstractions. When whatever we term the source of our interests and values is rendered inaccessible to us - or worse, punitive in nature - we lose not only the motivation to act, but the ability to see how our action can make any significant difference in the world. “A God who gives so little scope to love, a predestination which takes from endeavor all its zest with all its fruit, are irrational conceptions, because they say to our most cherished powers, There is no object for you” (*WB* 126).[108] There is then a direct correlation between pragmatic action and a theistic conception of divine indwelling.

Not that Edwards was a pantheist any more than he was a pragmatist. My claim here is that one of Edwards’s pragmatic attitudes is his view of Creation as an infinitely complex and living Cosmos whose sheer immensity is suffused with God’s positive attributes and is responsive to our personal actions. Theologically, however, the wide-scope of God’s regard and His identification with overflowing love leaves the *Dissertation* ambivalent on the role of those predestined to damnation. Michael J. McClymond points out that “the Calvinist distinction between the elect and the reprobate, the saved and the damned, does not readily find a place in *End of Creation*” (63). God’s infinite goodness to the whole of Creation turns out to be a little selective. Edwards, otherwise so adept at anticipating counter-arguments to his positions, does not directly address the complications to the doctrine of election when put next to the universal disinterested benevolence alleged to be inherent in divinity. Edwards did maintain the orthodox position of God’s absolute foreknowledge (as *Freedom of the Will* relentlessly insists), but the

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how Henry James Sr proposes that any God who isn’t immanent and any Creation that isn’t perpetually ongoing are concepts as good as meaningless to human actors.

[108] More precise historical connections between an immanent God and Jamesian pragmatism will be handled in chapter three.

view that God's "excellence" manifests as disinterested benevolence toward Creation gave credence - likely to Edwards's chagrin - to the budding universalism that would come to characterize late eighteenth century theology and nineteenth century revivalism in a country whose political temper was becoming increasingly democratic.[109]

As Edwards strove to reconcile disparate modes of thought, he discovered means recognizable in a pragmatic epistemology. Though he retained the belief in the sovereignty of a Christian God, that certain people were predestined to eternal damnation, and that human history and the world were designed for a specific teleological purpose, his reappraisals of experience, essences, and divine presence oriented his thought around their practical consequences and not their abstract natures. The theological determinism that radiates throughout Edwards's oeuvre may logically short-circuit pragmatism's openness to plurality and experiential variety; indeed, it's a major reason why I don't think Edwards is a pragmatist in the hard sense. However, teasing out the places where Edwards resorts to practical means of addressing theological problems puts us in a good place to see how these attitudes were taken up by later generations of Protestants and evangelicals. The upshot of isolating Edwards's "latent pragmatisms" is not only to illuminate a relationship of greater intimacy between theology and philosophy, but also between that of what we might call the sacred and the secular.

Scholarship on science and religion in the nineteenth century tends to assume the postbellum emphasis on variety, pluralism, uncertainty, chance – features intrinsic to pragmatism – as logical extensions of Darwinism and evolutionism. "For pragmatists," Charlene Seigfried goes so far to say, "Darwin's *Origin of Species* in 1859 was a watershed event, one that would forever change the way human beings understand their place in the universe" (177). Richard Rorty, pondering why foundationalism in philosophy from the nineteenth century on seemed increasingly irrelevant, concurs: "Darwin...convinced most of us that we were exceptionally talented animals, animals clever enough to take charge of our own evolution" (*Truth and Progress* 174). There seems no historical reason to doubt this narrative. James himself believed it: "in the psychology of our own day, the emphasis is transferred from the mind's purely rational function...to the so long neglected practical side. The theory of evolution is mainly responsible for this" (*Talks* 33). So did his son, Henry: "the tide of contemporary inquiry, driven forward by the storm of the Darwinian controversy" called on philosophy to "embrace the new reality" (*LWJ I* 54). Modern commentators like Hilary Putnam continue the trend: "the pragmatists came after and were deeply influenced by the discoveries of Charles Darwin" (46). All of this makes sense, since the 1859 publication of *On the Origin of Species* coincides with the emergent interest in Anglo-American intellectual culture in probability, in the reality of growth and variety as constituents of identity, and in the physical struggle for existence as it comes to bear on mental development. And it seems natural to read the (mis)perceived pragmatic defining of "truth" as that which satisfies our arbitrary desires as an extension into philosophy of the (mis)perceived Darwinian emphasis on "survival of the fittest."[110] "Mainly responsible," James says, but, I'm arguing, not entirely. An amplified induction and an openness to possibility characteristic of pragmatism emerges in Edwards's theology in response to epistemological pressures surrounding the uncertainty of spiritual conversion.[111] The notion of Christian progress and adaptation was a staple of American evangelical culture long before Darwinism gave the idea scientific currency, though it can be argued that the latter helped to reinforce the former.

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[109] What got Edwards expelled from his Northampton ministerial post was just this resistance to a more democratically-minded inclusion. As a means of drawing more people into the church, the Halfway Covenant (1662), sponsored by Solomon Stoddard, was intended to allow church membership - participation in the sacraments - to those without conversion experiences. Edwards's attempt to reverse some of his grandfather's efforts to make the rules of church membership more relaxed disaffected many of his parishioners. His denial of the Eucharist and Baptism - the sacramental pillars of Reformed theology - to anyone except full members resulted in a committee or neighboring churches voting overwhelmingly to oust him. See Marsden's *Jonathan Edwards* (352-65).

In the next chapter, I take up the threads laid down by Edwards's endeavors to reconcile the disparate strands of theology, science, and philosophy as they reappear in a later episode of American revivalism. As we'll see, the evangelical landscape of antebellum America became a zone of contestation not only over the legacy of Edwards, but also over the very issues he labored to articulate. To conservatives - especially at Princeton and Andover seminaries - he represented the height of Calvinist orthodoxy. To liberals, Edwards's Calvinism was an unfortunate obstruction that blinded an otherwise brilliant theologian to the democratic possibilities of his thought.[112] How Edwards's pragmatic attitudes were taken up by this later generation of revivalists is the subject of the next chapter, focusing on its most famous preacher, Charles Grandison Finney, whom I take to be integral to the history of pragmatism in America.

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[110] Incidentally, if Darwin ever used the words "survival of the fittest," he did so by way of Herbert Spencer, who coined the phrase.

[111] The muscularization of individuals' faculties and the meliorism of social realities in Jamesian pragmatism might be better understood if we situate that method within a much longer tradition of religious postmillennialism. As opposed to premillennialism, which understood human and sacred history - i.e., the coming of Christ's thousand-year kingdom - to be less susceptible to human intervention, postmillennialism "postulated a gradual improvement in society before the thousand years rather than a disruptive cataclysmic event. Postmillennialism's gradual approach meant that Christians could either slow down or speed up progress toward the millennium" (Curtis, *Redeeming America* 157). For a more in-depth discussion of the shaping influences of pre- and postmillennialism in American evangelical culture, see Curtis, Ch. 5, as well as its relationship to the rise of the twentieth century's premillennial dispensationalism in Marsden's *Fundamentalism and American Culture* (48-55).

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[112] Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr certainly thought the latter was true, and of Calvinism more generally. His novel *Elsie Venner* had the self-conscious "aim...to test the doctrine of 'original sin' and human responsibility for the disordered volition coming under that technical denomination" (xii). The novel, however, is about Calvinism's inability to adequately explain the presence of suffering in the world. Likewise, Holmes's "wonderful one-hoss shay,/ That was built in such a logical way" (ll. 1-2), lasts for one hundred years until 1755, when it suddenly falls to pieces at the exact moment of the Lisbon earthquake, a catastrophe inexplicable by Calvinist theodicy.

Chapter II

A Pragmatic Piety: Experience, Uncertainty, and Action in Charles Grandison Finney's Antebellum Revivalism

Introduction - An Antebellum Moratorium on Abstractions

To bring down philosophy from its high places is to enhance its real dignity by adding to its usefulness. This service was performed by Locke.

Francis Bowen, *Critical Essays* (5)

American philosopher and teacher of William James, Francis Bowen wasn't fond of German metaphysics. The first chapter of his *Critical Essays*, "Locke and the Transcendentalists," celebrates the empiricist thinker while decrying Transcendentalism's Germanized philosophy as little more than incoherent speculation divorced from concrete life. "Transcendental reasoning," he writes, "can only be answered by a Transcendentalist. There is nothing tangible for a common person to strike at; even Don Quixote never thought of contending against a cloud" (24). Bowen's desire for tangible concepts and his frustration with abstractions, it appears, wasn't uncommon at the time. Equally unintelligible was "Giant Transcendentalist," a murky figure, "German by birth," of Hawthorne's Bunyan-inspired spoof "The Celestial Railroad:"

> as to his form, his features, his substance, and his nature generally, it is the chief peculiarity of this huge miscreant, that neither he for himself, nor anybody for him, has ever been able to describe them. [...] He shouted after us, but in so strange a phraseology that we knew not what he meant, nor whether to be encouraged or affrighted. (326)

Hawthorne lampoons Transcendental phraseology as so removed from human comprehension that it fails to make a meaningful difference in the affections, neither encouraging nor affrighting. Brief as the American Transcendentalist moment was, the ridicule aimed at its use of language and meaning exposes something important about American intellectual culture at the time: that demands were being placed on abstract claims to show their practical consequences. It isn't my intention here to critique Transcendentalist writers, but by way of preface to demonstrate that it was a common theme in nineteenth century philosophy and theology that patience for linguistic obscurantism was wearing thin.[113]

The service Bowen claims Locke performed is the making of philosophical abstraction practically useful for a "common person." What Bowen, quoting the Scottish jurist Sir James Mackintosh, likes about Locke is the pragmatic element of his philosophy:

> [Locke's] writings have diffused throughout the civilized world...the disposition to reject whatever is obscure, fantastic, or hypothetical in speculation, to reduce verbal disputes to their proper value, to abandon problems which admit of no solution, to distrust whatever cannot be clearly expressed, to render theory the simple expression of facts, and to prefer those studies which most directly contribute to human happiness. (17)

What Mackintosh identifies in Locke - his rejection of anything "obscure" or "hypothetical" not grounded in an experiential reality, his attention to clarity in language to avoid "verbal disputes," and his preference for studies that work toward "human happiness" - are some of the central concerns of a pragmatic method whose primary goal is to identify the practical consequences of philosophical claims.[114] For Bowen, Locke is praiseworthy precisely because his philosophy rectifies that of the Transcendentalists, who "have deepened the gulf between speculative and practical men, and, by their innovations in language, they are breaking down the only bridge that spans the chasm" (19). Linguistic obfuscation, the very thing pragmatism was designed to dispel, is the wedge driven between philosophy and the interests of common people.[115]

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[113] These examples also ask us to reconsider Hofstadter's emphasis on religion as being "the first arena for an anti-intellectual impulse" (55). While it's not inaccurate, Hofstadter's claim seems to miss that the "anti-intellectualism" in American life was generated by those whom we don't typically see as religious as much as it was by the religious themselves.

[114] Recall James's reason for why he thought Locke was one of the first to use pragmatism, as Locke "made the word 'idea' stand indifferently for thing and thought" (*ERE* 10). If the idea could stand in for the thing, it gave a powerful rationale for the transformative effects of realist rhetoric: though a potential

I chose to begin this chapter with a brief overview of this one criticism of Transcendentalism because, even though histories of American pragmatism frequently cite this movement and its most famous practitioners (Emerson, Orestes Brownson, Sampson Reed) as prelude to pragmatism, they often neglect a parallel development in liberal antebellum Protestant evangelicalism. This latter discourse too became less focused on abstract creeds and received doctrines than the action produced by sincere belief. Emerson's statement at the end of "Experience," expressive of a pragmatic frame of mind – that "the true romance which the world exists to realize, will be the transformation of genius into practical power" (262) – reflected an emphasis on action current in evangelical culture. As one reviewer of the antebellum periodical *Spirit of the Pilgrims* put it, "[t]he spirit of religion in this country is active rather than contemplative" (524). By the same token, the Kentucky revivalist Barton W. Stone discountenanced the "unfathomable mysteries" of the Presbyterian Confession of Faith, preferring instead to "[confine] myself to the practical part of religion, and to subjects within my depth" (*Life* 59). Christian youths were likewise cautioned against an exclusive reliance on theoretical orthodoxy. Congregationalist Jacob Abbott's highly popular *Young Christian* book series was "designed to enforce the *practice*, not to discuss the *theory* of religion" (5).[116] But

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convert had never had a direct experience of a thing, that thing's idea, made vivid to the imagination, could theoretically induce a conversion. See Jackson, Ch. 1 (37-88)

[115] As it did in Edwards's time, the rearticulation of Lockean epistemology achieved a new currency in antebellum philosophical discourse. The erstwhile Transcendentalist Orestes Brownson argued that progress happens when culture returns from the "philosophy of abstractions...to the philosophy of reality, the philosophy of life, which presents to the mind the first principles of life and of all knowledge as identical" (*The Convert* 390), a sentiment voiced by Coleridge: "Christianity is not a theory, or a speculation; but a life" (*Aids* 201). These utterances all reflect a growing need to replace a philosophy of abstractions with one more appropriate to the needs and interests of human life.

[116] The preference for the practical remained a common interest throughout the century. John Robert Seeley's transatlantic bestseller *Ecce Homo* (1865), a survey of Christ's historical life, omitted theological aspects of that life entirely: "[n]o theological questions whatever are here discussed" (xxii). Even the theological implications of Christ became less important than the *life* he had led. And in his 1870 series of lectures delivered at Yale College, published as *Kingdom of Christ on Earth*, Professor of Systematic Theology Samuel Harris continued the tradition by associating interest in the life of Christ not with

rather than citing these as evidence of early pragmatism, focusing on how faith related to practice for antebellum evangelicals will highlight how the adoption of pragmatic attitudes were deployed to address philosophical problems and religious faith.

The figure I am most interested in exploring in this chapter, Charles Grandison Finney, seems to me to be largely missed in scholarly discussions of the period beyond cursory acknowledgements of his revival practices. Allen Guelzo wasn't overstating it when he said, in the forward to Hambrick-Stowe's *Charles G. Finney and the Spirit of American Evangelicalism* that "[v]ery few biographers have found much of interest in Finney as a theologian, and even those who hang his importance on his fame as a preacher of mass religious revival usually find little that was permanent of even admirable in Finney's revivals" (vii). This is surprising, because Finney's theology reflected many attitudes with other figures of the time. His directions for converting sinners, for example, exhorted ministers to "[b]ring up the individual's *particular sins*. Talking in general terms against sin will produce no results" (154), echoing Bowen and Hawthorne's desires for specification and practicality over abstractions and generalities. It's not saying anything new in the history of American religion to refer to Finney as the heir of Edwardsean revivalism. Yet while most agree that Finney is the undisputed carrier of the Edwardsean flame, no substantial critical essay or scholarly work examines Finney's theology or its pragmatic approach to revivalism in depth. Seeing how Finney reinterpreted Edwards's pragmatic attitudes will give us a better understanding of their transit through antebellum evangelicalism as well as making a case for including Finney in histories of American pragmatism, histories largely deemed to be secular in nature and inherently distinct from surrounding religious contexts.

One major reason for the oversight that figures like Finney are subject to is that the pre-Jamesian history of American pragmatism is usually dominated by Ralph Waldo Emerson. Cornel West's claim "that Emerson is the appropriate starting point for the pragmatist tradition" (6) is symptomatic of this pervasive trend. Joan Richardson begins her 2007 *A Natural History of Pragmatism* with Jonathan Edwards, but continues the genealogy with Emerson. I see no reason

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speculation, but practical action: "[t]his interest in Jesus is not speculative, but practical" (2). "Christianity," he continued, "is not dogmatic, but historical; not speculation, but action" (4). In chapter four, we will see how this effort to envision true Christianity as a living practice was narrativized in highly popular homiletic novels that endorsed the imitation of Christ as a means of social change.

to discredit this genealogy, but I do want to offer an alternative perspective that appreciates the role of Finney – and more broadly American evangelicalism – in our understanding of the historical development of pragmatism. Even though pragmatism is not often considered from outside its secular orientation, and even though Finney's role in American history is usually confined to historical studies of revivalism, I argue that evaluating Finney's theology for its pragmatic attitudes forces us to reconsider the hitherto marginal role of evangelical culture in the shaping of nineteenth century American philosophy as well as the putatively secular origins of Jamesian pragmatism.

I'm not the first to note Finney's pragmatism. Perry Miller characterized the famous revivalist as a pragmatist when he put into his mouth the words "'the results justify my methods'" (27). James E. Johnson argued that Finney's "early successes in attaining conversions led him to adopt a pragmatic approach to the problems of theology" (338). Following Johnson, Leonard I. Sweet has observed Finney's "pragmatic philosophy of revivalism" (211). Recently, biographer Keith Hardman explains that Finney's popularization of a "new, pragmatic, and optimistic approach to evangelism" (19) makes him the "'pragmatist's pragmatist'" (100), while Marianne Perciaccante notes that Finney's revival methods reflected a "pragmatic understanding of the best way in which to reach the mass of people" (161). Yet, in many of these sources, Finney's pragmatism is represented as being of the naive, Machiavellian sort - getting what you want by any means necessary. But Finney importantly would not have seen his approach in that light, as he believed his revival strategies came from divine decree: "I have always and everywhere used all the measures I used in these revivals, and have often added other measures such as the anxious seat whenever I have deemed it expedient. [...] And let me not be understood to take credit to myself. [...] I had no doubt then nor have I ever had that God led me by His Spirit to take the course I did" (*Memoirs* 180-81). Expediency and use value were Finney's primary tools, but an appreciation of his faith and a focus on his theological beliefs should also be considered in discussing his role in the history of American pragmatism.[117]

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[117] This isn't to suggest that beliefs operate in a vacuum, but can and do reflect the cultural specifics in which they emerge and are practiced. For a penetrating study of Finney's immediate context in which his theology and practice were developed, Perciaccante's deftly and thoroughly researched *Calling Down Fire* is a useful guide. I also share the school of thought to which Iain H. Murray - who is an evangelical scholar - belongs. In *Revival and Revivalism*, he criticizes Bernard Weisberger's attempt to "'interpret revivals in purely secular terms,'" as being "tantamount to saying that if God is in history at all that fact

Nor was Finney alone in his moral crusading. Though little is known about her, Finney's wife Lydia Root Andrews was active in several reform and social betterment causes. An outspoken proponent of abolition (unlike her taciturn husband) and a member of the Oberlin Maternal Association, the Female Society of Oberlin for the Promotion of Health, and the Oberlin Female Moral Reform Society, Lydia Andrews helped maintain communication with revivalist and reform correspondents as well as spearheading the organization of several of Finney's revivals. It's quite possible Andrews had mobilized similar pragmatic attitudes to her husband, but the extent to which this may be true remains to be seen.[118]

Yet, as was true for Edwards, calling Finney a mere pragmatist, as many seem to suggest he is, would be a mistake. His novel approach to revivalism was a recognition of the obsolescence of Enlightenment epistemologies, which led him to make pragmatic incursions into revival psychology, but some of Finney's theological commitments complicate naming him a pragmatist in the same way James was. Also true were the charges of enthusiasm levelled against Finney, a reminder that the Second Great Awakening was a resurrection of the first in more ways than one. Edwards was not far from the minds of antebellum revivalists. For many, the awakenings at Cane Ridge, Kentucky in 1801 and those of western New York in the 1820s were a sequel to the awakenings of the 1730s and 40s, yet all more or less celebrated the pious champion of respectable revivalism, "President Edwards." What they differed on was what "proper" meant. Images - of the itinerant firebrand James Davenport conducting a mass book burning in New London, Connecticut and stripping himself nearly nude in protest of clerical materialism; of Gilbert Tennent's direct assault on "the danger of an unconverted ministry;" and of George Whitefield's "fanatical" compassing of both America's backwaters and cityscapes - were frequent exemplars of how more conservative leaders believed Finney-esque revivalism

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lies outside the bounds of serious historical discussion. Such a standpoint seeks to open a door into the meaning of history when the key to its significance has already been discarded" (xx).

[118] For an appreciation of Lydia Root Andrews Finney's role in Finney's ministry, until her death in 1847, see Hambrick-Stowe's *Charles G. Finney and the Spirit of American Evangelicalism*. Aside from her letters, the archive is noticeably laconic on Lydia Finney's role in the promotion of revivals. An examination of that role exceeds the bounds of this dissertation, but the accounting for women's roles in American revivalism, along the lines of Rosalind Rosenberg's recovery of women pragmatists in *Beyond Separate Spheres* (1982), would be a fruitful project indeed.

could go dangerously awry, endangering unsuspecting souls in the process.[119] To some, Finney wasn't so much a sincere evangelist as a pompous showman who "thunders away with his anathemas against all who will not bow and do him reverence, terrifies weak-minded women and children half out of their senses" (17), as the *Evangelical Magazine* reported. It was certainly the expectation that the leading Boston Congregationalist Lyman Beecher had of Finney:

> Finney, I know your plan, and you know I do; you mean to come to Connecticut and carry a streak of fire to Boston. But if you attempt it, as the Lord liveth, I'll meet you at the State line, and call out all the artillerymen, and fight every inch of the way to Boston, and then I'll fight you there. (*Autobiography* 75) [120]

Though Beecher would eventually invite Finney to preach in Boston in 1831, he at first seemed adamant at keeping the revivalist upstart out of the historical bastion of Calvinist orthodoxy.[121]

Finney's approach to conversion was foremost a simplification of evangelical soteriology. To the perennial Protestant question, "how do I *know* I am saved," Finney responded with an emphasis on *doing* - though exchanging the question "what shall I do?" for a compulsive "this is what you *must* do." As the suffragist Elizabeth Cady Stanton recalled him saying, "'[r]epent and believe,' said he 'that is all you have to do to be happy here and hereafter'" (42). Conversion takes only a simple act of will, not the relentless introspection of Bunyan's *Grace Abounding* or the merciless self-excoriation of Michael Wigglesworth's diary. By rethinking the voluntary capacities of the suffering soul in the process of conversion, advocating a strenuous mode of living that would justify spiritual sincerity, and rearticulating the relationship between the human and the divine, Finney endorsed a distinctly practical evangelicalism built on what I have been pragmatic attitudes. An exploration of those attitudes will highlight the ways in which Finney departed from the Edwardsean tradition while adapting religious expression and faith to his particular historical moment.

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[119] The Presbyterian Albert Baldwin Dod, one of Finney's most vocal critics, in his lengthy October 1835 review of Finney's works, claimed that "[i]t is well known that [James] Davenport, against whose extravagant fanaticism [Jonathan] Edwards wrote at length, is *redivivus* in Mr. Finney, and that the same scenes over which he grieved and wept have been re-acted in our day under Mr. Finney's auspices" (657).

[120] For Beecher's many reservations against "Finneyism," its "uncontrolled emotionalism" and Finney's open acceptance of women preachers, see Hardman (123-32).

[121] Though the most famous revivalist preacher at the time, Finney was by no means the only one, nor the most exuberant. Other popular preachers like Jedidiah Burchard, Daniel Nash, and Jacob Knapp promoted their own revivals while drawing the conservative ire of orthodox ministers. See Perciaccante's *Calling Down Fire* (42-49). See also Hambrick-Stowe's observation that "Finney downplayed the effectiveness of the itinerant preachers who worked the villages of Oneida County and the North Country during his youth" (8-9). For Beecher's gradual warming toward Finney and eventual invitation to Boston, see Hambrick-Stowe (119-20).

Redefining the Supernatural and Causality

A minister should understand the philosophy of the human mind, so as to know how to plan and arrange his labors wisely.

Finney, *Lectures on Revivals of Religion* (169)

We saw in the last chapter how a reconciliation of science and religion was an objective of some prominent Enlightenment figures like Newton, Locke, and Edwards, and the same can be said of Finney. Calling for religious leaders to have a grasp of human psychology, Finney sought a ministerial method that accounted for the irreducibility of experience. For ministers – indeed anyone whose office involved people – the successful exercise of their duties relied above all on a grasp of human psychology.

True to the Edwardsean tradition that limited the potency of a miracle to the parameters of human psychology, Finney makes revival strategies and the theologies that inform them dependent on the limits and current "truths" of human psychology. "All theologians do and *must assume the truth* of some system of psychology and mental philosophy," because without a tentative pragmatic assumption of the functional truth of a "philosophy of the human mind," it would be impossible "to construct a *science* of any kind, or to attain to certain knowledge upon any subject" (*ST* 12; my emphasis). Human experience becomes the irreducible common denominator to which psychology, philosophy, and religion must shape themselves in order to be effective. Models of conversion not only had to come to terms with human limitations, but also justify the utility of assumed truths that provided the logic of those models; in order to save the eternal soul, you first had to deal with the finite body and the fallible mind.

Finney's evangelical approach to conversion aligns him with the methodology of pragmatism, which "has no dogma, and no doctrines save its method" (*Pragmatism* 27). In Finney's antebellum context, according to him and like-minded revivalists, there was a growing impatience with strict loyalties to dogmas that, as the revivalist Barton W. Stone put it, "have driven many into opposite extremes, and kept them from that happy medium, where truth commonly lies" ("Address" 10). Subscribers to Joshua Leavitt's *New York Evangelist* complained about "too much doctrinal discussion" (McLoughlin 76). Lewis Tappan, attempting to recruit the Finney-convert Theodore Weld to the pastorship of New York City's Free Church, griped to the young abolitionist that there was "too much 'theology' in the church now and too little of the Gospel," announcing that "this is the field for ardent and practical men" (52).[122] This emphasis on practicality over dogmatism, prioritization of experiential *method* over a preoccupation with getting your logic as clean as possible, and reorientation of religious duty around effort and effects rather than intellectual rigor, I'm arguing, are some of the ways in which antebellum revivalism cultivated novel conceptions of truth and practice that helped shape evangelicalism around the aborning logics of what would come to constitute Jamesian pragmatism. When Barton Stone called for "that happy medium, where truth commonly lies," he was essentially asking for the same thing Joshua Leavitt was: a practical approach to religion grounded in experience. In other words, Finney's attempt to make theology and philosophy functions of human psychology was a direct result of his reconciliation of various modes of thought, and it led him to assert the irreducibility of immediate experience, a fundamental epistemological tenet of Jamesian pragmatism.

The naturalizing of religious experience was of a piece with Finney's reluctance to ascribe revivalism to supernatural forces. His well-known description of what a revival is makes it impossible that the miraculous can intrude on religion:

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[122] The brothers Arthur and Lewis Tappan were Finney's most well-known and influential benefactors. For their endorsement of his evangelical crusade in New York City, see Hardman (175-78). For the brothers' role as financiers of Oberlin College, see Hardman (296-304).

> A revival of religion is not a miracle [in the sense of] suspending the laws of nature. [..] All the laws of matter and mind remain in force. [...] There is nothing in religion beyond the ordinary powers of nature. It consists entirely in the *right exercise* of the powers of nature. It is just that, and nothing else. [...] It is a purely philosophical result of the right use of the constituted means - as much so as any other effect produced by the application of means. (*LR* 12)

Not so much denying the existence of miracles, Finney banishes them from revivalism for the very reason that they are suspensions of natural laws.[123] Instead, revivals are the "philosophical [i.e., scientific] result of the right use of the constituted means," a sentence Hambrick-Stowe described as "one of the most controversial…in American religious history" (156). A revival is just like any other necessary outcome of specifically arranged causes. But it was that middle phrase - "right use" - that got Finney in the most trouble, since by "use" he was largely referring to *human* agency. The suggestion that mere humans had the power to effect their own conversions, to orthodox ears, risked diminishing the sovereign power of God. While his belief in the causal necessity of human action was hardly offensive (it had been Edwards's position after all), Finney's extension of human will to the production of revivals smacked of Arminianism, resurrecting the heretical shades of the seventeenth century Puritan dissenters Anne Hutchinson and Roger Williams.

In readying sinners for the impingement of spiritual truth by the Holy Spirit, Finney revises another Christian theological tradition: the distinction between chronos and kairos. Referring to diachronic, ongoing time, chronos forms the basic stream of experience which kairos, crisis or opportunity, intersects.[124]

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[123] Passages like this reflect the tension in antebellum theology's relationship with miracles. On the one hand, the idea of God's providence stipulated an ever-present possibility of divine intervention in human affairs. On the other, such an intervention seemed to diminish the meaningfulness of human agency. In Finney's case, the existence of miracles complicated humans' ability to consent to conversion. But Finney doesn't so much deny the existence of miracles as he leans on a theological reading common at the time – that the "apostolic age" of miracles is long over.

[124] This understanding of kairos as its own peculiar time distinct from chronos is a Christian innovation on the older Greek word for "target," "opportunity," and "opening." For the etymological history of the word as it appears in Greek and Latin literature, see Richard Onians's *The Origins of European Thought* (343-48).

> [C]onversion is not itself a miracle, nor do miracles themselves ever convert any body. They may be the means of awakening. Miracles are not always effectual even in that. And if continued or made common, they would soon lose their power. What is wanted in the world is something that can be a sort of omnipresent miracle, able not only to arrest attention but to fix it, and keep the mind in warm contact with the truth, till it yields. (*LR* 134-5).

These passages reflect the tension in Finney's thought between preserving the miraculous (and by extension avoiding challenging their role in the Gospels) and insisting on the natural self-sufficiency of the human will. While suggesting that miracles "made common…would soon lose their power," he immediately follows this by imagining that an "omnipresent miracle" may be useful in capturing the mind in preparation for conversion. What Finney seems to be conceiving of here is a field of supernatural influence subordinated to the far more important natural and "philosophical result" of a conversion experience.

Finney's assertion that miracles could never convert anyone echoes Emerson's contention in his "Divinity Address" that "[t]o aim to convert a man by miracles is a profanation of the soul" (115), since "the word Miracle...is Monster" - monstrous because irreconcilable "with the blowing clover and the falling rain" (113-14).[125] The antebellum redefinition of what constitutes a miracle derived less from the Romanticist interest in the transformative powers of nature than from the growing sense that nature and its laws and forms were sufficient for themselves, not dependent on transhuman or supernatural interventions to effect change. Put another way, the supernatural status of miracles comes under question because they by definition fall outside the only available field of empirical inquiry: concrete human experience. Finney's desire for "a sort of omnipresent miracle" reflects his emphasis on a convert's natural will being sufficient for itself, if kairos could be made to sanctify chronos and the spiritual benefits of crisis be made ever-present. In this sense, kairotic time becomes indistinguishable from diachronic flow.[126]

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[125] Emerson is perhaps more consistent in his rejection of miracles than Finney, who seems at times to overstate the naturalism of revivals and conversions while being somewhat ambiguous about whether or not miracles exist and what use they can serve.

[126] In chapter four, I discuss the ways in which liberal evangelicalism - of which many nineteenth century revivals were expressive - exchanged a conception of progressive, ongoing time for one that emphasized crisis. Because Finney understood conversion to be a critically immediate experience demanding a

But the conflation of kairotic and diachronic time comes with an unforeseen consequence. By minimizing the radical interjection of the miraculous into human affairs, and exchanging it with the sanctification of diachronic time, Finney opens the possibility of denying any significant difference between the sacred and the secular. Or, more precisely, in his desire for an "omnipresent miracle," he allows that the miraculous (the sacred) occupies no special place apart from the temporal – secular – field in which humans live. The distinction between the sacred and the secular is thus flattened. Whereas Finney suggests that such a homogenized sanctification may be possible, his critics saw it the other way, as a swallowing - hence assimilation, hence elimination - of the sacred in secular time.[127] This is one of the reasons why so many could, without any cognitive dissonance, align Finney, one of the nineteenth century's most tenacious believers, with atheism.

Finney's rethinking of these theological distinctions was one of the major reasons Beecher wanted to keep him as far away from Boston as possible. It was also why, in his review of *Systematic Theology*, the orthodox Presbyterian Charles Hodge essentially accused Finney of a too-secular humanism. According to Hodge, the logical conclusion of Finney's empowering of the human will is that "[t]here is and can be no allegiance to God as God, and hence Mr. Finney substitutes perpetually, 'obedience to the Intelligence,' to an 'idea of the Reason,' as synonymous with obedience to God…. In his whole system and of necessity God is subordinate to the universe" ("Art. VI" 266-67). The raising of human experience to epistemological respectability threatens to fracture God's absolute authority. Hodge's censure, it has been noted, was less a fair assessment of Finney's theology than an effort to assert Calvinist dominance by representing detractors as intellectually misguided.[128] The significance of this theological dispute

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precipitous act of consent, he is the rightful ancestor to how religious reform movements like the Social Gospel conducted their reformist programs.

[127] The challenge Finney is up against in this desire for an "omnipresent miracle" is the theological mainstay of a sharp divide between the sacred and the secular, which many Reformed traditions like Calvinism held to. In this moment, we may see an example of the emergence of a concept of time belonging to Charles Taylor's understanding of "secularity," which isn't necessarily an absence of religion, but a shift in our understanding of ourselves as occupying this temporal zone in which the sacred and secular have been flattened. See Taylor's *A Secular Age* (54-61).

[128] Finney never actually refuted the doctrine of absolute sovereignty, but he did try to argue that sovereignty consisted not in any abstract quality, but in God's will: "[b]y absolute, I mean, his expressed will, in obedience to his reason, is law" (*ST* 479).

rests in the shift Finney promoted in treating a revival not as a spontaneous intervention of a sovereign God, but as a fully realizable event that could be engineered by human actors.[129]

But this exclusion of supernaturalism has a practical purpose; even the possibility of God's miraculous intervention would leave the impression that sinners may not be *able* to choose salvation. "We now have all the powers of moral agency," Finney assures his audience, "we are just as God made us, and do not need any alteration in the substance of soul or body. [...] The alteration lies in the manner in which they are disposed to use, and do actually employ, their moral and physical powers" ("Sinners" 4-5). Finney's abiding contention throughout his ministry was that reliance on an abstract absolute sovereignty offered no incentive for religious practice; rather than creating faithful Christians, it promoted spiritual inertia. Because there is nothing standing in the way of one's turning to God, the urgency of acting *now* was central to Finney's conversion model, a theological shift that had lasting effects beyond Finney's ministry. Katherine Mortimer, the Christian agonist of Elizabeth Prentiss's popular *Stepping Heavenward* (1869), tells her dying friend Amelia, "[g]ive yourself to Christ right now. [...] A thousand years would not make you more fit to die" (176). Not only is religion commensurate with the "ordinary powers of nature," but those very powers are what must be instrumentalized by the "right use of the constituted means."

But by that last phrase, Finney wasn't also saying that the ends justify the means (the common accusation of amorality of which pragmatism and James are often the victims). For some of his critics, Finney's fixation on ends and effects was actually an attempt to have the ends *sanctify* the means. If it is true, as one reviewer of *Systematic Theology* inquired, that "the ends sanctify the means," then "it is right to do evil, that good may come."[130] Finney concedes that

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[129] Hodge draws several conclusions from Finney's theology that don't necessarily follow from Finney's own views, such as emptying the atonement of any meaning and diminishing the sovereignty of God. And Hodge's conservative rebuttal to Finney's humanism didn't remain in historical isolation. What Professor of Systematic Theology and minister Michael Horton finds so "destructive" about Finney's theology is that it "revolved around human morality" and his emphasis on "self-salvation" ("Life"). For the ways Finney shifted contemporaneous understandings of what a revival was, see Murray's *Revival and Revivalism*, Chs. 10-11.

[130] Finney's early biographer George Frederick Wright identifies the anonymous reviewer as the orthodox Presbyterian Charles Hodge (216-17). Hodge is essentially charging Finney with an unscrupulous expediency associated with utilitarianism. However, compare what Finney actually says in *Systematic Theology*. The "*doctrine of expediency*...is this, that whatever is expedient is right, for the reason, that the expediency of an action or measure is the foundation of the obligation to put forth that action, or adopt

"[t]he mere outward act has no moral character except as its character is derived from the end or design of the mind," but his refuge lies in an argument of necessity: "if he chooses an end in accordance with the dictates of reason and revelation, he can not but choose the means by the same rule. [...] If honest in his end, he will be and must be honest in the use of means" ("Princeton Review" 19). For Finney, there is a necessary moral causality between the right selection of an end and the means used to bring it about. As he put it in his sermon "Can Two Walk Together Except They Be Agreed?," "the more pure and holy the means are that are used to promote a revival of religion...the more like God they are, so much the more, of *necessity*, will they excite the opposition of all wrong hearts" (12).[131] Far from justifying evil acts, Finney's pragmatic piety knits the morality of the means to that of the effects, adopting the Scottish Common Sense position expressed by the Baptist educator and contemporary president of Brown University Francis Wayland: "as all relations, whether moral or physical, are the result of His enactment, an order of sequence, once discovered in moral, is just as invariable as an order of sequence in physics" (5). Because physical means and ends are logically consistent, it follows that the "right use of the constituted means" will produce morally consistent results as well. According to this causal logic, a justified saint as well as a justified sinner will act like one. We'll see in the next section how Finney employed this theory of moral necessity in his extemporaneous preaching.

This defense against Machiavellian pragmatism should strike us as familiar, since it also echoes James's argument in his defense of pragmatism's conception of truth. In *The Meaning of Truth*, James devoted an entire lecture to "The Pragmatist Account of Truth and Its Misunderstanders." Admitting that "[t]he name 'pragmatism,' with its suggestions of action, has been an unfortunate choice" (184), James challenges the misconception that pragmatism is "a sort of bobtailed scheme of thought, excellently fitted for the man on the street, who naturally hates theory and wants cash returns immediately" (185). Returning to his claim that pragmatism considers ideas just as real as things, James connects motivating ideas to their actionable effects:

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that measure. [...] But...utility, tendency, expediency, is only a condition of the obligation...but never the foundation of the obligation" (96). In other words, there can be no moral distinction between ends and means in a truly pious pragmatism.

[131] See also Finney's sermon, "Doctrine of Election:" "[f]oreknowledge and election are not inconsistent with free agency, but are founded upon it" (*SIS* 217).

> To a certain extent our ideas, being realities, are also independent variables, and, just as they follow other reality and fit it, so, in a measure, does other reality follow and fit them. When they add themselves to being, they partly redetermine the existent…. This pragmatist doctrine, exhibiting our ideas as complemental factors of reality, throws open...a wide window upon human action, as well as a wide license to originality in thought. But few things could be sillier than to ignore the prior epistemological edifice in which the window is built, or to talk as if pragmatism began and ended at the window. [The critics] ignore our primary step and its motive, and make the relation to action, which is our secondary achievement, primary. (*MT* 185-6)

The issue here is really about sincerity, a match between inner ideas and outward action, a dynamic signified by the figure of the window. Countering the critics who deem pragmatism to be a mere justification for immediate action, James asserts that the action performed by a pragmatist is not done independently of its motivating ideas – the materials of a constructed "edifice" always subject to *re*construction – which are just as real as the "reality" beyond the window. Ideas "fit" their realities in such a way that any account of reality would be "incompletely definable unless ideas also are kept account of." James is not specifically addressing morality here to the extent that Finney does, but the argument of a "fitness" between ideas and their realized actions provides a safeguard against charges that pragmatism appeals only to "engineers, doctors, financiers, and men of action...who need some sort of a rough and ready *weltanschauung*" (185) that will justify action to the exclusion of motivating ideas or psychological sincerity.[132]

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[132] The field of pragmatic ethics hears more from John Dewey than James on the matter of pragmatism's moral obligations. James did say, in a famous passage from *Pragmatism*, that "*[t]he true is the name of whatever proves itself to be good in the way of belief, and good, too, for definite, assignable reasons*. [...] If there be any life that it is really better we should lead, and if there be any idea which, if believed in, would help us to lead that life, then it would be really *better for us* to believe in that idea, *unless, indeed, belief in it incidentally clashed with other greater vital benefits*" (36-7). This passage is one of the reasons why James is usually taken to mean we can simply will ourselves to believe in things that make our lives better, but that's not exactly what he's saying: "it *would* be really better for us to believe in such ideas." Furthermore, James does seem to equate the goodness of an idea with its individual utility, which makes his pragmatism - unlike Dewey's - far more amenable to the individualism that characterizes much of his other writing.

Finney's emphasis on the connection between effects and means is important for another reason. Influenced as he was by Scottish Common Sense philosophers like Dugald Stewart and Thomas Reid, Finney rejected the implicit arbitrariness of Hume's empiricism: "[f]rom the first appearance of an object, we never can conjecture what effect will result from it" (*Enquiry* 46). We cannot perceive any necessary connection between cause and effect, only the sequences they seem to habitually make. The effects of a conversion experience, then, would have no implicit justification. Finney's "right use of constituted means," on the contrary, enables a revival to achieve its philosophical result if the means God has enjoined are put to their "*right exercise*." To Finney, no doctrine about cause and effect was more pernicious than "that there is no connection of the means with the result, and no tendency in the means to produce the effect" (*LR* 13). To render the rational connection between means and effects arbitrary or in any way disconnected would be to rob volition of its properly effective role in conversion. To Finney, this salvifically lethal doctrine excuses spiritual indolence on the grounds that all one needs to do to be saved is wait God's time.[133]

And what is true for the individual is also true of the cosmos. "There is no *natural* event in which [God's] own agency is not concerned. He has not built the creation like a vast machine that will go on alone without his further care. He has not retired from the universe, to let it work for itself. This is mere atheism" (*LR* 19-20). Finney is talking about deism, but his description of it as atheism is a result of his pragmatic loyalty to practical differences. Because the deist's central claim is that God has absconded from Creation, deism is practically atheism. There is no part of the natural world that isn't connected to divine agency, and to suggest God isn't actively implicated in Creation is to practically promote the moral inertia and salvific stagnation implied in atheism.[134] The same logic applies for the quality of "right:" "[r]ight is objective or subjective. Objective right is a mere abstraction or an idea of the fit, the suitable, and of that choice which is subjectively right or constitutes virtue. Can this abstraction impose obligation to will itself as an end? What is it? Why it is an abstraction. It is nothing in the concrete - nothing actual or possible" ("Princeton Review" 32). Deism is atheism for the same reason that "objective right" cannot impose moral obligations - abstractions and absconded deities can have no practical significance independent of the concrete conditions of human actors or the natural world. .

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[133] Finney regularly insisted that waiting God's time was detrimental to salvation. In *Systematic Theology*, he suggested Edwards was at least partly to blame for it: "[t]he moral inability of Edwards is a real natural inability, and so it has been understood by sinners and professors of religion. [...] They desired me to say to sinners, that they could not repent, and that they must wait God's time…. [...] To attempt to effect the conversion of a sinner, or to promote a revival, was an attempt to take the work out of the hands of God" (330-31). The same was true for many new measure revivalists. Reflecting on the state of religion in New England, the Baptist Jacob Knapp lamented "those hyper-Calvinistic tenets" that encouraged spiritual laziness by teaching that "[w]hen God wanted to convict or convert a sinner, he knew where to find him, and how to do it, without the intervention of human effort; and in his own 'good time'" (*Autobiography* 38).

The signification of the abstract by way of practical effects has further implications, and ties Finney to Jamesian thought in more compelling ways. This move to make the condition of meaning its manifestation in the concrete is one strategy to get beyond Cartesian dualism, the consequence being that mind becomes an *embodied* phenomenon. If we consider pragmatism's condition that for abstractions to have significance they must make some difference in experience, there is a clear connection among Finney, James, and the twentieth century emergence of phenomenology, the description of faith as a totalizing embodied experience, and later theories of extended mind like embodied cognition and Clark and Chalmers's "active externalism."[135] Finney's insistence that religious affections be embodied experiences can help us rethink the potential degrees of overlap among revival theology, philosophies of mind, and the empirical sciences.

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[134] Finney's attempt to make nature and God commensurate was one of the reasons why the Princeton theologian Benjamin B. Warfield claimed that *Systematic Theology* "'gives us less a theology than a system of morals. God might be eliminated from it entirely without essentially changing its character. All virtue, all holiness, is made to consist in an ethical determination of will'" (James Johnson 351). The anonymous reviewer of *Systematic Theology* too, according to Finney, "repeatedly insinuates that I confound God with the universe and make good will to the universe instead of love to God the great thing in religion" ("Princeton Review" 59). Criticisms like these, as much as Finney denied their accuracy, are a measure of how embedded in Calvinist orthodoxy was the theological insistence that God, though the creator of nature, is radically separate from it.

[135] The twentieth century theologian Paul Tillich has described acts of faith in which "every nerve of man's body, every striving of man's soul, every function of man's spirit participates. [...] In every act of genuine faith the body participates, because genuine faith is a passionate act" (106). Philosophers of mind Andy Clark and David Chalmers are perhaps the most well-known proponents of the anti-dualist extended mind thesis. Their theory of "active externalism" - clearly inspired by Dewey's idea of experience as a transaction between a subject and the environment - considers the role of the environment in the shaping of cognitive processes, seeking to explain the extent to which the "out-there" is implicated in how we use abstract concepts. See their paper, "The Extended Mind" (1998).

The next section discusses Finney's conversion model in detail., as well as highlighting the ways Finney employs the epistemological categories of variety, uncertainty, and possibility for productive use in the saving of souls.

Conversion as Process - Epistemological Values of Variety, Uncertainty, and Possibility

[N]o individual or school of thought could equal experience as Finney's teacher. His doctrine, in fact, grew out of actions which met the pragmatic test; success could be measured only in numbers of converts and in the apparent intensity of their convictions. Thus it was that Finney's chief contribution in the New York campaigns was not a theology but a set of practices.

Whitney Cross, *The Burned-Over District* (160)

Finney was, according to most accounts, an imposing figure. "He had a magnificent physique," Cochran recalled, "and walked with a quick elastic step that made people instinctively turn and look at him" (13).[136] One famous image of him depicts a bracing posture with piercing, deep-set eyes that make it easy to imagine why so many accounts of his preaching frequently mention rapt audiences stricken with excruciating fear for their souls. Recalling her girlhood in Troy during a Finney revival, the future suffragist Elizabeth Cady Stanton remembered him as "a terrifier of human souls" (41), describing his oratory in the fashion he became known for:

> I can see him now, his great eyes rolling around the congregation and his arms flying about in the air like those of a windmill. One evening he described hell and the devil and the long procession of sinners being swept down the rapids, about to make the awful plunge into the burning depths of liquid fire below…. He

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[136] For a glowing description of Finney's intellectually and athletically vigorous youth, see Cochran (13-18). See also Robert Aikman's memorial article in *The Independent* two weeks after Finney's death: "[h]e was a very striking figure in the pulpit . About six feet in hight [sic], erect and long-armed, with a lofty forehead and a large gray eye, whose gaze seemed now to sweep over a whole audience and then to pierce into the secret soul of some individual before him" (1).

> suddenly halted and, pointing his index finger at the supposed procession, he exclaimed:
>
> ‘There, do you not see them!’
>
> I was wrought up to such a pitch that I actually jumped up and gazed in the direction to which he pointed…. [...] Fear of the judgment seized my soul. Visions of the lost haunted my dreams. Mental anguish prostrated my health. Dethronement of my reason was apprehended by friends. (*Eighty Years* 42-3)[137]

Stanton’s recollection of Finney’s fiery, reason-smiting oratory illustrates the preacher’s radical use of direct address, appeals to immediate experience, and rhetorical sundering of the boundary between the worlds of matter and spirit, a Lockean conflation of thing and idea.[138] Her affections raised to the utmost pitch, Stanton gained a clarity of spiritual sight that *real*ized the world beyond matter yet consequentially bound to it. Where Edwards described his sense of the heart as a new yet somewhat vague understanding of spiritual truth, Finney described hellscapes of unthinkable suffering whose anxiety-inducing hyper-reality was practically indistinguishable from parishioners’ lived realities.[139] Where Edwards gently excused reason from his sense of the heart, Finney blasted it right out of the mind.

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[137] Compare Stanton’s account with Cochran’s description of his late grandfather: “[w]hen in the full tide of his eloquence, [his eyes] swept his audience like search lights, fascinating, compelling attention, yet producing strange, uneasy feelings” (16). He continued: “[i]t was an exposition of merciless justice; of what guilt men had the right to expect...and of the terrors that would overtake them when judgment was at hand. Then, right before our eyes, he conjured up such a fearful storm of wind, rain and hail that I grew chilled through and through. I shivered and buttoned my coat up tight and I saw uneasiness and apprehension depicted on the faces of all around me” (68-9). Rev. Charles Bush recalled Finney’s ample use of vocal energy and homiletic realism: “[a]s the preacher uttered this sentence, he stood at his full height, tall and majestic - stood as if transfixed, gazing and pointing toward the emblazoned cloud, as it seemed to roll up before him; his clear, shrill voice rising to its highest pitch…. [T]here were no sleepers within the sound of that clarion voice” (*Reminiscences* 12).

[138] One easily overlooked innovation of Finney’s preaching is his regular use of the second person pronoun “you” in addressing his congregations, a small alteration in conventional sermonizing that produced large effects: “[w]hat is personal preaching? No *individual* is ever benefited by preaching unless he is made to feel that it *means him*. [...] It often appears so personal, to wicked men, that they feel as if they were just going to be called out by name before the congregation” (*LR* 219). See also Finney’s *Memoirs*: “I could name ministers who...were greatly ashamed of me when I first began to preach because I was so undignified in the pulpit, used language in such common use, addressed the people with such directness, and said *‘you,’* and because I aimed not at all at ornament, or at supporting the dignity of the pulpit” (79).

The violent dethronement of Stanton's reason and her subsequent prolonged illness (which she attributed to Finney's preaching) was shocking to more moderate and conservative revivalists, who saw less of proper religion in Finney's preaching than a theatrical assault on the senses.[140] Yet the deployment of a radical homiletic realism in provoking the affections was in keeping with the Edwardsean stress on the fundamental parity of human faculties. According to this theory, raising the affections to the level of ironclad conviction would naturally be accompanied by a corresponding muscularization of a will primed for consent. A dethroned reason was a small price to pay when what mattered was the activation of a will that could consent to an offering of grace.

Whitney Cross's portrayal of Finney as a diligent student of experience is true for how he gauged the success of his ministry, and for the efficacy of ministers attempting to initiate conversions. In his *Memoirs*, he made direct experience a crucial qualification for a successful preacher: "[w]ithout the direct teaching of the Holy Spirit, a man will never make much progress in preaching the Gospel. The fact is, unless he can preach the Gospel *as an experience*, present religion to mankind as a matter of consciousness, his speculations and theories will come far short of preaching the Gospel" (43; my emphasis).[141] Mere intellectualism is ineffective in achieving the requisite conviction of a sincere conversion. The primacy of direct, unmediated experience, sensitive to the infinite variability of human consciousness, is the epistemological core of Finney's revivalism. The stipulation that, in order for the Gospel to have an appreciable effect it must show its "cash value in experiential terms" (*Pragmatism* 88), makes Finney's preaching one of the first examples of nineteenth century evangelicalism's emerging pragmatic character.

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[139] Henry B. Stanton corroborates his wife's depiction of Finney's visceral homiletics: "[h]e painted in vivid colors. He gave his imagination full play. [...] As he would stand with his face toward the side gallery, and then involuntarily wheel around, all the audience in that part of the house toward which he threw his arm would dodge as if he were hurling something at them. In describing the sliding of a sinner to perdition, he would lift his long finger toward the ceiling and slowly bring it down till it pointed to the area in front of the pulpit, when half his hearers in the rear of the house would rise unconsciously to their feet to see him descend into the pit below" (26). This provocation of the affections in an effort to activate the will was the practical application of Finney's psychological theory of the intrinsic interplay of the will and the affections.

[140] Traveling in America, the English novelist Frances Trollope related her shock at witnessing young girls on the anxious bench at a Cincinnati revival: "[y]oung creatures, with features pale and distorted, fell on their knees on the pavement, and soon sunk forward on their faces; the most violent cries and shrieks followed. [...] More than once I saw a young neck encircled by a reverend arm. Violent hysterics and convulsions seized many of them…. It was a frightful sight to behold innocent young creatures...thus seized upon, horror struck, and rendered feeble and enervated for ever. One young girl...had every appearance of idiotism" (72-3).

So crucial was the immediacy of experience to a successful revival, in fact, that any attempt to introduce mediating measures threatened to curtail the work of the Holy Spirit. Finney's correspondent and Presbyterian minister Daniel Nash cautioned Finney over the use of his sermon skeletons - outlines of basic homiletic points used to assist ministers in extemporaneous preaching.[142] "I should advise you to be careful about using skeletons in preaching. Whatever may be the effect on you, I am persuaded they would injure my spirituality. [...] [W]hen you preach, throw yourself entirely on God" (Hambrick-Stowe 123). Any reliance on tools that distracted from the immediate experience risked diluting the power of the Spirit.

Another possible disruption to a personal conversion experience was a reliance on standardized conversion models. One of the reasons Mark Noll declared that "[b]eyond doubt, [Finney] stands as *the* crucial figure in white American evangelicalism after Jonathan Edwards" (176), is because, like Edwards, Finney's conversion methods reflected a sensitivity to experiential variety and possibility. "To suppose that...because in some instances, sinners have had those horrors of conscience, and fears of hell, before they would yield, that therefore they are *necessary*, and that all sinners must experience them before they can change their hearts," is "unwarrantable" ("How to Change" 31). These pragmatic methods were a challenge to Calvinist predestination, a doctrine that some revivalists felt outright canceled incentives to pursue the epistemological values of possibility and uncertainty. The intellectual proximity to Jamesian pragmatism's epistemology is apparent in *Varieties of Religious Experience*:

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[141] The question of ministerial qualifications in leading a revival or facilitating conversions had been pondered by clergymen since the time of Edwards. Solomon Stoddard stipulated the importance that professors of religion "get experience of this work in their own hearts. If they have not experience, they will be but blind guides" (*Guide* 27). The Presbyterian minister Gilbert Tennent's notorious 1742 sermon, "The Danger of an Unconverted Ministry," was intended as an assault on the legitimacy of ministers who themselves had not undergone the experience of conversion (or whose claims to conversion were questionable). His sermon generated no shortage of controversy, especially among the Presbyterian and Congregationalist elite.

[142] In the *Charles Grandison Finney Presidential Papers* archive at Oberlin College, one can find Finney's "commonplace book," a small notebook featuring examples of Finney's sermon skeletons. Such methods were not uncommon at the time, and were valued because of the immediacy and spontaneity they lent to a minister's preaching. The English nonconformist Jabez Burns's *Five Hundred Sketches and Skeletons*, for example, prescribed that "the profit of our auditory should ever be first, - ever pre-eminent. Compared with this, every thing else is trifling an unimportant" (iv). By "profit," Burns was emphasizing a sermon's practical effects over doctrinal adherence or intellectual exhortation.

> [n]o two of us have identical difficulties, nor should we be expected to work out identical solutions. Each, from his peculiar angle of observation, takes in a certain sphere of fact and trouble, which each must deal with in a unique manner. (487)

The radical relativity of experience translates into the idea that the true spiritual life is lived idiosyncratically. The individual mind, with its "peculiar angle of observation," not transcendent categories or abstract concepts, becomes the measure of the "truth" of a conversion. Like Edwards and David Brainerd's complaints with the shortcomings of an overly paradigmatic conversion morphology, Finney privileges the infinite possibilities of experience over doctrine, individual discovery over received opinion.[143] New Light revivalists explicitly instructed camp meeting attendees, during worship, to "*not take your particular experience as the standard for others*" (*Penuel* 264). The epistemological outlook that respects individual human experience as such, and that can handle a seemingly endless proliferation of empirical data motivates in turn the development of an empiricism radical enough to account for it.[144] Why Finney can be seen as the historical mediator between Edwardsean revivalism and the activist evangelicalism of the postbellum era is a direct consequence of his defense of a pluralistic appreciation of experiential variety, the fundamental fact that no two conversions are necessarily the same.

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[143] In *Lectures on Revivals of Religion*, Finney mentions David Brainerd by name, using him as an example of the dangers of any strategy of conversion that focused on the affections to the exclusion of an energizing act of will: "Sinners are often wholly taken up with *looking at themselves,* to see if they cannot find something there, some kind of *feeling* or other, that will recommend them to God. Evidently...David Brainard [sic] was a long time taken up with his *state of mind*, looking for some *feelings* that would recommend him to God. [...] Thus, the poor man, for want of correct instruction, was driven almost to despair…much impaired by the false philosophy he had adopted on this point" (358). Where Edwards held Brainerd up as a model Christian worthy of emulation, Finney treated him like a cautionary tale.

Nascent in this attention to the unpredictability of individual subjectivities is a respect for uncertainty. Contrary to more conservative approaches to revivals, such as those of Lyman Beecher, revivalism under Finney had at its center an irresolvable unpredictability about the "proper" measures, an uncertainty remedied by an appreciation of the practical circumstances surrounding the revival. As he puts it in *Lectures on Revivals*, "God has established *no particular system of measures* to be employed and invariably adhered to in promoting religion." He considers this open-endedness to be particular to Christianity, as the "forms" under the "*Jewish* dispensation" "were all *typical*, and were designed to shadow forth Christ…. [...] Therefore they were fixed, and all their details particularly prescribed by Divine authority. But it *was never* so under the Gospel" (238). Unlike Judaism, epistemological uncertainty is endemic to Christianity.

Finney went further:

> [w]e are left in the dark as to the measures which were pursued by the apostles and primitive preachers, except so far as we can gather it from occasional hints in the book of Acts. [...] When Jesus Christ was on earth, laboring among his disciples, he had nothing to do with forms or measures. He did from time to time in this respect just as it would be natural for any man to do in such cases, without anything like a set form or mode of doing it" (238-39).

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[144] This amplification of empirical data in Finney's epistemology is another reason why I believe James's radical empiricism itself can be viewed in relation to changes in American Protestantism. This isn't to suggest that Finney can be called a radical empiricist by any stretch. What has yet to be disclosed in American intellectual history is the way in which James's radical empiricism comes to be thinkable and the extents to which earlier intellectual precedents have shaped its development.

Finney employed a productive uncertainty regarding the measures of revivals. It's no obstacle if we know little about the circumstances of ancient Christian practice; Christ - who in this passage comes across as a practical man of experimental action - is the enduring model that will shape that uncertainty to human interests. In Finney's account, "[w]hen Christ came, the ceremonial or typical dispensation was abrogated, because the design of those forms was fulfilled, and therefore themselves of no further use" (238). The "forms" having "no further use," Christ does the "natural" thing - to adopt a pragmatic tentativeness toward the utility of forms and to preach "the Gospel in the *most effectual way*, to make the truth stand out strikingly, so as to obtain the attention and secure the obedience of the greatest number possible" (239). It's little wonder why William McLoughlin noted that "[t]he new criteria of religious fervor were quantitative, to be measured by the number of days a revival lasted and by the number of conversions obtained" (129). For Finney, a revival was true if it *worked*.

Emphasizing the pragmatic attitudes of Christ's preaching, Finney interpreted religion as a practical endeavor that must be prepared to adjust itself to a variety of more or less unpredictable circumstances. The only legitimate function of forms and measures are as heuristics, provisional measures that may enhance the success of religious practice, but are never equivalent to or sufficient replacements for it. As Finney put it, "[w]henever the churches get settled down into a *form* of doing things, they soon get to rely upon the outward doing of it, and so retain the form of religion while they lose the substance" (*LR* 255). The substance of religion, in other words, was an experience in the Jamesian and Deweyan vein: a *process*.

Among *Systematic Theology*'s many revisions of Old Light Calvinist theology, the embrace of process over closed system is its most original, and one that links antebellum revivalism epistemologically to Jamesian pragmatism. From the outset, what Finney calls "Christian consistency" attempts to blend Christian practice with scientific empirical inquiry:

> The discovery of new truth will modify old views and opinions, and there is perhaps no end to this process with finite minds in any world. True Christian consistency does not consist in our stereotyping our opinions and views…. [...] Christian consistency implies continued investigation and change of views and practice corresponding with increasing knowledge. (3)

Finney's scientific conception of truth as ever-evolving adopted the Edwardsean appreciation for ongoing experiential flux. His argument that truth for "finite minds in any world" is an ongoing process turns the experience of garnering that truth into an open-ended experiential journey of discovery evacuated of predetermined teleology. Heir to that tradition, James made flux and variability a fundamental condition of pragmatism's epistemology: "[s]o far as reality means experienceable reality, both it and the truths men gain about it are everlastingly in process of mutation - mutation towards a definite goal, it may be - but still mutation" (*Pragmatism* 99). By accepting the irreducible flux of "experienceable reality," Finney at once delegitimized loyalties to traditions for their own sakes and argued that Christian practice was equivalent to scientific inquiry.

Significantly, furthermore, Finney does not say "discovery of *the* truth." His remarks on "Christian consistency" are an effort to reconcile scientific inquiry with Christian practice, but not to associate either with pretensions to absolute claims to truth. In doing so, he maintains his loyalty to experiential variety while avoiding the suggestion of a monolithic unified order of truth, an order that practically doesn't exist for "finite minds," but only in the eternal reality of God. He would say as much to ministers who challenged his preaching methods: "'[s]how me a more excellent way. Show me the *fruits* of your ministry; and if the fruits of your ministry so far exceed mine as to give me evidence that you have found out a more excellent way than I have, I will adopt your views" (*Memoirs* 66). The common thread between being Christian and being a scientist - the only one Finney thinks is significant, at least - is the humility to change one's views in the face of new data, a pragmatic approach to saving souls that puts Finney's evangelicalism in immediate epistemological proximity with Jamesian pragmatism.

Interestingly, Finney has mapped these two conceptions of truth - one tentative and subject to modifications from new experiences, the other codified and closed - onto denominational affiliation. The ossification and institutionalization of truth and uncompromising adherence to doctrine, in fact, is the mark of that longstanding nineteenth century Protestant propaganda target: the Catholic. "Every uninspired attempt to frame for the church an authoritative standard of opinion which shall be regarded as an unquestionable exposition of the word of God, is not only impious in itself, but it is also a tacit assumption of the fundamental dogma of Papacy" (*ST* 3).[145] Catholicism represents the stultification of progress; "Christian consistency," and its covenant with open-ended scientific inquiry and respect of individual experience, represents the progressivist pursuit of new knowledge. Bear in mind, Finney does not say "Protestant," but uses the more ecumenical "Christian" to denote progressive truth seeking - a rhetorical move signaling not only that "Papists" cannot be true Christians, but that the association between Christianity and a pragmatic tentativeness toward truth is a normative one.[146]

This uniquely "Christian" experimentalism toward conversion demands, in turn, something that a "standard of opinion" effectively cancels: the muscularization of the human will. In the next section, I discuss Finney's most controversial psycho-theological move in reworking Protestant conversion.

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[145] Finney was by no means alone in his treatment of Catholics as obsessed with traditionalism and whose doctrines were antithetical to American values of freedom and self-determination. Highly popular narratives like Maria Monk's *Awful Disclosures* (1836) and Rebecca Reed's *Six Months in a Convent* (1835) are staples of the anti-Catholic propagandistic literature of the American nineteenth century. Depicting convents as Catholic methods of polluting the minds of young women, murdering the illegitimate offspring of priests, and indoctrinating superstitious beliefs in unvigilant (usually female) Protestant minds were only some of the images these narratives helped to popularize. For what is perhaps the definitive study on anti-Catholic literature and sentiment of the time, see Jenny Franchot's *Roads to Rome: The Antebellum Protestant Encounter with Catholicism*.

[146] In the epilogue, I discuss the ways in which liberal evangelicalism, over the course of the nineteenth century, assumed a normative cultural dominance whose effects we still feel today. Finney's antithesis between "Catholic" and "Christian" is also implicitly between "Catholic" and "Protestant," the latter of which will increasingly come to be identified with "American" to the extent that the invocation of the one summons that of the other.

Willing Converts in Antebellum Revivalism

The water of life is really as free as natural water; and this we all know is the common gift of Providence to man and beast. But the condition is, that we should will to receive it - *that we acknowledge it to be the water of life*.

Sampson Reed, *Observations on the Growth of the Mind* (vi)

Six months before the New Lebanon Conference where Finney's new measure revivalism encountered the scrutiny of New England orthodoxy, the Congregationalist pastor and fierce Finney critic Asahel Nettleton sent a letter to the minister of Utica, New York, Samuel Aiken, admonishing Finney on challenging the authority of settled pastors and charging the revivalist with brewing a "civil war in Zion - a domestic broil in the household of faith" (Tyler 249).[147] Nettleton allegedly intended Aiken to have Finney see the letter.[148] Finney did indeed see it, and, rightly nettled, snubbed his theological opponent directly from Aiken's Utica pulpit, doubling down on the revival strategies that made his name notorious throughout western New York's "burned-over district."

One of these strategies was to continue the Edwardsean emphasis on the role of the affections in a conversion experience.[149] At Troy in March, 1827, not long after he read Nettleton's denunciatory letter, Finney preached one of his most well-known sermons: "Can Two Walk Together Except They Be Agreed?" The sermon reads like an antebellum version of

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[147] For Finney's account of what transpired at New Lebanon, see his *Memoirs* (169-77).

[148] For the account of Nettleton's obstructive actions leading up to the New Lebanon Conference, see Hardman, Ch. 6. Finney touches on the letter briefly in his *Memoirs* (174). Bennet Tyler's memoir of Nettleton claims that, while Nettleton sought a diplomatic solution to pastorate schisms, "[h]e found that Mr. F[inney] was utterly unwilling to abandon certain measures" (247). Yet throughout his own memoir, Finney consistently asserts that these apparent contentions had been exaggerated. For an account of this epistolary controversy between Nettleton and Finney, and Nettleton's criticisms of Finney's Edwardsean sermon, see also Wright (75-81) and Murray (230-31).

[149] As Hardman points out, Finney had direct access to Edwards's *Religious Affections* while he stayed in the home of Samuel Aiken in 1827 (117). Though, considering the reputation of Edwards's text in theological and revivalist circles, it is very unlikely that Finney would have been ignorant of even its basic points about religion consisting mainly of the affections.

Edwards's *Religious Affections*. "All pleasure and pain," Finney intoned, "all happiness and misery, belonging to the mind - all sin and holiness, have their seat in, and belong to, the *heart* or affections" (1). The sermon's central thesis, that the agreement of affections between people is of more concern than their intellectual or theoretical agreement, is also implicitly an argument that feeling is knit to voluntary action in ways the intellect isn't.

"For two to be agreed," Finney began,

> implies something more than to be agreed in *theory*, or in understanding: for we often see persons who agree in theory, but who differ vastly in *feeling and practice*. Their understandings may embrace the same truths, while their hearts and practice will be very differently affected by them. Saints and sinners often embrace in theory the same religious creed, while it is plain that they differ widely in feeling and practice. (1)

Across three similarly sounding sentences, this passage insists that theory/understanding/creed occupy one side of the religious life, while feeling (or heart) and practice are aligned on the other. Internal affections are signified by practice. "We are to know each other by our fruits," Finney says elsewhere. "This is expressly given in the Bible as the rule of judgment in the case. [...] It seems difficult to rid men of the prejudice that religion consists in feelings and in experiences in which they are altogether passive" (*ST* 302). James had the same idea: "[i]f your feeling bear no fruits in my world, I call it utterly detached from my world; I call it a solipsism, and call its world a dream-world" (*MT* 23). Finney's emphasis on how affections make us more willing to act is not so much an example of his patronizing his audience as it is a marker of the orthodox formalism he felt himself going up against. When, at the end of the sermon, Finney referred to the "lukewarm and ungodly," he was talking about Beecher and Nettleton, both of whom didn't fail to catch the implication.

Part of that formalism advocated an approach to conversion that kept the potentially volatile affections in check while using reasoned arguments to reach an intellectual understanding of spiritual truth. But again, Finney went to some length to countermand this procrustean model, making the case that any conversion must be conducted with the understanding of the ineluctable variability of human experience. The sermon typifies Finney's use of psychological openendedness as a justification for a humanistic conversion model:

> These different effects, produced in different minds by the same truths, are owing to the different state of the heart or affections of the different individuals. Or, in other words, the difference in the effects consists in the different manner in which the person receives these truths, or feels and acts in view of them. It is to be observed, also, that the same things and truths will affect the same mind very differently at different times. This, too, is owing to the different state of the affections at these times. (1)

Following the Edwardsean dictum that true religion consists in the affections, Finney made radical contingency of the affections a powerful - if unpredictable - agent in the conversion process. Conversion is not a one-size-fits-all process, but one in which the affections are powerful modulators of spiritual sight. The fact that minds are "different" - a word appearing nine times throughout the paragraph - and respond differently to the "same truths" is not only a consequence of the Fall (or the scattering of Babel), but a fundamental psychological condition, necessitating a model of conversion that is flexible and tailor-made to individual sinners according to their peculiar subjectivities. "Human experiences differ as human countenances differ" (*ST* 409), and that difference is inextricable.

The central reason orthodox formalism was so stultifying to Finney, though, was that it provided no rationale for Christians to convert. Along with the doctrine of total depravity, absolute sovereignty marked the human will as congenitally defective, incapable of producing any good acts - the "old terrorism," as Washington Gladden called it (*Recollections* 428). Finney continued the liberal revivalist challenge to the regnant Augustinian notion of good as positive creation and sin as negation or absence.[150]

The volitional gridlock inherent to total depravity came in conflict with the growing voluntarism of antebellum America, and Finney and many New School ministers sought to invest conversion processes with a volitional component that would manifest beliefs in practice.[151] A more liberal interpretation that affected a variety of traditional orthodoxies and denominations, the New School – spearheaded by figures like Joseph Bellamy, Timothy Dwight, and Nathaniel William Taylor – sought to make human agency central to the conversion process. One of Finney's so-called "new measures" was to centralize *consent*, the primary volitional act Finney learned from his own conversion struggle at Adams, New York, in 1821:

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[150] Augustine's influential theodicy (which he learned from the third century A.D. Neoplatonic philosopher Plotinus) is a simple formulation: "evil is not a positive substance: the loss of good has been given the name of 'evil'" (440).

> I had become very nervous, and in the night a strange feeling came over me as if I was about to die. [...] [S]omething seemed to confront me with questions...as if an inward voice said to me, "What are you waiting for? Did you not promise to give your heart to God? [...]
>
> [...] Indeed, the offer of Gospel salvation seemed to me to be an offer of *something to be accepted,* and that it was full and complete; and that all that was necessary on my part, was to get my own consent to give up my sins, and give myself to Christ. (*Memoirs* 11)

"What are you waiting for?" was indeed the question, as antebellum revivalism frequently used a discourse of crisis that framed conversion not as a series of predetermined steps that would incrementally lead one to God, but as an immediate choice. A question that is also a call to action, "what are you waiting for?' enhances the immediacy of the decision one must make. Of course, what certified Finney's revival strategy was that he had firsthand experience of its salvific efficacy.

Consent, then, became the key to successful conversions. Finney essentially brought legalism into the realm of religion. Recalling his legal training, "I bought my first Bible as a law-book, and laid it by the side of my Blackstone" (*SGT* 273). The English jurist Sir William

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[151] This inclusion of the positive affordances of volition is another area where Finney reworks Edwards's conception of freedom. After quoting his thoughts on "natural ability" from *Freedom of the Will* (38-9), Finney interjects that Edwards's "definition of natural ability, or natural liberty, as he frequently calls it, wholly excludes the power to will, and includes only the power or ability to execute our volitions. Thus it is evident, that natural ability, according to him, respects external action only, and has nothing to do with willing" (303-4). Finney interprets Edwards's "freedom" of the will to consist in its negative nature. Finney believes that the human will can be a positive force. For a record of the extent to which New School ministers strove to overcome the orthodox mandate of God's exclusive initiative in effecting conversion, see *A Narrative of the Revival of Religion, in the County of Oneida* (41-46).

Blackstone - required reading for any Anglo-American jurist in training - was highly influential in making voluntary acts the logical basis for their punishment: "[a]n involuntary act, as it has no claim to merit, so neither can it induce any guilt: the concurrence of the will, when it has its choice either to do or to avoid the fact in question, being the only thing that renders human action either praiseworthy or culpable" (*Commentaries* 20). We'll see the further implications of this passage, but what it told Finney was that the inaction of waiting God's time doesn't render the convert morally exculpable; what mattered in the valuation of an act was the consent of the will. One couldn't will oneself into a conversion state, but, by following the promptings of the Holy Spirit, one could consent to it.

But even that for some was going too far. The Princeton theologian and mathematician Albert Baldwin Dod's scathing 1832 review of Finney's *Lectures* and *Sermons* targeted the suggestion that the human will could in any way affect the power of God. According to Dod, Finney

> speaks of a "state of things, in which it is *impossible for God* or man to promote religion but by powerful excitements." [...] Then may we rightly teach...that God, thwarted in his wishes and plans by the obstinacy of the human will, is literally grieved by the perverse conduct of men; and sinners may properly be exhorted...to forsake their sins from compassion for their suffering Maker! (491)[152]

The eighteenth century language of enthusiasm has been dampened, but the same suspicion of "powerful excitements" remains to contest the proper conduct during a revival. Followed to its logical conclusion, Dod argued, Finney's muscularization of the will had the effect of diminishing the infinite power of God, thereby exonerating sinners from seeking repentance.

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[152] Dod seems to be exaggerating Finney's focus on the excitability of the affections here. In *Systematic Theology*, Finney explained that promoting excessive enthusiasm isn't exactly a sustainable practice: "[a] high degree of excitement cannot long continue, without producing inflammation of the brain, and consequent insanity. And the law of God does not require any degree of emotion, or mental excitement, inconsistent with life and health. [...] [H]ere is one grand mistake of the church. They have supposed that the revival consists mostly in this state of excited emotion, rather than in conformity of the human will to the law of God. [...] Excitement is often important and indispensable, but the vigorous actings of the will are infinitely more important" (130). See also Finney's sermon "How to Change Your Heart:" "you cannot change your heart by working your imagination and feelings into a state of excitement" (30).

Dod's review constituted the basic "old school" counterattack to Finney's revivalism and its disastrous implications for God's sovereignty, predestination, total depravity, and the atonement.[153] Giving even an inch to the human will, it seemed, threatened to topple the entire Calvinist edifice.

But Dod was right about Finney's attention to producing excitements, and he would have been right in the same way about James, who argued that the best way to understand an experience was to look at its extreme manifestations: "it always leads to a better understanding of a thing's significance to consider its exaggerations and perversions, its equivalents and substitutes and nearest relatives elsewhere" (*VRE* 22).[154] An experience's adherence to convention tells you nothing about it beyond the social creeds and customs to which it adheres. Whatever personal or social significance it may have is buried under external forms that distort its original "purity." The underlying assumption in Finney and James's preference for radical excitation is that the truth of an experience rests in its idiosyncrasy, its bursting beyond conventional boundaries, and an implicit argument that forms or disciplines that attempt to bridle the rawness of experience threaten to corrupt its truth-bearing immediacy. Not that extremes of experience are necessarily the only means by which an experience can be understood, but it does indicate the degree to which these writers believed lived experience had been – or was threatened to be – supplanted by obedience to a variety of orthodoxies and social conventions. A distrust of creeds in favor of direct, idiosyncratic experience is yet another reason why I argue Finney and Emerson can be seen to occupy parallel positions in the history of American pragmatism – indeed, asking us to reconsider its hitherto presumed secular narrative.

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[153] I have no doubts Dod was sincere in his criticisms of Finney, whom he believed was simply repeating, "without any qualification, the doctrine which the New Haven school was at first understood to teach" (486). Popularized by Nathaniel W. Taylor, who helped found the Yale Divinity School, New Haven theology eschewed such Calvinist mainstays as imputed sin and physical depravity, rejected the notion of the atonement as a sacrifice, and emphasized the moral responsibility of sinners over a state of depravity. Charles Hodge worried that "this mode of preaching, is to keep the Holy Spirit and his influences out of view; and we fear a still more serious objection is, that Christ and his cross are practically made of none effect. [...] The specific act to which the sinner is urged as immediately connected with salvation, is an act which has no reference to Christ" (301). For a discussion on the impact of Dod's lengthy review, see Hardman (286-92).

[154] This is a nicer way of what James's father said about criminals: "[t]he liar, the thief, the adulterer, the murderer, no doubt utterly perverts the Divine life which is latent in every human form...but he nevertheless does all this in the way of a mute unconscious protest against an overwhelming social tyranny [and] I am profoundly convinced that if it had not been for these men...the underlying life and freedom of humanity...would have been utterly stifled, and we should now be a race of abject slaves" (*CLC* 105-106). In his later works, Henry James Sr scaled back such commentary that would have shocked his Boston neighbors, but the principle remained that extremes of experience demonstrate their "truth" far more effectively than unexaggerated, domesticated, socially acceptable ones.

I mentioned that Finney's conversion experience in the woods of Adams, New York was important for its immediate, personal character, whose "working" for Finney gave him a method of conversion that didn't rely on mere intellectual assent to God's glory, but a direct experience of its unquestionable reality. But it was important for another reason, as it provided the evidence for a radical redistribution of the faculties and their relation to one another. To properly actuate a conversion process, sinners

> ought to be made to see that what God requires of them is to *will* right. If they obey and submit with the *will*, the *feelings* will adjust themselves in due time. It is not a question of *feeling*, but of *willing* and *acting*. (*LR* 356).

Whereas conventional Enlightenment epistemology understood experience to begin in the senses and passions, filtered through the reason, and ultimately issuing in an informed act of will, Finney reverses the sequence, making an act of will the initiating factor in the epistemic chain in which "the *feelings* will adjust themselves in due time." It isn't enough, as some antebellum audiences were told by Harriet Beecher Stowe, that "[t]here is one thing that every individual can do, - they can see to it that *they feel right*" (404). To Finney, feeling isn't doing, as Stowe's oft-cited appeal to the emotions implies. The only thing that will make any meaningful difference is an *act* of will. To Stowe, Finney would have retorted, as Perry Miller tells us he did to his converts, "[d]on't wait for feeling, DO IT" (33).[155]

Another proximity is William James's conception of the will in one of his more controversial essays, "The Will to Believe."[156] His goal in the essay is to refute the claim of

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[155] Though Miller claims Finney said this, it's unclear where he got it from (he gives no citation). In any case, the statement stands as a neat encapsulation of Finney's revival methods.

[156] Despite James's careful attempts to obviate misunderstandings about the "will to believe" (which he later felt he should've called the "right to believe"), the essay is still one of those pieces of evidence lodged against pragmatism as a philosophical system for justifying expediency and caprice. At no point

"pure intellectualism" that, in cases where we are not in possession of all the facts or where logic is insufficient to get at truth, we ought to take the safer course in suspending our will to engage the unknown. "[T]his command," James thinks, "seems to me the queerest idol ever manufactured in the philosophic cave" (30), because it removes what for James is the best verification for truths that work for us: *action*, even if that action results in our being duped. "I...for one," James writes, "cannot see my way to accepting the agnostic rules for truth-seeking, or wilfully agree to keep my willing nature out of the game" (28). For James, the risk is inherent in the game, and no amount of intellectual caution, logical prudence, or obedience to preestablished forms can replace the criterion of action.

The Blackstonian legal turn had its theological consequences for the doctrine of imputed guilt. Reflecting in 1843 on his disagreements with the Presbyterian Confession of Faith decades earlier, Barton Stone believed that "according to the law, every soul was to die for his own sins; even a son should not die for the father, nor the father for the son" (*Life* 88), repudiating the scriptural promise - often used to justify original sin - that God will "[visit] the iniquity of the father upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation" (*KJV* Exod 34:7). Evacuated of the imputation of guilt, the doctrine of original sin becomes not a metaphysical attribute but a disposition to *will* sinful acts. It has been argued by scholars like Jay Fliegelman, Gregory Jackson, and Karen Haltunnen that the hammer blow to the doctrine of original sin was most powerfully wielded by Locke's tabula rasa, the absolute cognitive vacuity into which all minds are born.[157] However, we can also say that the reinterpretation of original sin and total depravity and the rise of American antebellum optimism owed as much to the emergence of consent as a factor in conversion. Since no one *really* - as in

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does James make the case that it is psychologically possible or ethically permissible to arbitrarily select our own beliefs.

[157] Jay Fliegelman's argument about colonial American childhood pedagogy fixes Locke as the virtual progenitor of this sea change: "Locke argued that a child's character is not inherited at birth but rather is 'created' by the sum total of sense impressions and experiences written on the blank slate of his mind" (2). By a similar token, Gregory Jackson argues that colonial Protestants developed an "inoculation theology" that could ensure moral protection for children born without knowledge of sin: "[w]ithout inspiration, intuition, revelation, or innate moral values - all banished from Locke's epistemology - learning was a mechanistic process badly adapted to the spiritual survival of the inexperienced" (57). In her study of the birth of horror in eighteenth and nineteenth century New England, Karen Haltunnen alleges that "Locke's view of the mind as *tabula rasa*...struck the first serious blow to the doctrine of innate depravity" (41).

historically - consented to the fall, fortunate or not, no one could be legitimately charged with Adam's fall in a realist sense. Unmoored from its immemorial biblical past, sin becomes uniquely about individual human choices in the here and now. Finney would be the last to deny the existence of sin, but it doesn't obviate the fact that we *choose* depravity; it is not chosen for us. The stunning implication of this, as the theologian and Finney contemporary Nathaniel W. Taylor points out, is that "[n]ot a human being does or can become thus sinful or depraved but by his own choice" (30). Why this seeming theological quibble over the nature of sin and the extent to which humans can be held culpable of sinning is so important is because the challenge to orthodox theodicy was also the zone in which the relationship between acting and being was played out in antebellum revivalism.

Sin Is in the Sinning - Action and Being in New Haven Theology

The theological disputes in antebellum revivalism demonstrate that the volitional threads of God and humanity were seen as intimately entangled; you can't pull on one without affecting the other. One of the major theological innovations of the era, dubbed "New Haven theology," endeavored to retool Calvinist orthodoxy so as to make it amenable to human freedom. Continuing the theological tradition of New England divines like Samuel Hopkins and Timothy Dwight, New Haven theology introduced liberal and humanistic factors into what it believed to be an excessively deterministic theology that sanctioned spiritual apathy and the vicarious punishment implicit in Christ's sacrifice.[158]

The major proponent of New Haven theology and fellow founder of Yale Divinity School, the theologian Nathaniel W. Taylor helped voice the revisionist challenge to Calvinist orthodoxy. A reinterpretation of moral depravity and a defense of man's inherent freedom concerning his own salvation, Taylor's 1828 sermon "Concio ad Clerum" is noteworthy less for its Latin title - not uncommon at the time - than the pun of using *concio*, a noun meaning "address" but also a verb meaning "I provoke" - which, despite the intention behind the title, did manage to provoke unease among the established clergy. The elision from noun to verb suggestive in *concio* proves to be the central theme of the sermon, as Taylor's theological revisioning entailed transforming the orthodox doctrine of depravity from an unchanging theological absolute to a matter of choice, from a compulsive nature to an act of volition. In other words, from a subject to a predicate.

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[158] Samuel Hopkins was a disciple of Jonathan Edwards, and Timothy Dwight - eighth president of Yale - was his maternal grandson. For where New Haven theology sits in the history of liberal theology in America and its influence on later liberal preachers like Horace Bushnell, see Gary Dorrien's *The Making of American Liberal Theology* (111-57). See also Douglas A. Sweeney's excellent history of the impact of New Haven theology in *Nathaniel Taylor, New Haven Theology, and the Legacy of Jonathan Edwards*.

Contrary to some of his opponents (like Dod), Taylor wasn't rejecting the totality of depravity, but only how the doctrine could be made to square with individual volition.[159] The first line of attack was to assert the moral responsibility of individual sinners. Taylor argued that humans' moral depravity does not "consist in a sinful nature, which they have corrupted by being *one* with Adam, and by *acting in his act*" (5). Flatly rejecting the imputation of sin as irrational, New Haven theology by the same stroke made one's moral state determinable not by the action of another consignable to all persons through all time, but by an individual's particular voluntary actions.[160]

The orthodox conception of sin as being caused by a preexisting sinful nature is, according to Taylor, logically untenable. Moral depravity cannot "consist in *any disposition or tendency* to sin, which is *the cause of all sin*," adding that "that which is the cause of *all* sin, is not itself sin. The cause of all sin itself sin! Whence then came the first sin?" (7). This reductio ad absurdum allows Taylor to avoid a tautology, but more importantly it makes our understanding of sin inseparable from action, tendency, disposition, its *process* of coming into being. By denaturalizing sinful *nature* and hitching the meaning of sin to sinful *practice*, Taylor is able to make the essence of sin constitutive of its practical effects. Moral responsibility rests exclusively in an individual's *choice* to sin.

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[159] Taylor and other proponents of New Haven theology were frequently lumped together under the denigrating rubric of Arminianism, a recurrent accusation against religious dissidents. Drawn from the writings of the Dutch Reformed theologian Jacobus Arminius, this theology emphasized the adequacy of atonement for all and humans' ability to resist sin.

[160] It has been noted that Taylor's New Haven Theology was heavily influenced by the Congregationalist theologian Samuel Hopkins's so-called "New Divinity," which explicitly denied the justice of imputed guilt: "[t]he children of Adam are not answerable for his sin, and it is not their sin, any farther than they approve of it, by sinning as he did" (*System* 336).

Taylor concluded that "moral depravity" - according to Reformed theology, a critical aspect of our essential nature - "*is man's own act, consisting in a free choice of some object other than God, as his chief good*" (8). Finney agreed: "[a] change of heart...is to prefer a different *end*" ("Sinners" 11). No longer a congenital innateness we are helpless to get rid of, depravity is made inseparable from volition. As such, "Concio ad Clerum" is a major marker of the rise of individualism, but it also marks an ongoing philosophical and theological tradition of making ontological essences (like moral depravity) incomprehensible apart from the actions that manifest them.[161] Because it's impossible for God to be the author of sin, and because sin can't be a part of some preexisting nature, the only logical outcome for Taylor is that sin is a voluntary choice, an *action*: "there is no such thing as sinning without acting" (24). And Taylor is quick to embrace the authority of the source he claims gave him his enabling logic: "President Edwards."[162]

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[161] The consequences of propounding such theology, broadly referred to as "New School," were not merely imaginary. The Presbyterian theologian and minister Albert Barnes was brought before his presbytery in 1836 and charged with heresy for repudiating the imputation of Adam's sin. Though he wasn't convicted, it was a reminder to proponents of the New School that conservative-minded elders wielded considerable punitive power. Even the famed Lyman Beecher wasn't impervious to charges of heresy, when he was brought before the Cincinnati Presbytery. See the report that the Presbytery requested Beecher publish to clarify his theological positions, *Views in Theology* (vii-ix). For Finney's account of the Barnes trial, see *Lectures on Revivals* (271, 276). For the Presbyterian minister James Waddel Alexander's reflections on the trial, see *Forty Years' Familiar Letters* (166). See also Ahlstrom (467) and Hambrick-Stowe (125).

[162] Published by his great-grandson Sereno Edwards Dwight in 1829, Edwards's ten-volume *Works* was the source for Taylor's logic about the relationship between essences and actions, specifically *Freedom of the Will*, which he partially quotes. Edwards's original words are "[i]f the Essence of virtuousness or commendableness, and of viciousness or fault, does not lie in the Nature of the dispositions or acts of mind, which are said to be our virtue or our fault, but in their Cause, then it is certain it lies nowhere at all" (190). Edwards's distinction between the *nature* of a disposition and its *cause* is meant to argue that we cannot be held blameworthy for the "vice of a vicious act of will" if it arises from an extra-human cause, with which we properly have nothing to do.

Taylor and Finney weren't the only one coopting Edwards's sacred name to prove or disprove theological arguments. Lyman Beecher and Asahel Nettleton's anti-new measure epistolary exchange *Letters on the "New Measures"* believed that "President Edwards" would have rebuffed Finney's "Can

It's unclear exactly when and to what extent Finney absorbed Taylor's thought. (The three times his *Memoirs* mentions Taylor have nothing to do with intellectual exchanges.) But despite the lack of biographical information, Finney seems to have adopted the practical equivalence of being and action wholeheartedly:

> [w]hat is sin? Sin is a transgression of the law. [..] Sin is not mere negation, or a not willing, but consists in willing self-gratification. [...] Sin must be voluntary…. It consists in willing, and it is nonsense to deny that sin is voluntary. The fact is, there is either no sin, or there is voluntary sin. (*ST* 127)

"Sin is not mere negation," Finney asserts, flatly rejecting the Augustinian notion of evil as privation of the good. Nor does sin consist in a sinful nature imputed to us by Adam, consisting as it does "in willing self-gratification." And Finney manages to bypass the logical quandary of suggesting sin has a positive, created substance by saying it "consists in willing." Finney's final, uncompromising insistence that "there is either no sin, or there is voluntary sin" explodes any notion that sin exists as some metaphysical nature preceding our volitional acts.

"Taylor's true successor" (453), as Frank Hugh Foster called him, Finney adopted this Blackstonian aspect of New Haven theology, writing that "those who hold that sin is an essential and inseparable part of our nature...is to talk nonsense.. [...] This cannot be a crime, since the will has nothing to do with it" (*ST* 262). More precisely, "[d]esires that do not result in choice and action are not virtuous. Nor are such desires necessarily vicious. They may arise involuntarily in the mind...but while they produce no voluntary act, they are no more virtuous or vicious than the beating of the pulse" (394).[163] The

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Two Walk Together" sermon on the grounds that it provokes the enthusiasm made notorious by the excesses of a figure like James Davenport (44-45). And Tyler Bennet, a stalwart Congregationalist critic of New Haven theology, used Edwards to refute Taylor's notion of moral action.

[163] A critic of New Haven Theology - or as he called it, "Practical Pelagianism" - Samuel Baird wrote that Finney "was the first preacher who adequately attempted to employ the theology of New Haven, in its practical relations" (217). Nevin judged that "Finneyism is only Taylorism reduced to practice, the speculative heresy of New-Haven actualized in common life" (114). Wright remarked that "[w]hen Finney...went to New York, and came in contact with the Tappans, he was brought into the circle of

blameworthiness of a particular act is justifiable only by its manifestation in action. In other words, as it was for Taylor, so for Finney, sin was in the sinning.

Hitching volition to sin had profoundly liberating effects for potential converts, as did the rise of voluntarism more generally. But this liberation came with a cost. As I pointed out in the last chapter, the practical identification of the is and the does implies that individuals themselves are solely responsible for anything deemed sinful in their actions, to the exclusion of other contributing factors. Neither Finney nor Taylor suggested the possibility that sin, in addition to being a choice, could be the result of cultural or environmental factors. This noticeable gap in their psychology perhaps has a historical explanation, existing as they did before the rise of sociology. But, more likely, in their strenuous effort to repudiate the volitional enervation implicit in Calvinist orthodoxy, Finney, Taylor, and other New Light revivalists interpreted the significance of sin as confined to individual practical choices.

Taylor and Finney's major contributions to the evangelical proximity to Jamesian pragmatism were theological, and they were certainly influenced by intellectual strands that came before them, like Common Sense philosophy and Edwardsean psychology.[164] Recall my argument in chapter one that Edwards's atom served as his figure for the practical equivalence of being and action. In "Concio ad Clerum," we can see how Protestant theology continued its migration into pragmatic territory. Because under the doctrine of moral responsibility sinners could not be imputed Adam's transgression, and because it is a theological absurdity to say God could be the author of sin, Taylor and Finney were led into the pragmatic attitude of constituting sin by its actions, of practically identifying the is and the does.

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influences then radiating from Dr. Taylor, of New Haven, who was then the great advocate of the self-determining power of the human will" (179).

[164] One of these sources was the Congregationalist pastor and Edwards disciple Joseph Bellamy, who argued that it is morally untenable to punish someone for someone else's crime. His dismantling of the imputation of Adam's sin was a strong influence on Taylor, who quotes him directly (8). See also Hardman (16-17).

The Pragmatics of Finney's "New Measures"

The revival fairly started, the most excitable were soon on the anxious seat. There we learned the total depravity of human nature and the sinner's awful danger of everlasting punishment. [...] Having brought you into a condition of profound humility...in the depths of your despair you were told that it required no herculean effort on your part...to be reconciled to God.... The way to salvation was short and simple.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton, *Eighty Years* (41-2)

Finney's revivalism was often - derisively - called "New Measures" revivalism, referring to the controversial means, such as the protracted meeting and the anxious bench, he used to spur consent in willing converts. What mattered to Finney was that these measures be pragmatic ones sensitive to changing psychological conditions. "As sure as the effect of the measure becomes stereotyped, it ceases to gain attention, and then you must try something new" (*LR* 173). Finney's use of the word "stereotyped" is apt, because the age of mass media and politics was coming to shape Americans' interactions with worlds beyond their local communities.[165] Instrumentalizing the emergent interest in print media and mass politics, Finney was unashamed about citing his inspirations:

> What do the politicians do? They get up meetings; circulate handbills and pamphlets; blaze away in the newspapers; send their ships about the streets on wheels with flags and sailors...all to gain attention to their cause and elect their candidate. [...] They know that unless there can be an excitement it is vain to push their end. I do not mean to say that their measures are pious, or right, but only that they are wise, in the sense that they are the appropriate application of means to the end. (*LR* 172)

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[165] What tends to get lost in histories of print media in America was its originally religious dimensions. As David Paul Nord points out, "[b]y the late 1820s, the evangelical publishers had become leading innovators of printing technology and national business organization, and the millennial dream of reaching everyone with books and tracts seemed imminent" (6-7). See also Candy Gunther Brown's *The Word in the World*, Ch. 2 and Moore's *Selling God*, Ch. 1.

This all sounds like pragmatism *tout court*, a case of nineteenth century realpolitik. But Finney's adoption of this political pragmatism shouldn't be seen in isolation from its deeply pious character. Finney doesn't simply import the means of political cynicism for the sake of achieving the effect of exciting parishioners to a sense of God. A revival requires the "right use of the constituted means;" whatever effects are aimed at, there is nevertheless a "right use" in the deployment of means.

To instrumentalize participants' thirst for novelty, revivalists promoted zones of consistently sustained attention in which the stream of experience may eventually hit upon - or be hit upon by - a spiritual truth, thereby igniting the moment of consent to God's offered grace. Finney cautioned ministers facilitating an "awakened sinner" that "[w]henever you have reason to believe that a person within your reach is awakened, do not sleep till you have poured in the light upon his mind, and tried to bring him to immediate repentance. Then is the time to press the subject with effect. If that favorable moment is lost, it can never be recovered" (*LR* 155).

This understanding of human attention as something that needed to be consistently stimulated became the underlying logic of one of Finney's more controversial new measures: the protracted meeting.[166] The Methodist itinerant Peter Cartwright described such a meeting at the famous Cane Ridge revival in Kentucky 1801, where

> seemingly unexpected by ministers or people, the mighty power of God was displayed in a very extraordinary manner; many were moved to tears, and bitter and loud crying for mercy. The meeting was protracted for weeks. Ministers of almost all denominations flocked in from far and near. The meeting was kept up by night and day. [...] Hundreds fell prostrate under the mighty power of God, as men slain in battle. (33-34)

What stands out in Cartwright's relation is the meeting's ecumenical spirit - "almost all denominations flocked in." Believers in search of an awakening were encouraged to prolong their attendance, “for weeks” if necessary.[167] Implicit in Finney’s dismissal of form and “stereotyped” duties, nowhere is there any attempt to impose predetermined discipline or hermeneutics on the directness of participants’ experiences. God very much acts *through* parishioners, whose embodied experiences furnish the evidence of successful conversions. Pragmatically accepting the fundamental capriciousness of experience, Finney and many new measures revivalists like the Baptists Jacob Knapp, Jabez Swan, and Albany’s Presbyterian Edward Norris Kirk orchestrated zones of revival around the cultivation of sustained attention.[168]

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[166] Controversial, because it was not uncommon for these protracted meetings to run over into business hours, threatening the flow of commerce. Though Finney didn't invent the protracted meeting, his name was invariably associated with it.

As affectionate outpourings, these emotional effects became the evidence by which the “power of God” could be ascertained. New Light revivalists sought to keep parishioners’ faculties at a heightened pitch of awareness, whereby the coveted moment of divine influx could be captured, initiating conversion “by the truth made effectual by the Holy Spirit” (*LR* 318). A revival becomes the critical experimental testing ground for the production of appreciable effects that could determine within a reasonable degree a believer’s salvific status. But spiritual lassitude was an inescapable pitfall even for the most fervent of believers: “the fact is that in a revival the Christian’s heart is liable to get crusted over, and lose its exquisite relish for divine things” (269). The effects of instantaneous conversion do not provide a lifelong inoculation against the mundane challenges that threaten it - spiritual apathy, distraction, lapses of memory, slackened conviction.[169] Effectively canceling the metaphysical nature of the Calvinist doctrine of the irresistibility of grace - by which grace, once had, could never be lost - antebellum revivalist conversion makes grace provisional on the enduring actions of the truly converted, actions that continuously manifest the spiritual condition of the agent. In other words, the lifelong vigilance encouraged by revival practitioners respected the fact that the stream of experience is not exempt from its embeddedness in struggle simply because a doctrinally-based "reward" had been achieved.

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[167] The “proper” way to start or continue a revival was a frequent topic of debate among theologians and lay practitioners. Modern historians have tended to focus largely on secular explanations of revivalism. Nathan O. Hatch, for example, explains that nineteenth century religious movements “took shape around magnetic leaders who were highly skilled in communication and group mobilization” (4-5), while “[i]ncreasingly assertive common people wanted their leaders unpretentious, their doctrines self-evident and down-to-earth, their music lively and singable, and their churches in local hands” (9). While such explanations tell us about the human actors, what accounts like Hatch’s miss is the very real historical belief that revivals were to a large extent works of God, a belief often shared by clerical authority and laypeople alike.

[168] Knapp related that, throughout Calvinist-influenced areas of New England, “Sunday schools, missionary enterprises, and protracted meetings could find no place” (39). For Kirk’s adoption of Finney-esque revival strategies, see Johnson and Wilentz’s *The Kingdom of Matthias* (71-6).

[169] Finney’s lecture on the same subject published in the December 1840 issue of *The Oberlin Evangelist* stipulated that “*[t]his confidence, whatever may be its foundation, cannot of itself secure the soul against falling into sin and hell*” (201). A conviction of one’s personal holiness, no matter how assured, is no defense against the spiritual snares of everyday existence.

Finney's conversion model depended on a psychology in which human attention required a sustained effort to capture the unpredictable moment when the Holy Spirit fills the mind. By positioning the sinner in the path of an oncoming Spirit, the eventual moment would strike when, as Finney learned from his own conversion, consent would be granted to receive the "offer of Gospel salvation" (*Memoirs* 11). That notion should remind us how close evangelical practice was to Jamesian psychology, since James's will functioned on virtually identical, if less explicitly religious, terms:

> [c]onsent to the idea's undivided presence, this is effort's sole achievement. Its only function is to get this feeling of consent into the mind. And for this there is but one way. The idea to be consented to must be kept from flickering and going out. It must be held steadily before the mind until it *fills* the mind. Such filling of the mind by an idea, with its congruous associates, *is* consent to the idea and to the fact which the idea represents. (*PP* 1169)

It would be oversimplistic to call James's will a secularized version of Finney's. The language of consent, the sustained attention to a particular idea, and the sensation of being *filled* recalls the plenary inspiration of the Holy Spirit. One may try to replace every instance of "idea" in the James passage with "the Holy Spirit" to transform it into a Finney-esque psychology, but that would be missing the point, a mere verbal distinction, James might say: "effort's sole achievement" is in the capture of "consent to the idea and to the fact which the idea represents." This wasn't only theoretical for James. The principle, in fact, on which *Principles* is based testifies to that basic caprice that artistic style would have to meet. As F.O. Matthiessen observed, though James believed that "[s]tyle is not my forte," he nevertheless "realized instinctively that he must develop artistic skills of presentation if he was to fulfill his aim of keeping the reader in contact 'with the actual conscious unity which each of us at all times feels himself to be'" (*James Family* 350-51). Finney's revivalism and James's writing style operate, in other words, on the same principle.

But perhaps the most iconic feature of antebellum revivalism, and certainly one reason why historians typically refer to Finney's methods as pragmatic, is the anxious bench. If "[t]he way to salvation was short and simple," as Stanton tells us it was, it made sense that this emotionally conductive implement of revivals should be as well. A simple chair or wooden seat, unadorned so as to keep attention on the immediate experience of converts, the anxious bench was reserved for those especially concerned about their spiritual condition. Placed at the front of the congregation, and so in full view of onlookers, the anxious bench was intended not to assuage individuals' anxieties, but to amplify them, generating a psychological crisis that would instigate the treasured act of voluntary consent to the urgings of the Spirit. Seeking to agitate the affections by sessions of prolonged exhortations to the sinner, practitioners of the anxious bench vigorously pursued the effects of spiritual contrition, to "publicly g[i]ve their hearts to God" (*Memoirs* 238), as Finney put it.[170]

In keeping with Finney's loyalty to experienceable facts, the anxious bench didn't attempt to standardize conversion, but was instead a necessary result of the way the human mind works. "The *design* of the anxious seat is undoubtedly philosophical, and according to the laws of mind" (*LR* 253). The "laws of mind" to Finney included the fundamental capriciousness of experience, the responsiveness to plain and simple motivations to action, the excitability of the affections. If the pragmatic verification of a sincere conversion required the individualized manifestation of effects, new measures like the anxious bench were designed to draw them out. What was important was that the measures function as tentative heuristics, disposable whenever they exhausted their capacity to make practical differences in the conversion process. Whitney Cross put it, "[s]uch devices were deliberately adopted, because experience showed that they worked. Their use does not itself prove that the perpetrators were hypocrites or scoundrels" (182).

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[170] Finney's penchant for affective sermonizing was known to shake even the sternest of congregants. Describing the sudden plunge into repentance by a Finney sermon of "General J.D. Cox," "a cool man, a brave man, not given to hysterics, Cochran writes, "[v]arious efforts have been made to define this power. Some writers call it 'psychic influence'; some, the 'power of suggestion.' Some say he had 'personal magnetism'; others, a 'high hypnotic potential'" (71). Suggestions of clandestine mind-control, of course, also summoned nativist fears of Catholic cabals in Protestant ranks.

Yet some did think practitioners of the anxious bench were nothing but hypocrites and scoundrels. The bench was an easy target for critics who associated it with contemporaneous trends in quack medicine, deceptive business practices, mesmeric manipulation, and female exploitation. To its critics, the anxious bench was hardly more than a cheap stage prop for the manipulation of intense, over-sentimentalized outbursts that didn't produce sincere conviction, much less demonstrate the workings of the Spirit. In his widely read anti-new measure tract *The Anxious Bench* (1843), the theologian John Williamson Nevin deplored its "solemn tricks for effect" (28). But for Finney and like-minded revivalists, effects were precisely the point, and powerful affections extracted from stony hearts provided valuable evidence of grace. To Nevin, you couldn't reverse the chain of causality by instigating effects. As we've seen, however, Finney reversed conventional Enlightenment epistemology, by placing volition first in the chain so that affections could be generated and shaped by acts of will.

Despite Finney's emphasis on the unmediated experience of conversion, some parishioners failed to see a distinction between the raw experience of consenting to holy surrender and the material objects that facilitated it. One commentator observed that "[m]any seem to think that sinners cannot be converted except by the instrumentality of protracted meetings and anxious seats" ("Anxious Bench"). Though the simple, unformulaic design of protracted meetings and the anxious bench were intended to facilitate a direct experience issuing in consent, parishioners seemed at times to miss the message. If we take this anonymous voice at its word, it tells us that some parishioners at least were searching for a form that would mediate their conversion, and incidentally that they failed to see the pure functionality of Finney's pragmatic methods. The emphasis on unmediated experience of voluntary consent to the Spirit seemed always in danger of sliding back into an orthodox preoccupation with forms and measures.

Curtis D. Johnson has recently challenged a scholarly consensus about antebellum revivalism that he refers to as the "protracted meeting myth" (350), arguing that, while the popularity of new measures is historically verifiable, available statistical data show that their vaunted efficacy – by figures like Finney and modern historians – has been largely overstated.[171] And for all its energetic scouring for the psychological markers of conversion, James D. Bratt challenges the scholarly notion of antebellum revivalism as a "success story of popular Protestantism" (68). This isn't to say, however, that the pragmatic attitudes driving them waned in their efficacy or failed to maintain their epistemological value. Despite the statistical evidence for widespread backsliding and failed conversions, it was still possible for revivalists, theologians, and philosophers to garner valuable spiritual truths from pragmatic appeals to direct experience.

Conclusion

[W]hat was heresy in [Finney's] generation turned out to be orthodoxy in the next.

William G. McLoughlin, *Modern Revivalism* (65)

If we assume that much of the nineteenth century in America was dominated by theological liberalism, then McLoughlin would be right.[172] Finney represented a growing trend in American theology and philosophy that emphasized the freedom of the human will, the value of human experience and its variability, and the personalization of religious practice - all tenets of what historians broadly characterize as features of evangelicalism. This isn't to say that contrary voices were silenced; far from it - "[i]f revivalism was 'everywhere' in the antebellum United States, then anti-revivalism was too" (78), as James Bratt points out.[173] Nor would many of those voices have considered what Finney said and did as anything other than heresy. At the same time as resisting the suggestion of celebrating his liberalizing of Protestantism, I've also tried to keep in mind Finney's Calvinist legacy, which like Edwards he never fully surrendered, even as his theological refinements seemed to orthodox eyes to detonate the very foundations of the true Christian religion.

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[171] Johnson's statistical data on antebellum New York Baptists suggest that protracted meetings were far more popular than they were effective at solidifying pious behavior. Johnson attributes the discrepancy to the "aura of success" that fed into images of their efficacy, that "churches found [them] to be a useful supplement to an awakening on the verge of happening or that had already begun," and that "parents who feared their children would leave their parental home before finding God felt a particular urgency in supporting meetings that promoted immediate salvation" (373-77).

[172] Historian Paul E. Johnson shared McLoughlin's view that Finney's revivalism shifted orthodoxy considerably: "[w]ithin a few years free agency, perfectionism, and millennialism were middle-class orthodoxy" (*Shopkeeper's* 5), another instance in which American revivalism was interpreted as a decisive break with past beliefs. There are certainly reasons to trust in the dominance of a liberal Protestant theology, though I would add its hegemony should be understood within specific contexts rather than assuming its monolithic cultural command. While I agree that revivalism had a significant impact on some aspects of religious thought in America, some twentieth century historians have tended to unquestionably assume the simplicity of revivalism's role in such transformations in antebellum economics, politics, and religion. For a useful history of the German- and Scottish Common Sense-influenced liberal theology of nineteenth century America, see Dorrien (xv-xix).

So when McLoughlin made the unequivocal claim in his introduction to Finney's *Lectures on Revivals* that the book "clearly marks the end of two centuries of Calvinism and the acceptance of pietistic evangelicalism as the predominant faith of the nation" (vii), the sentiment strikes me as less adequate a description than an exultation in Calvinism's decline, which was historically much more complex and nowhere near as conclusive as McLoughlin made it out to be. I've mentioned before in this chapter that there is good reason to claim Finney as one of the most important figures in the shaping of modern liberal Protestantism and evangelicalism. But these are terms that should be used with caution, as Finney's liberalization of orthodox Calvinism was neither an unqualified embrace of individual identity nor a complete rejection of traditional Calvinist doctrines. In the generation that came of age after Finney's most famous revivals - in which an explosion of Spiritualist belief systems dedicated themselves to finding the common denominator between science and religion, and in which James struggled, like his revivalist predecessors, to develop a philosophy that could respect the epistemological value of unmediated and idiosyncratic experience while avoiding the idealist abstractions of rationalism - we'll see that Calvinism continued to influence the ways American intellectual culture addressed problems of philosophy and of faith.

I have attempted to show that certain attitudes common to Jamesian pragmatism can be identified in some liberal strains of antebellum revivalism. A less-than-salient figure in discussions of the history of pragmatism, Finney sought to instill these attitudes in his parishioners, altering evangelical practice and in the process contributing to the emergent interest in the practical as epistemologically valid. As we'll see, Finney's innovations in human psychology and religious experience - his postmillennialism and justifications for an active will - helped to stimulate social reform movements of which the nineteenth century had no shortage. But as Perciaccante points out, "it is misleading to conclude that 'Finney-ite' Arminian revivalism produced the reform impulse" (Perciaccante 112). Though there were wide areas of overlap between revivalism and social reform, it's much more complex than McLoughlin's observation that "the social outlook implicit in Finney's theology was the Christian counterpart of Jacksonian democracy" (*Modern* 100), if only because Finney had few good things to say about Jackson or the individualism that his presidency inspired.[174]

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[173] See also Bratt (72-77) for the discursive strategies anti-revivalists used to discredit the pro-revivalists. Bratt expresses an impatience with scholarly accounts like Timothy L. Smith's *Revivalism and Social Reform* (1957) that treat revivalism as a "tale of progress and triumph for the Wesleyan impulse, glossing over the tensions in the tradition" (77).

It's also worth considering to what extent Finney is culpable in our modern understanding of what constitutes "faith." Paul Tillich has observed that one of the modern misinterpretations of faith is its identification with mere feeling or emotion (38-9). Anti-new measure revivalists concerned with the adulteration of true religion by powerful emotions expressed discomfort with the affectional disorderliness it seemed logically to produce. With the rise of the secular sciences throughout the nineteenth century, the more science could reduce religion to mere feeling, the less cultural authority religion could yield and the more privatized it became. The massive influence an affection-driven revivalism had on evangelical practices perhaps contributed inadvertently to the retreat - coerced or self-imposed - of religion into spheres more private and localized. If Tillich is right to argue that the association of faith with mere feeling assisted in the marginalization of faith, we might consider the ways in which not just Finney, but other proponents of affection-driven revivalism had a hand in making "heart religion" susceptible to a psychological discourse that attempted to secularize it, explain it away as physiological or mental aberrance.[175] If it is argued that powerful emotions constitute true religious expression, science can - and often did - explain religion as a mere disorder of feeling, responsive to proper therapy, and not at all as a system of sincerely held beliefs that provided "rules for action" (*Pragmatism* 23), or as Tillich famously described faith: "a total and centered *act* of the personal self, the act of unconditional, infinite and ultimate concern" (8; my emphasis).

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[174] Finney's major complaints toward Jackson were the president's treatment of indigenous groups and the failure to act decisively on the issue of southern slavery. See Hambrick-Stowe for a more nuanced and biographically sound assessment of Finney's relationship to politics in the 1820s and 30s: "[i]n 1828 Finney was definitely no Jacksonian" (88-93).

[175] Of course, such a consideration would require a more penetrating look at the relationship between religion and contemporaneous theories of sentiment. That consideration far exceeds the scope of this

Finney's embrace and productive utility of uncertainty was also an important motivator in the liberalization of Protestant religious expression. Credited as a fundamental feature of modernity, uncertainty was seen by leaders like Edwards and Finney not only as an exclusive condition of our fallen state that could be rectified by the twin epistemological tools of reason and revelation, but as a productive category that opened conversion models to an enormous variety of individual experimentation. Doctrine and the regulation of practice suffered as a result. It's simple, then, to see why the rise of fundamentalism was also an assertion that there were right and wrong ways to practice religion, and that salvific certainty was in fact possible.

Finney's role in evangelicalism seems to have had another unforeseen effect. By pluralizing religious experience on the basis of the intrinsic availability of the Holy Spirit to individual agents, Finney not only continued a tradition enshrined by the Anne Hutchinson's adherence to immediate revelation, but also participated in the further liberalizing of Protestant culture, a phenomenon H. Richard Niebuhr famously parodied: "[a] God without wrath brought men without sin into a kingdom without judgment through the ministrations of a Christ without a cross" (*Kingdom* 193).[176] Niebuhr's memorable jab to liberal optimistic progressivism reflects a persistent conservative criticism of liberal Protestantism and its unholy alliance with modernism, as being so loose in its doctrines, so flexible in its criteria of salvation, and so lax in its acceptance of who is really a Christian that it doesn't even qualify as true religion.

Pondering the future of the relationship between social reformism and "Modern Philosophy" in his *New Views of Christianity*, the many-times-over convert Orestes Brownson

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chapter, however. My use of the word "secularization" here is provisional, as I reserve a more focused discussion of the relationship between the sacred and the secular for the epilogue.

[176] Niebuhr published that in the 1930s, which signals the extent to which liberal Protestantism has been the subject of extensive misapprehensions.

envisioned a union of thought and action virtually Emersonian in its implications.[177] The "inspiration" for reform associations in 1836 America, Brownson believed,

> is...at this moment, apparently blind, but it and Modern Philosophy tend to the same end. They have the same truth at bottom. [...] The philosophy will explain and enlighten the inspiration. They who are now mad for associations will comprehend the power which has moved them...and they will give to the philosopher in return zeal, energy, enthusiasm…. In this country more than in any other is the man of thought united in the same person with the man of action. [...] The time is not now distant when our whole population will be philosophers, and all our philosophers will be practical men. [...] [H]ere every idea may be at once put to a practical test, and if true it will be realized. (91-2)

"[I]n this country more than in any other," philosophical thought and practical application will be reconciled, philosophy granting sight to inspiration and inspiration granting energy to philosophy. Though Brownson can seem like an idealist here (the prophecy of an America full of practical philosophers is particularly noteworthy), his assumption that philosophy and practicality exist independently of one another was not, as I've shown at the beginning of this chapter, an unusual perspective. The upshot of this augured collaboration of abstract thought and practical action, for Brownson and James alike, is that the truth of an idea is inseparable from its manifestation: "every idea may be at once put to a practical test, and if true it will be realized."

Brownson's prophecy even has a messiah. He speaks of the "one man" who is "a more perfect type of the synthesis of Eclecticism [i.e., the panoply of voluntary associations] and inspiration than any one else" (93). He's talking about the famed Unitarian preacher William Ellery Channing. But my guess is that he could as well have been speaking about William James, whose complicated relationship to his father Henry James Sr.'s bouts with spiritual experience and faith in the religious sectarian maelstroms of antebellum America will be the subject of the next chapter. These struggles with changing theological tides and science's attempts to explain religious experiences issued in what amounted to pragmatism’s “synthesis,” its deliberate function as a mediator among seemingly incompatible points of view. The intellectual elements we have seen in Jonathan Edwards, Charles Grandison Finney, and the variety of figures discussed thus far, will continue to be shaped and reshaped in the life of William James, leading to the formation of his own brand of pragmatism.

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[177] Brownson is notorious for his haphazard odyssey through antebellum Protestantism. Born into a strict Congregationalist home, he was eventually baptized into the Presbyterian church, only to leave the church to become a Universalist pastor, then a Unitarian one, published his *New Views* while a member of the Transcendentalist Club, and converted to Catholicism in 1844, a move many in his former circles considered an intellectual betrayal.

Chapter III

The Pragmatic Attitudes of Henry James Sr, William James, Swedenborg, and the Unitarians

All my intellectual life I derive from you…. What my debt to you is goes beyond all my power of estimating, - so early, so penetrating and so constant has been the influence.

William James to Henry James Sr, 1882 (*LWJ, 1* 219)

[Y]ou must not leave me till I understand a little more the value and meaning of religion in father's sense.... It is not the one thing needful, as he said. But it is needful with the rest.

William James to Alice Howe Gibbens, 1883 (Perry 323)

Introduction - Conversion Experiences of William and Henry James Sr

Though it can be tempting to exaggerate the critical usefulness of William's words to his father and wife, they do broach the question as to how Henry James Sr's thinking influenced that of his son.[178] Joan Richardson was right when she pointed out that "[p]ragmatism's identifying notion that truth happens to an idea did not spring fully formed and ready to do intellectual battle from the head of Peirce or James" (2). Nor did it spring fully formed from the head of Henry James, Sr, but, as this chapter attempts to show, his theological writings had a significant impact on his son's articulation of pragmatism. This chapter will make the case that the theory of experience in

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[178] Throughout this dissertation I have used "James" to refer to William James. Obviously, for the purposes of this chapter, I will resort to using William and Henry Sr's first names. In the fourth chapter, I will revert to using "James" to refer to William.

Henry's Swedenborgian theology as well as the contemporaneous Unitarian conception of the divine exerted considerable influence on how William justified his own pragmatic logics. Because both Henry and William were sensitive to the epistemological value of experience unmediated by conceptual categories or traditional hermeneutics, like Finney's their firsthand experiences with the preternatural provide the justification for a pragmatic approach to belief. This is not a chapter that tries to claim that William got his pragmatism wholesale from his father, but a chapter about the ideological proximities between Henry's Swedenborgianism and liberal Unitarianism and such logics as they underpin William's burgeoning pragmatism. I begin with a comparison of what seem to me to be clear cases of Henry and William's reports of their conversion to radically new states of mind, what Andrea Knutson would call their "conductive imaginaries."[179]

Both Henry and William resisted their fathers' attempts to determine their vocations. Both suffered physically throughout their lives and waged extensive intellectual endeavors to understand the meaning of that suffering. Early in life, a barn fire led to the amputation of Henry's right leg, an injury that left him with phantom pain for the remainder of his life; William suffered from eye, stomach, and back problems, and a heart ailment that ultimately killed him. Both had little patience for Hegel or philosophical abstractions seemingly undiscoverable in human experience. Both felt in their own way that western philosophy, like many things in the nineteenth century, was in desperate need of reform.[180]

And both said things like this:

> Henry: "Deprive a man of self-mastery or the arbitrament of his own actions...and you destroy his morality. He may kill you, or do what he will...because you have

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[179] I have briefly discussed Knutson's work in relation to Jonathan Edwards in chapter one. As a reminder, Knutson defines a "conductive imaginary" as "a conscious space organized, or that self-organizes, around the dynamics and tensions between emergent and stored up truth, uncertainty and certainty, and perception and objects perceived" (4).

[180] In his 1863 work *Substance and Shadow*, Henry announced that "[p]hilosophy...has plainly reached a crisis in her history" (97-98). While William's proposed solution to the problem differs from his father's, where they agree is that philosophy must take into account human interests, positively affirming the value of human life and intellect. It is not enough to be skeptical, as Peirce in 1868 would argue in his rejection of Cartesian doubt (a rejection William shared wholeheartedly): "[w]e cannot begin with complete doubt. We must begin with all the prejudices that we actually have when we enter upon the study of philosophy" ("Some Consequences" 228).

> previously debauched his moral instincts, or robbed him of his moral growth, and consequently inaugurated purely brute relations between you" (*NE* 24).

> William: "Man's chief difference from the brutes lies in the exuberant excess of his subjective propensities…. Had his whole life not been a quest for the superfluous, he would never have established himself as inexpugnably as he has done in the necessary. [...] Prune down his extravagance, sober him, and you undo him" (*WB* 131-132).

What these passages share is a desire for self-determination unhampered by social constraints.[181] Their mutual appreciation for raw, unbridled interiorities is telling. "Nature," William writes, "is but a name for excess; every point in her opens out and runs into the more" (*PU* 286), adding, "[w]ithout too much you cannot have enough, of anything" (316). Both understood escape from external constraints and an embrace of intuitive self-mastery not as a dereliction of social duty or hedonistic abandon, but as an act of liberation that propelled one out of the ordinary flux of quotidian things, chasing the superfluous for whatever could be termed "true."

For both, then, the "true" was best sought in the unrestrained immediacy of experience, directly felt and prior to rationalistic or deductive modes of explanation or description. Their shared respect for such prerationalized experience shaped their remarkably similar crises of faith. These experiences contain key themes that help to illuminate the ways in which what father and son experienced resonated with traditional spiritual conversion narratives, even as they appear divested of any explicitly religious content.[182] In an episode that William would quote at length in *Literary Remains*, Henry divulged his spiritual “vastation.”[183] Its depiction of a soul in the grip of “abject terror” would not have been out of place in William’s *Varieties*:

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[181] This emphasis on spontaneity - as opposed to strict discipline - as the path to proper uprightness and moral goodness was popularized by Amos Bronson Alcott's experimental Temple School (see Dahlstrand, Ch. 5). The pedagogical strategy of fostering an environment of experimental freedom for the student was the status quo in the James household. "I desire my child," Henry wrote, "to become an upright man, a man in whom goodness shall be induced not by mercenary motives as brute goodness is induced, but by love for it or a sympathetic delight in it. And inasmuch as I know that this character or disposition cannot be forcibly imposed upon him, but must be freely assumed, I surround him as far as possible with an atmosphere of freedom" (*NE* 99). For a useful discussion of the antebellum shift from a pedagogy of corporal punishment to one of "disciplinary intimacy" based on love and affection, see Richard Brodhead's *Culture of Letters*, Ch.1.

[182] For a reading that considers the Bunyanesque and Swedenborgian influences of Henry's spiritual crisis and theology, see Feinstein (68-75). See also Matthiessen's biography of the James family (170-72).

> One day...towards the close of May, having eaten a comfortable dinner, I remained sitting at the table after the family had dispersed, idly gazing at the embers in the grate, thinking of nothing, and feeling only the exhilaration incident to a good digestion, when suddenly - in a lightning flash as it were - ‘fear came upon me, and trembling, which made all my bones to shake.’ To all appearance it was a perfectly insane and abject terror, without ostensible cause, and only to be accounted for, to my perplexed imagination, by some damnèd shape squatting invisible to me within the precincts of the room, and raying out from his fetid personality influences fatal to life. The thing had not lasted ten seconds before I felt myself a wreck, that is, reduced from a state of firm, vigorous, joyful manhood to one of almost helpless infancy. (*SRF* 44-45)

Beginning in a state of physical and intellectual passivity, “idly gazing at the embers,” “thinking of nothing,” Henry aligns his narrative with spiritual autobiographies that allegorize such passivity as a flagging in spiritual vigilance.[184] Cognitive engagement suspended, his “family...dispersed” along with the moral and spiritual support grid they represent, Henry is rendered vulnerable to the intrusion of otherworldly menace. Even within the apparent hallowed sanctity of the domestic hearth, physical isolation signifies spiritual jeopardy. In the sudden and inexplicable rupture of the stream of consciousness, the mundane animal satisfaction of functioning bowels is shattered by an “abject terror” whose utter disconnection from any prior event signals its supernatural provenance. “In a lightning flash” - a common metaphor among revivalists for the precipitous influx of the Holy Spirit - Henry is thrust from the tranquil and familiar hearth into uncanny supernaturalism and epistemological chaos.

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[183] Vastation is Swedenborg’s word for individual spiritual anguish or the laying waste of corrupt institutions in preparation for conversion. See *Arcana Caelestia, Vol. 1*: “[b]efore...they can be elevated into heaven, their evils and falses must be dissipated, and this dissipation is called vastation” (244). Henry applied this term to his own experience after conversing with an anonymous Swedenborgian correspondent (*SRF* 49-50).

[184] See Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*, in many ways the Protestant *ur*-text for conversion: “[n]ow about mid-way to the top of the hill, was a pleasant arbour, made by the Lord of the hill, for the refreshing of weary travellers. [...] Thus pleasing himself a while, he at last fell into a slumber, and thence into a fast sleep, which detained him in that place until it was almost night” (46). In *The Redeemed Captive*, Rev. John Williams implied the success of a Mohawk assault was due to colonists’ inattention: “not long before break of day, the enemy came in like a flood upon us; our watch being unfaithful” (10). This trope of physical slumber allegorized as spiritual lethargy has a biblical precedent in Matthew 26: 40-41, when, finished with his prayers in Gethsemane, Jesus comes upon his disciples who had been charged with keeping watch: “[a]nd he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

Having no “ostensible cause,” the experience transcends the natural order, taking place, it seems, “only” in Henry’s “perplexed imagination.” Even his attempt to “[account]” for the terror resists rational clarity. The conflicting description of the figure as “squatting” yet “invisible” is less a slip of descriptive continuity than a sign that the shape is imperceptible within the boundaries of rational sensation. Recalling Milton’s Death, a “shape” knowable only through tortuous linguistic ambiguity, “[i]f shape it might be call’d that shape had none/ Distinguishable in member, joynt, or limb,/ Or substance might be call’d that shadow seem’d,/ For each seem’d either” (II. 667-70), Henry’s phantasmagoric episode forcefully overturns his sensory and intellectual manifold. Like Job, whose utterance he quotes directly, Henry is given all the torment without the why; unlike Job, this suffering leads not to a penitential reconciliation with the divine, but to psychic diminution.[185] If the scientific naturalism of his day posited nature and human consciousness as inherently inclined toward organic growth and maturation of types, Henry’s preternatural experience exerts an opposite force, reverting him to a state of “helpless infancy.”

In “The Sick Soul,” perhaps the most agonized lecture in the *Varieties*, William relates a story similar to his father’s. Citing an example of “[t]he worst kind of melancholy,” James is coy about the source: “for permission to print...I have to thank the sufferer” (159-60). The sufferer, of course, is James himself.

> Whilst in this state of philosophic pessimism and general depression of spirits about my prospects, I went one evening into a dressing-room in the twilight...when suddenly there fell upon me without any warning...a horrible fear

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[185] The invocation of Job 4:14 is characteristic of the elder James’s relationship with Christianity. In *Literary Remains*, William reports that “it was a strange thing to see him, when in a depressed mood, murmur the psalms of David to himself by the hour” (73). Unlike his son, Henry was more deeply situated in the religious tradition that saw biblical texts as spiritual panacea in times of need and provided a variety of frameworks within which to interpret one’s experiences as harboring spiritual truths.

> of my own existence. Simultaneously there arose in my mind the image of an epileptic patient whom I had seen in the asylum, a black-haired youth with greenish skin, entirely idiotic...with his knees drawn up against his chin, and the coarse gray undershirt, which was his only garment, drawn over them inclosing his entire figure. He sat there like a sort of sculptured Egyptian cat or Peruvian mummy, moving nothing but his black eyes and looking absolutely non-human. This image and my fear entered into a species of combination with each other. *That shape am I,* I felt, potentially. [...] After this the universe was changed for me altogether. I awoke morning after morning with a horrible dread at the pit of my stomach…. It was like a revelation; and although the immediate feelings passed away, the experience has made me sympathetic with the morbid feelings of others ever since. It gradually faded, but for months I was unable to go out into the dark alone. (*VRE* 160-61)

William occupies a double liminality of twilight and a dressing-room - i.e., a place where one exchanges one wardrobe for another in a time when day passes into night. Just as Henry's *passivity* was the occasion for supernatural intrusion, so William's *passing* from one state to another - day to night, day clothes to evening dress - becomes the psychological site of sudden and exquisite fear.

Both of these experiences feature institutions (the home and the asylum) that have transformed from havens intended to be psychologically recuperative to epistemologically ambiguous zones penetrable by uncanny visitations. While Henry's ambiguously shaped visitor is an external antagonist to physical and spiritual vitality, William's seems at times to pose a kind of psychic unification, couched in a linguistic construction that muddles subject/object distinctions: "*[t]hat shape am I*." Like his father's "damnèd shape," William's "image of an epileptic patient" is there and not there, yet "real" in the sense of producing felt responses in William. "Like a sort of sculptured Egyptian cat or Peruvian mummy," the patient, half nude and not fully human, exists at the uncanny nexus of animal and human, not identical to William's fear but assimilated to it at the moment of his realization that he shares a fundamental nature with it.

In both of these cases, the influx of sudden fear is initially a kind of pure experience: unmediated and prerationalized, whose origins are as unaccountable as the mental images they provoke. As sudden as the fear is the mind's attempt to make sense of it, summoning in both experiences images ostensibly intended to incarnate a bodiless emotion. Not unlike those experienced by revival participants - such as Elizabeth Stanton's prolonged illness following her Finney-induced terror - the intense and irresistible inflow of powerful emotions is the engine of a literal *catastrophe* that becomes the occasion for life-changing action.[186] Incapable of being interpreted away or written off as some meaningless aberrance, William interprets the fear for its *usefulness*. And though he appears in part traumatized by that fear - "for months I was unable to go out into the dark alone" - it is a fear that, by its cultivation of sympathy "with the morbid feelings of others," encourages social interaction. He cannot go out *alone*.[187]

Both of these accounts follow recognizable parameters of spiritual conversion narratives, which, according to Courtney Bender, "build authority and authenticity by omitting social ties, limiting precultural knowledge, and emphasizing emotion" (67). Free of hermeneutical intervention, both experiences stand outside the realm of cultural interpretation and are products of an immediate terror that blurs the boundary between inner subjectivity and objective "reality." Perhaps most significantly, they're also mined for their practical effects. Henry mentions the experience has "no ostensible cause," but its origin is far less important than its "proper upshot:" "a most important change operating in the sphere of my will and understanding" (*SRF* 48), converting Henry to the Swedenborgian notion "that a new birth for man...is the secret of the Divine creation and providence" (50).

A similar valuation of experience not in terms of origin but practical effects was true for William. The practical upshot of his experience gave him the warrant with which to claim that

> [i]n civilized life...it has at last become possible for large numbers of people to pass from the cradle to the grave without ever having had a pang of genuine fear. Many of us need an attack of mental disease to teach us the meaning of the word. [...] The atrocities of life become 'like a tale of little meaning tho' the words are strong'; we doubt if anything like *us* ever really was within the tiger's jaws, and conclude that the horrors we hear of are but a sort of painted tapestry for the chambers in which we lie so comfortably at peace with ourselves and with the world. (*PP* 1034)

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[186] I'm using "catastrophe" in its etymological sense of a sudden turn. Henry also refers to his experience as "my catastrophe" (*SRF* 48).

[187] Significantly, at the very moment William relates his own experience in *Varieties*, he directs readers right to his father's own "vastation" (161).

Securely isolated from “the atrocities of life” - in “chambers” not unlike the one his father found himself in - we fail to apprehend the meaning of words intended to represent or convey experience. Implicitly, then, civilized life provides comforts, but at the cost of divorcing us from the “genuine” parts of experience - the unmediated exposure to life’s less pleasant prospects and our heroic going to meet it. “The history of our own race,” William told the YMCA in 1895, “is one long commentary on the cheerfulness that comes with fighting ills” (*WB* 47). We may read of such “atrocities” but our understanding of them would always be secondhand; their practical utility, as real as a “tale of little meaning.” We’ve already seen the implications of failing to secure an immediate experience in Edwards and Finney and their mutual insistence that language, while having heuristic potential, is no substitute for immediate experience. In Henry and William, as well, we see two major tenets of pragmatism come to the fore: the primacy of prerationalized particulars of experience as valid evidence, and a preoccupation with the practical effects of experience as epistemologically valid.

Recall, then, that one of the most important goals for revivalists in leading a convert to an immediate experience of the Holy Spirit was the concurrent provocation to action. When the philosophy student of both William and Josiah Royce, George Santayana, suggested that, “if we could substitute reading for experience, the problem of evil would disappear,” William responded, “[i]ndeed it would…. The reader is not the sufferer, he only knows the suffering took place. The horror for him is matter of information, not of immediate feeling” (“Notebook 4513”).[188] Meaning without feeling is as good as meaningless, to put it bluntly. Having no immediate feeling or direct experience, this exchange suggests, doesn’t compel us to action; i.e., what to *do* about the problem of evil apart from speculating about it. “[T]he meaning of the word,” its *potential* meaning, William argues, is inseparable from the experience that actualizes it. This relationship between actuals and possibles is fundamental to our psychology: “[e]very bit of us at every moment is part and parcel of a wider self...and the actual in it is continuously one with possibles not yet in our present sight" (*PU* 289). Peirce agreed, and drew his conclusion explicitly from William's father: "the true solution of the problem of evil is precisely that of [Henry's] *Substance and Shadow*…. The real is composed of the potential and actual *together*" (*James Family* 138).[189] The ability to see beyond painted tapestries requires something more than secondhand accounts or scholarly knowledge; it requires direct experience. For those invested with an immediate experience of evil, Santayana suggested, evil would cease to be a merely metaphysical problem and become one susceptible to and calling for human amelioration. For Edwards's generation, the cost of a direct experience with the evils of the world heightened the possibility of spiritual corruption by malevolent forces; for William, direct experience equips us with the cognitive tools to confront and, hopefully, overcome such evils.

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[188] See also Dewey’s very similar understanding of the problem of evil in *A Common Faith*, a problem that has “haunted theology in the past and that the most ingenious apologetics have not faced, much less met. If these apologists had not identified the existence of ideal goods with that of a Person supposed to originate and support them - a Being, moreover, to whom omnipotent power is attributed - the problem of the occurrence of evil would be gratuitous” (45).

This emphasis on the primacy of direct experience with all its capricious intensities, "multitudinous beyond imagination" (*Pragmatism* 13), marks Henry and William as heirs to a liberal Protestant tradition whose principal exponents include Friedrich Schleiermacher and Swedenborg, the latter of whom I contend is a major player in the development of pragmatic logics as they emerge in Henry's theology. Pervasive in the complex spiritual marketplace of nineteenth century America, the pragmatic attitudes peculiar to the more liberal forms of evangelical Protestantism helped reconfigure the meaning of religious experience around not doctrines or creeds, church membership, or regional affiliations, but direct individual experience based in the affections and radically empirical in how it "build[s] authority and authenticity," to quote Bender. For revivalists, proponents of Spiritualism and related alternative religious movements, and Jamesian pragmatism, action is built on the affections, desires, interests, human variability, and the unpredictable flux of experience. It was this openness to experimenting with experience that characterized the nineteenth century context in which Emanuel Swedenborg was received.

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[189] I'm trusting Matthiessen's scholarship here. Though Peirce does refer to *Substance and Shadow* as providing the "everlasting solution" to the problem of evil (*CP* V:287), Matthiessen, however, does not cite this quotation, nor have I been able to locate it in any of Peirce's *Collected Papers,* edited by Hartshorne and Weiss.

The Nineteenth Century Swedenborgian Reception in Context

In her *Modern American Spiritualism*, the English spiritualist Emma Hardinge recounts the expulsion of Elizabeth D. Schull from Oberlin's First Congregational Church, for "unchristian conduct," which included "breaking covenant with this church" and "heresy in denying the cardinal doctrines of the Bible" (384-85). Schull was only one of many antebellum parishioners making the exodus from traditional denominations to a spiritual marketplace encouraging individuals' experimentation with a variety of alternative modes of belief. As Robert Fuller points out, though revivalism had somewhat flagged by the 1830s, "[t]his is not to say that revivalism's experimental thrust thereafter disappeared, but that it drifted even further beyond the confines of denominational affiliation" (81). Beyond the pale of affiliation for Schull lay the immediate contact with spiritual realities: "I believe God commissions my angel friends as ministering spirits to commune with me, and I have tangible evidence of their presence" (Taves 181). Schull was a particular example of an expanding trend following the revivals of the 1820s and 30s, a trend broadly referred to as spiritualism, but one that also included a plurality of experimental methods of contact with trans-empirical realities: mesmerism, animal magnetism, mind-cure, theosophy, to name a few.[190] The nineteenth century was, as John Lardas Modern put it, characteristic of "an unprecedented potentiality of responses to and habituations of something conceived of as the religious" (2).

Fuller's phrase "experimental thrust" is apt, considering spiritualism's core epistemological commitment to an important cognate of "experiment:" experience. The more unmediated, the more personal and idiosyncratic, the greater likelihood of its status as viable evidence. Parlor séances in which the departed would appear to loved ones, clairvoyants preternaturally attuned to the spirit realm, and books penned via automatic writing by long-dead figures like Thomas Paine were just some of the phenomena that fascinated both believers and skeptics. What all these phenomena shared was a commitment to direct experience as valid in itself, potentially supplemented by rationalism or metaphysics, but by no means requiring them. By cultivating a kind of sanctification of sense, spiritualism and related practices constructed, to use Joan Richardson's phrase, "environments of fact" (2) in which direct, prerationalized experience could be quarried for practical spiritual truths.

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[190] "Spiritualism," like "revivalism" before it, was a baggy term whose definition depended on the person using it. Unsurprisingly, detractors tended to lump spiritualism in with mesmerism, mind-cure, etc., while proponents of individual practices didn't always make the same assumption. For a discussion on the interrelation of popular psychology and popular religion in the Anglo-American nineteenth century, see Taves, Ch. 5.

As such, spiritualism and other alternative movements both indicated a shift in and called for a need to reorient the parameters of staid Enlightenment epistemologies. The mass cultural intrigue in movements like spiritualism, mesmerism, mind-cure, faith healing, and Swedenborgianism demonstrated that certain experiences – clairvoyance, visions of the afterlife, bodily possession, automatic writing – demanded a criterion of truth-seeking and -telling that could no longer be satisfied by Cartesian dualism, Enlightenment rationalism, traditional empiricism, or western metaphysics.[191] It may – and did – sound counterintuitive to juxtapose the apparently incommensurable epistemologies of faith and science, but this was precisely the effort made by spiritualist leaders like James M. Peebles, Emma Hardinge, and George Bush, and physicians like Joseph Buchanan and Charles Caldwell.[192] Later in the century, Helena Blavatsky's Theosophical Society based its teachings on the "twin truths" (xi) of science and religion. In the same year, Mary Baker Eddy's *Science and Health* asserted that "[t]he divine Principle of healing is proved in the personal experience of any sincere seeker of Truth" (x). As we saw with Edwards and Finney, immediate experience was the key to the (hoped for) reconciliation of the stubbornly dissociated fields of science, philosophy, and religion.[193]

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[191] For a discussion of the wide variety of Protestant-influenced healing movements of the nineteenth century, see Heather D. Curtis's "'Acting Faith:' Practices of Religious Healing in Late-Nineteenth-Century Protestantism" in *Practicing Protestants* (137-58).

[192] In the 1840s and 50s, Joseph Buchanan attempted to found "neurological anthropology, an eclectic discipline that would unite psychology, physiology, culture, and religion" (Fuller 67), while Charles Caldwell, primary founder of the modern Louisville Medical Institute, argued that all that would need to be done for religion and phrenology to be conceptually united was to remove from religion "its false doctrines and teachings, superstitions and extravagances" (Fuller 63).

[193] Perhaps unsurprisingly, this kind of epistemological reorientation was seen by some to challenge proper Baconian scientific inquiry. By many of its practitioners, however, spiritualism was never taken to be anti-intellectual or anti-scientific. On the contrary, many considered the variety of spiritualist practices to be one with the spirit of science and ancillary to its progress. As Ann Taves puts it, "Spiritualism articulated a 'religious naturalism' that claimed common ground with both science and religion" (166). John Buescher agrees that spiritualism sought to reconcile science and religion by providing "a connection between Heaven and Earth that was real in substance and detail, not just in the imagination or abstract" (83). And though he wasn't a spiritualist, Emerson echoed the tendency of the times when he

Exchanging a widely held Old Testament conception of God whose presence can be situated terrestrially within a temple or a meetinghouse for the Peterine conception of converts as “lively stones” who will “[build] up a spiritual house” (*KJV* 1 Peter 2:5), religious practitioners endorsed the view that believers, as walking shekinahs, could potentially have immediate access to the divine independent of place or time. By suturing the practice of religion to life as it is lived, and making the measure of one’s spiritual status commensurate with one’s actions, they provided the methodological foundations for a pragmatic way of living.

The reshaping of epistemological standards occurred at both the popular and institutional levels, and its haphazard journey to pragmatism saw both converts and critics. Spiritualist organs like *The Spiritual Telegraph* (1852-60) and *The Banner of Light* (1857-1907) popularized individual testimonials of otherworldly experiences as well as experiments conducted to investigate them. Formed in 1882 in London by the psychologist Edmund Gurney, the poet and philologist Frederick W. H. Myers, the medium Stainton Moses, and others, the Society for Psychical Research was a broad transatlantic effort to investigate various parapsychological phenomena. Its American branch, formed in 1884, saw membership from the researcher Richard Hodgson, the Christian philosopher Josiah Royce, and, more to my interest, William James, who, in his presidential address to the Society in 1896 signaled that parapsychological phenomena had dealt a crushing blow to Lockean sensory epistemology. To James, these phenomena, “subtract presumptive force from the orthodox belief that there can be nothing in any one’s intellect that has not come in through ordinary experiences of sense” (*EPR* 131). These phenomena as well as his own episode of a sudden and “horrible fear of my own existence” were potential proofs that the human sensorium was vulnerable to incursions that could not be explained by traditional sensory epistemology. In the welter of antebellum religious pluralism and practical experimentation came the eighteenth century Swedish polymath and seer, Emanuel Swedenborg.

Swedenborg’s impact on nineteenth century transatlantic evangelical Protestantism is no secret to historians of religion. Sydney Ahlstrom, Peter Williams, and more recently Leigh Eric Schmidt all recognized the degree to which Swedenborg helped reimagine the epistemological

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said, in Swedenborgian fashion, “[t]he true meaning of *spiritual* is *real*” (“Worship” 169). It was only a matter of how certain evidence was understood that tended to marginalize spiritualism (and like-minded movements) on the side of the occult, the magical, the flatly unscientific.

value of religious experience almost immediately from when his first religious texts began appearing in the 1740s.[194] However, despite a handful of occasional interventions by Paul Jerome Croce, Eugene Taylor, and Josephine Donovan, Swedenborg's legacy has tended to occupy little more than brief mention. F.O. Matthiessen, for example, noted the Swedenborgian influence on Emerson's reflections of poetic language and on Henry James Sr's notion of selfhood in *American Renaissance*, but didn't go much further than that.[195] Whitney Cross spoke of Swedenborgianism's "great, if rather vague synthesis of all the more liberal religious doctrines," but in its relationship to antebellum revivalism said "it served here merely as a catalytic agent" (343). A reconsideration of revivalism's proximity to Jamesian pragmatism, then, also asks us to reconsider Swedenborg's role within the same constellation of developments. Here, I'd like to observe Swedenborg's influence on the theology of Henry James Sr (a theology William followed closely and struggled to understand), taking seriously Emerson's comment in the 1850s that "[t]his age is Swedenborg's" (*JMN* 335).

Swedenborg is largely known for undergoing a spiritual awakening in his 50s, whose effects continued until his death (which he accurately predicted to be March 29). Undergoing "mystic" transports over several years, he experienced firsthand a motley crowd of angels, demons, middling spirits, and freshly executed criminals, all occupying an intricate cosmology structured by a system of correspondences that, according to Swedenborg, we may all partake in depending on our capacity either for selfishness or selfless love. Needless to say, this cosmology and its epistemological implications hardly resembled the Swedish Lutheranism of his upbringing. Like Schleiermacher, Swedenborg maintained that true religion lay in an immediate and affectionate experience of divine things, not in ritualistic obeisance or credal observance.[196] Though he died in 1772, Swedenborg enjoyed vast posthumous attention from both religious and scientific figures. Nineteenth century ministers like George Bush, La Roy Sunderland, and Warren Felt Evans took him at his word.[197] Emerson included him in his pantheon of representative men. The spiritualist Andrew Jackson Davis met his ghost.[198] Henry James Sr used Swedenborg as a stick to beat the Calvinist Edward Beecher with.[199] The 1858 edition of *Encyclopedia Britannica* lauded his "theosophic mysticism...remarkable for its apparent reality and comprehensiveness" (758). The representation of the afterlife in Elizabeth Phelp's popular *Gates Ajar* series (1868-87) drew from Swedenborgianism, while the same has been argued for the local color writing of Sarah Orne Jewett (Donovan). At the time he was thinking about how to make our ideas clear, Peirce was simultaneously reading Swedenborg through Henry's theology. Swedenborg's belief in the intrinsic correspondence between matter and spirit and the doctrine that a thing's ultimate meaning is linked to its utility were attractive to the elder James. Seeking a path out of what he considered the crushing cosmological rupture and debilitating determinism of his father's Calvinism, Henry found in Swedenborg nothing short of a theological and practical savior.

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[194] For Swedenborg's wide-ranging appeal to a diversity of American religious fields, see Ahlstrom (483-90). Leigh Eric Schmidt notes Swedenborg's prominent role in the redefinition of modern mysticism, especially as it was experienced and practiced in the American nineteenth century ("Making" 283); see also his longer work on the topic, *Restless Souls* (44-47). For Swedenborg's link to Neoplatonic philosophy and his influence on spiritualism, mesmerism, and Christian Science, see Peter Williams's *America's Religions* (310-14).

[195] In response to Emerson's claim in "Poetry and Imagination" that "'[t]he poet accounts all productions and changes of Nature as the nouns of language, uses them representatively, too well pleased with their ulterior to value much their primary meaning,'" Matthiessen explains that "[t]he representation he is thinking of is Swedenborg's, the correspondence between the physical world of appearance and the real world of spirit" (40). Matthiessen also notes in passing that Henry James Sr's "pungent combination of Swedenborg and Fourier" formed his determination "to break through the constrictions of self-hood into a warm community with all men" (182).

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[196] See Schleiermacher's highly influential definition of religious experience in *On Religion*: "[t]he contemplation of the pious is the immediate consciousness of the universal existence of all finite things…. Religion is to seek this and find it in all that lives and moves, in all growth and change, in all doing and suffering. It is to have life and to know life in immediate feeling, only as such an existence in the Infinite and Eternal" (36).

[197] Some sources mention the first establishment of an American Swedenborgian church in 1790s Baltimore. At around the same time, Swedenborgian missionaries (such as John "Appleseed" Chapman) traveled throughout the eastern and midwestern states and territories distributing Swedenborgian texts. Boston's Swedenborgian Church of North America was formally organized in 1817 and still stands today. The local historian Franklin B. Hough tells us that Swedenborgianism had an established presence in western New York in the 1820s (170). Despite its occasional detractors like Robert Baird, the new theology had a pervasive and influential presence in antebellum America. See Baird's *Religion in America*: "[t]heir doctrines, which, the reader must be aware, are of Swedish origin, and have for their author Baron Emanuel Swedenborg, are a strange 'amalgamation, [featuring] some of the most extravagant vagaries of mysticism. Their mode of interpreting Scripture is totally at variance with every principle of sound philology and exegesis, and necessarily tends to unsettle the mind, and leave it a prey to the wildest whimsies that it is possible for the human mind to create or entertain'" (567). It appears that Baird was quoting the *Theological Dictionary* of Rev. Charles Buck, published in London in 1833 (889), but the quote was also found in the *Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge* (1099), edited by the Baptist minister John Newton Brown and published in 1837.

[198] During a magnetic trance, Davis reported having met two men: "[t]he smaller of the two men I knew was called Galen, a physician of considerable renown; and the more beautiful one was once known as Swedenborg, a Swedish philosopher and theologian" (*The Magic Staff* 248).

[199] Henry explicitly targeted the son of Lyman Beecher, Edward, in *The Nature of Evil*, but this was only one of his many Swedenborgian skirmishes against Calvinism. Throughout texts such as *Substance and Shadow* and *Society the Redeemed Form of Man*, he makes the case that Swedenborgianism is far better equipped to negotiate the relationship between the human and the divine than the spiritually enervating Calvinism. See for example this provocative stand: "I have no belief in God's absolute or irrelative and unconditional perfection. I have not the least sentiment of worship for His name, the least sentiment of awe or reverence towards Him, considered as a perfect person sufficient unto Himself. [...] [A]ny bitch in fact who litters her periodical brood of pups, presents to my imagination a vastly nearer and sweeter Divine charm. What do I care for a goodness which boasts of a hopeless aloofness from my own nature…? And what do I care for a truth which professes to be eternally incommunicable to its own starving progeny…? [...] In short I neither can nor will spiritually confess any deity who is not essentially *human*" (*SRF* 333-34).

These historical examples warrant the question: to what extent is pragmatism indebted to certain elements of Swedenborgianism? Eugene Taylor made the case some time ago that Peirce absorbed a good deal of Swedenborgian thought, mainly through his conversations with Henry James Sr and multiple readings of the latter's *Substance and Shadow* as well as his own readings of a core Swedenborgian text (still read today), *Divine Love and Wisdom* ("Peirce"). Taylor resists the assumption that pragmatism can be understood as a predominantly secular philosophy, appreciating the degree to which Transcendentalist and Swedenborgian strands directly influenced the thought of Peirce and William. Taylor is right to suggest that, for those "interested in the historical roots of pragmatism, it may mean that in addition to deriving pragmatism from the standard English and German sources, pragmatism, and consequently Swedenborgian thought, can also be seen in the more historically accurate context of its own time" ("Peirce").[200] Is there a link, for example, between the pragmatic signification of use value and Swedenborg's assertion that a true spiritual "image does not appear when [correspondences] are viewed in their forms, but it appears when they are viewed in uses" (*AW* 176)? Is there a way in which Swedenborg's correspondence doctrine altered conceptions of truth in nineteenth century American philosophy and evangelical practice? Addressing these questions lies with Swedenborg's absorption and rearticulation in antebellum Protestantism, the ways in which his writings were used to justify spiritualist and related phenomena, and Henry James Sr's leg.

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[200] Taylor would briefly suggest the incorporation of Swedenborg's doctrines of use and rationality into Peircean pragmatism ("Swedenborgian Roots"). While he poses some interesting correspondences between Swedenborg's theology and American pragmatism, I want to take several of these interesting suggestions further.

Correspondences Between Matter and Spirit

Mr. Henry James is the only man who has sunk his shaft into the depths of Swedenborg's mind - the only man who has dug out a secret treasure of thought worthy to be kept.

Octavius B. Frothingham, "Swedenborg" (609)

Following his amputation, Henry James Sr would be dogged throughout his life by what the nineteenth century physician Silas Weir Mitchell dubbed phantom limb. Reflecting on her correspondence with Henry, the suffragist Julia Ward Howe recalled him saying, "'I lost a leg...in early youth. I have had a consciousness of the limb itself all my life. Although buried and out of sight, it has always remained a part of me'" (325). The consequences were not simply physical, however. James biographer Howard Feinstein provocatively observes that "[t]he amputation made him acutely aware of...the puzzling relationship between body and spirit, between material substance and spiritual reality" (41). Henry's lifelong ordeal was instructive for its deeper implication that the realm of spirit was not, as Calvinism tended to hold, beyond human apprehension.[201] By the same token, the Swedenborgian tenet that spiritual truths are embedded in natural facts, though "buried and out of sight," the obliteration of material substance did not cancel the eternal spiritual reality they symbolized. Because for Swedenborg, the ultimate reality was *spiritual*, Henry's "maimed aftermath" (19), to use Sarah Covington's phrase, provided the symbolic logic that physical existence was in fact not amputated from spiritual truths.

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[201] Though even in Calvinist contexts, material and spiritual interpenetration wasn't unheard of. The witch trials of Andover and Salem, Massachusetts, for example, remain as preeminent examples of the precarious borderland between the material and spiritual and the consequences of transitioning between them. My point here is that Swedenborg posed a correspondence theory in which humans could actively engage in that transit.

So when Henry came to learn of Swedenborg's doctrine of correspondences, he discovered a comprehensive system that demonstrated an intrinsic connection between the material and spiritual. In *The Animal Kingdom*, Swedenborg explained that

> [i]n our Doctrine of Representations and Correspondences, we shall treat of both these symbolical and typical representations, and of the astonishing things which occur, I will not say in the living body only, but throughout nature, and which correspond so entirely to supreme and spiritual things, that one would swear that the physical world was purely symbolical of the spiritual world. (451)

Henry adopted Swedenborg's doctrine of correspondences because it maintained that the natural world is best understood not as a world of scientific naturalism or of Comtean positivism, but as a vast landscape of embedded eternal realities that only required to be read by spiritually attuned minds. Refuting Hume's implication that empirical details are fundamentally independent of one another and so can only be understood in their discrete forms, Swedenborg renders the apparent disconnectedness and incoherence of the phenomenal world potentially intelligible on experiential grounds.

What stands out for Henry is just that unqualified appeal to direct experience, Swedenborg's candid self-authorization of his claims. "*It is exclusively these facts of spiritual observation and experience...which produce the effect in question*…. For this is what Swedenborg never does, namely, reason about the things he professes to have learned from angels and spirits" (*SRF* 65). Swedenborg captivates not merely because of his robust intellectualism, but because the evidence he offers derives principally from unintellectualized experience, which for Henry is, without contradiction, the most effective conduit to the intellect: "no books address the reader's intellect so much through the heart as these of Swedenborg do" (66). His appeals to a pure experience would be lost on readers who "regard Swedenborg as a sort of intellectual tailor, whose shop they have only to enter, to find whatsoever spiritual garments their particular nakedness craves" (66-7). Chiding what we today might call "cafeteria Christians" for their consumerist, pick-and-choose attitude toward religion, Henry lauded Swedenborg for resisting intellectualizing his own experience and allowing it to be its own self-authentication.

Henry continues his economic metaphor. Those of "unsympathetic hearts" (66) who enter the shop of the "intellectual tailor,"

> when they find, as every one among them is sure to do who has any faculty of spiritual discernment, that there are absolutely no garments made up, but only an immense sound of the shearing of sheep and the carding of wool and whirling of wheels and the rattling of looms and the flying of spindles, and that every forlorn wight who would be spiritually clad must actually turn to and become his own wool-grower, weaver, and tailor, the great majority of course go away disgusted, and only those remain whose vocation for Truth is so genuine as to make any labor incurred in her service welcome if not pleasant. (67)

Henry's point isn't so much that contemporary church-goers are spiritually inept (though he did feel that way about some, especially the Unitarians), but that true religion is a personal venture that demands putting its substance, its intellectual content, into practice. Getting religion is less about going to church and putting on the forms – "garments" – than it is immersing oneself in sensorially active engagement (the "immense sound of shearing," "carding," "whirling," and "rattling"), and labor - in sum, the direct experience - of fashioning the garment yourself.[202] The lesson of Swedenborg's offer of unintellectualized spiritual experience is that the significance of religion rests not in its formalism or tradition, but in its personalization and utility for individual lives.

But Henry's analogy goes deeper than the likeness between the crass materialism of antebellum industry and religious consumerism. Anyone "who has any faculty of spiritual discernment" will find that underlying the phenomenal experience of the manufacturing process of a garment lies its spiritual reality.[203] And this isn't simply a penetration of spiritual sight disclosing supernal design that leaves the phenomenal veil behind, but a recognition of the entanglement between the material and spiritual. "The spiritual universe cannot exist without a natural universe, in which it can produce its effects and uses" (*TCR* 62), Swedenborg insisted. Going beyond earlier theories of correspondence between the material and spiritual worlds, Swedenborg linked them not only via perceptible effects, but via the practical *use* a spiritual reality has in the natural world.

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[202] Henry is thinking here of Unitarianism, and he was very critical of what he took to be its emphasis on rationalism and its subordination of divinity to mere cultural refinements: "Unitarianism, or Rationalism...denied the supernatural, or hierarchical element in the church...and resolved the church into a refined or cultivated natural good. It denied the Divinity of its founder, turning him into a man of extraordinary natural endowments merely" (*NE* 344). Nearly two decades later, his opinion had not warmed: "[t]he whole Unitarian movement in the church was a development of the church's latent spiritual stupidity and senility, no longer able indeed spiritually to discern between its right hand and its left…" (*SRF* 388-89).

Henry was exposed to this pragmatic doctrine at a young age, when he served as a proofreader for Boston's *Christian Examiner*, a paper that in 1826 published Sampson Reed's *Observations on the Growth of the Mind*, the Swedenborgian-influenced tract that had so captivated the Transcendentalists.[204] Rejecting what it saw as Lockean passivity, Reed's tract favored an epistemology that endorsed active engagement with the world and appreciated its complex nature as conjoined matter and spirit. *Observations* elaborated a key Swedenborgian lesson, one that Emerson would quote in his essay on Swedenborg, one that would prove illuminating for the mature Henry, and one that would radically inform the structure of his son's pragmatic method: what a thing is or can be is linked directly to its utility. One of Swedenborg's "golden sayings," according to Emerson, was "[t]he perfection of man is the love of use" (*RM* 126).

But it isn't immediately apparent what Henry or Emerson meant by "use." Swedenborg himself said that "[u]se is to perform one's office and to do one's work rightly, faithfully, sincerely, and justly," adding that "what is really meant in the Word by the good of charity, which are called ‘good works,’ also ‘fruits,’ [is] uses” (Synnestvedt 49). Seeming to defend a kind of justification by works, Swedenborg suggested that uses are the nonfungible actions performed by specific offices - the wool-growers, weavers, and tailors, the individual-specific vocations of Henry’s spiritual garment shop. Specific use is the manifestation of spiritual reality; or put in pragmatic terms, practical differences manifest conceptual significance. This pragmatic realism is why Peirce suggested that Christ’s apothegm in Matthew 7:20, “by their fruits ye shall know them,” marked him as the first pragmatist.[205] It’s also why, at the end of *Literary Remains*, William invoked the very same gospel moment when he asked, “[m]ust not the more radical ways of thinking...appeal to the same *umpire of practice* for corroboration of their more consistent views? [...] By their fruits ye shall know them” (119; my emphasis). Practical effects are the umpires who call the validity of conceptual pitches and swings to determine their status as knowledge.

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[203] Henry makes much of this tailoring conceit, and it's likely he was also considering Thomas Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus* (1833-34) and its imagined philosopher Diogenes Teufelsdröckh. The work explores "the grand Tissue of all Tissues, the only real *Tissue*…quite overlooked by Science – the vestural Tissue, namely, of woollen or Cloth; which Man's Soul wears as its outmost wrappage and overall; wherein his whole other Tissues are included and screened, his whole Faculties work, his whole Self lives, moves, and has its being" (4).

[204] On order of his father, Henry enrolled - not without reluctance - in Union College under Eliphalet Nott, president of the college, pro-revivalist, and Finney correspondent. For reasons that biographers have left to conjecture, Henry absconded from Union to Boston, finding work as a proofreader for the city's *Christian Examiner*, an influential liberal Protestant periodical that frequently published editorials by Unitarian luminaries like William Ellery Channing, Noah Worcester, and Henry Ware, Jr. For the complex financial, familial, and intellectual reasons why Henry decided to escape from Union College, see Feinstein (45-57).

And the meaning of knowledge is what’s at stake here as well. Quoting at length a sketch of Enlightenment sensory psychology, by which knowledge is constituted by the interplay of “two factors, a knowing subject, and an external world,” Henry goes on to denounce the whole system as a “*corpus delicti*,” and sets out to “prove this elaborate pedantry a pure superfluity, so far as the fact of knowledge is concerned” (*SS* 287-88).[206] “Doubtless,” Henry continues, this

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[205] While discussing his “third grade of clearness of apprehension,” otherwise known as the pragmatic maxim, Peirce paused to give credit where it was due: “[b]efore we undertake to apply this rule, let us reflect a little upon what it implies. It has been said to be a sceptical and materialistic principle. But it is only an application of the sole principle of logic which was recommended by Jesus; ‘Ye may know them by their fruits,’ and it is very intimately allied with the ideas of the gospel.” (*CP* V:402, n. P2).

[206] Henry quotes from the German philosopher-theologian Albert Schwegler’s survey *A History of Philosophy in Epitome*. Schwegler sums up Kantian epistemology this way: “[a]ll knowledge is a product of two factors, a knowing subject, and an external world. Of these two factors the latter furnishes our knowledge with experience as the mater, and the former with the conceptions of the understanding as the form, through which a connected knowledge - or synthesis of our perceptions in a whole of experience - first becomes possible. If there were no external world, then there would be no phenomena; if there were no understanding, then these phenomena which are infinitely manifold would never be brought into the unity of a notion, and then no experience were possible. Thus while intuitions without conceptions are blind, and conceptions without intuitions are empty, knowledge is a union of the two, since it requires that the form of the conception should be filled with the matter of experience, and that the matter of experience should be apprehended in the net of the understanding’s conceptions” (287). Henry repudiates this description of knowledge as inimical to true spiritual understanding, and James would detect in the “understanding” an intervening third term artificially constructed to hold the empiricist universe - “*a set of eaches*” (*PU* 129) - together.

Enlightenment-era, scientific understanding of knowledge poses "such a predicament as you put a coat in, logically, when you mention a tailor and a piece of cloth" (288). Returning to the imagery of tailoring and Swedenborg's doctrine of use, Henry refutes the traditional subject/object epistemological paradigm:

> [e]very coat of course logically pre-dicates a tailor and a piece of cloth, but you convey a very inadequate notion of the actual garment by enumerating these purely constitutional elements of it. [...] I am free to admit that the tailor and the cloth are necessary *data* of the coat, are logically implied in its constitution: but this sort of knowledge is purely scientific as interesting only the tailor and manufacturer, and not philosophic as interesting all mankind. (288)

In this metaphor, the tailor and cloth represent sense data; the assembled coat, knowledge. This knowledge, though, "is purely scientific," useful only to tailors and manufacturers unconcerned with the "philosophic" interest, which Henry equates with a spiritual understanding of the coat/knowledge. As a philosopher,

> I do not ask what makes the garment, *i.e.* what elements enter into its material constitution; but only what creates it…. The coat itself or spiritually, *i.e.* in the use or power it exerts, is something very different and superior to the material elements which go to constitute it…. The coat when truly conceived...causes both the tailor and the piece of cloth to disappear in the bosom of its own unity or individuality, whence they never reappear…. [...] But obviously the coat is not merely a visible existence, it possesses also an invisible or spiritual BEING in that distinctive use or power which it exerts over other existence, and which accordingly constitutes its true individuality, its distinctive personality or discrimination from all other things. (*SS* 288-89).[207]

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[207] This episode is in close parallel to an anecdote Henry tells in his "Letter on Incarnation" (1874): "I remember a little boy once saying to his father at dinner-table: 'Father, you say that God is pure spirit or life, and consequently that he alone is or lives in all existence. Now I want to know if He is in this chicken on my plate?' Yes, the father replied, beyond all doubt He is there, as the specific use or power of that flesh to nourish you. 'Very well then,' said the little sceptic, hastening to cram his mouth with chicken, 'If God is in this chicken which I am eating, then I am now eating God.' Oh no, again replied the father, I did not say that God was materially in the chicken as its very flesh, for then He, like the flesh itself, would be dead, but only spiritually, i.e., as the living use or power of the flesh" (Matthiessen, *James Family* 82-3).

The emphasis here on fruits over roots can't be understated. What renders a thing distinctive is its unique "use or power." "Truly conceived," the coat will be seen by a kind of second sight as it *is*, which is to say, as it *does*. Its constituent parts, its *origin* as a created thing, vanishes in its superior function (keeping one warm in a New England winter). Its true significance, what gives it *being*, is not the process or skill that gives it material existence; Henry argues, rather, that its true being - its hidden but discoverable eternal essence, what he esoterically calls its "individuality" - is in the particular use for which it was made, a use which cannot be assumed by other objects, for to do so would be to render such objects pragmatically identical. As Jamesian pragmatism would assert time and again, what constitutes a thing's truth is not its origin or link to tradition, but its practical utility in lived experience.[208]

We can see, I'm arguing, that Henry adopted pragmatic attitudes in his revision of Calvinist theology and interpretation of Swedenborg. Importantly, though, this isn't to suggest that Henry's project was merely a theological version of Jamesian pragmatism. Whereas William's philosophy emphasized experienced particulars that made a difference in individual lives, the aim of Henry's theology was always fixed on the life to come and the eternal nature of the human soul. Though he used pragmatic attitudes, such as an insistence on the use value of spiritual concepts, Henry's theology remained in esoteric spaces that even his son sometimes considered too abstract to be practically useful.

Though he thought that Henry's *Secret of Swedenborg* was "altogether out of harmony with the spirit of this age" ("Review" 433), Peirce did, however, summarize Henry's distinction between appearance and being in a way that would become crucial to the pragmatic method: "to *be* without being manifested is a kind of being which does not differ from its negative, but is a meaningless form of words. Thus, it is of the very essence of being that it shall come forth into appearance, of the very essence of God that he shall create" (434). Being *is* being because being

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[208] This focus on fruits over roots didn't come without its moral quandaries. In Melville's "The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids" (1855), for example, blithe ignorance of the roots of commercial production results in wanton decadence for the bachelors in "paradise," and economic disenfranchisement for the maids of "tartarus" who produce their male consumers' lineaments. Nor was the moral dilemma of southern slavery lost on the consumers of the north, who benefited directly from southern cotton, manufactured in textile mills like that of Lowell, MA.

- of which God is the prime exemplar - creates. The rest is verbiage. This, recall, was Edwards's conclusion in the *Dissertation Concerning the End*: the end for which God created the world is solely for the manifestation of his glorious being.[209] "A meaningless form of words," what has no practical manifestation, has, in William's phrase, no cash value, no intellectual or spiritual currency that satisfies our material or spiritual needs and points us toward action. And if that divine impulse to create is read as an expression of abundant love - which it was - we come to the proximity between a universe conceived in and sustained by divine affection and a logic of pragmatic justification for action.

Because affections, for Henry, were what held together the relationships between individuals and between God and Creation, a connection threatened by the rationalizing forces of industrialization and the hyperempirical stance of positivism. What he found in Swedenborg's "doctrine of natural ultimates" was a system that could challenge what he saw as science's misguided interpretation of nature as a realm existing unto itself, operating according to eternal laws indifferent to human interests and values:

> [t]his is all that Swedenborg means by his doctrine of natural ultimates as incidental to spiritual creation. It is a doctrine which...not only accounts for Nature...but brings the dread and formidable spiritual world into our own keeping...by harnessing it and taming it down to the phenomena of men's familiar natural history. (*SRF* 239-40)[210]

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[209] See chapter one of this dissertation. "If it be fit, that God's power and wisdom, &c. should be exercised and expressed in some effects, and not lie eternally dormant, then it seems proper that these exercises should appear, and not be totally hidden and unknown. For if they are, it will be just the same as to the above purpose, as if they were not" (*DCE* 21). I am not posing an equivalence here, because Edwards and Peirce inhabited very different cultural contexts, but I do argue that their sharing of this pragmatic attitude illuminates the intellectual history I am developing.

[210] "Ultimates" is another Swedenborgian term that begs clarification. In Swedenborg's writings, ultimates are the terminal points of divine creation - in concrete terms, "all and each of the things of the mineral kingdom" in which "lie concealed the end and also the beginning of all the uses which are from life (*AW* 31). In a broader sense, though, "the Ultimate of Creation is the Natural World, in which is the terraqueous Globe with all Things upon it" (*LJ* 9). The doctrine of ultimates, then, knits the divine to the material universe by a causal logic (which, incidentally, constitutes Swedenborg's response to causal skepticism): "[f]rom the...Order of Creation it may appear, that such is the Chain of Connection from first to last, that all together form a Unity, wherein what is prior cannot be separated from what is posterior, just as the Cause cannot be separated from the Effect, nor consequently the Spiritual World from the Natural World" (10-11).

Whereas “modern science affirms that all natural existence is constituted by some primary natural substance, say protoplasm, and that there is an end of the matter” (241), Swedenborg “accounts” for nature by familiarizing it, “bring[ing] it into our own keeping,” while simultaneously divesting the spiritual world of its supernatural (non-human) qualities. This “taming down” of the natural and the spiritual isn’t the ethic of rationalized instrumentalism for commercial gain, but a spiritualized engagement that renders the potentially alien and inhuman familiar and useful for human interests. Henry’s central point is that modern science’s positing of a “primary natural substance” undergirding existence is in principle no different from a spiritual world that exists only supernaturally: neither has any real, practical significance for human interests and uses.[211] Both, in other words, operate outside the realm of human experience. Swedenborg was a game changer for Henry because he provided the crucial link between the remote immutability of the natural and spiritual worlds, a link accessible via intimate human experience.

To nineteenth century ears, the claim that one could immediately experience the spiritual world evoked mysticism. “Mystic,” as Emerson called Swedenborg, though, might be a little misleading.[212] Swedenborg argued that it was possible to have “genuine visions...or sights, of those things which really exist in another life, and which are nothing but real things” (*AC* 291). It was a matter not of a new faculty implanted in the mind - which Edwards also insisted did not constitute his sense of the heart - but of the native capacity of our common faculties to perceive uncommon things. Henry extended this naturalist assertion to argue against the rationalist view of the moral universe - i.e., that good and evil exist as objective, transcendent realities. He followed the same principle that such realities are only meaningful insofar as they have to do with human life:

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[211] The concept of “substance” has a storied history in western philosophy. While some idealists postulated an ultimate reality they would often refer to as “substance,” in the empiricist tradition (namely Locke and Hume) it wasn’t taken for granted that we have a distinct idea of it. In *Some Problems of Philosophy*, in one of his many enfilades against the rationalists, William James pragmatically analyzes “substance” out of its conceptual obscurity (121-28).

[212] In “The Poet,” Emerson writes that “Mysticism consists in the mistake of an accidental and individual symbol for an universal one” (*Essays* 233-34), which becomes his central criticism of Swedenborg in *Representative Men*: “Swedenborg...failed by attaching [himself] to the Christian symbol, instead of to the moral sentiment, which carries innumerable christianities, humanities, divinities, in its bosom” (135). What makes Swedenborg a mystic for Emerson is the seer’s “theological determination” (134-5), a symbolic system that is fixed once for all, excluding process and the possibility for individual reinterpretation.

> good and evil, heaven and hell, are not outgrowths or accidents of the human personality by any means, but necessary constituents of human nature itself…. [...] They have no distinctive supernatural quality nor efficacy whatever. [...] They are purely subjective appearances, vitalized exclusively by the created imperfection, or the uses they subserve to our provisional moral and rational consciousness. (*SRF* 251-52)

The core idea here is one shared by pragmatism, that the significance of things is intrinsically bound to their practical use. They are activated, "vitalized exclusively," by how they can be used to serve our "provisional moral and rational consciousness." When William quoted this passage in its entirety in *Literary Remains*, he called it, as he did most of his father's writing, "abstract" (83). But Henry's turn away from supernaturalism in favor of provisional human interests would be mirrored by his son's sustained emphasis that pragmatism is a method that respects those interests above merely intellectual concerns. "It is by the interest and importance that experiences have for us," William said, "by the emotions they excite, and the purposes they subserve, by their affective values...that their consecution [sequencing] in our several conscious streams...is ruled" (*ERE* 151).

Henry's distaste for supernaturalism informed his idiosyncratic conception of God as a "divine being" or, in Swedenborg's terms, "the "Divine-Natural Humanity." (More will be said on that last phrase.) What is wrong with Christianity, Henry argued, is its insistence on the divine being's "rigidly *super*natural quality" (*SRF* 331). Henry relates God's "relative perfection" (i.e., not his absoluteness or infinity) to how that conception shapes the way we behave: "the practical lesson to be derived from it [that a humanized God merits our reverence] is that God is not willing to be had in reverence of men for His absoluteness and infinity, but only for His relative perfection: in that being rich and of incomparable renown He yet makes Himself poor and of no repute that we through His destitution may become rich and powerful" (332). Henry is of course talking about the Incarnation, the embodiment of God's divine essence in the person of Jesus

Christ. A God willing to renounce divinity (even if temporarily), assuming a corporeal form that suffers, merits awe and practical devotion in ways that transhuman features like infinity and omniscience don't. It was, as the Unitarian minister George Ripley pointed out, Christ's direct experience of human suffering that made the Incarnation vital for nineteenth century social and individual reform: "[t]he Infinite Majesty of God is softened and brought down to the perception of man, as it is exhibited in Him who possessed our nature and who knew our infirmities" (44). A critical component of Henry's theology - as it will be for the postbellum Social Gospel movement - the suffering of Christ, his direct experience of evil out of love for humanity, highlights the ways in which the palpable affections have become the point of contact between the human and divine.

Henry insists that the nature of a self-humbling and affectionate God isn't just a theological nicety, but makes a practical difference. In a telling if obscurely reasoned and overstuffed sentence, Henry continues:

> when He who is the acknowledged top of all perfection...thus renounces His absoluteness, renounces every patent right He has to our regard...and consents like any unprivileged person, like any honest workingman, diligently to sue out His title to our allegiance in the court of every man's equitable judgment, it is high time for us to learn that a man *is* in the long run only so much as he *does*, that there is no such thing as a chronic excellency - as an absolute or fossil perfection - ever practicable either to man or God, and that our only chance therefore for immortality lies in no stored-up capital of goodness and truth we possess, but in the acute life or character we daily witness in putting all our accumulations of goodness and truth out to active use. (*SRF* 332-33)

It was the divine's *consent*, the doing, that substantiates "His title to our allegiance." In Henry's logic, God's voluntary consent to assume human form ratifies a justification by works that teaches "a man *is* in the long run only so much as he *does*." This is Henry's "practical lesson" - that the way we achieve immortality is, as it was for Finney, not by a static, "chronic" reverence for an unchanging excellency, but by a process of daily witness, "the acute life" whose piety, if "put to active use," constitutes our salvific status.[213] Just as Milton could not "praise a fugitive and cloistered virtue...that never sallies out and sees her adversary, but slinks out of the race" (45), no "stored-up capital of goodness" will have any real, practical meaning if it lies unmanifested.[214]

In a nod to Edwards, Henry's critique of a "chronic excellency" reminds us that questions about the nature of divinity were not far from how pragmatic attitudes were articulated. In Edwardsean theology, "excellency" is "[the] consent of being to being" (*SPW* 336), or the relational aspect of one thing in Creation to another – in other words, a consideration of its "true nature" as it relates to its surroundings, not to some rationalist or metaphysical "substance." To use one of William's favorite figures, excellency in this passage is understood in its *living* relation, an evolutionary image signaled as well by Henry's "fossil perfection." Unlike a fossil, the significance of something excellent, in this sense, is linked to its interactions with surrounding forces, experiences, and its ability to change. It might not be too much of a stretch to say that, like truth, excellency *happens* to an idea.

Henry elaborated this Swedenborgian emphasis on intimate divinity in works like *The Secret of Swedenborg* and *Society the Redeemed Form of Man*, both of which William cited extensively in *Literary Remains*. For both, it squared with their shared disdain for the transempirical absolute of the rational idealists, deeply influencing their understanding of the connection between feeling and action. Since the Absolute is not a thing that experiences mortal suffering, it cannot understand it as humans do, nor does its ignorance of such trials move us to act emotionally or cognitively (which are distinct but mutually interlocked for Henry and William). On the contrary: "when philosophy identifies God with some abstract absolute the notion of helping him is ruled out" (320), observed the psychologist of religion George Coe in his *Psychology of Religion*. This is why, when Henry jettisoned so much of Christian orthodoxy, the Incarnation remained; it was that event that granted the divine a direct experience of human existence.[215] It's no wonder Henry was attracted to Job, who demanded to know of God, "Hast thou eyes of flesh, or seest thou as man seeth?" (*KJV* Job 10:4). Job's complaint calls into question whether God's omniscience includes knowing how his creatures experience the trials of living. For orthodox theists, simply citing God's majesty settled the matter. But for liberal-minded revivalists, many Swedenborgians, and the Jameses, this only begged the question, since the only claims that the insurmountable rift between divine knowledge and human life make on us are fearful awe or obedient adoration.

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[213] Throughout his life, Henry maintained the view that "when orthodoxy commends God...to our rational reverence and affection, under the guise of a...melodramatic being so essentially heartless as to live for untold eternities without feeling any desire for companionship; so essentially irrational that it cost him no effort of thought to summon the universe...;: I repugn the instruction…" (*SS* 73).

[214] This subordination of private and individual piety to public morality and action will become the centerpiece of the theological ethics of the Social Gospel movement, which begins to emerge around the 1870s as a response to mass urbanization, Christian sectarianism, and civic indifference to poverty. Walter Rauschenbusch, one of the movement's key players, argued in his highly influential *Christianity and the Social Crisis* against preaching an emphasis on cloistered virtue to the exclusion of a socialized, public morality. In his defense of the Israelite prophets championing public morality, Rauschenbusch quotes the Scottish theologian George Adam Smith: "'[c]onfine religion to the personal, it grows rancid, morbid. Wed it to patriotism, it lives in the open air, and its blood is pure'" (26). Rauschenbusch was slightly more moderate in his estimation; for the Israelite prophets, "[p]ersonal religion was chiefly a means to an end; the end was social" (29). We will see the ways in which this ethical reorientation vitalized the Social Gospel's emphasis on public piety later in the century and well into the twentieth.

This revolt against the absolute was felt in other ways. The next section deals with the pragmatizing of human history and its relation to truth. A world and a history populated by human actors in a continuous state of becoming is, for the James's, the only conception that asks for our sympathy. "*As* absolute," James argued, "the world repels our sympathy because it has no history" (*PU* 47). Thus, the way to make the world meaningful for its inhabitants is to consider its own history, the record of its stream of consciousness collectively experienced by the human actors who give it form. Further, the affectionate bond of sympathy, we've seen and will continue to see, is the most effective means of making our practical action meaningful.

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[215] One of the reasons I'm arguing that Henry James Sr had a strong effect on the development of pragmatism is because of his insistence on an immanent God whose involvement with Creation justifies the meaningfulness of our actions. In this way, though under a different discourse, Henry achieved what Edwards - Newton and Whiston, too - would have understood to be the synthesis of God's general and special providence.

History as Process and the Pragmatic Conception of Truth

Other world? There is no other world; here or nowhere is the whole fact.

Emerson to Sampson Reed, 1842 (*JMN*, VIII: 183)

Emerson's point to Sampson Reed was that we shouldn't concern ourselves with worlds that aren't "factual" for us - which was also Wittgenstein's observation, when he opened his *Tractatus* with the deceptively simple sentence "[t]he world is all that is the case" (5). This insistence on the ultimate facticity of this and no other extra-experiential world is rooted in religious and philosophical efforts to reclaim *terra firma* for human experience. Henry saw no validity in theological abstractions except through the lens of a social humanism committed to promoting sympathy among its members. Space and time - more particularly nature and history - are incomprehensible outside the experience of human actors. Rather, Henry argues, our very spatial and temporal environments are functions of our experience.

In *The Secret of Swedenborg*, Henry defended the Swedenborgian concept that nature and history were not created as absolutes separate from human existence. When we interpret them rightly, "space and time, or nature and history, have absolutely nothing to do with creation in its objective aspect...but only...as it exists to our infirm thought. They belong to it, not as a result, but as a process" (115). Nature and history's sole function is to progressively reveal divine truth to rationally imperfect (but perfectible) human beings. And elsewhere, he continues insisting on his particular brand of a humanistic cosmology: "[t]here were no time and space prior to creation, simply because time and space are experiences of the finite mind...and so fall within creation not outside of it. They are constitutionally involved in all purely conscious or subjective existence; time having no meaning save to furnish a *rational* or relative basis - space a *sensible* or finite basis - to such existence" (*SS* 69). Henry's rendering of space and time as not objective master constructs within which we move, but as subjective categories implicated in our individual experiences leads him to posit process over closed system, possibility over universal once-and-for-all dogmatisms, practical effects over origins.[216]

Another advantage of Swedenborg's pragmatizing of history is that it liberates divine revelation from literalist demands that reduce its significance to historical confirmation of biblical prophecies. "All our diviners, whether devout or sceptical, hold nature and history to a final or absolute and independent significance; and thus find themselves compelled either to adjust revelation to cosmical order in a very crude irrational way, or else...to reject it altogether." To Henry, treating nature and history as transhuman absolutes creates the need to "adjust revelation" to a cosmical order that is always in flux and under no compulsion to satisfy our literalist hopes.[217] "Swedenborg," Henry continues, "leaves [nature and history] valid only as furnishing a basis of divine knowledge consonant with the ever-growing requirements of the human heart and understanding" (*SoS* 87). At once evolutionist and humanist, Henry's reading of this Swedenborgian conception of nature and history as subservient to divine revelation both eluded the disconfirmation of prophecy and fostered a pragmatic attitude that truth can be made amenable to the unpredictable unfolding of historical events or the human experiences that disclose them. What Henry essentially gets out of Swedenborg here is a pragmatic conception of truth.[218]

So whatever can be said to be the reality of space and time is not something existing independently of our experience. This isn't the idealistic representation of truth's assured eternity: "[t]ruth is immortal," Lydia Maria Child said, "[n]o fragment of it ever dies" (53). Nor is it - in contrast to the pluralistic Ishmael - Ahab's version of truth, a yearned-for revelation objectively real and worth pursuing even unto one's obliteration. When William outlined in no uncertain terms what truth looked like to a pragmatist, he did so in a way that asserted the primacy of process over closed and deterministic systems: "[t]he truth of an idea is not a stagnant property inherent in it. Truth *happens* to an idea. It *becomes* true, is *made* true by events" (*Pragmatism* 89). Capitalizing on the etymology of "fact" as referring to "doing" or "making," William links truth to experience in a dialectical way. Rephrased in Henry's theology, the "truth" of Creation is not a "stagnant property" of its prehuman, immemorial eventuality; its truth "*happens*" to it in dialogue with "the ever-growing requirements of the human heart and understanding." By the same principle of Taylor and Finney's practically identifying the essence of a thing with the process that gives it being, William makes truth commensurate with the process of its becoming.

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[216] This redefining of creation as ongoing process unfolding in human experience would bolster the salvific logic of the Social Gospel movement. In terms reminiscent of Henry's, the Boston pastor Philip Stafford Moxom in 1896 would argue that "the kingdom of God is not a new creation...but the world redeemed, purified, disciplined, and spiritualized…. There is no break in the continuity of God's working" (64). Henry, then, was just early to a later and wider theological reorientation.

[217] The stakes in making what might seem like a trivial theological distinction were actually quite real. Nineteenth century readers would be reminded of the Millerites' "Great Disappointment," when history failed to fulfill William Miller's prophecy that Christ would return to earth to usher in the millennium on October 22, 1844. Property was sold, families were abandoned, and hilltops swarmed with expectant believers. Ultimately, people were disappointed. Though they weren't the only nineteenth century religious group who believed in an imminent Second Coming, the Millerites became a byword for religious lunacy and gullibility.

[218] This isn't to say that Henry and William's conceptions of truth are identical. William's pragmatism was always grounded in a temporal reality in which truth was always revisable according to new data. Henry's theology accepted temporal flux as a condition of spiritual life, but it never lost sight of a teleological destiny for spiritualized men.

Contrary to the biblical literalism that emerged to challenge the historicism of European scholars, Henry refuted the idea that Creation was a historical event that precipitated time and space as we know it. "I may truly say that I no longer incline to regard creation as a physical act of God" (*CLC* 4), by which he means the significance of God is His workings - i.e., providence - on the human *intellect* (which for Henry is equivalent to the spiritual), an intellect that is always in a dialectical relationship with truth. Creation is significant not because it initiated the human drama, but because it continues to reveal the relationship between divinity and humanity. "The spiritual creation is not a work of God begun and accomplished in space and time. It is an infinite and eternal work, disclosing itself in space and time, or nature and history, without doubt, but deriving all its form and substance from the immediate divine presence and activity" (*SoS* 115). Or to use one of his favorite Swedenborgian images, "*what we call human history is at bottom nothing else than a theatre of* DIVINE REVELATION…" (*SRF* 174).

And like a theater, space and time provide the stage on which the dramatis personae enact the perpetual revelation of divine truth. But Henry makes an important Jamesian-pragmatic caveat:

> we are not now talking of any paltry fact of organic experience, or fact of sense, which can be scientifically probed or proved...but of a truth of men's inward or regenerate nature exclusively, of their *living* or spiritual experience, of their *soul-history* as it were; a truth which as slowly flowered out of the suffering human heart, and which therefore appeals for its ratification in every mind solely to the man's cultivated or disciplined affections. It is a truth which no amount of merely scientific culture, nor any ardor of ratiocinative acumen, will ever qualify a man to do justice to. In fact these things are very apt to *dis*qualify men for the acknowledgement of spiritual or living truth. (*SRF* 421-22)

The truths of "*living* or spiritual experience," of a "*soul-history*," appeal directly to and are ratified "solely" by the affections independent of "ratiocinative acumen." To Henry, the realization of such truths demands an acumen rather of "cultivated or disciplined affections," showing how far the Edwardsean-Schleiermacher-Swedenborgian conception of truth as rooted in immediate feeling penetrated the elder James's theology. There is, furthermore, nothing said about the social or consensual dimension of truth, but only that which exists in relation to the individual. Henry was largely socialistic in his hopes for a common humanity in ways that his son wasn't, but the emphasis on "spiritual or living truth" beginning its process of validation within private interiors with respect to one's "*soul-history*" and not by scientific or rationalistic tests certified by consensus would shape William's noticeably individualistic conception of pragmatic truth. Where Henry's theology emphasized the spiritual brotherhood of enlightened citizens, William's philosophy looked to more terrestrial sources for validation of truth.

That's not all in the passage that reflects a pragmatic spirit. The vagueness of this truth lingering throughout the passage functions as a pragmatic openness to the possibility of an infinite variety of individually discovered truths. An openness that was also true for William's whole approach to the sciences: "[a]t a certain stage in the development of every science a degree of vagueness is what best consists with fertility" (*PP* 19).[219] While the nineteenth century theme of uncertainty current in the sciences is almost always attributed to Darwin, elements of productive vagueness existed in evangelical theology well before and in close proximity to the thought of Henry and William James.

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[219] For an appreciation of William's embrace of linguistic and logical vagueness as legitimate philosophical categories of investigation, see William J. Gavin's *William James and the Reinstatement of the Vague* (1992).

For William's pragmatism, too, scientifically proven facts could not provide the kind of epistemological framework needed to account for experiences that seemed to transcend empirical criteria. In an address before the Society for Psychical Research in 1892, William demonstrated the extent to which the "exceptional facts" of trances, mediums, ghostly visitations, and visions exerted such force on what we can know as "truth:"

> [s]cience, so far as science denies such exceptional facts, lies prostrate in the dust for me; and the most urgent intellectual need which I feel at present is that science be built up again in a form in which such facts shall have a positive place. Science, like life, feeds on its own decay. New facts burst old rules; then newly divined conceptions bind old and new together into a reconciling law (*EPR* 100-101).

The incentive to develop an epistemology in accordance with the variability of human experiences led William to detach truth from its association with the Absolute or rationalist substance. Divesting theological concepts of their absolute status and resituating them as functional categories of the stream of human experience should remind us of the proximity between this crucial theological shift and William's radical empiricism, which postulated - in outright defiance of faculty psychology - that consciousness was not itself a substance, but a *function* of the irreducible substratum of pure experience.[220]

Henry and William's emphasis on the affections as those things in which truth consists and which impel us to action more effectively than intellectual reasoning has important implications for pragmatism's claims about what counts as truth and the justifications for our actions. If Edwardsean and Finneyesque revivalism and Swedenborgian theology assert that the nature of religion rested in human affections, the same could be said for Jamesian pragmatism, devoted as it was to the epistemological validity of individual feeling. The next section explores the precise relationship between William's budding pragmatic logics and the humanism of Unitarian theology.

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[220] See William's "Does Consciousness Exist?" in *Essays in Radical Empiricism*. His answer to that question depends on what one means when one invokes "consciousness." But as a substance or faculty existing in the mind, a kind of hub for sensory inputs, William's response is an emphatic no. Our immediate experiences are the "essence out of which philosophers have constructed the entity known to them as consciousness. *That entity is fictitious, while thoughts in the concrete are fully real*" (37).

Unitarianism According to William James - God as Love, Reflex Action, and the Pragmatics of Mind Cure

You see that, although religion is the great interest of my life, I am rather hopelessly non-evangelical, and take the whole thing too impersonally.

William James to Henry Rankin (*Letters, Vol II* 58)

Writing to Benjamin Waterhouse in June 1822, Thomas Jefferson trusted "that there is not a *young man* now living in the United States who will not die an Unitarian" (*Writings* 1459), repeating the same sentiment later that year to the theologian James Smith: "I confidently expect that the present generation will see Unitarianism become the general religion of the United States" (Randolph 360). What Emerson called a "corpse-cold" religion didn't become as "general" as Jefferson expected, but its theology did become one of the most influential denominational and cultural forces of the American nineteenth century.[221] Its core teachings of the primacy of human reason in biblical exegesis, the humanity of Christ, and its rejection of total depravity were logical extensions of the muscularization of human agency in antebellum evangelicalism. As Channing announced in 1819 at his ordination sermon for Jared Sparks (future Unitarian president of Harvard),

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[221] Formally established with Boston's American Unitarian Association in 1825, Unitarianism was only one of the nineteenth century's liberalizing movements that reinterpreted Christian doctrine in the decline of Calvinist orthodoxy. Having theological precedents in sixteenth century Europe through the writings of Michael Servetus (whom Calvin himself helped put to death), Unitarianism emerged at the turn of the nineteenth century largely through the influence of figures like the English dissenter Joseph Priestley, the Unitarian ministers William Ellery Channing and Henry Ware, Sr, and the Transcendentalist critic and so-called "Unitarian Pope" Andrews Norton. For an exhaustive history of the role Unitarianism played in the shaping of liberal Protestantism, see Dorrien (1-57).

> [s]ay what we may, God has given us a rational nature, and will call us to account for it. We may let it sleep, but we do so at our peril. Revelation is addressed to us as rational beings. We may wish, in our sloth, that God had given us a system demanding no labor of comparing, limiting, and inferring. But such a system would be at variance with the whole character of our present existence. (28-9)

Channing - who "owed more to the Awakeners than he was aware" (Niebuhr 152) - argues that a system encouraging practitioners to wait God's time - i.e. Calvinism - is incompatible with our status as rational creatures. Rather revelation - the disclosure of God's will to his creation - demands the free deployment of the rational faculty to compare, limit, and infer. Using the language of inclusivity ("we," "us," "our"), Channing universalizes the doctrine of election, making salvation a matter of human endeavor and not a part of a divine plan independent of our agency or experience. Rather than espousing a God who inscrutably determines our place in eternity, Channing describes him as a taskmaster demanding experiment and effort in the pursuit of spiritual goals, a God of labor Henry described as "a working God, grimy with the dust and sweat of our most carnal appetites and passions" (*SoS* vii).

Unitarianism's arrival into the American mainstream is usually signaled by the 1805 election of Henry Ware Sr. (father of Henry Ware, Jr and Emerson's mentor) to Harvard's Hollis Chair of Divinity - up to this point a Congregationalist post in a Congregationalist college. (No orthodox Congregationalist would hold the post again until 1910.) The Unitarian-Emersonian Charles William Eliot would serve as Harvard's president from 1869-1909, modernizing the school's curricula based on pragmatic principles and rejecting established codes in favor of "practical education."[222] So when William arrived as an undergraduate at Harvard in the fall of

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[222] The very first paragraph of Eliot's 1869 inaugural address leaves no ambiguity as to how thoroughly practicality had overturned theoretical concerns and disciplinary antagonisms: "[t]he endless controversies whether language, philosophy, mathematics, or science supply the best mental training, whether general education should be chiefly literary or chiefly scientific, have no practical lesson for us to-day. This University recognizes no real antagonism between literature and science, and consents to no such narrow alternatives as mathematics or classics, science or metaphysics. [...] Poetry and philosophy

1861 and began teaching appointments in the spring of 1873, Unitarian principles were firmly entrenched in the school and in many educated Boston families.[223] A consideration of Unitarianism's presence is significant because James delivered a lecture to the Unitarian Ministers' Institute in 1881 in which he made the case that Unitarian theology was the best expression of what he was then beginning to formulate as pragmatism.

In "Reflex Action and Theism," published in *The Will to Believe,* William hailed the "eagerness which theologians show to assimilate results of science, and to hearken to the conclusions of men of science about universal matters" (112). His goal in the address was to "ask whether [the reflex action's] influence may not extend far beyond the limits of psychology, even into those of theology herself" (113) - in other words, an effort of pragmatic mediation between reflex action - but science more broadly - and a theism that views God as synonymous with abundant love.[224] Delivered six years after the appearance of Peirce's essay "How to Make Our Ideas Clear" (which William directly cites in the address), he makes no secret about its pragmatic orientation:

> [i]ndeed, it may be said that if two apparently different definitions of the reality before us should have identical consequences, those two definitions would really

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and science do indeed conspire to promote the material welfare of mankind; but science no more than poetry finds its best warrant in its utility" (1).

[223] As Harriet Beecher Stowe vividly recalled, in a less than celebratory tone, "Calvinism or Orthodoxy was the despised and persecuted form of faith. It was the dethroned royal family wandering like a permitted mendicant in the city where it once had held court, and Unitarianism reigned in its stead. All the literary men of Massachusetts were Unitarian. All the trustees and professors of Harvard College were Unitarians. All the élite of wealth and fashion crowded Unitarian churches. The judges on the bench were Unitarian, giving decisions by which the peculiar features of church organization, so carefully ordained by the Pilgrim Fathers, had been nullified" (*Life* 57).

[224] What William referred to as the "fundamental and well established...doctrine of reflex action" (112-13) is less important to him in this essay than the reconciliation between science and religion he saw cresting on the American intellectual horizon. But for clarification, reflex action "means that the acts we perform are always the result of outward discharges from the nervous centres, and that these outward discharges are themselves the result of impressions from the external world, carried in along one or another of our sensory nerves. [...] There is not one [action] which cannot be remotely, if not immediately, traced to an origin in some incoming impression of sense. There is no impression of sense which, unless inhibited by some other stronger one, does not immediately or remotely express itself in action of some kind" (113).

> be identical definitions, made delusively to appear different merely by the different verbiage in which they are expressed. (124)

Using consequences as arbiters of practical significance, William asserts that unclear "verbiage" may expose philosophical disputes as delusive - the central claim of Peirce and William's pragmatism. William says the*ology*, but what he's really interested in is the*ism* - not *-ology* ("study"), but *-ism* ("practice"). As he says, "theism always stands ready with the most practically rational solution it is possible to conceive. [...] At a single stroke, it changes the dead blank *it* of the world into a living *thou*, with whom the whole man may have dealings" (127).[225] Theism's postulation of a world bears the stamp of divine personability - the second person *thou*, not the impersonal neuter *it* - that energizes and makes practical action meaningful. The significance of action for people is predicated on their affectionate bond with "whatever they may consider the divine" (*VRE* 31).

So even though William's confession to his Unitarian friend Henry Rankin - that "although religion is the great interest of my life, I am rather hopelessly non-evangelical, and take the whole thing too impersonally" - sounds like the sobered objectivity of an agnostic philosopher of religion - which he was in many ways - he understood all too well the crucial role *personality* played in justifications for actions. It undergirded the whole philosophical endeavor: "[t]he history of philosophy is to a great extent that of a clash of human temperaments." He added that even though "[o]f whatever temperament a professional philosopher is, he tries...to sink the fact of his temperament," personal bias is inescapable: "his temperament really gives him a stronger bias than any of his more strictly objective premises" (*Pragmatism* 6-7). William's point is that personal temperament is not only inescapable, but it also modulates supposedly unbiassed philosophical conclusions. It's not an accident that Unitarianism's emphasis on Christ's humanity - as opposed to his divinity - his unique *personality* became the theological justification for Christians to *act* like Christians.[226]

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[225] See also William's reiteration of this critical aspect of his theory of action in his later essay "The Will to Believe:" "[t]he more perfect and more eternal aspect of the universe is represented in our religions as having personal form. The universe is no longer a mere *It* to us, but a *Thou*, if we are religious; and any relation that may be possible from person to person might be possible here" (27-8).

William lauds the "champions of the Unitarianism of New England," indicating why he believes Unitarianism's doctrine of an affectionate God is uniquely suited to a pragmatic ethos. "A God who gives so little scope to love, a predestination which takes from endeavor all its zest with all its fruit, are irrational conceptions, because they say to our most cherished powers, There is no object for you" (126). William's use of the word "irrational" is telling, because he also means "impractical;" here is the Channing-esque element. If, as Channing argued, our potential for disclosing God's providential hand in earthly affairs and if action conducted toward that goal is a rational pursuit, any system that suppresses that effort (meaning doctrines like predestination and election) would not only be irrational, but at cross-purposes with God's design. By extension, the rational faculty is rational to the extent that it is *useful*; it does not sit fixed within the confines of the merely thinking mind, but manifests in and distributes itself throughout the quotidian dealings of human life.

William's address to the Unitarian Ministers' Institute wasn't simply congratulatory rhetoric. The question beneath the address is the same question under Henry's revisionist theology of atonement: what does it mean to love or be loved by someone who died nearly nineteen centuries ago, in a place most have never been, for sins you yourself never committed? Reconceiving the divine as an immediate presence of love, and not as a theological doctrine remote from the living interests of living people, Henry and William participated in the liberal Protestant transformation of rigidly historicized absolutes into spiritually useful historical events, amenable to individuals' present experiences.[227] Today's evangelical emphasis on believers having a *personal* relationship with Jesus is the logical conclusion of making the atonement not just theologically meaningful, but making it practically useful, in terms of affectionate closeness, for believers.

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[226] According to Unitarianism, Christ's substitionary atonement - a payment for the debt of Adam's sin - is an absurd doctrine since it reduces Christ's personhood to a mere function in a transhuman divine scheme. Nor does Unitarianism hold to the patripassionist claim that God suffered in Christ's body the way humans suffer. The logic here is simple: to be a good Christian it is incumbent to imitate Christ; however, if Christ is in fact divine (and his humanity merely for show), believers have no justification for heeding Christ's command in Matthew 4:19 to "[c]ome, follow me." In fact, to even attempt to imitate Christ would be tantamount to imitating God himself, an imitation that wasn't lost on more conservative-minded theologians who equated it with aspirations to divinity.

[227] Dewey's pragmatism of faith also had an uneasy relationship with history, as it viewed adherence to historical traditions and dogma as characteristic of "religion," and not necessarily expressive of the "religious" quality of genuine experience: "some views about the course of human history and personages and incidents in that history, have become so interwoven with religion as to be identified with it. [...] With

As William talks about the relationship between God and human action, we're reminded of his father's repugning the instruction of a God "so essentially heartless" and "so essentially irrational" (*SS* 73). He follows his father's logic closely here in making a direct connection between a theism that postulates a loving God involved in His creation and the meaningfulness of human action.[228] By situating the meaningfulness of action in the affectionate bond one *feels* toward whatever constitutes their perceived reality, William sutured his pragmatic epistemology to liberal theism. The postbellum reformer Washington Gladden would come to the same conclusion when, recalling his young experience trying and failing to gain God's favor, he wrote: "[t]o feel that, in spite of your best endeavors, you are alien and an outcast from the family of God is not encouraging to virtue; it tends to carelessness and irreverence" (*Recollections* 36). Just as his father rejected the impersonal *deus absconditus* of Calvinist theology, William justified his theory of action with the idea that we are fundamentally beings who respond to and live by affections:

> No other reason can be assigned why we should express ourselves to God in verse rather than in prose, and do it with music, but only, that such is our nature and frame, that these things have a tendency to move our affections. (38-9)

Consequently, *love* is also that which dissolves the subject/object distinction. William's contemporary Freud added to the effort to overcome this Cartesian philosophical mainstay. Despite many of its questionable claims about religion, Freud's *Civilization and Its Discontents*,

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such persons, the result is that the more these ideas are used as the basis and justification of a religion, the more dubious that religion becomes" (*Common* 30).

[228] The theism William lauded in "Reflex Action" should be distinguished from its more rationalistic (i.e., non-empirical) variant. In *A Pluralistic Universe*, William critiqued "scholastic theism" along lines familiar in his earlier essay: "in scholastic theism we find truth already instituted and established without our help, complete apart from our knowing; and the most we can do is acknowledge it passively and adhere to it, altho such adhesion as ours can make no jot of difference to what is adhered to" (27-28).

I think, makes a useful observation on this head. Regarding the connection of love to the satisfaction of the pleasure principle, Freud writes that “this connection may lie in the remote regions where the distinction between the ego and objects or between objects themselves is neglected” (90).

From Edwards’s religious affections to Finney’s humanistic revivalism to James’s argument that a loving God who excites our affections is the condition for practical action, we can see a clear line in American intellectual history that knits affections to action in a variety of interpenetrating contexts. What doesn’t appeal to our affections doesn’t appeal to our wills. As William put it, “it seems to me that the only sort of union of creature with creator with which theism, properly so called, comports, is of this emotional and practical kind” (135), where “emotional” and “practical” are seen as mutually reinforcing. His contemporary, the Christian philosopher Eugene William Lyman, joined the Edwardsean choir in 1910 when he argued for a theological pragmatism: “[o]ur life of feeling is not a matter of metes and bounds…. It is the door of the soul through which the life of the Infinite can enter, it is the organ of divine knowledge” (64). Like Finney’s, William’s God is an immanent divinity whose affection for His creation is the motive force to which our feeling-based sensorium responds in kind.

If immanent, God is not, as orthodox Calvinism held, radically other from humanity. According to William’s logic as drawn from Unitarianism, the concept of God, to be meaningful, *must* exist in some relation to humans. William cannot conceive of God to be wholly other (a redefinition that also eliminates the possibility of obliterative theophanies) because meaning can only exist in some apprehensible relation. Despite Dewey’s less individualistic (that is to say, less Jamesian) approach to religious faith, this was a point on which he agreed: “[i]t is this *active* relation between ideal and actual to which I would give the name ‘God’” (*Common* 51). William never says this (though at times it is implied), but this Unitarian-derived implication in pragmatism renders the absoluteness of the Calvinist God absolutely meaningless.

These connections between practical use and the notion of God as love were highly influential in nineteenth century cure movements, with which William had direct contact. “The plain fact remains,” he wrote, “that the spread of the [mind cure] movement has been due to practical fruits, and the extremely practical turn of character of the American people has never been better shown than by the fact that this, their only decidedly original contribution to the systematic philosophy of life, should be so intimately knit up with concrete therapeutics" (*VRE* 96). In a statement that would have horrified the orthodox, William argued that "[n]ot God, but life, more life, a larger, richer, more satisfying life, is, in the last analysis, the end of religion" (507). This way of seeing things tells us why William often preferred the German *Weltanschauung* to the English "philosophy;" the former refers to "worldview," but also to a philosophy of *life*.

The variety of mind-cure techniques became for William the occasion to consider the privately felt effects of alternative, extrascientific modes of healing and how these effects might justify these modes. When the Massachusetts legislature planned to introduce the "Medical Registration Act" in 1894, which would have regulated the practice of medicine and surgery, James opposed it in the *Boston Transcript*, defending alternative systems like Christian Science and mind-cure on the grounds that "their *facts* are patent and startling; and anything that interferes with the multiplication of such facts, and with our freest opportunity of observing and studying them, will, I believe, be a public calamity" (148). Left free of hermeneutical constraints, experiential facts will not only emerge in their fullest clarity, but - and this is the important point for William - their practical values could be fully manifested, evaluated, and justified.

The cultural change from denominational juggernauts like Calvinism that emphasized the productive capacity of sustained spiritual introspection to loosely defined spiritual movements paralleled the impetus to make philosophy and religion useful for life, to endow them with a Swedenborgian-esque spiritual use value. William's interest in mind-cure wasn't only intellectual; his biography is full of examples of how he considered overcoming his multiple ailments to effect an Emersonian transformation of genius into power. Annie Payson Call's *Power Through Repose*, a book he reviewed positively after its publication in 1891 (Richardson 311), makes active human power a practical result of theorizing an affectionate God. An acquaintance of William's, Call spoke of the positive comfort of obedience to the laws of the body in ways that echoed Finney and Emerson's repudiation of the supernatural: "it is no miracle, it is only natural" (84). Her central claim demonstrated as well as any the ideal of practical Christianity, encapsulating the influence evangelical heart religion had on the pragmatic method:

> [a] man’s love is God’s love for the use for which he was made; a man’s power lies in the best direction of that use. This is a truth as practical as the necessity for walking on the feet with the head up. (85)

The primary link between James and the religious movements percolating from the time of Edwards, the link that argues most compellingly that pragmatism is in no small way shaped by evangelical-Protestant logics, is this emphasis on action made meaningful by notions of God as love, free will, and spiritual use. Henry James Sr’s rejection of a heartless God who demonstrated no affection for his creation and Call’s equation of “man’s love” and “God’s love for the use for which he was made” were powerful influences on William as he was developing his own style of pragmatism.

Conclusion

Pragmatism is in the air and everybody starts with it as a basis. I do not know how I shall escape the influence.

Virginia Robinson (Rosenberg 116)

The student of philosophy to James R. Angell at the University of Chicago, Virginia Robinson wasn’t wrong about the pervasive influence of pragmatism in American academia. Perhaps unbeknownst to Robinson was that she was standing in the midst of a widespread cultural adoption of pragmatism that extended far beyond university walls, into Georgia backwoods, novelizations of Christ’s life, and squalid urban tenements. In the preceding sections, I have called attention to the ways in which certain intellectual elements and shifts at the intersections of American evangelicalism and philosophical pragmatism left their marks on the thought of William James. The primacy of direct experience, the conception of God as love, and the spiritualization of utility were highly influential in the development of and justifications for pragmatic claims.

As it sometimes is in our day, the nineteenth century endeavor to reconcile science and religion, faith and philosophy, experienced pushback from corners dismissive of faith for one reason or another: as a relic from mankind's superstitious past, an epistemological dead zone unworthy of scientific study, or as a faculty that yielded potentially valid hypotheses but nevertheless should be subordinated to scientific confirmation. Such representations, then as now, not only distort the epistemological commitments of spiritual communities, but they tend to ignore the influence that belief can wield and has wielded on the shaping of cultural movements. Belief, to put it briefly, has its own epistemology, distinct from other ways of knowing. That pragmatism emerged at a time when transatlantic intellectual culture was beginning to appreciate religious experiences for the challenges they posed to conventional epistemologies is, I'm arguing, not just a historical coincidence. Psychologists like Edwin Starbuck, George A. Coe, James Bissett Pratt, and, of course, William James laid the groundwork for what would become the discipline of the philosophy of religion. Raised a Quaker, Starbuck underwent a spiritual conversion early in life, the effects of which led him to study religious experience from a psychological point of view. Coe - son of a Methodist minister who labored in the cinders of Finney's burned-over district - dedicated himself to living a good Christian life with or without salvific certainty, revolutionizing American religious education in the process.[229] A disciple of James, Pratt wrote extensively on the relation between religious experience and psychology in works such as *The Psychology of Religious Belief*, *The Religious Consciousness*, and *Matter and Spirit*. "Agnostic" is a misleading descriptor for James; "hopelessly non-evangelical," as he described himself to Henry Rankin, is better. Nevertheless, at the end of his life, in the posthumously published *Some Problems of Philosophy*, James stayed faithful to faith: "[f]aith...remains as one of the inalienable birthrights of our mind" (225). What these figures and many like them shared was a commitment to understanding faith not as a psychological aberrance, not as a threat to the more “respectable” discipline of scientific inquiry, but as an epistemological phenomenon in its own right.

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[229] At the beginning of his *Psychology of Religion*, Coe divulged his own experience with religion in a way that called back to Edwards and Finney's frustration with standardized conversion models: "the chief incitement to seek mystical experiences came to me wrapped up in dogma, and the disappointment of my adolescence, when the promised and sought-for mystical 'witness of the Spirit' did not come, caused me to turn away from both the dogmatic and the mystical approach to religion" (xiii-xiv).

By some accounts, though, the latter half of the nineteenth century was still viewed as a time of secularization, during which the substance of religion had grown stale and formulaic. In 1907, Henry Adams described his experience growing up with New England religion in the following way (in the third person voice characteristic of his *Education*):

> Of all the conditions of his youth which afterwards puzzled the grown-up man, this disappearance of religion puzzled him most. [...] [H]e went through all the forms; but neither to him nor to his brothers or sisters was religion real. Even the mild discipline of the Unitarian Church was so irksome that they all threw it off at the first possible moment…. The religious instinct had vanished, and could not be revived, although one made in later life many efforts to recover it. (34)

There’s a fair amount of cultural pessimism here (as there is throughout *Education*), though Adams might have been overstating the case. As this chapter has shown, it would be more accurate to say that “the religious instinct” had not so much disappeared as it transformed, explored new channels of religious expression responsive to individuals’ felt sense of what constituted a good life. Elizabeth Schull was one. John Humphrey Noyes, Andrew Jackson Davis, Margaret Fuller, and later figures like Julia Ward Howe, Horatio Dresser, and Ralph Waldo Trine were others. To some circles, “religion” had become synonymous with dogmatisms too formulaic and affectionately remote for those who believed access to the divine occurred through intense emotions and spontaneous visionary experiences. For the proponents of liberal evangelicalism, a practical piety would be needed to address the spiritual concerns of individuals occupying a rapidly changing and increasingly materialistic world.

In the ways that direct experience and action were reevaluated in religious and philosophical cultures in the early nineteenth century, and which influenced the formation and justification of Jamesian pragmatic claims, they also had a profound effect on the postbellum Social Gospel movement. A transdenominational and transatlantic evangelical reform movement, the Social Gospel sought to mobilize a pragmatic ethos in efforts to improve urban conditions and refashion individuals in the image of Christ - history's greatest moral teacher, and the only one worthy of emulation. This was the era of the "What Would Jesus Do?" movement, and it was an explicit attempt to produce practical effects in the here and now as a way of illuminating spiritual truths and, ultimately, establishing the kingdom of God on earth. Among its primary motive forces was the characterization of God as a loving God; as the so-called "father of the Social Gospel," Washington Gladden understood it, "force and fear...are certainly among the lowest moral motives; the conduct which they inspire must be an inferior kind of conduct" (*Recollections* 61).

Currently, the Social Gospel movement tends to get little attention outside the field of transatlantic religious history. Even some historians can be seen downplaying its influence. Even though as early as 1940 Charles H. Hopkins claimed that "America's most unique contribution to the great ongoing stream of Christianity is the 'social gospel'" (3), you'll still find more recent historians like Robert Fuller saying that "although [the Social Gospel] never became a major force in American religious life, its very appearance testifies to the period's increasing concern that faith be made relevant to the actual difficulties facing men and women in their daily lives" (165). Fuller was right about the second part, and my goal in the next chapter will be to show how he wasn't quite right about the first. Though the Social Gospel was low on theological innovation, it did produce an extensive array of media - practical theologies, photojournalism, novels, etc. - that appealed to both educated elites and popular audiences, generating lasting cultural effects that helped shape what we call modernism and whose liberal, reformist ethos was the primary target of early twentieth century Protestant fundamentalism.[230]

Social Gospel leaders like Charles Sheldon, Jacob Riis, M.W. Howard, Jane Addams, Walter Rauschenbusch (grandfather to neopragmatist Richard Rorty), Edward Everett Hale, William T. Stead, and Mrs. (Mary Augusta) Humphry Ward understood spiritual meaningfulness to inhere in the production of concrete effects. The Topeka minister Sheldon, for example, used novelistic narrative to link the justification of Christian value in imagining “what would Jesus do?” As sin is in the sinning, *being* a Christian meant *behaving* like one. The magic lantern tours of the New York reformer Jacob Riis exposed the realities of urban squalor, using a theory of correspondence to inculcate a double vision that would enable audience members to discern the spiritual realities signified by material facts. Everett Hale’s *If Jesus Came to Boston*, Stead’s *If Christ Came to Chicago!*, and Howard’s *If Christ Came to Congress* (all published in 1894), along with more theological works like William E. Blackstone’s *Jesus Is Coming* (1878), all sought to imagine the coming of Christ not merely an abstract or metaphysical truth, but as an immanent - and imminent - spiritual reality whose significance rested in its practical manifestation. Mrs. Humphry Ward’s popular *Robert Elsmere* (1888) joined dozens of postbellum tramping narratives that drew from the idea that spiritual lessons were best - perhaps only - garnered through direct experience of economic hardship or the physical suffering of others. One of the efforts to recover “the religious instinct,” as Adams put it, was to produce the spiritual truths of Christian belief in the lived realities of both believers and the spiritually lost.

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[230] Walter Rauschenbusch seemed late to the game when in 1917 - decades after the Social Gospel had already made its major contributions to Anglo-American culture - he wrote, "[w]e have a social gospel. We need a systematic theology large enough to match it and vital enough to back it" (*Theology* 1).

What, then, is the relationship between the postbellum emergence of pragmatism and the Social Gospel movement? The Social Gospel was built on an ethic of practical Christianity, an emphasis on Christ’s gentle love for humankind, and a Christian realism that resurrected the notion of spiritual realities embedded in material facts. With this broad sketch, I want to look closer at the ways in which the Social Gospel undertook a pragmatically-minded ethos, how it incorporated some of the intellectual elements we’ve seen articulated by Edwards, Finney, Henry James Sr, and William James, and how certain elements of pragmatic thought were not simply confined to the realm of philosophy, nor were exclusively derived from it. My ultimate claim in the final chapter is that it was during the Social Gospel that not only did American evangelical Protestantism become thoroughly pragmatized, but it was quite self-conscious about the connection.

Chapter IV

The Pragmatic Attitudes of The Social Gospel

It was an interesting period in which to exercise the function of the Christian ministry. The spirit of inquiry was in the air. [S]ome ancient traditions were challenged, and it was evident that the Christian world was getting ready for a forward movement.

Washington Gladden, *Recollections* (291)

Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of God.

1 Corinthians 6:10-11

Introduction - The Social Gospel in the History of American Pragmatism

When the Congregationalist pastor and Social Gospel leader Washington Gladden submitted for publication his Sunday evening addresses on the relation between Christian morality and American industry, his publisher Horace Scudder "hesitated over the title." Gladden's suggested title was *Applied Christianity*. Scudder "could not see the force of the adjective," Gladden reported. "I tried to show him that the whole significance of the book was in that adjective; that the thing which the world needed most was a direct application of the Christian law to the business of life" (*Recollections* 297-98). For reasons unrecorded, Scudder thought the adjective unnecessary, perhaps even redundant. Whatever the case, this somewhat minor exchange tells us something critical about the movement known as the Social Gospel: that for postbellum America the *practical* part of Christian practice wasn't as explicit as some thought it ought to have been. "[T]he function of the Christian ministry," Gladden believed, was up for reappraisal.

At the center of this anecdote about a simple adjective lies the epistemological foundation for what would be known as the Social Gospel movement. A transnational and transdenominational movement spanning from the 1870s to the first half of the twentieth century, the Social Gospel's central goal was the application of Christian principles to a variety of socioeconomic crises: poverty, labor, immigration, temperance, and urban reform, to name a few. Indeed, for many Social Gospel reformers, the *total* reformation of society was at stake. In 1921, Social Gospelers and professors Shailer Mathews and Gerald Birney Smith defined "social gospel" as "[t]he application of the teaching of Jesus and the total message of the Christian salvation to society, the economic life, and social institutions such as the state, the family, as well as to individuals" (416).[231] Like Gladden's "Christian law," Mathews and Smith's definition aimed at a homogeneous "total message," taking literally Christ's injunction that "whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all" (*KJV* James 2:10). Running the concentric gamut of human experience from "the state, the family, as well as to individuals," and dedicated to the proposition that Christianity was logically compatible, if not synonymous, with American democracy and progress, the Social Gospel sought to make Christian morality a spiritually pervasive force in material affairs. By adopting the same logics that pragmatism mobilized to apply philosophical claims to human experience, the Social Gospel's creed of applied Christianity joined postbellum efforts to transform theories and ideals into agents of practical change.

The Social Gospel's language of social *crisis* – as opposed to social *question* – exploited the immediacy of experience, summoning the etymology of "crisis" as calling for a *decision*. Whereas a *question* is suited to unhurried intellectual speculation, a *crisis* is a radical intensification of time, a kind of kairos appealing to one's sense of urgency and cultivates a responsiveness to experimentation for practical results. From its incipience in the 1870s, the Social Gospel's primary goal was the pragmatic realization - via theology, literary, and photography - of social and economic crises as occasions for situating spiritual ideas within the realm of experience. Arriving on the East Coast of America, the Puritans of legend celebrated the longed-for building of God's country *here*; the Social Gospel sought to fulfill the prophecy by building that country *now*.

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[231] Dean of Chicago's Divinity School, Shailer Mathews occupied a prominent position against the premillennialist and fundamentalist movements of the early twentieth century, especially against the anti-liberal J. Gresham Machen. Unlike Machen and others, Mathews argued that Christianity and Modernism were completely compatible. For Mathews's role in the modernist-fundamentalist controversies of the early 1920s, see Marsden's *Fundamentalism and American Culture* (176-84).

In the last chapter, I argued that the Swedenborgian theology of Henry James Sr had a significant impact on the pragmatisms of Charles Peirce and William James. His theology and these pragmatisms shared the idea that the primary significance or truth of a proposition rested in its practical consequences for human life. In this chapter, I'm suggesting that the concurrent emergence of the Social Gospel as a pragmatized evangelicalism was no accident. When James wrote in *Varieties* that "the religious question is primarily a question of life" (514), it was clear to him that religious belief wasn't simply incidental to living, as it may have been for the patrons of Henry James Sr's tailor shop, but bound up with it. The "nature of Christianity," the gospel of labor minister Charles Stelzle agreed, "has to do with life." And while, as I've pointed out in previous chapters, the apparently predetermined nature of Christian eschatology may seem to foreclose any logical commerce between the open-ended pluralism of pragmatism and the teleological orientation of Christian practice, it was their shared incentive to make hermeneutical systems appropriate to the irreducible flux of lived experience that made them ideological bedfellows. "For while the fundamental basis of Christianity must always remain the same," Stelzle continued, it "cannot be limited to the ecclesiastical terminology of the theologian in the one case, nor to a narrow interpretation of life in the other" (80). The pragmatic ethos adopted by Social Gospel leaders - an ethos that shaped its understanding of the relationship between visible and invisible worlds, its emphasis on ethical action, how that action is linked to our beliefs, what experience means and how it can and should be mobilized for social good, and its Christian humanism - is the subject of this chapter.[232]

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[232] An emphasis on the actionable will of believers is a consistent theme in Social Gospel literature. The protagonist of the American Winston Churchill's social Christian novel *The Inside of the Cup*, for example, encapsulates the reformist ethic required to inspire social change: "[t]he secret...lay in a presentation of the divine message which would convince and transform and electrify those who heard it

Names like Shailer Mathews, Vida Dutton Scudder, J.S. Woodsworth, Caroline Bartlett Crane, Harris Franklin Rall, and Frank Mason North aren't typically heard outside of studies on Social Gospel literature. Even so, they left a lasting impact on North American religion, philosophy, and politics. As Christopher Evans has shown, Christian socialists like J.S. Woodsworth and Stanley Knowles (both of whom began their careers as ministers) profoundly shaped the course of Canadian social politics, while the works of the Catholic priest and professor John A. Ryan and academic John R. Commons directly influenced the economic theories bolstering Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal policies (197-98).[233] As Susan Curtis observes, Woodrow Wilson's message of duty and self-sacrifice upon America's entry into World War I was drawn directly from a Social Gospel vocabulary (191), while the language of early twentieth century muckraking exposés deployed a self-consciously evangelical language of sin and redemption to appeal to middle class sensibilities.[234] During the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s, Martin Luther King, Jr credited the Baptist pastor Walter Rauschenbusch with granting American Protestantism "a sense of social responsibility" (440).[235] So William McGuire King wasn't being glib when he claimed that "the direction of modern religious thought in the United States was decisively shaped by the social gospel" (50), even as contemporary American Christianity tends to fall victim to stereotypes of obdurate conservatism and ideological parochialism.[236]

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to *action*" (364). The theologian Harris Franklin Rall carried the Social Gospel ethos even as late as the 1930s. Transcendence of the person, he argued, occurs "by the way of action" (79).

[233] For the line of descent from the economic theories of John R. Commons to the New Deal legislation enacted by his student Edwin E. Witte, see Cecilia Tichi's *Civic Passions*, Ch. 2.

[234] For a detailed account of the uses of evangelical discourse in turn of the century muckraking journals, see Gorrell, Ch. 3.

[235] In spite of some crucial disagreements about what he felt was Rauschenbusch's "unwarranted optimism concerning human nature," King was open-handed about the Social Gospel leader's influence on his "quest for a method to eliminate social evil:" "[i]n the early `50s I read Rauschenbusch's *Christianity and the Social Crisis*, a book which left an indelible imprint on my thinking" (440).

[236] The descendants of the Social Gospel, the so-called "lay liberals" or "Golden Rule Christians," continue to form a considerable portion of the religious mosaic in twentieth and twenty-first century America. In keeping with the pragmatic tradition cultivated by the Social Gospel, they are "best defined," as sociologist Nancy T. Ammerman points out in *Lived Religion in America*, "not by ideology, but by practices. Their own measure of Christianity is right living more than right believing" (197). Ammerman notes that among the qualities defining Golden Rule Christianity are its belief that religion is best practiced in public and not in private, an emphasis on social action and caring for the needy, and a core

The Social Gospel is sometimes seen as synonymous with liberal Protestantism. But it would be misleading to situate the Social Gospel on a liberal/conservative or left/right spectrum. Its commitment to ecumenical reforms, its openness to philosophical humanism, and its receptivity to evolutionary science have rightfully categorized the movement along the lines of a progressively liberal Protestantism. However, its hope for a totalizing federal piety tended to ignore church/state separation, authorizing an exclusively Christian moral hegemony that raised questions about any commitment to religious pluralism. Indeed, the movement's reticence concerning non-Christian belief systems within America and its silence as to what they might have to say about living according to Christ's precepts recalls familiar nineteenth century pretensions to Protestant cultural supremacy.[237] Many Social Gospel leaders were quite candid about inspiriting American government with an unambiguously Christian ethos, unruffled by any possible affronts to the Jeffersonian tradition. As John Hodder, the Social Gospel hero of *The Inside of the Cup* resolved, it was necessary "to bring Christianity into government, where it belongs" (324). At the same time, a towering Social Gospel figure like Josiah Strong – whose credentials were virtually unimpeachable among his peers – would cite Romanism, Mormonism, and socialism among the "seven perils" stultifying American progress. And when it came to political equality, even a fair-minded progressive like Washington Gladden had his limits: "[s]uffrage is not a natural right" (Luker 74). Though many of its adherents shared common goals, the Social Gospel's multi-layered ideological commitments remind us to be wary of nuance in the often precarious imbrications that constitute large-scale historical movements.

As historians like Ronald C. White, Jr. and Ralph Luker have forcefully argued, the Social Gospel was not predominantly a northern white evangelical movement. Luker notes that well-meaning but myopic interpretations of the movement have caused "historians to ignore its

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commitment to Christ's injunction to "love one another" (203-6). These were the features that constituted the practical aims of the Social Gospel.

[237] The silence of many Social Gospel leaders concerning the presence of Muslim, Jewish, indigenous, and other non-Christian religions is worthy of remark, especially considering figures like Walter Rauschenbusch functioned as ministers in ethnically heterogeneous areas like Hell's Kitchen and the Lower East Side. Commentary from non-Christian groups on the Social Gospel are not very forthcoming, but would provide a fascinating alternative perspective on the movement's seemingly unproblematic utopian apocalypticism.

manifestations in black and Southern white churches alike" (3). Historical emphases on New England's role in the shaping of American religious sensibilities, the view of Reconstruction South as politically and economically shattered (when it wasn't being caricatured as ideologically retrogressive), and the salience in Social Gospel literature of northern and midwestern urban centers like New York, Boston, Rochester, St. Louis, and Chicago, helped contribute to what Luker has called "the astigmatism of the historians" (3). Figures like Harlan Paul Douglass, Ida B. Wells, Joseph C. Price, W.E.B. Du Bois, and Booker T. Washington often found themselves working alongside northern white reformists like Lyman Abbott, Charles M. Sheldon, Ellen Gates Starr, Benjamin Orange Flower, and Jane Addams.[238] Such historical astigmatism, too, has led some to forget that the phrase "Social Gospel" itself began as the title of the utopian Christian Commonwealth Colony's periodical, a magazine published in rural Georgia.

The Social Gospel's emphasis on the effects of faith, rather than its intellectual content, demonstrates just how proximate Jamesian thought was to the movement. In the final pages of his chapter on "Habit" in *Principles of Psychology*, James asserted that "[n]o matter how full a reservoir of *maxims* one may possess, and no matter how good one's *sentiments* may be," one's "character" remains unaffected. "Every time," he continues, "a resolve or a fine glow of feeling evaporates without bearing practical fruit is worse than a chance lost" (129). Despite the volume of one's "reservoir" of knowledge or feeling, fruits count, not roots. Gladden, who had witnessed western New York revivalism firsthand, agreed in terms that closely echoed James and Finney: "feeling is the glowing link which binds together thought and action. A feeling which originates in no definite thought, and results in no definite action, is good for nothing" (*Being* 10-11). Both pragmatism and the Social Gospel sought to vitalize the human will by fixing the significance of concepts to their practical effects. James's closing thoughts on the formative qualities of habit leaves us with the lesson that you practically *are* what you *do*. One who inculcates the values of habitual "asceticism" and "self-denial in unnecessary things...will stand like a tower when everything rocks around him, and when his softer fellow-mortals are winnowed like chaff in the blast" (130). Just as the Social Gospel's theological core hitched the justification of Christian values to their concrete manifestation in human experience, the pragmatist, James tells us, "turns away from abstraction and insufficiency, from verbal solutions, from bad *a priori* reasons" and "towards concreteness and adequacy, towards facts, towards action and towards power" (*Pragmatism* 25).

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[238] To take one prominent example, Virginia's Hampton Institute (now Hampton University), founded and funded by both white and black Christian reformers, inspired one of its most famous students, Booker T. Washington, to structure Alabama's Tuskegee Institute on the very same Social Gospel principles of civic education and practical labor. Du Bois, a well-connected figure in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, studied under Royce and James, and corresponded with critics like Bliss Perry and theologians like Lyman Abbott. See *The Autobiography of W.E.B. Du Bois*, especially Ch. 13.

This chapter is not an argument that Jamesian pragmatism directly fueled Social Gospel ideologies or vice versa. Rather, I'm arguing that these two concurrent historical phenomena were responses to theories of history as inherently progressive and whose teleological uncertainty incentivized an ethic of practical experimentation. It is rather easy to point out that both pragmatism and the Social Gospel were rigorously practical in their orientation to the world; an analysis of their shared logic and what a view of that commonality might tell us about the history of pragmatism, then, is the focus of this chapter. By locating pragmatic logics and attitudes within a predominantly Protestant evangelical context, viewing its manifestations in theology, literature, and photojournalism, I hope to show not only how American evangelical Protestantism and philosophy were in dialogue with one another, but to challenge the presumed secularity of Jamesian pragmatism.[239] Demonstrating how pragmatic attitudes emerged throughout a series of Protestant-inspired texts and images will help reshape the way we think about the history of pragmatism and American Christianity.

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[239] At the same time, however, the spheres of pragmatism and the Social Gospel did sometimes overlap. Figures like the Harvard theologian Francis Greenwood Peabody, the Methodist socialist Harry F. Ward, and Deweyan sociologist Charles Horton Cooley provide biographical connections between theology and evangelicalism and philosophical pragmatism. Jurgen Herbst has observed that the ethical theology of Francis Greenwood Peabody was heavily influenced by his teacher Charles Peirce's concept of synechism (the philosophical tendency to view things like space and time as continuous, not discrete). According to Doug Rossinow, Harry F. Ward's adoption of practical ethics was directly related to "[h]is attraction to philosophical pragmatism" (66). Charles Horton Cooley, a student of Dewey's, was one of many who identified Christianity with democracy: "[t]he democratic movement, insomuch as it feels a common spirit in all men, is of the same nature as Christianity. [...] An ideal democracy is in its nature religious, and its true sovereign may be said to be the higher nature, or God, which it inspires to incarnate in human institutions" (203, 205).

A This-Worldly Theology of Process and the Abolition of the Absolute

In the spiritual, as in the physical, God is the secret and source of life; phenomena, whether material or spiritual, are the manifestation of his presence; but he manifests himself in growth, not in stereotyped and stationary forms.

Lyman Abbott, *The Evolution of Christianity* (v)

On some of the more speculative doctrines the social gospel has no contribution to make. Its interests lie on earth, within the social relations of the life that now is.

Walter Rauschenbusch, *Theology for the Social Gospel* (31)

In his examination of the Social Gospel, the twentieth century Dutch theologian Willem Visser ’t Hooft agreed with a contemporary that the movement “takes the idea of *time* seriously” (43). Like many areas of academic and popular culture at the time, the Social Gospel subscribed to a gradualist (or evolutionist) conception of history and natural phenomena. Unlike catastrophism, which argued that change occurs by sudden disruptions of otherwise stable continuums, gradualism contended that change – in nature and experience – could be accounted for by both a consideration of how an individual thing develops through time and in relation to accompanying phenomena. Relations, as James would agree, are just as important as the terms that separate them. Typified by Lyman Abbott’s assertion that God “manifests himself in growth,” and by Rauschenbusch’s exhortation that if “the Christian ideal of society is to come, - we must shift from catastrophe to development” (*Theology* 225), the Social Gospel argued that if we were going to capture the significance of a thing, we would need a knowledge of its processional unfolding in history and human experience.[240] Histories trump essences. Because modern American Protestantism is not often associated with an almost Emersonian fascination with this-worldly flux, metamorphosis, and ambiguity, understanding how the Social Gospel understood itself within the processes of time, and how its abolition of the absoluteness of theological concepts shaped its orientation toward truth and reality, will more thoroughly illuminate its connections to pragmatism.

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[240] Rauschenbusch said this in 1917, long after the major Social Gospel reforms had taken place. For some, it did raise questions about the viability of the movement, especially in the catastrophic wake of the first world war. True, as Donald K. Gorrell points out, “[s]ocial salvation and social awakening continued to be goals rather than accomplishments” (34) into the twentieth century.

As a result of its understanding of history as subject to human involvement, the Social Gospel is usually categorized as a postmillennial movement. The *post*- refers to the arrival of Christ *after* social ills had been cured, a change occurring not without the hand of providence, but, according to Social Gospel theology, crucially dependent on the active engagement of devoted Christians, whose pious actions would be instrumental in the melioration of earthly corruption.[241] And melioration is very much the right word. “Meliorism,” James believed, “treats salvation...as a possibility. [...] [P]ragmatism must incline toward meliorism” (*Pragmatism* 125). What united the Social Gospel and pragmatism was their shared rejection of the determinism and epistemological inscrutability of the Calvinist doctrines of predestination, election, and absolute sovereignty, doctrines specifically oriented toward the life to come and its fundamental unknowability. By positing the terrestrialization of the kingdom of God, subject to the vagaries of human choice and possibility, and not its establishment in a supernal realm transcending human experience, Social Gospel reformers turned attention toward *this* world and its complex histories, a global orientation that Martin Marty has deemed the movement’s “cosmopolitan habit in theology” (17). As the progressive economist Richard T. Ely understood it, “Christianity is primarily concerned with this world, and it is the mission of Christianity to bring to pass here a kingdom of righteousness and to rescue from the evil one and redeem all our social relations” (*Social Aspects* 53).[242] Rather than fixating on a transcendent world to come, “waiting God’s time" for its conversion, Social Gospelers instrumentalized a this-worldly theology of process that would share with Christ's atonement the work of radical social redemption.

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[241] For a discussion about the role of postmillennialism in the context of highly influential nineteenth century evangelical publishing societies like the American Tract Society and the American Home Missionary Society, see David Morgan’s *Protestants and Pictures* (29-34). In such circulations as the *Christian Almanac,* published by the New England Tract Society, careful calculation of publishing and readership statistics, the tracking of the progress of benevolent societies like the American Sunday School Union, and hagiographies of Protestant divines like Jonathan Edwards that - accurately or not - highlighted their auguries of American millennialism, helped confirm - or at least encourage - the postmillennial hopes of readers throughout the nineteenth century.

[242] The fixation on this world and not on that which is to come is a far cry from popular Christian devotion earlier in the century. As a not uninfluential point of contrast, Harriet Beecher Stowe defined the proper salvific frame of mind to her readers as “a state in which the mind is so bent and absorbed by the love of Christ, that all inducements to worldliness lose their power, and the mind becomes as indifferent to them as a dead body to physical allurements” (Stokes 53).

So it seems that the Unitarian minister and psychical researcher Minot J. Savage was overstating the case when he asserted that "[n]early all the present opposition to evolution comes from theology" (41). Rather, Social Gospel theology seemed more or less in accord with advancements in evolutionary science. An emphasis on process and metamorphosis over stasis and absolutes did produce a shift in staid theological ideas of the nature of reality and humanity's place in it. Sounding strikingly like Henry James Sr, Gladden claimed that "[t]he work of creation is a continuous process, and so is the work of revelation. All that we call Nature is but the constant manifestation of the divine power; and the Spirit in whose image our spirits are fashioned...is here...as close to us as He ever was to any men in any age" (*Recollections* 426).[243] The claim that Creation is an ongoing process whose God is intimately involved in its progressive unfolding is not only a statement about God's immanence but, as Gladden suggests, a subpoena for ethical reform in such a world. The closer God slides toward the "immanent" side of the immanent/transcendent spectrum, the logic goes, the more important – the more *justifiable* – become our "works" and their role in the shaping of our reality. After centuries of Calvinist doctrine repudiating the role of good works in relation to redemption, works themselves began to share in the process of how beliefs and ideas achieved the coveted status of *justification*.

If Creation itself was subject to change by this immanence, it's no surprise other doctrines would follow suit. The pragmatist theologian Eugene William Lyman, for example, demonstrated the extent to which even the core of Christian soteriology - Christ's atonement - morphed in response to the subordination of timeless absolutes to their practical utility in human experience: "one of the gravest mistakes of theology," he wrote, "has been to recognize atonement not only supremely but *exclusively* in Christ's death on the cross. But to limit atonement to a single event in history...is to narrow its power and to rob the faith in God's Fatherhood of its deepest meaning. [...] It represents his forgiveness as a merely passive attitude, whereas it really is an active and seeking force" (*Theology* 195). Whereas conservative audiences criticized historicism for reducing Christ's sacrifice to a secular act in secular history, Social Gospelers implicitly criticized it for stranding the atonement's sacred meaning in a past whose historical fixity was less important than its remoteness from current human interests.

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[243] Recall one of Henry James Sr's major points in *The Secret of Swedenborg*: "space and time, or nature and history, have absolutely nothing to do with creation in its objective aspect...but only...as it exists to our infirm thought. They belong to it, not as a result, but as a process" (115). As it was for Henry James Sr, the unmooring of Creation from a fixed historical moment entailed a novel system of ethics that helped spur Social Gospel reform. It also indicates the prescience James Sr's demonstrated regarding theological mainstays. The evolutionist theologian Henry Martyn Simmons would write that "[w]e are learning to see all around us this more wonderful *Genesis*, this Creation infinite and eternal" (15). For James Sr and later theologians like Simmons and Savage, the concept of Creation was only meaningful in its manifestations here and now.

The Social Gospel sought to pragmatize theological doctrines by subjecting them to the test of lived human experience, bringing to fruition James's qualification that "[i]f theological ideas prove to have a value for concrete life, they will be true" (*Pragmatism* 35). What would establish the kingdom of God was not the faithful passivity of Bunyan's Christian, but the pious readiness to action of Greatheart, who, faced with the menace of Giant Despair, resolved to "fight the good Fight of Faith" (282). Cultivating believers' sense of themselves as existing within a progressively unfolding world whose God was immanent, Social Gospel leaders reconceived individual and social salvation as critically dependent, not on intellectual adherence to orthodoxies that made no appreciable difference in the world, but on effect-driven, future-oriented, experience-tested pragmatic action.

A revaluation of what it means to live in time, hence, is a crucial lynchpin in reassessing the historical coincidence of pragmatism and the Social Gospel. The idea that human experience is rooted not in psychical faculties but in an ongoing temporal flow - most memorable in James's "stream of consciousness" psychology - eroded the apotheosization of the timeless, the eternal, the absolute, and the philosophical tendency to identify these qualities with divinity. The "timeless" is precisely what James doesn't like about philosophical rationalism (and by extension, theological monism) because to him it means canceling future possibilities, making us ill-prepared to meet the uncertainties of a progressively unfolding history:

> [r]ationalists take it [the world] concretely and *oppose* it to the world's finite editions. [...] It is perfect, finished. Everything known there is known along with everything else…. [...] Here all is process; that world is timeless. Possibilities obtain in our world; in the absolute world, where all that is NOT is from eternity

> impossible, and all that IS is necessary, the category of possibility has no application. (*Pragmatism* 116-17)[244]

"Here" is pluralism, possibility; "there" – a place beyond our experiential reckoning – is rationalism, the determinism that threatens to cancel the potentials of human action. In his comparative study of religion and pragmatism, Lyman threw his hat into the Jamesian ring: "[m]y question is whether the notion that God is timeless does not tend to neutralize the religious and practical value of faith in his immanence" (*Theology* 18). To Lyman and other Christian reformers, it emphatically did. By emphasizing mutability as a fundamental condition of existence, pragmatism and the Social Gospel subjected human thought, knowledge, and action to temporal contingencies, endorsing an ethic of pragmatic adaptability to unforeseen vicissitudes whose shared goal was the progressive betterment of human life. This is not, as Leibniz said, the best of all possible worlds. It's better because it *isn't* the best.

James's word "application" is an important one, since to effectively understand a thing, we must know how it has been applied in human experience. Most know the jurist Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr's 1881 maxim that "the life of the law has not been logic; it has been experience" (5). Less pithy but equally pragmatic was Lyman's argument that the future of theology lay unambiguously in pragmatic tests:

> [t]he method by which pragmatism tests and interprets truth is essentially historical. [...] We must study in history the spiritual trend which it represents, and the values which it has produced or destroyed, for only then shall we be able to see what it really signifies for us and to take the attitude toward it which will lead to the best results in the future. (*Theology* 54)

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[244] It needs to be said that the crux of James's gripe is not with rationalism across the board, but its "over-tender forms." He protests against rationalism's tendency to foreclose the practical utility of human experience, not against the idea that rationalistic claims are necessarily without pragmatic value: "I have...defended rationalistic hypotheses, so far as these re-direct you fruitfully into experience" (*Pragmatism* 117). Experience, then, is the bellwether of validity for both pragmatism and the Social Gospel.

It isn't the *absolute* meaning of a concept, but the spiritual *trend* - the shifting eddies of effects it produces in lived history - that demonstrates "what it really signifies for us." This novel emphasis on a concept's exposure to historical flux and its importance for us in the present wasn't lost on Rauschenbusch, who joined James and Lyman in his rejection of the timeless. Christ, Rauschenbusch argues, "was not a timeless religious teacher, philosophizing vaguely on human generalities. He spoke for his own age, about concrete conditions, responding to the stirrings of the life that surged about him" (*Social Crisis* 49). While this emphasis on "concrete conditions" would seem to suggest a kind of moral relativity, marooning Christ's precepts in their biblical context, Rauschenbusch's lesson is that we are ethically obligated to examine our specific historical conditions, suiting our actions to the world in which they are done.[245] "That is in fact," Rauschenbusch continues, "the process with every great, creative religious mind: the connection with the past is maintained and the old terms are used, but they are set in new connections and filled with new qualities" (57). Making the fluctuating quality of history and experience a condition of human life, Lyman, Rauschenbusch, and many Social Gospel leaders provided the logic for a pragmatic ethic that sought to make hitherto "timeless" and "absolute" spiritual values accountable to quotidian existence.

So in this way, experience drives theory, not the other way around. "[I]t is religion," the philosopher of religion Harald Höffding argued, "which is based on ethical ideas, and not...*vice versa*" since "[e]thical feeling develops in the struggle for life" (323). Ethical knowledge – knowledge specifically about action – comes from experience. One is schooled in ethics not in the seminary but in the direct confrontation with the uncertainties, irregularities, and the myriad struggles of life. "The content of religion always points back to life in the world of experience" (330), cycling our attention back to lived experience and averting the meandering vortices of theoretical speculation. Höffding's sustained insistence that religion begins in *this* world and in *this* life and not in considerations of another beyond our experience coimplicates the human and divine realms, a Swedenborgian theory of correspondence that sanctifies our "ethical feeling," providing, in James's provocative phrase, a "moral equivalent of war."

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[245] The assertion that moral precepts are not timeless but relative to their historical context was a common refrain in the period after evolutionary theory gained a foothold in the sciences and theology. Minot J. Savage, in the 1870s, for example, could accept with little reservation that "[t]his law of change and growth, which is true in all other things, holds also with equal force in matters of religion. The religious rites, institutions, and books of a people, are and must be the natural expression of that people's religious thought and grade of civilization" (171). His argument that evil is merely a "maladjustment" of humanity to its environment also draws heavily from an evolutionary understanding of nature.

But a "struggle" indicates an uncertainty about the outcome. To Höffding, James, and Social Gospel leaders, it is precisely because the world is incomplete, because the bedrock condition of human experience is one of capricious uncertainty irremediable by appeals to timeless absolutes, that the world and its inhabitants exist in a state of improvisatory experimentation. Further, it is because these conditions of ambivalence gained currency in Protestant evangelicalism, psychology, and philosophies of religion that we can even have an ethical system at all. As Höffding put it, "[t]here can only be ethical striving as long as the course of the world is uncompleted" (248). In no accidental language, James too believed that open-ended worlds lending themselves to our ethical elevation, if read aright, could "*sanctify* the human flux" (*Pragmatism* 121; my emphasis). Completed worlds driven by rationalist philosophies, in contrast, demand no ethical striving on our part, require no effort to perfect the things we find imperfect about the world.[246]

But the subjection of religion and religious experience to the stream of time has other consequences. As psychologist George Coe saw it, our understanding of reality itself was up for reevaluation. In his chapter "Religion as Discovery," Coe builds on his central thesis that religion is "a certain aspect, tendency, and process of values and valuations" (*Psychology* 229). "No atoms of mental life appear to you at all," he writes, "but rather a continuous flow which has various aspects, of which the sensational is one" (16), adding that the reality with which mind deals is bound up with the interests and values that work for that mind. Coe's Real, then, is the pragmatic real, in the sense that what is "true" is what "works" for us.[247] For Coe, the real is a process of discovery, in all departments of human interaction, including religion: "[l]ike commerce, government, or education, *religion is a process* in which the real produces definition of itself" (232; my emphasis). What is *real* is not some empirically verifiable "out there," a single destination to which properly reasoning minds may travel. Rather, what is real is a useful - even if tentative - attitude toward the world whose claim to veracity is entangled in the very process of its discovery *as* useful.

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[246] James relates how he came to the conclusion that perfect, completed, Edenic worlds aren't exactly conducive to heroic ideals or moral striving, and leave us more or less vulnerable in our confrontations with historical realities. Citing the "atrocious harmlessness" of his weeklong stay at the utopian community of Chautauqua Lake, James reflects on his "instinctive hostile reaction" to its "realization...of all the ideals for which our civilization has been striving" (*Talks* 173). What Chautauqua lacks for James is "the element of precipitousness," that quality of uncertainty and risk that vitalizes the human will in "the everlasting battle of the powers of light with those of darkness" (174).

[247] This reconception of reality wasn't confined to academic circles, but had real effects in Social Gospel reform. We'll see more clearly how a Jamesian conception of the real and true became the guiding principle behind Jacob Riis's photojournalism.

Another critical part of the story has to do with the nature of the kingdom of God. In spite of their differences, the one concept that united virtually all Social Gospelers was a dedication to the kingdom as a this-worldly event precipitated (largely) by pragmatic human action. When Rauschenbusch tasked himself with articulating a theology for the Social Gospel, the kingdom stood out unequivocally as the sine qua non of the movement: "[t]his doctrine is itself the social gospel" (*Theology* 131). Such a theology would only be "valuable in so far as it grows out of action for the Kingdom and impels action" (*Theology* 141), taking as unambiguously as James that "[t]he truth of a thing or idea is its meaning, or its destiny, that which grows out of it" ("Notebook 4502"). The primary value is in effects, not origins. The theological innovation made by figures like Rauschenbusch was to subject the kingdom of heaven to the laws that govern earthly experience.

But the question as to exactly what form this kingdom would take was left tantalizingly vague. Edward Bellamy's fully utopianized Boston in his bestseller *Looking Backward* (1888), it seems, was an exception to the rule. The trend in both theology and literature, despite their shared commitment to the kingdom coming "on *earth* as it is in heaven," was to leave the shape of that kingdom up to an ever-receding future. "It is for us," Rauschenbusch augured, "to see the Kingdom of God as always coming, always pressing in on the present, always big with possibility, and always inviting immediate action" (*Theology* 141). Couched in the present continuous - "coming," "pressing," "inviting" - the kingdom emerges asymptotically, ever not quite, according to "the flow of history" (146). If this sounds vague, the vagueness is intrinsic to the Social Gospel's theology of process. Like James's "principled and deliberate fuzziness" (*Philosophy* 28), as Rorty describes it, the vagueness surrounding the Social Gospel kingdom aimed at a productive ambiguity that vitalized and directed practical action without stipulating a preconceived design. The kingdom would come, but - in the spirit of pragmatism, which "does not stand for any special results" (*Pragmatism* 25) - it would conform to no predetermined plan.

Even in attempts to literalize the concrete installation of the kingdom on earth tended to stop short of actually *showing* readers its vision of a utopian apocalypse. The WWJD? experiment of *In His Steps* works well in Raymond, and later when it is replicated in Chicago, but the closest we get to seeing the kingdom is Henry Maxwell "[dreaming] of the regeneration of Christendom...a church of Jesus without spot or wrinkle" (302). Likewise, the rags-to-riches hero of Harold Bell Wright's *That Printer of Udell's* (1902), after becoming a model Christian, sets off from his midwestern home "to enter a field of wider usefulness at the national Capitol" (345), the last we see of him.

The retention of ambivalence characteristic of Social Gospel narratives and preaching legitimated the continuation of, as Höffding put it, "ethical striving." The incompleteness, the lack of closure, in these theological texts and narratives, however, is not due to any lack of imagination, but a pragmatic instrumentalization of vagueness that cultivated and sustained the conditions for ethical striving. The question I want to ask next is how the pragmatic attitudes that so influenced the this-worldly process theology of the Social Gospel found their way into contemporaneous popular evangelical fiction, taking two examples that I find exemplary for my argument.

From "What Shall I Do?" to "What Would Jesus Do?" – The Pragmatic Logics of the Homiletic Novel

Where is the concerted effort of evangelical laymen, to set up gospel means in the deserted lower wards of this city?

James Waddel Alexander, *The Revival and Its Lessons* (180)

"Hold on, Felicia!" the Bishop interrupted. "This is not an age of miracles!"
"Then we will make it one," replied Felicia.

Sheldon, *In His Steps* (265)

A thinly veiled likeness of Jane Addams, Felicia Sterling proposes to build a thinly veiled likeness of Hull House in Chicago and is met with incredulity by the well-meaning but short-sighted Bishop Edward. Virtually always referred to as "the Bishop," and thereby never letting readers forget he is a man defined by his clerical occupation, he has difficulty imagining Felicia's settlement plan could be made a substantial reality. Against "the Bishop's" reluctance to disturb the status quo, Felicia's declaration that we will make this an age of miracles is impressive not only because it means humans are capable of wielding a power known only to God, but also because it sets out to make the word miracle substantial by subjecting it to experimental - experienceable - tests. Not the first of its kind, but a pattern-setter regardless, Charles Sheldon's bestselling homiletic novel *In His Steps* incorporated pragmatic logics into its representations of social reform.

The dialectical quality of spiritual truths espoused by Social Gospel theologians found a comfortable home in the form of what has recently been dubbed the social Christian, or more technically, the homiletic novel. A hybrid form that combined the conventions of the middle class novel with the homiletic realism of sermons, the homiletic novel incorporated the allegorical doubleness of William Langland's fourteenth century *Piers Plowman* and Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* (1678), the Christian bildungsroman framework of Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) and Elizabeth Prentiss's *Stepping Heavenward* (1869), the sentimental piety of Susan Warner's *The Wide, Wide World* (1852), and the self-conscious focus on social reform in titles like T.A. Arthur's *Ten Nights in a Bar-Room* (1854) and Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852).[248] As its name implies, the homiletic novel drew from sermonic techniques of inculcating spiritual lessons and urging believers to apply those lessons to and justify them in their lived experiences.[249]

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[248] The social Christian novel's indebtedness to earlier works like *Uncle Tom's Cabin* has been observed by Robert Walker and Dewey Wallace in their introduction to Robert Wright Glenn's pioneering work on the genre (xvi). Claudia Stokes, too, has identified the Protestant master plots structuring Stowe's domestic fiction (Ch. 3). It should be added, though, that the *imitatio Christi* is an as-powerful device in both *Uncle Tom's Cabin* as well as much postbellum social Christian fiction. It is Tom's ability to imitate Christ so well that validates his status as a man and, by extension, the abolitionist argument that slavery is illegitimate precisely because the enslavement of *men* is a logical contradiction.

The homiletic novel also inherited from texts such as these the Scottish Common Sense appeal to affection as the wellspring of action. The interlocking of the affections and the will – a connection central to Edwards's *Religious Affections* – informed sentimental and homiletic novels' insistence that right action came from the right stirring of affections. These genres, then, provide insight into a strain in thinking about human psychology that informs popular novels as well as pragmatic justifications for action.

The applicability - as opposed to the mere learning - of spiritual doctrines had always been intrinsic to Protestant homiletic composition. The sixteenth century Protestant reformer William Perkins, in his *Arte of Prophesying* (1592), a widely read guidebook on sermon writing, stressed four key sections of effective sermon composition: biblical text, interpretation of the text, exegesis, and application of the spiritual lesson. Dramatizing the "application" portion of this widespread Protestant model, the homiletic novel sought to train readers to transform Christian principles into living practice, repudiating the claim that the novel is, as Lukácz put it, an "epic of a world that has been abandoned by God" (88). Rather, as we'll see, homiletic novels were often sagas of worlds ready and waiting to be saturated by the Spirit.

The principal method of achieving this saturation point, the *imitatio Christi* sought to discipline individuals' behavior by radically modeling it on that of Christ. Nothing new in the history of western Christianity, the *imitatio Christi* provided the central ethical system in such devotional manuals as Thomas á Kempis's fifteenth century *Imitatio Christi*, Luke Milbourne's gloss of that foundational text, *The Christian Pattern Paraphras'd* (1696), and John Wesley's

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[249] Ian Watt's argument that the novel is constituted by a "formal realism" and whose origin is linked to the rise of a middle class have been and still are central to theories of the novel. More recent accounts of the American nineteenth century novel, such as those of Gregory Jackson, Dawn Coleman, and Claudia Stokes have questioned secular interpretations of the form, offering alternative views that appreciate the role of religious - largely Protestant evangelical - culture in its creation and reception. Jackson makes a compelling case for this largely unrecognized literary mode in his essay "'What Would Jesus Do?'" (641-42). See also Stokes's argument that, for many sentimental women writers like Catharine Sedgwick and Susan Warner, "the novel was a kind of sacred text, just as capable of effecting conversion as the Bible itself" (32).

The Christian Pattern (1735).[250] Resurrecting this heuristic for postbellum audiences, Gladden explained that "the Christian life is the life of Christ, copied just as fairly as we are able to copy it" (*Being* 25). The *imitatio Christi* heuristic central to homiletic novels like Charles Sheldon's *In His Steps* and Churchill's *The Inside of the Cup* aimed at providing readers with a criterion of ethical action based in the lived experience of Christ. Hitching the veridicality and justification of Christian belief to Christian conduct, the homiletic novel participated in and contributed to a long tradition in American philosophy and theology of the practical identification of theory and practice, the *is* and the *does*.

Popularly known as the "What Would Jesus Do?" movement, this late nineteenth century recovery of the pre-Reformation *imitatio Christi* discipline adopted a pragmatic logic that sourced the primary value of belief in the pious actions of individuals. Commonly thought to be a late twentieth century invention, popularized by WWJD? wristbands and bumper stickers, the WWJD? movement has it roots in the last decade of nineteenth century America.[251] In such works as William T. Stead's *If Christ Came to Chicago!* (1894) and - most explicitly - in Sheldon's *In His Steps* (1896), readers were invited to consider what shape the world would take if Christ's precepts were pragmatically applied. The homiletic novel capitalized on the association of the middle class form with private, immersive reading to obliterate sin from where it most effectively hides - the human heart. Progressive Boston pastor Philip Stafford Moxom put it simply when he said that "[t]he salvation of society is the salvation of the individual" (66). Renouncing the self that pursued individual gain and inhabiting a selfless Christic paradigm, practitioners could tailor their individual action to their heterogeneous conditions.

Inspired by other Social Gospel novels like Ward's *Robert Elsmere* (1888), the minister and homiletic novelist Charles Sheldon deliberately pursued unmediated experiences of socioeconomic hardship, tramping through the slums surrounding his Topeka congregation.

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[250] For a compact yet comprehensive history of Thomas á Kempis's signature work, and the enduring legacy of the *imitatio Christi* heuristic, see Magill (40).

[251] Nor was the movement isolated to exclusively religious cultures. Its reach becomes more impressive when we consider that it was the Democrat Al Gore - not the self-professed Christian Republican George W. Bush - who, when a Tennessee Baptist church couldn't decide whether to allow a visiting woman bishop to preach, asked the male preacher "What would Jesus do?" The woman bishop delivered the sermon (Henneberger).

Accepting a call to minister in the city, Sheldon reflected in his *Life* on how his experience left him feeling disconnected from the lives of the city's working class: "I felt the isolation of the preacher and the minister from the great world of labor. What did I know of it except the little experience I had had on a farm as a boy? [...] It was another world" (82). Seeking the antidote to this state of epistemological isolation and donning a set of old, shabby clothes, Sheldon enacted the pragmatic identification of reality with the process of its discovery.[252] So immersed in the realities of his surroundings, these experiences even assumed for him a kind of virtual reality: "[a]s night came on I had an uncanny feeling that the thing I was trying was somehow real" (84). Sheldon's personal experience would become a common theme in the theology of the Social Gospel, as it was for pragmatism - that the reality or truth of a thing is intimately bound to our acting on it. As Gladden put it, "[i]f you want to know the certainty of these things, you must put them into practice" (*Being* 96). For Sheldon, the putting into practice of what it means to be impoverished made it real to the extent of subverting personal identity, producing an experience that was practically indistinguishable from that of the economically downtrodden of Topeka's slums. It also made possible the epistemological bridge necessary for an effective *imitatio Christi*.

Eric Schocket has argued that "if the aim of the middle-class investigator is to map...the mysterious realm of the working and lower classes, then such an easy transition from observer to participant exposes...the fragile border between the two" (119). Sheldon's pursuit of the direct experience of the other half exposes the unstable - hence permeable - borderland between classes and social groups, putting to proof James's claim that "[b]y experimenting on our ideas of reality, we may save ourselves the trouble of experimenting on the real experiences which they severally mean" (*ERE* 61). The distinction between "observer" and "participant," to use Shocket's language, is in this system conceptual, a functional overlay placed on the irreducible substrate of experience.[253] For James, gleaning usable truths from secondhand experimentation -

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[252] These direct, immersive experiences led Sheldon to extend principles of Christian stewardship to the city of Topeka, especially in neighboring Tennesseetown, at the time an enclave for Great Exodus black populations. For an incisive examination of Sheldon's contributions to social Christianity in Topeka and his participation in the city's neighborhood improvement programs, see Cox (144-51).

[253] This is in keeping with James's wider argument that most of what Enlightenment psychology considered absolute, irreducible faculties of thought - like consciousness - were, in fact, functions of the

such as tramping through Topeka's slums - is possible because observers may transcend those conceptual distinctions to plumb the aquifer of fruitful experience.

Sheldon's homiletic novel *In His Steps* begins accordingly in the fraught borderland between middle class respectability and the denizens of the social cellar. The novel's opening epigraph, taken from 1 Peter 2:21, prescribes that, "because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that ye should follow his steps" (7). The scripture also forms the subject of the Sunday morning sermon the main character, Rev. Henry Maxwell, can't quite get done in the novel's opening scene. Distracting him is the unexpected arrival at his front door of a vagrant looking for work, whom Maxwell politely turns away (8-9). In a moment of modern theoxenia, the opening action - a spurned wanderer in search of relief, on a Friday no less - clearly echoes the ethical implications central to the story of Mary and Joseph.[254] The opening scene contrasts the theological formalism of sermon writing with the practical opportunity to do real Christian action in the here and now - an opportunity Maxwell doesn't, at least for now, recognize. This lack of recognition, of *seeing*, exploits the irony of a minister failing to allay another's suffering while writing a sermon *about* suffering. *In His Steps* frames the practical consequences of putting theological and theoretical formalism above the actual problems of the world - problems that are literally at your front door.[255]

Homeless, around thirty years old, tramping for "three days" (15) through the fictional city of Raymond, the nameless vagrant appears as a less-than-subtle avatar of Christ (or Lazarus). Arriving at Maxwell's Sunday service, he finds "the large building was filled with an audience of the best-dressed, most comfortable-looking people of Raymond" (10). Though "tolerably familiar with this sort of humanity out on the street" (14), the parishioners' reaction to

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substrate of experience itself. "I mean only to deny that the word [consciousness] stands for an entity, but to insist most emphatically that it does stand for a function" (*ERE* 3).

[254] If the biblical overtones weren't already obvious, Mary is the name of Maxwell's wife.

[255] The Social Gospel's legacy of social justice can be seen in several cities across the globe - such as Detroit, Buffalo, Toronto, Dublin, and Rome - in the form of *Homeless Jesus* art pieces. The brain child of Canadian artist Timothy Schmalz, each bronze sculpture installation features a hooded and faceless effigy lying on a bench, usually outside a church. Named "Jesus," yet faceless, the sculptures foster an identification of the homeless and needy with Christ, embodying the scriptural admonition that "[i]nasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (*KJV* Matt. 25:40).

the "stranger" is stupefied inaction. Taking on the role of educator, the vagrant commands the audience's attention "as if the whole congregation had been a small Bible class," putting to them a practical question about Christ's teachings: "[w]hat did He mean when He said: 'Follow me?'" (15). Reflecting Gladden's complaint that "[a] keen theological argument would have been interesting, but...it hardly ever touched life in the remotest way" (*Recollections* 33), the vagrant's request is essentially for practical clarity, conceiving what the consequences would be if Christ's precept were actualized in human experience - the central tenet of Peircean and Jamesian pragmatism. With this arresting intrusion into the bastion of spiritual comfort and material respectability, the vagrant's line of pragmatic questioning testifies that to understand what Christ meant by "Follow me," one who claims to believe in the precept must seek its significance in its practical results.

Inspired by the experience of witnessing the vagrant fatally succumbing to physical exhaustion, Maxwell pledges himself and invites willing members of his congregation to adhere to a Christian "standard of action," "for an entire year, not to do anything without first asking the question, 'What would Jesus do?'" (24). In their day to day lives, individuals must navigate ethical uncertainties by following this "standard of action" that affixes the significance of principles or claims to their concrete results. By allotting a set interval of a year in which to assess the concrete results of a radical *imitatio Christi*, WWJD? - not what he *thought,* or what he *said* - enacts what amounts to a pragmatic experimentation of Christian principles.[256] The subjunctive mood intrinsic to WWJD? functions on the same logic as Peirce's pragmatic maxim, that in order to capture a thing's significance, we must "[c]onsider what effects, that might conceivably have practical bearings, we conceive the object of our conception to have. Then, our conception of these effects is the whole of our conception of the object" (31). WWJD?, thus, called for practitioners to imaginatively inhabit a zone of hypotheticals whose consequences, if acted upon, would be clear and actionable to us. If James is right to claim with Peirce that "our beliefs are really rules for action" (*Pragmatism* 23), then imagining what Jesus would do amounts to pragmatically conceiving what effects such action would produce.

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[256] Sheldon's was by no means an isolated attempt to pragmatize Christian conduct. Published two years before *In His Steps*, British journalist William T. Stead's exposé *If Christ Came to Chicago!* asked readers to consider, "[i]f Christ came to Chicago what would He wish me to do?" (443). And several other texts from the period, such as M.W. Howard's *If Christ Came to Congress* (1894), Edward Everett Hale's *If Jesus Came to Boston* (1895), Ira Cardiff's atheistic parodies of the trope, *If Christ Came to New York* and *What Would Christ Do about Syphilis?* (1930), even modern-day diet books like Don Colbert's *What Would Jesus Eat?* (2002), invited readers to imagine what Jesus would do if he returned to find the world in the state it was.

So as James was articulating pragmatism for philosophical audiences, evangelical fiction devised its own in the application of Christian principles to lived experience. As Sheldon read the chapters of his novel from his Topeka pulpit, he was asking his congregation to think pragmatically: knowledge of Christ and his teachings and how to effectively manifest them in the social world requires their acting out. Real knowledge, by extension, does not come from passivity. "There is no knowledge without action," the practical theologian Harris Rall opined. "No one can really know who remains simply an onlooker" (79).[257] By adjusting the immersive qualities of novel reading to the pragmatic logic of the *imitatio Christi* heuristic, the homiletic novel precludes the possibility of passive reading, exposing as Erin Smith puts it, "the porousness of the boundaries between literature and life for good Christian readers" (194). Cultivating pragmatic attitudes of real-world Christian action, the literary became a powerful tool in not only putting scripture's money where its mouth is, but in quelling the forces of moral inertia that proved the major obstacle to the coming of Christ's kingdom.

Even so, the WWJD? experiment dramatized in *In His Steps* reveals the limits of applying Christian principles to social problems. Despite George Herron's claim that "the business man who fails to be a little Christ to the world has made a disastrous and irreparable business failure" (24), the novel's experiment in applying WWJD? to capitalism suggests a reinscription of the very economic abuses and shortcomings it tries to mitigate. Following to its logical conclusion Christ's direction in Matthew 19:21 to "go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor," the heiress Virginia Page's settlement house plan nearly puts her on the brink of indigence, threatening to place her in the very position of those she is trying to assist. This is the concrete result of the test of applying practical Christianity to capitalism, two systems that the editor of the *Daily News* Edward Norman discovers to be utterly incompatible: "[t]here is no question with me now...that a great many men would lose vast sums of money under the present system of business if this rule of Jesus was honestly applied" (140). To the experimental idealism of *In His Steps*, however, the stark incompatibility suggested between unregulated capitalism and pragmatized Christianity reveals the limitations of implementing a totalizing Christianity within an areligious economic system. When, as Rauschenbusch argued, you subscribe to the maxim that "'[b]usiness is business' [...] life is cut into two halves, each governed by a law opposed to that of the other, and the law of Christ is denied even the opportunity to gain control of business" (313). The novel is conscious enough of the problem to make Edward Norman say what he does, but it's not as imaginative in finding a way out of it.

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[257] What hasn't received as much scholarly attention is the way in which Social Gospel theologians like Rall contravened attitudes of passivity that issued in no new or useful knowledge, advocating for a results- and purpose-driven faith. When Rorty identified the Deweyan and Whitmanesque "participatory Left" - as opposed to the politically effete "spectatorial Left" - as the position necessary to "achieving our country," he could have just as easily cited the Social Gospel attitude of participatory faith (of whom he himself shares a genealogical lineage in Walter Rauschenbusch). See *Achieving Our Country* (35-38).

Almost not as imaginative. Felicia's father, a man of business who calls the WWJD? movement "very impracticable" (207), is introduced in chapter twenty-one. He is quickly dispatched hardly twenty pages later, serving as a critic of transplanting small-town idealism to urban economy. Learning "certain speculations" demolished his fortune, and rather than face the inevitable prospect of financial destitution, Mr. Sterling takes his own life (the salvific consequences of which are not hard to imagine). According to the novel's post-mortem account, "[i]t had all rested on a tissue of deceit and speculation that had no foundation in real values" (230). That language of "speculation" vs. "real" isn't accidental, and the fact that Mr. Sterling meets his end isn't because he questions the practicality of the WWJD? movement, but because he is so wedded to the fantasy of unreal value promised by unregulated capitalism. An illustration of Christ's rule that "[y]e cannot serve God and mammon" (*KJV* Matt. 6:24), the cautionary tale of Mr. Sterling's demise - however heavy-handed it strikes us - is also an illustration of the consequences of trying to live according to mere speculation rather than by "real [cash] values."

The pragmatic logic of the homiletic novel sought to reconnect readers with the "concrete facts and joys and sorrows" of life, the "struggle for life," as Höffding put it, that is the wellspring of our ethics. By extension, disconnection from the real and its struggles is tantamount to moral alienation. E.A. Smith cleverly points out that of the twelve characters who take the WWJD? pledge, the Judas of the group turns out to be Jasper Chase (203). Why Jasper, a popular fiction writer, is associated with the greatest double-cross in Christian history is linked directly to his vocation. Failing to secure the affections of Rachel, another WWJD? pledge, Jasper uses the novel form to construct a self-affirming reality better suited to his amorous proclivities: “the heroine of Jasper’s first novel had been his own ideal of Rachel, and the hero in the story was himself” (106). Fabricating alternative realities divorces Jasper not only from the fact of unreciprocated affections and their practical consequences, but more importantly from the social realities of the novel, the only available zone of legitimate pragmatic action. The homiletic novel, then, recapitulates a longstanding nineteenth century criticism of religious fiction, that it doesn’t, in C.W. Andrews’s estimation, “produce a Christian character, as nearly conformed to the pattern given by our blessed Redeemer, and as well fitted to perform its part *in the actual world*” (6; my emphasis). Jasper’s sin lies not only in denying Christ by failing to adhere to the WWJD? pledge, but in denying the actual world of experience. His self-idealization - hence, self-idolization - condemns Jasper to a practical hell. Alone, and having completed the last chapter of his novel, “[i]t grew darker in his room” (178).

The homiletic novel emerged as a means to vitalize human volition against the forces of social determinism and, to use James’s phrase, the “moral holidays” rationalized by laissez-faire capitalism, rigorous individualism, and a hardlined Darwinism that desiccated the possibilities of human agency, if it didn’t cancel them outright.[258] These kinds of determinisms were explicit in works like Stephen Crane’s *Maggie* (1893), whose young heroine succumbs tragically to the social forces around her, signaling not only the infirmity of human volition but the utter inconsequentiality of Christian virtue. The final words of the novella, spoken by Maggie’s mother after learning of her daughter’s demise, “‘[o]h, yes, I’ll fergive her! I’ll fergive her!’” (78), is a parody of Christian forgiveness as mawkish and ineffectual in inciting practical solutions to real social problems. In Frank Norris’s *McTeague* (1899), unnamed and irresistible forces propel its increasingly inebriated and homicidal central character to a final confrontation with an irrevocable and abysmal destiny. Dubbed naturalism, the genre did not tend to view human experience, as the Social Gospel and pragmatism did, as a fruitful reservoir of edifying and redemptive lessons, but wrestled with the possibility of life's inexplicable mercilessness and proneness to forces as indifferent as they are inexorable. Pragmatism and the Social Gospel's tendency toward salutary problem-solving and their shared antipathy to determinism, also run counter to naturalism's often observed repetitiveness, what Jennifer Fleissner calls its "stuckness in place" (9) and what Sara Blair has termed its "aesthetics of arrest" (35). For the pragmatic ethics of the Social Gospel, it was imperative that social conditions could transcend such historical cyclicity and experiential arrest. James's admonition that "[t]he hell to be endured hereafter, of which theology tells, is no worse than the hell we make for ourselves in this world by habitually fashioning our characters in the wrong way" (*PP* 130) grants us a degree of volition hardly reconcilable within a naturalistic universe.[259]

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[258] This determinism was what Jane Addams couldn’t stomach about Marxism (Knight 89), with its implications of inevitable and violent class conflict. To Addams’s pragmatic mind, virtually all conflict was a verbal issue; conflict arose from latent misunderstandings. It was a distaste shared by James in many of his relentless execrations against Hegel and his arguments against the exclusive adoption of rationalistic philosophies. In *Pragmatism*, to take one example, James contrasts empiricism (which he clearly favors) with “a rationalistic philosophy that may indeed call itself religious, but that keeps out of definite touch with concrete facts and joys and sorrows” (13). Rationalism’s avoidance of “concrete facts,” according to James, and its insistence on determinism and foreordained teleologies make it ill-suited to address the real problems of human agents, such as those confronted by the progressives of the Social Gospel.

It's not surprising then that other homiletic novels framed their dramas as conflicts between progressive ministers and deterministic defenders of the status quo. Not written as a series of sermons but nonetheless at its most energetic when at its most sententious, the American Winston Churchill's 1913 homiletic bestseller *The Inside of the Cup* follows other homiletic novels in their promotion of a pragmatic ethic as the key to establishing the kingdom of God on earth. Largely unread today, Churchill's novel is nonetheless a key piece of evidence linking pragmatism to Social Gospel reform. (Indeed, the novel's neglect is likely part of the reason the relationship between the two movements has remained underexplored.) The narrative follows John Hodder, an orthodox minister whose direct experience with lower class vice and upper class corruption in his midwestern parish results in his conversion to a self-consciously pragmatized Christianity. His practical homiletics condemned as "'[s]heer Unitarianism, socialism, heresy'" (372), Hodder nevertheless emerges victorious as the exemplary reformist minister fully infused with the pragmatic spirit.[260] *The Inside of the Cup*, I argue, makes profoundly visible the idea that the attitudes driving the Social Gospel were pragmatic ones and rested on quintessentially Jamesian logics.

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[259] I pause here to highlight conventional descriptions of postbellum American literary history as characterized by genres like naturalism and realism. The table of contents of James Nagel and Tom Quirk's *American Realism Reader* (1997), for example, organizes literary selections into "Regionalism and Local Color," "Realism," and "Naturalism." This kind of periodizing tends to turn a blind eye to religious bestsellers like Lew Wallace's *Ben-Hur: A Tale of the Christ* (1880) and Harold Bell Wright's *That Printer of Udell's* (1902), which frequently employed the same literary strategies associated with writers like Stephen Crane, Theodore Dreiser, and William Dean Howells. Though admittedly I treat naturalism broadly here, the genre does in fact make certain claims about "reality" that homiletic novels do not. I am, in fact, sympathetic to Lee Clark Mitchell's argument in *Determined Fictions* that "[t]he naturalists...did not simply substitute a mechanistic determinism for the assumed agency by the realist novel. In far more searching endeavors, they depicted the ways in which 'agency' itself is constructed only after the fact, made up as we go along in the stories we tell about the moments of our lives" (xi). James's arguments about habit formation (and its not insignificant religious language of heaven and hell), furthermore, are much closer ideologically to the program of homiletic novels.

A major reason this is true is because the novel mentions James and pragmatism by name. Hodder, it turns out, is a bonafide Jamesian (and part Roycean) convert: he cites James's essay "Is Life Worth Living?" (276), talks about *Varieties* at dinner parties (275), unconditionally accepts Myers's and James's theory of the subconscious (289), pragmatically analyzes the Trinity (in an episode clearly drawn from Peirce's pragmatic analysis of transubstantiation in "How to Make Our Ideas Clear" (30-31)), adheres to Josiah Royce's Christian humanism as a theory of social salvation (277), and – faithful James disciple that he is – rejects "the Church for her subservient rationalism" (508).[261] Hodder conceives of religion in ways that reflect a reading of religious experience a là Höffding and James's *Varieties*: "[r]eligion, he began to perceive, was an *undertaking*, an attempt to find unity and harmony of the soul by adopting, *after mature thought*, a definite principle in life. If harmony resulted, - if the principle *worked*, it was true. Hodder kept an open mind, but he became a pragmatist so far" (275-6). Defining religion not as "dogged clinging to the archaic speculations of apologists, saints, and schoolmen" (275), but with active "*undertaking*," Hodder concludes with the Jamesian pragmatist that ethical action begins in - *because of* - an uncompleted, pluralistic world conducive and responsive to our ethical striving. Hodder embarks on an "uncompromising experiment" (471) that asks, as the Raymond parishioners had, "WWJD?" – except in his case we ought to suppose that the "J" could also stand for James.

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[260] Charles H. Hopkins points out that "[t]he seedbed in which the ideological roots of social Christianity found themselves most at home was Unitarianism" (4). Unitarianism's openness to religious ecumenicalism, scientific advancements, the Higher Criticism of the Bible, its receptivity to a variety of religious experiences, and its emphasis on the love of God and the humanity of Jesus were powerful factors in its influence on postbellum reform. For Unitarianism and the Social Gospel, denominational affiliation and doctrinal observance became less important than the Christian action that took real effect in the world.

[261] In his effort to overcome his spiritual turmoil, Hodder finds relief in the Christian humanism of Royce. "It was Royce, who, in one illuminating sentence, solved for him the puzzle, pointed out whence his salvation had come. '*For your cause can only be revealed to you through some presence that first teaches you to love the unity of the spiritual life…. You must find it in human shape*'" (277). Like many Social Gospelers, Hodder would locate salvation less in the providence of God than in the pious actions of human actors. Royce, a friend of James, would admit later in life the influence of pragmatism on his philosophy.

A major part of the drama of *The Inside the Cup* is the conflict between traditional claims of truth and more pragmatic ones. Hodder's pragmatic conception of truth, that "[t]ruth might no longer be identified with Tradition" (363), threatens to undermine not only the conservative ethos of many of his parishioners, but the financial status quo zealously defended by the town's laissez-faire man of capital and fervent individualist, Eldon Parr. (The trouble is compounded by Hodder's romance with Eldon's socialist daughter Alison, who eventually undergoes conversion to the minister's gospel of social work.) Hodder's is a gospel of utility that defines the terms of one's salvation according to one's usefulness: "[t]o those who knew, there was no happiness like being able to say, 'I have found my place in God's plan, *I am of use*.' Such was salvation" (369). Quintessentially pragmatic, Hodder's logic forms the structure of his new theory of belief: "[t]here was no such thing as belief that did not result in act" (276).

That last statement is also a claim about the pragmatic conception of reality. Whatever one may say about the validity of their beliefs, the roots of those beliefs are meaningless without their fruits. Another way to think about Hodder's claim is that only those beliefs that issue in action merit induction in any description of what one can legitimately call reality. The novel's title, from Matthew 23:25, is an extended diatribe against hypocrisy - behavior that is all about the insincerity of action and the willed mystification between an inner and an outer self. The text is essentially about what it means to perceive reality. "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!," Christ rails, "for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess." It is when the "blind Pharisee, cleanse[s] first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also." Perception of the real isn't simply a matter of seeing that which is external to you, but of purifying the very faculty of sight, calibrating it according to practical reality rather than merely theorized views of the world.

Like Sheldon's tramping expeditions across Topeka, Hodder's experience with the poverty of the Dalton Street slums exemplifies the power of direct experience to generate radical conversion. Scrupulously avoided by the wealthy parishioners of the city, Dalton Street becomes, like most scenes of urban squalor in Social Gospel literature, a zone of homiletic realism: a place – the direct experience of whose socioeconomic neglect, uncertainties, and struggles – which is the very occasion for the possibility of conversion.[262] Meeting the impoverished tenement-dwelling Garvins, Hodder undergoes a scene of realism that literally rewrites his sensory manifold: "for months afterward particular smells, the sight of a gasoline stove, a certain popular tune gave him a sharp twinge of pain. The acid distilling in his soul etched the scene, the sounds, the odours forever in his memory" (155). This psychological rewriting highlights the crux of Social Gospel conversion: if realism requires our taking account of materiality by mixing our values and interests with them - as James thinks it does - Hodder's conversion proceeds along the same lines by "[transforming] a mere knowledge of these conditions into feeling" (222). Feeling, which in a radically empirical universe, has just as much claim as anything to an account of reality by the differences with which it makes in the world. In a way, the permeability of the human sensorium by a compulsively real "out there" recapitulates revivalism's climactic conversion scene, in which hesitant believers, humbly succumbing to the influx of the Holy Spirit, certify the reality of their conversion by the intensity of their *feeling*.

Like its revivalist forbears, the Social Gospel taught that conversion was achieved not by intellectual assent but by direct experience. The heightened particularity of Hodder's conversion scene recalls the detailed empiricism of sociological exposés like Walter Swaffield's:

> We are brought face to face with a great need. Need brings responsibility and responsibility fruits in duty. Duty to face the need in all its horror; to go if necessary in and out of the dark alleys, the darker rooms, breathe the foul, damp air, touch the dirty, slimy walls, look into the faces of those who are our brothers and sisters, listen to the story of wrongs unrighted…. Duty to go to these spirits in prison, as Christ did before us" (673).

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[262] The Social Gospel's representation of impoverished urban spaces as potential sites of moral uplift challenges contemporaneous views of the city as having an inherently corrosive force on character. The anticlimactic finale of Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* (1900), for example, reinforced perceptions of the city as toxic to individual morality while bemoaning the loss of what Susan Moeller has called "the myth of rural purity" (5). Josiah Strong would argue the city, rather than being the epicenter of material progress, economic trade, and architectural prestige, was an intensifier of social dangers such as unchecked immigration, intemperance, and rampant Mammonism (128-30).

According to Swaffield, a sensorially unmediated experience - breathing, touching, listening - "fruits in duty," almost by necessity. Allowing the social underworld to permeate his senses, becoming literally a part of his identity, Hodder executes the Social Gospel's model of conversion to practical action. Homiletic novels and, as we'll see, the photojournalism of Jacob Riis, encouraged a direct, tactile engagement with the lived experiences of the needy, an engagement that would incite conversion to the only available justification for belief: *action*. As readers of homiletic novels were encouraged to do, Hodder internalizes the incontrovertible realism of the social underworld, garnering valuable knowledge that is not simply conceptual, not simply a Lockean mental representation, but functionally identical to the lived experience of socioeconomic outcasts. Hodder becomes the exemplary Social Gospel minister, who, as progressive economist John R. Commons explains, "should be a student of social science," but "he should find the facts by personal contact" (*Social Reform* 13-14).

Hodder's conversion from theological passivity is, then, a conversion to a one-to-one correspondence between his sight and reality: "[h]is had been the highroad of a fancied security, from which he had feared to stray, to seek his God across the rough face of nature, from black, forgotten cañons to the flying peaks in space. He had feared *reality*. He had insisted upon gazing at the universe through the coloured glasses of an outworn theology, instead of using his own eyes" (251). Hodder inverts the Emersonian formula of "[a]s I am, so I see" (*Essays* 259) into "as I see, so I am." Viewing actual human suffering - and not the doctrinal adherence to an "outworn theology" - as the occasion for seeking God, Hodder represents the Social Gospel's commitment to transforming society by insisting that human sight be pragmatically focused on actual human facts and values. Abolishing the "pure ancestral blindness" (*Talks* 175) - the blindness of vaunted doctrinal "purity," of inherited tradition, of outmoded solutions to ancient problems long since resolved - requires a direct confrontation with the conditions of the here and now. Hodder's conversion to a practical Christianity and his conversion to pragmatism are one in the same.[263] Whereas revivalist conversion emphasized the heightened emotional experience of an individual believer with the Holy Spirit as certification of one's salvific status, Hodder's conversion is to a gospel of power, the salvific verification of which lies its practical utility for social good. To the anxiety-ridden question of generations of doubting Christians – "How do I know I am saved?" – the Social Gospel conversion model offered a pragmatic response: you *know* by *acting*.

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[263] Compare the conversion of Reverend Northmore in Elizabeth Neff's *Altars of Mammon* (1908): "God is not wrath - that was the old barbaric idea before love was known, and we must slough it off. [...] Religion is for life, not death, for the uplifting of us on earth, not in Heaven" (202). God's love - or, more

Like that of his counterpart Henry Maxwell, Hodder's narrative, despite its triumphal optimism for the coming kingdom, ends in the same state of eschatological deferment. Hodder's marriage to Alison, the daughter of his spiritual foil Eldon Parr, closes the romance plot of the novel, but theological closure remains suspended. "Nothing could be more insipid and senseless than the orthodox view of the hereafter," Alison proclaims, newly converted to Hodder's pragmatic Christianity. "I am talking about a scheme of life here and now" (225). Hodder sees nothing at the end of the novel, but what he hears is "the cry of a new and wider vision of his task" (510). In this way, Hodder - and Sheldon's - understanding of the kingdom follows the pragmatic logic of Peirce, that "the guiding power of a myth or symbol...must be conceptually 'vague' if it is to guide rational development" (Bellah 201-2). By its own vagueness, the kingdom invites experimental, pragmatic human action. This lack of certainty in pragmatism is literalized in homiletic novels in the form - or rather the absence of a form - of the promised kingdom, whose indefinitely asymptotic becoming urges believers to never cease working toward its inevitable arrival.

As the foregoing look at two homiletic novels suggests, part of the reason the connections between the Social Gospel and pragmatism tend to be missed in histories of postbellum American culture is because Social Christian novels are often overlooked in literary studies. Their translucent religiosity, political heavy-handedness, and overt moralism also don't help attract contemporary - and often secular - readers whose literary sensitivities have been tuned to things like stylistic nuance, generic experimentation, and ideological ambivalence. The novels' almost unconditional adoption, too, of the "sentimentalism" of earlier mid-century novels doesn't conform to conventional expectations of postbellum literature as dominated by hard realism (think Henry James or Stephen Crane). The literary concerns of canonical writers like

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broadly, an affectional connection to whatever we deem to be greater than us - as an incentive to practical action *right now*, we've seen, is a key motivator for both pragmatism and the Social Gospel.

Emerson, Hawthorne, Melville, or Whitman are often not the concerns of homiletic novelists, whose aims tend to be the moral muscularization of readers and their conversion to a Christian worldview that tends to be problematically silent about its relation to democratic pluralism and commitment to religious liberty.

What the pragmatic logic of homiletic novels shows, however, is that even if they don't share the complex literary symbolism or the teleological openendedness of a Hawthorne or a Melville, they do share the Emersonian ambition "to realize...the transformation of genius into practical power" (*Essays* 262). Their transformation was one of feeling into practical power, again highlighting the ways in which the Common Sense tradition informed the tradition of pragmatized evangelicalism I have been exploring. More, homiletic novels – of which the bestsellers *In His Steps* and *The Inside of the Cup* are a spare sample – demonstrate a level of doctrinal experimentation that did, in fact, resonate with a nineteenth century readership. When we think about the phrase "American literature," a consideration of the homiletic novel would expand our understanding of the complex landscape of American literary history.[264] More importantly, it would ask us to rethink the ways in which the novel itself is sometimes seen as a largely secular enterprise, and how we might invite religious belief into our modes of narrative analysis.

Consecrating the Camera – The Pragmatic Logics of Jacob Riis's Urban Photojournalism

[A]s the Bible becomes more lifelike, it becomes more social. We used to see the sacred landscape through allegorical interpretation as through a piece of yellow bottle-glass. It was very golden and wonderful, but very much apart from our everyday modern life.

Walter Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis* (209)

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[264] The same can be said for transatlantic literature more broadly. It's true that England, for example, has its share of reform literature. William Booth's *In Darkest England* (1890) and Jack London's non-fiction works like *The People of the Abyss* (1903) are two prominent examples. To what extent these reflect similar strategies as my selection of texts is matter for further study.

For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made.

Romans (*KJV* 1:20)

Writing in the 1890s, the sociologist and philosopher John H.W. Stuckenberg sounded a familiar nineteenth century complaint when he asserted that "[e]mpty speculation on divine subjects has lost its force; mere theories are recognized as having no regenerative power…. The whole weight of the age is an emphasis on the demand for *Christian Realism*." Arguing that "[t]he ethical era has succeeded the aesthetic" (*Age* 164), Stuckenberg links perception of the *real* with regenerative action that couldn't be brought about by contemplation of "mere theories." For truth and power to be made manifest, the real must be taken account of. We must look at life, not "through a piece of yellow bottle-glass," as Rauschenbusch put it, but as it is, focusing not on the polished surfaces, but on the unembellished inside of the cup.

So James agreed. Nonplussed at being accused of "deny[ing] the existence of realities outside the thinker," James wrote to Dickinson Miller that he was unequivocally "a natural realist" (*LWJ, 2* 295). Pragmatism, he insists, using the well-known illustration of spilled beans on a table, hitches the meaning of those realities to how we use them. So long as one "*takes account*" of the beans, such an account "is neither false nor irrelevant" (295). What James means, then, by "natural realism" is an account of reality that has undergone some degree of human involvement.[265] As we saw with Coe and homiletic novels, "reality" is incomprehensible without a knowledge of how it is mingled with human interests and feelings. "Compared with this world of living individualized feelings, the world of generalized objects which the intellect contemplates is without solidity or life" (502), James concluded at the end of *Varieties*.

Yet the tendency to see James as rigorously subjectivist has dogged the reception of pragmatism since its inception. Michael Slater cites Rorty as one major reason why this occurred

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[265] Compare James's letter to Dickinson Miller to Dewey's logically similar argument about the nature of rightness: "[r]ight is only an abstract name for the multitude of concrete demands in action which others impress upon us, and of which we are obliged, if we would live, to take some account" (327). Dewey's point is that our notion of "Right" rests on the same logic as does James's notion of the "Real." We do not, they both say, behave within the constraints of transhuman principles of morality or reality, but within the matrix of accounts we take of them.

(654).[266] But recent writers on pragmatism like Slater and Hilary Putnam have made the case that James was, in fact, a realist in the sense that James believed in a world that existed independent of human interaction; such a world just had no significance for us. "James's pragmatic account of truth," Slater writes, "presupposes metaphysical realism" (659). Putnam likewise argues that, despite the "antirealist elements in James's philosophy" (141), he wants to "return to a standpoint close to what he calls the 'natural realism' of the common man" (145). All of this is to put forward the idea that, for James and Social Gospelers, you could only start talking about the "real" when human actors were present to interact with it. Why this is important is because the Social Gospel subscribed to a Christianized pragmatic realism of its own, one that emerged, as we saw, in theology and literature, but also in the use of photojournalism. One of the key features of the relationship between pragmatism and American Christianity was their shared understanding of what was justified as *real*. For the real to be effective as an agent of change, it needed to be experienced directly, and like James's spilled beans, *taken account of*.[267]

This act of taking account of a thing is the first step in making it real in the pragmatic sense. The journalist and social reformer Jacob Riis provides us with a good test case for understanding how this urban reformist realism adopted pragmatic attitudes. A Danish immigrant who experienced firsthand the staggering degree of urban poverty in postbellum America, Riis eventually found work as a police reporter for the *New York Tribune*, frequenting notorious New York slums like the Five Points, Mulberry Bend, Bone Alley, and Bandits' Roost, and the city's several Potter's fields (modern day Bryant Park, Madison Square Park, and Washington Square

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[266] It's unclear to what extent Rorty is to blame for why pragmatism has been throughout the twentieth century associated with radical subjectivism. Rorty it seems was nothing if not a faithful pragmatist: "[t]he antiessentialist has no doubt that there were trees and stars long before there were statements about trees and stars. But the fact of antecedent existence is of no use in giving sense to the question, 'What are trees and stars apart from their relations to other things - apart from our statements about them?'" (58). In true pragmatic fashion, Rorty locates the meaning of things in their relation to human accounts of them, not in some ontologically transhuman "antecedent existence" containing an ultimate unchanging truth.

[267] It was this connection between an account of the real and practical action that informed not just homiletic novels and Jamesian pragmatism, but legal efforts to spur social reform. In her *Work-Accidents and the Law* (1910), the suffragist and lawyer Crystal Eastman employed a similar method in linking vivid portrayals of workers' lives to reforms in workers' safety. Compiling as many records on injured workers as possible, holding interviews with affected families and friends, Eastman and her associates "set out to complete each story," the intent being "to enrich the statistical story with some real…experience" (6-7).

Park). Hand-drawn sketches of urban poverty supplied magazine readers with some idea of how the other half lived, as the close and poorly lit confines of New York tenements, alleyways, and saloons were often too dark for the photographic technology available at the time. When in the late 1880s magnesium powder became available for flash photography, Riis took advantage of the technology to illuminate the darkest corners of what, for many, were invisible – unknown, unaccounted, and hence unreal – spaces (nearly blinding himself and twice setting fire to a house).[268] Published in 1890, Riis's immensely popular exposé *How the Other Half Lives* revealed to audiences the hitherto invisible world of the social cellar, using visible *accounts* of the real to inspire practical action.[269]

The advantages of the pragmatic model weren't immediately obvious to Riis. When he decided to give up writing editorials and go into preaching, his friend, the Reverend Ichabod Simmons pleaded, "'No, no, Jacob...not that. We have preachers enough. What the world needs is consecrated pens.' Then and there I consecrated mine" (*Making* 135). Eventually, he would come to consecrate his camera, bringing to active duty the "Christian Realism" Stuckenberg so strenuously called for. Whether he understood it in such terms, Riis found himself, like Gladden, reappraising what the function of the Christian ministry meant for believers.

Consecrating the camera, it turned out, depended on a pragmatic logic. As he put it in his bestselling autobiography *The Making of an American*, "I do not want [photography] explained to me in terms of HO_2 [sic] or such like formulas, learned but so hopelessly unsatisfying. I do not want my butterfly stuck on a pin and put in a glass case. I want to see the sunlight on its wings as it flits from flower to flower" (266). Like Emily Dickinson's cautionary "Split the Lark - and you'll find the Music - [..] Now, do you doubt that your Bird was True?," Riis, in true pragmatic fashion, measured the "truth" of a thing by its approximation to lived experience. What would give in James's phrase a "satisfactory relation" (*Pragmatism* 28), what is true and what *works* is not a sterilized index of a concept's interior logic, but the ways in which it is woven into human interests. It sounds like less of a coincidence, then, when James used the same chemical formula to discuss the way we understand water:

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[268] For his first awkward and perilous foray into the burgeoning world of flash photography, see Riis's autobiography *The Making of an American* (264-71).

[269] Just as the homiletic novel's purpose was to provide immersive virtual experiences that would vitalize the action of readers, Riis's photorealism was intended to - and was successful in - producing real change in urban conditions. According to Riis, Theodore Roosevelt - at the time a member of the New York Board of Commissioners - upon reading *How the Other Half Lives*, left a card at Riis's office reading, "I have read your book, and I have come to help" (*Theodore* 131). Soon after, tenements were torn down and replaced with more habitable structures and police lodging houses were outlawed as a direct result of Riis's exposés. In the literary field, one member of Riis's 1892 Ocean Grove lantern slide lecture was Stephen Crane, who then, as Sara Blair has argued, incorporated the theme of arrest into his fiction, most notably *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*, published the following year. See Blair (29-45).

> [w]hen a chemist tells us that two atoms of hydrogen and one of oxygen combine themselves of their own accord into the new compound substance 'water,' he knows...that this is only an elliptical statement for a more complex fact. That fact is that when H_2 and O...get into closer quarters...they *affect surrounding bodies differently*: they now wet our skin, dissolve sugar, put out fire, etc., which they didn't in their former positions. (*PU* 187)

This is one of those passages that gets pragmatism thrown in with nominalism ("only an elliptical *statement* for a more complex *fact*"), though what's more interesting and more historically relevant is that a shift in chemical identity is tantamount to a shift in molecular behavior brought on by its *relation* to other things. An instantiation of the theory that what a thing *is* is what a thing *does*. Jonathan Edwards's atom - whose identity is inseparable from its solidity - returns to us nearly two centuries later. If anything, Riis's casual analogy of an inanimate practice (the chemistry involved in photography) with a living thing ("my butterfly") illustrates, as does Holmes's "life of the law," the pragmatist's subordination of conceptual distinctions to raw, concrete experience, what James has called in many places the irreducible principle of the "continuity of experience."[270]

Like the Social Gospel theologians and reformists who leavened their philosophies of social change with pragmatic logics, Riis understood the relationship between ethical action and

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[270] See, for example, James's emphasis in *Pragmatism* that "the pragmatic method, in its dealings with certain concepts, instead of ending with admiring contemplation, plunges forward into the river of experience" (57). James would later elaborate the philosophical role of experience in his chapter on "The Continuity of Experience" in *A Pluralistic Universe*: "[e]very examiner of the sensible life *in concreto* must see that relations of every sort, of time, space, difference, likeness, change, rate, cause, or what not, are just as integral members of the sensational flux as terms are, and that conjunctive relations are just as true members of the flux as disjunctive relations are" (280). This, he goes on to say, is the epistemological core of his radical empiricism.

"truth" along the same lines. Echoing the spiritually-inflected language of Rauschenbusch's maxim that "work reveals," Riis writes, "what are we that we should think ourselves always right, or, lest we do wrong, sit idle all our lives waiting for light? The light comes as we work toward it" (*Making* 325). Playing on "light" as "truth" - a play he would repeat throughout his career - and refusing to wait for light in very much the same way Finney refused to wait God's time, Riis makes the definition of reality inextricable from the process that brings it about. Riis's language of revelation as a process of human striving *toward* truth makes human action a crucial component in the construction of what we call truth and reality.

While conducting his magic lantern tours throughout American cities, Riis was well aware of the ideological differences of his various audiences, and he shaped his photographic content accordingly. As Gregory Jackson has shown, some of Riis's photographs - especially those shown to religious audiences - promoted a spiritual second sight that could "[oscillate] between the material and spiritual, the immanent and transcendent" (244). This oscillation, I would add, did not allow viewers' attention to rest on such binaries, conceptual distinctions actively discounted in pragmatism's conception of truth and reality. Rather, Riis's photojournalism encouraged a pragmatic attitude of redirecting viewers' attention to the world of experience. Individual and social salvation would be proportionate to the degree to which Riis's pragmatically inspired realism vitalized conduct in the experienced realities of Christ's flock.

4.25 Ice-coated House (burned) in Crosby Street, 1896

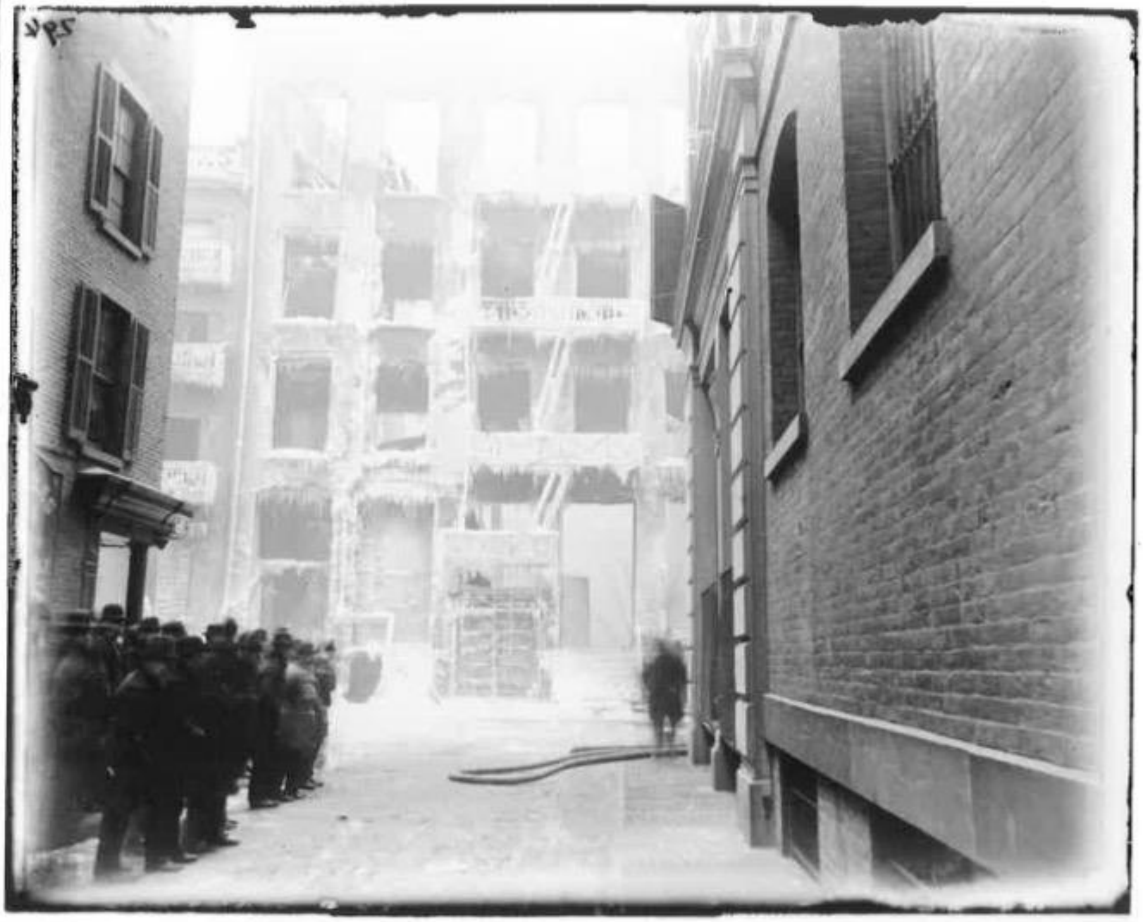

FIG. 4.25.1

Figure 1: Ice-coated House (burned) in Crosby Street, 1896

One of Riis's most well-known photos, "Ice-coated House (burned) in Crosby Street, 1896," captures the remains of a lower Manhattan building.[271] The title "Ice-coated House" and the fact the building had been burned through calls upon the dual imagery of a recognizably

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[271] My selection of images and their titles come from Bonnie Yochelson's catalogue of Riis's photography, *Jacob A. Riis: Revealing New York's Other Half*. Yochelson notes that the building may have been the Metropolitan Hotel, which closed the same year it was destroyed (*Revealing* 292). However, Riis's choice to call it a "House" summons imagery of the nineteenth century home as a microcosm of the nation, impelling viewers to reflect on the susceptibility of Victorian domesticity to socioeconomic ills.

Dante-esque hellscape. To the left of the frame stands an indiscriminate crowd while a spectral shape to the right - blurred by Riis's deliberate manipulation of exposure times - stands aloof from the group.[272] Human actors occupy ambiguous positions while the exterior buildings remain, in more ways than one, frozen in time. Almost blending together as one, the crowd to the left would be a familiar sight in cities prone to labor strikes and food lines, but they also signify the masses outside of Christ's fold, marginalized spatially as they are spiritually - those whose desperate indigence gives the lie to Horatio Alger's mythology of self-reliant perseverance. The ghostly remains of the building mirror the spiritual remnant of the crowd, both icons of the decay of an urban environment transformed into a literal hell on earth. Hell, like heaven, is no longer understood to be a zone beyond human experience, but whose reality can be apprehended directly in the here and now. As Kate Marcy, the convalescing inebriate and former prostitute of *The Inside of the Cup*, asks, "'Hell's *here* - isn't it?'" (259).

The image's one-point perspective does more than shepherd our gaze to the burned-out building. The clarity of the foreground buildings, untouched by contiguous destruction, indicates a level of attentive upkeep (even the enforcement of New York City's progressive housing codes of the time) that clearly wasn't shown toward the centerpiece of the photo, a kind of leering ghost of things to come for surrounding structures. As the image draws us spatially from the soundness of urban architecture to the specter of its potential destruction, it also draws us temporally, from the comfort and security of present health to the eventual certainty of corporeal dissolution. Put another way, Riis's "Ice-coated House," in effect, functions as a visual memento mori.

Imagining the spatial and temporal immediacy of integrity and ruin, the image invites viewers to consider the precarious hair's breadth illusorily separating action from consequence.

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[272] In calling attention to the deliberateness of some of Riis's photography, I'm challenging the view of Riis as both a hopeless amateur and his photography as demonstrating a natural and spontaneous engagement with the "real," approaching it with what Peter Burke has called an "innocent eye" (19). One of his biographers, Alexander Alland, Sr, for example, has likened Riis's photos to "children's drawings - spontaneous, uninhibited, honest. Like things in nature, the people who are his subjects fall into place by themselves and create a visual harmony that at once makes us aware of their reality and of the truth they project" (13). This rosy overstatement somehow misses the fact that Riis, more often than not, requested his subjects to occupy certain poses, rearranged furniture in some indoor shots, and, in several of his photographs, like "Street Arabs," had three young boys pretend to be asleep.

Dissolving any real distinction between the material and spiritual, concrete action and consequence, Riis's image enacts a pragmatic conception of reality that links perception of that reality to action. "[A] drawing would not have been evidence of the kind I wanted" (*Making* 267), he writes, because "if you can only make the others see, will they do" (293). It is *seeing*, not speculation or rational argumentation or realist description, that produces the conditions for doing. As in the *imitatio Christi* framework, the key to *doing* is to embody the sensible personhood of Christ. Acquainting his audiences with a direct experience of the real, Riis closes any temporizing gap that may obtain between action and its consequences. Even the titles of many of his photographs reinforce the sense that there is no actual barrier between seeing and doing. They often included references to their specific locations ("in Crosby Street," "in Jersey Street"), suggesting the possibility that seeing for yourself is always available.

Riis repeated similar strategies in other photos intended for religious, largely Christian audiences. Another image, "Italian Mother and Her Baby in Jersey Street," depicts an Italian mother holding a swaddled infant in her lap. As in the image of the burned out house, quotidian aspects of life - the stuff of secular literary realism - are given a spiritual trimming. Deliberately staged by Riis as a scene of urban poverty, the Italian mother sits gazing heavenward in the posture of a Renaissance Madonna. The "ladder" to the left - in all likelihood used as a drying rack or bedframe - coupled with the photo's low angle give the illusion of a basement, evocative of the social cellar hidden - *buried*, in the scene's oscillation between the *womb* of the mother and the *tomb* she occupies - beneath the street surface latticed with tenements, dives, and lodging houses. To the right, a door ajar connects this subterranean cube with an even deeper underworld, suggesting a labyrinthine network of squalor honeycombed beneath the audience's very feet, very much there, yet unaccounted for.

2.3 Italian Mother and Her Baby in Jersey Street, 1888-1889

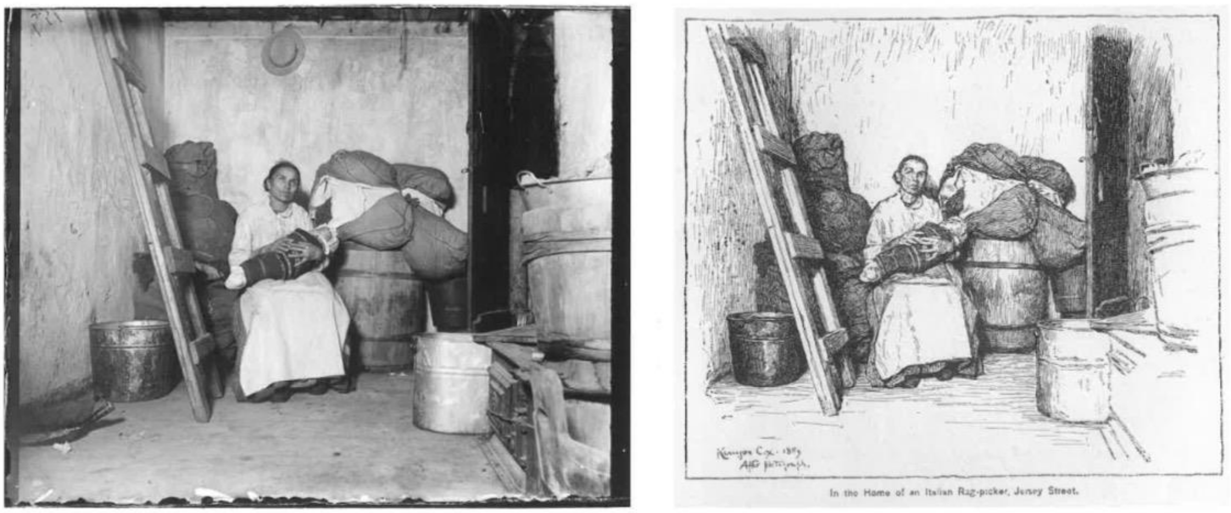
Kenyon Cox · 1889
After photograph.
In the Home of an Italian Rag-picker, Jersey Street.

FIG. 2.3.1

FIG. 2.3.2

Figure 2: Italian Mother and Her Baby in Jersey Street, 1888-1889

Suspended above the mother’s head is a straw boater hat, emblematic of the heavenly aureole adorning the heads of sacred figures, especially Mary, in Christian iconography. The deliberate absence of any paternal figure only lends to the image’s representation of virgin maternity, here ensconced, literally and metaphorically, at the bottom of the social ladder. By drawing an unmistakable association between Marian devotion and urban poverty, the image encouraged reform-minded audiences to heed Christ’s admonition in Matthew 25:40 that “[i]nasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me,” the Social Gospel’s central statement on vicarious responsibility. Imagining the urban poor as theoxenic personations of Christ, the photo imagines no real distinction between spiritual and material registers in its pragmatic attempt to transcend such rationalistic binaries that James thought so toxic to American philosophy.

The “Italian Mother,” like the “Ice-coated House,” visualizes the Pauline scripture that “invisible things...are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made.” We could also say that the *real*ization by Riis’s photojournalism of the invisible other half is the necessary condition for their being understood – taken account of – in the experiences of viewers. By soldering spiritual iconography to the conditions of lived experience, Riis’s images perform the

”[r]eturning...into experience” (52) of potentially abstract concepts - human suffering and human dignity, for example - argued by James to be central to pragmatism.

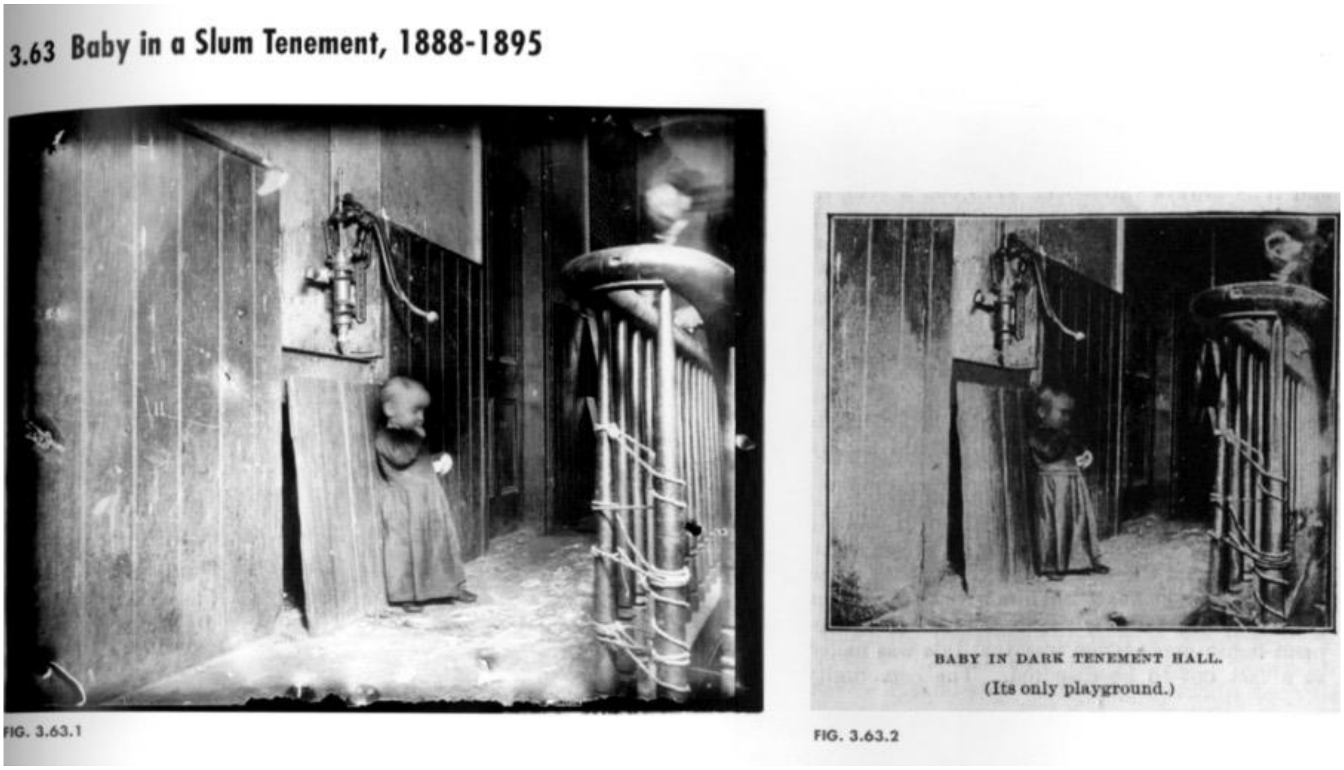
3.63 Baby in a Slum Tenement, 1888-1895
BABY IN DARK TENEMENT HALL.
(Its only playground.)
FIG. 3.63.1
FIG. 3.63.2

Figure 3: Baby in a Slum Tenement, 1888-1895

First published in 1895, “Baby in a Slum Tenement” depicts an unsupervised toddler “standing with its back against the public sink in a pool of filth that overflowed on the floor” (*Peril* 135). As in “Italian Mother,” Riis repeats the overhead suspension of deceptively trivial objects - except in this case, not a halo but a broken faucet hangs impendingly as an icon of the squalor ironically providing both the amenities of “home” as well as the potential agents of the toddler’s demise.[273] The deployment of irony – an expression of two simultaneous yet distinct meanings at once – functions here visually as the binaries of light and dark, innocence and depravity, material and spiritual are fused into a single experienced and experienceable reality.

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[273] Legitimate fears of diseases like cholera and dysentery justified the association of urban water supplies with contamination. Though advancements had been made in New York City’s water supply (notably since the cholera outbreaks of 1832 and 1866), Riis’s own investigation revealed lingering traces of contamination in New York’s Croton watershed, prompting further safeguards for city dwellers (*Making* 228-30).

As Riis had done in "Ice-coated House," the manipulation of exposure times ruptures the scene and its central figure into their material and spiritual registers, a ghosting effect nearly lost in the image's halftone reproduction to the right. A spectral reminder of the precarious health and the staggering mortality rates of tenement youth, the child loiters innocently within the liminal space between light and dark, engaged in the infantile attitude of thumb-sucking - a paltry therapeutic compensation for the absence of clean water and mother's milk.[274] The tonal blending of the toddler's body with those of its surroundings visually reinforces the reformist argument that environment, not individual volition or racial background, primarily shapes character. Barely visible but for a hand and blurred face, the man and resident spirit swallowed in darkness only drives home the point that the conditions of youth may ossify into the vices of adulthood. Seen metaphorically, the photo follows to its logical conclusion the result of what Riis called "the deadly inertia in civic life" (*Making* 251), pragmatically conceiving of the value of moral and economic individualism and its effects in human experience.[275]

Playing with the ambiguity of the possessive pronoun "Its," Riis's image multiplies the image's hermeneutic layers. Reducing the toddler to the neutered impersonal, the possessive "its" connotes not ownership, but the toddler's – *its* – utter incapacity for such. "It" is also the playground of the tenement hallway: "It is only playground," an irony exploited in the 1895 halftone reproduction.[276] The publication history of the photo summons the association of the playground and the kindergarten as spaces of citizen-building, the pedagogical training grounds in which lifelong characters are forged. What is distinctively pragmatic about Riis's photography of infant neglect and tenement depravity is the representation of the consequences of that familial and social neglect in the apparition of the adult marginal to the central focus of the image. Like the dispossessed crowd and gutted ruins of "Ice-coated House," the figure in "Baby in a Slum Tenement" prefigures the future consequences of socioeconomic neglect. In both, as well, a difference in space is a difference in time.

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[274] For Riis's own perception of just how shocking these rates were in places like New York's Mott Street Barracks and other lower Manhattan tenement housing areas, see *The Battle with the Slums*: "the infant death-rate of the Barracks that year [1888] was 325 per 1000. There were forty babies, and one in three of them had to die" (123). Babies, apparently, were also important factors in tenement housing lighting codes. As Riis reports, "an order was issued defining darkness to the sanitary police: if the sink in the hall could be made out, and the slops overflowing on the floor, and if a baby could be seen on the stairs, the hall was light; if, on the other hand, the baby's shrieks were the first warning that it was being trampled upon, the hall was dark" (*Battle* 91). It was evidently a common enough problem that housing code committees made stumbling over infants a yardstick of acceptable living conditions.

[275] My claim here is not that Riis's photo demonstrates an undiluted pragmatism, but that demonstrating the logical conclusions of certain interests deployed experientially is something a pragmatist would do in order to assess the merits of those interests.

One of the drawbacks of this spiritualized realism, however, is its liability to be missed entirely. Despite the (mostly) faithful rendition of "Italian Mother" by magazine illustrator and painter Kenyon Cox in the adjoining image, the straw boater/halo is the one detail he leaves out, indicating the degree to which the spiritual register of these images can be - and were - overlooked. For reasons known only to Cox, his image drops the Marian iconography deliberately orchestrated by Riis for Christian audiences. What to Cox and secular readers might have seemed straightforward depictions of urban squalor and decay were, in fact, highly nuanced representations incorporating homiletic and pragmatic logics.[277] That Cox had done a drawing of the photo adds another layer of remove from the photographic medium's emphasis on the power of realism to engage viewers in a direct experience of as-yet unknown spaces. As we saw in the halftone reproduction of "Baby in a Slum Tenement," spiritual layerings are easily lost in translation.

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[276] As Yochelson notes about this image, Riis "never described it," yet two other publications exploited the irony of describing this scene as a "playground." Respectively, the *Evening Sun* and *Review of Reviews* titled the image "The Baby's Playground" and "A Child's Playground, Into Which the Sunlight Had Never Penetrated" (251).

[277] This is not to say that all of Riis's photos were deliberately staged or that they made ample use of Christian iconography. The fact is that many of his audiences were religious, and the spiritual imagery in his photos would not have been lost on them. It is known that Riis often presented his magic lantern lectures in religious settings like Finney's old church, New York City's Broadway Tabernacle, and Charles H. Parkhurst's Plymouth Church, providing New Yorkers with virtual experiences of poverty and disease residing just around their corners (*Making* 298).

Another reason why Riis's deliberate spiritual inflections can be missed is the assumption that the intent behind photography is to provide viewers with an objective transcription of reality "out there." As June Howard put it over thirty years ago - and as many would agree today - "[t]o claim that image or word *simply* records true facts, simply represents reality...uses the appearance of truth to guarantee an illusion" (15). If it is assumed that Riis's sole purpose was to merely "show" audiences scenes of poverty, the homiletic overtones in these images become little more than ornamentation, if they are even considered at all. Michael Davitt Bell's argument that we should understand postbellum realist ideas, not in their attempts at some ideal mimesis of an objective world, but in "the function of these ideas" (4) is a much more useful orientation that enables us to view Riis's Christic-pragmatist photojournalism in the *spirit* in which it was intended.[278] Rather than using truth to guarantee an illusion, or using realistic particularities to divert attention to some transcendent world to come, Riis's photojournalism is grounded in a pragmatic realism aimed at converting individuals to action.

For these and similar reasons that we saw with Finney and Swedenborg, it would change our understanding of American pragmatism to see figures like Riis as participants in the history of its development as a set of attitudes toward the world and its problems. Even the fate - or what Sara Blair might call the "afterlives" - of Riis's photographs tells us that he thought of them as a pragmatist might. Recovered from the attic of his Richmond Hill home years after his death, a box of negatives and lantern slides shed light on the photographs that Riis always intended to use as a lantern - an object "letting in the light," as he put it.[279] How they ended up there can be gleaned by Riis's own admission, that "I had a use for [photography], and beyond that I never went" (*Making* 265). Notwithstanding their aesthetic and historical value for us, the photographs ceased to have a "cash value" for Riis in the same way Charles Finney's anxious bench had a purely practical utility to effect conversions. Their historical conditions exhausted, the problems they were intended to address (mostly) solved, the photographs as material objects had reached their pragmatic expiration date. What mattered most to Riis about the photographs was how they worked, the differences they created in viewers' perceptions toward urban reform and social justice.

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[278] Indeed, the *function* of religious or spiritual ideas, as opposed to their ontological or transcendent meaning, became of interest to philosophers and sociologists of religion in the twentieth century. The sociologist Robert Bellah, to take one prominent example, wrote that "[i]t is not now so much the substance of that which it is claimed is transcendent as the function of the claim itself that is of interest" (196).

[279] For the laborious - and somewhat humorous - narrative about the rediscovery of Riis's photographs, negatives, and lantern slides, see Alland 43-48.

Conclusion

In 1925, long after the heyday of Social Gospel reform, the American missiologist Daniel J. Fleming spoke warmly of the pragmatic spirit being brought to bear on Christianity:

> the most effective popular apologetic on the mission field has passed from origins to consequences, from roots to fruits. [...] More and more the people of the world are applying Christ's test to Christianity - 'By their fruits ye shall know them.' It is to this test of life that Christianity is increasingly being brought. In so far as we regard the function of Christianity to be the transformation of life upon the earth into a kingdom of righteousness and not merely a means for saving a small remnant of humanity into a state of future bliss people will view Christianity objectively and subject it to a pragmatic test. (*Whither Bound* 67).

It's significant that Fleming throughout tends to see no distinction among "Christ's test," "this test of life," and a "pragmatic test." Like Peirce before him, Fleming suggests that Christ's dictum, "[b]y their fruits ye shall know them," as well as his emphasis on "the *function* of Christianity," anticipated the central tenet of pragmatism well before the method had a name. Binding the only significant knowledge of a concept to its actionable consequences in experience, the pragmatists and Social Gospelers drew from the same set of logics and attitudes that both movements considered the most effective tools for building better individuals and a better world. Seen from the perspective of the Social Gospel, pragmatism becomes part of a much broader shift in cultural attitudes emergent throughout the nineteenth century in disciplines and institutions deemed either secular or religious, and not exclusively from the origin points of Peirce, James, or Dewey. What I have tried to show is that the conventional narrative of pragmatism as developing from largely - if not exclusively - secular sources (even, admittedly, against James's own account) cannot be maintained with the same assurance as it has in the past, that American Protestant evangelical culture has had a significant role in its history.

This has been the story of how William James developed pragmatism within a matrix of scientific and religious debates whose history stretches back to Edwards. The liberalization of Protestant evangelicalism, the apotheosis of direct experience over inherited doctrine, and the humanism inherent in pragmatism - among other cultural factors beyond the scope of this dissertation - helped fuel a conservative backlash that led to efforts to abolish liberal ideologies and install more fundamentalist approaches to religious practice and social policy. In a complete rejection of the postmillennialism that fueled the Social Gospel and liberal evangelicalism more broadly, the theologian and major architect of American Fundamentalism Cyrus I. Scofield wrote in 1910 that "the true mission of the church is not the reformation of society" (26). Indeed, for some the proper response to the pluralism of modernity was, as Jonathan J. Edwards observes, to establish a "'true church,' defined...by common commitment to a set of definable norms for belief, practice, and communication." In this sense, Fundamentalism "is a particular response within modernity to a problem of modernity - the need to maintain associational commitments in the context of pluralism" (xi-xii).[280]

While the Social Gospel incorporated pragmatic logics, those logics were not confined to collective social relief, nor to what was the unifying mission of the movement: the establishment of a terrestrial kingdom of heaven. One of the legacies of postbellum Christian pragmatism is the concomitance between individual commercial success and one's salvific status. Represented in such works as advertising executive and congressman Bruce Barton's *The Man Nobody Knows* (1925), this muscular Christian pragmatism advocated individual (virtually masculine) vigor and business acumen as qualities becoming not only of a good capitalist, but a good Christian. Barton tells his readers to "[p]ragmatically study the man, Jesus Christ and his methods from the perspective of your life. Thoughtfully apply His methods to your real life situations and circumstances" (vi). The representation of Christ as a self-made and tireless business dynamo espoused in muscular Christianity is reminiscent less of Churchill or Sheldon's pragmatic minister than Franklin's practical man of business, indicative of pragmatism's connotative shift from James's sophisticated method of justifying beliefs to an association with unscrupulous materialism and ego-driven profiteering. In some ways, then, the capitalist Mr. Sterling of *The Inside of the Cup* died for nothing. In direct reaction against what it felt to be excessive attention to social work and an insipid feminization of Christ, muscular Christianity was but one manifestation of the conservative backlash against the liberal Protestantism of the Social Gospel, a backlash that, with variation, to be sure, continues today.[281]

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[280] As the name implies, Fundamentalism aimed at returning to the fundamentals of the Christian faith. It was a direct response to what it saw as the "flattening" of the spiritual life spurred by a variety of "liberal" developments like Darwinism, modernism, pluralism, and the decline of prayer. See Rick Ostrander, "The Practice of Prayer in a Modern Age: Liberals, Fundamentalists, and Prayer in the Early Twentieth Century" in *Practicing Protestants* (177-95).

Despite the pervasive impact of mass religious movements in the period, late nineteenth and early twentieth century transatlantic academic thought leaned toward a secular historiography that tended to be as dismissive of religious belief as it was triumphal about a coming golden age of secular progress. Evolutionist models like J.G. Frazer's monumental *The Golden Bough* (1890-1915) - whose authority Bronislaw Malinowski unquestionably accepted - justified a historical narrative in which religious belief is but one (primitive) phase on the path to a secular scientific enlightenment (62-3).[282] Available in English translations beginning in 1930, Max Weber's seminal 1905 *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* reiterated the narrative of religious belief's subsumption within a capitalist and decidedly secular economy, a subsumption we also see repeated in Ian Watt's literary theory by Robinson Crusoe's "unconvincing...tributes to the transcendent" (81). And much of what Freud had to say about religion as an atavistic depository of illusions and infantile fantasies of an all-powerful patriarchy relegated religious expression and belief to a less-than-subordinate roles in history. Ideally, it seemed, they wouldn't even exist when everything else finally made it to Canaan.[283]

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[281] It almost goes without saying that modern Pentecostalism and Fundamentalism have their roots in the religious contestations of which the Social Gospel played no small part. Theologians of the early twentieth century, like Reinhold Niebuhr (despite his later liberal leanings) and John Gresham Machen were influential in the rise of a neo-orthodoxy that challenged what they felt was a liberal Modernism incompatible with true Christian belief. As Machen put it, "the liberal attempt at reconciling Christianity with modern science has really relinquished everything distinctive of Christianity" (7).

[282] Bronislaw's anthropology rests heavily on Frazer's *Golden Bough*, especially its theory of "primitive magic" (18-25).

Despite mid-twentieth century interventions like that of Herbert W. Richardson's *Toward an American Theology*, contemporary academics have tended to repeat such assumptions about secularization.[284] Historians like Susan Curtis and Martin Marty have argued that the effect on religion caused by the Social Gospel's proximity to mass culture led to a secular cooptation of many of its religious ideals, a simple case of historical irony that misses the ways in which religiosity in America persisted after the Social Gospel. Despite what the academics John R. Commons, Richard T. Ely, and Charles Horton Cooley said about sociology, economics, and democracy, respectively, it has become common to view these and other institutions as predominantly secular, the presence of religious belief being extraneous to an understanding of history or culture, a cosmetic undeserving of serious scholarly study.[285] More recently, Ann Douglas's highly influential *The Feminization of American Culture* (1977), based a large part of its argument on a "secularization of faith" (21) that she pinpoints with the rise of antebellum Unitarianism, an argument that David Morgan rightly shows to be a distortion of Protestant visual culture during the same period.[286] Rather than a “secularization,” Morgan argues, “the media of the new mass culture became part of the practice of belief” (39). Morgan’s view, which I’m inclined to think more productive, attempts to do away with an excessive reliance on a sacred/secular binary and the myopic historiographies derived from it.

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[283] In the less-than-optimistic opening to *The Future of an Illusion* (1927), Freud was explicit about what he called "the most important item in the psychical inventory of a civilization," its "religious ideas," which for him were tantamount to "illusions" (18), "fulfilments of the oldest, strongest and most urgent wishes of mankind" (47). In fairness to Freud, he does eventually clarify that "[a]n illusion is not the same thing as an error" and that [w]hat is characteristic of illusions is that they are derived from human wishes" (48). (Illusion means the same in German and English.) But even with the caveat, the use of "illusion" to refer to religious ideas risks repeating the secularist stigma of religion and belief as essentially delusive mental phenomena, especially when Freud himself claimed that "we may compare them...to delusions" (50)

[284] In 1967, Richardson pointed out that "the emergence of public atheism in the modern world cannot be explained as the mere *terminus* of an historical process that is tending toward an ultimate irreligion," adding for good measure: "[i]t is ironic that the secular theologians, who talk constantly about the historical nature of man, should propose a theory of history that results from their ideological commitments rather than from a study of history itself" (4).

[285] See Charles Hopkins's *The Rise of the Social Gospel* (167). The open religiosity of early sociologists and other scientists, as well as the establishment of sociology departments in theological schools, makes even more inexplicable certain claims about secularization like Gerhard Lenski's that "from its inception [sociology] was committed to the positivist view that religion in the modern world is merely a survival from man's primitive past, and doomed to disappear in an era of science and general enlightenment" (Hadden 587). A much more historically accurate depiction comes from American sociologist Robert Bellah: "[e]very theology implies a sociology (and a psychology, and so on) and every sociology implies a theology. [...] To refuse to relate them is to admit intellectual bankruptcy" (206-7).

The foregoing list of late nineteenth and twentieth century examples of what has come to be known as the secularization thesis are what Charles Taylor has referred to as “subtraction stories” (*Secular* 22) - myths that assume a process of and attempt to explain secularity as the gradual removal of religious elements from a broader culture. We saw with Kenyon Cox’s subtraction of the straw boater hat/halo how this can occur almost imperceptibly. But “stories,” indeed. For even as I write these words, we are witness almost daily to reminders that the often kneejerk association of secularization with progress has severe limitations, routinely and uncritically viewing any expression of belief as tantamount to cultural regression. We are also audience to the overtly religious motivations of those who actively try to reshape the world in their own ideological image.

In the epilogue, I address these ideas in more detail. Questions of secularity, progress, belief, and what the role of these ideas play in American life and especially in American universities will be the subject of the closing to this dissertation.

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[286] For Morgan’s challenge to Douglas’s account, see *Protestants and Pictures* (22).

Epilogue

Those who neglect religion in their analyses of contemporary affairs do so at great peril.

Peter Berger, *Desecularization of the World* (18)

The Modern Conflation of the Sacred and “America”

When Bill Clinton, alongside the director of the Human Genome Project Francis Collins, announced to America in 2000 the completion of the first complete map of the human genome, Clinton likened it to “the map that Meriwether Lewis had unfolded in front of President Thomas Jefferson in that very room nearly two hundred years earlier.” After citing the president whose name has become virtually synonymous with the “wall of separation between church and State” (510), Clinton went on to tell the nation “[t]oday...we are learning the language in which God created life. We are gaining ever more awe for the complexity, the beauty, and the wonder of God’s most divine and sacred gift” (Collins 2). If the overtly religious character of the announcement stoked controversy, it was overshadowed by what many saw as confirmation of scientific progress – a confirmation that, for some, disconfirmed the very discourse in which Clinton couched his celebratory address.

But why should this matter? For one, it reminds us of the implicit identification of Christian belief with America itself, the almost imperceptible prestidigitation in sliding between the sacred and the secular. Or, rather, not a slide, because it’s not clear if there’s any real distinction between, for example, the secular politics involved in representing America and any religious justification of doing so. What William R. Hutchinson called “a non-established establishment” (82), this juxtaposition, in America at least, of a putatively secular and even-handed disinterest toward religion and a simultaneous hegemonic installation of Christianity as not just coextensive but identical to "American values" should make us reconsider the historical assertions to America's vaunted secularity.

This secular-sacred conflation is in no sense unique to our own twenty-first century moment. The nineteenth century sisters Harriet Beecher Stowe and Catharine Beecher believed that "[t]he law of Christianity and of democracy...teaches that all men are born equal in rights, and that their interests and feelings should be regarded as of equal value" (200). There is perhaps no reason to suppose that, in writing Christianity next to democracy, the Beecher sisters were thinking of different things. The conflation is even more complete in the twentieth century evangelical firebrand Billy Sunday: "Christianity and Patriotism are synonymous terms" (McLoughlin, *Modern* 444). Charlie Chaplin's closing salvo against fascism in the 1940 satire *The Great Dictator* was jarring to audiences because of its abrupt break of character and tone, not because it viewed New Testament Christianity as one with democracy and technological progress.[287]

Regardless of the degree of coherence, habitual associations have a way of effortlessly summoning one another. Calling democratic freedom a uniquely "Christian" value – as the

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[287] Throughout the film, Chaplin plays twin roles: Adenoid Hynkel, a satirical mock-up of Adolf Hitler, and a Jewish barber, who, of course, looks exactly like the dictator. In a case of mistaken identity, Hynkel/Hitler is captured by his own troops while the barber, assumed to be the fascist dictator, finds himself giving a rousing speech to the newly occupied people of Osterlich. Fiercely criticizing fascism, the barber explains to the crowd that "[i]n the seventeenth chapter of St. Luke it is written: 'the Kingdom of God is within man.' Not one man nor a group of men, but in all men! In you! You the people have the power. [...] Then, in the name of democracy, let us use that power. Let us all unite!"

Janet Jakobsen and Ann Pellegrini read Weber's Protestant "worldly asceticism" as a historical case in which the religious/secular binary was conflated: "[a]s Weber observes, secularism's freedom from religion was also freedom for the market. This market freedom was...tied to...the practice of 'worldly asceticism.' Because worldly asceticism in its market form was only indirectly related to the religious…, it could form a practice at once secular and religious" (1). This is what Catherine Albanese means when she describes how an "ordinary religion" becomes "more or less synonymous with culture" (6), a conclusion also reached by the sociologists Wade Clark Roof and William McKinney, in their work on mainline religion prior to the 1960s: "[s]o wedded were the liberal, mainline churches to the dominant culture that their beliefs, values, and behavior were virtually indistinguishable from the culture" (22). Nor was this lost on theologians of the time, as Herbert Richardson, glossing the German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer, notes: "[i]n American secularization, religion ceases to exist as a separate phenomenon because it seeks to embody itself fully in the state, science, business, and other worldly institutions by identifying its concerns wholly with theirs" (108). What Bonhoeffer originally said was "*American secularisation* derives precisely from the imperfect distinction of the kingdoms and offices of church and state, from the enthusiastic claim of the church to universal influence on the world" (108).

Beecher sisters and Chaplin do – does more than reinforce the arguable notion that America is Christian to the core; it ignores the possibility that democratic freedom can be associated with any other religion, giving credence to the dubious logic that if you are not Christian, you are not American.[288] So when Arthur Schlesinger, Jr offers his antidote to what he considers the fractious impulses of the "cult of ethnicity" – an "assimilation process" that would "lead newcomers to an acceptance of the language, the institutions, and the political ideals that hold the nation together" (121)[289] – it doesn't occur to him how those ideals were and still are read as the covert influence of Christian hegemony.[290] Muslims can proclaim their allegiance to democratic ideals and institutions all they want. But within a culture that routinely identifies "secular" America with sacred Christian principles, such professed loyalties may only marginally quell suspicion.[291]

Habitual associations summon their appurtenances as readily as they do their antitheses. The assumption that "secular" contradicts "religious" in some fundamental way has become so automatic as to be seen as self-evident. This "intuitive" contradiction is due more, I think, to the prevalence of triumphalist secularization narratives and (until recently) a lack of nuanced critique, rather than any kind of inherent contradiction.[292] While this dissertation has focused on disclosing the intellectual connections between a brand of historically liberal Protestantism and pragmatism, its conclusions are necessarily implicated in the broader phenomena in modern America of the tortuous ambivalence between the sacred and the secular. This rethinking should make us seriously question what we in literary, historical, philosophical, theological studies mean when we say sacred *or* secular, and the explanatory value we get out of using them.

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[288] My thinking here has to do with the arbitrariness of the association. Had it been Catholics who settled on the eastern coast of America to escape religious persecution, championed democracy in political tracts during the American Revolution, won senate seats and presidencies because of their unimpeachable devotion to religious freedom and tolerance, Catholicism - not Protestantism - would have become synonymous with democratic ideals.

[289] "[P]ressed too far," Schlesinger writes, "the cult of ethnicity has had bad consequences…. The new ethnic gospel rejects the unifying vision of individuals from all nations melted into a new race. Its underlying philosophy is that America is not a nation of individuals at all but a nation of groups, that ethnicity is the defining experience for most Americans, that ethnic ties are permanent and indelible, and that division into ethnic communities establishes the basic structure of American society and the basic meaning of American history" (16). Schlesinger wrote this in the early 1990s, and while the cultural landscape has certainly shifted since then, this is not a vision of American life most would be unfamiliar with.

[290] See for example Tracy Fessenden's examination of the secularization thesis as it operates in America in *Culture and Redemption*: "[t]he co-implication of secularism and Reformed Christianity has meant...that Christian religious polemic could remain compatible with America's vaunted history of religious liberty and toleration by being cast in strictly secular terms. [...] [A]n implicitly Christian culture puts pressure on all who make claims on American institutions to constitute themselves as religious on a recognizably Protestant model" (4).

[291] The current rise in fears about the "Islamicization of America" and the politically visible distrust of Muslim congress members give unfortunate proof that these suspicions are not confined to marginal or underground groups.

Schlesinger's proposed solution to thwart cults of ethnicity, at bottom, exposes a problem having to do with experience. Throughout this dissertation, I've insisted that Jamesian pragmatism's underlying epistemology assumes the legitimacy of individual experience in all its variety. Schlesinger's argument, however – that the experiences that we claim forge our particular identities or identification with a group – is an implicit claim that the privileging of individual experience has gone too far, is actually damaging to America's political fabric. The nightmare for Schlesinger and the title of his book is the "disuniting of America," a widespread splintering of multicultural group identities organized around racial, ethnic, class, political, or some other ideological interest, and not around "the historic theory of America as one people – the theory that has thus far managed to keep American society whole." After over two centuries of validating individual experience, twentieth century intellectuals like Schlesinger called for a return to transexperiential doctrine and theory as culturally restorative against the various "cults" of experience.

Schlesinger's target, the "cult of ethnicity" classifies "all Americans according to ethnic and racial criteria" (16), but the same might be said about a "cult of experience," those who value their own unique experiences – however "strange" they may seem to us – over commitments that would otherwise encourage social or political comity. Your belief that God sanctions polygamy is all well and good, but you shouldn't be surprised to find federal troops on Deseret's doorstep.[293] Of course, we need not go as far back as the Mormons. The rain during a president's inauguration *could be* the blessing bestowed by a Christian God, but it means very little to others who hear nothing but white nationalist rhetoric and the coming erosion of minority protections in the inauguration speech. What matters here is that these are fundamentally incompatible versions of political reality that the appeal to a multicultural respect for difference or experience barely ameliorates, if at all.[294]

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[292] The older Latin meaning of *saeculum* referred to an age, a generation, a period of earthly time. Originally, it could refer to those clerics and monks who performed sacred duties among the laity outside of the walls of seminaries or monasteries. The understanding of "secular" as distinct from "religious" seems to be a thirteenth century development ("secular, n2"). Its meaning as distinguished from, dismissive of, or logically antithetical to religion appears to be a modern invention ("secular 2-4").

[293] From 1857-58, the United States federal government, under James Buchanan, engaged in armed skirmishes with the Mormon settlers of Deseret, their theocratic state in the Utah Territory. Specifically

There is no shortage of examples that demonstrate our current context as one primarily of experiential contestation and justification. We do, in fact, find ourselves living with the problems of a pluralistic openness to individual experience that this dissertation has explored in the pragmatic-evangelical proximities in Edwards, Finney, Swedenborg, and the Social Gospel. Which experiences *count* as valid, which ones belong to our idea of what America means or should mean, are questions we are still wrestling with. Schlesinger's solution may have its complications, but his worry about disunification isn't misguided. When the pluralistic respect granted direct experience is reoriented within group identity, it gives rise to an identity politics that can ossify group boundaries and eliminate the possibility of conversation to all except those who can be shown to belong to that group.[295] In a very real sense, the historical liberal pluralism that was intended to democratize the value of experience gave rise to a politics of exclusion.[296]

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with a view to curtail polygamy, the "Utah War" was resolved when Mormon leader Brigham Young agreed to terms of submission.

[294] I am not being prescriptive here. I am, however, noting the problematic implications of this dissertation's findings, threading a way to what I believe is a more useful understanding of "secular."

[295] Linda Nicholson locates the splitting off of identity politics from social justice movements in the 1960s and 70s as well as its tendency to generate exclusionary modes of group-centered values and goals. See *Identity Before Identity Politics* (1-5).

[296] Not that more conservative voices haven't contributed to this exclusion. Insisting that, in America, all are equal and that racial divides are a thing of the past (as was repeated ad nauseam following Obama's 2008 election) has the direct effect of invalidating experiences that clearly demonstrate the disproportions in American life. (Think migrants and refugees, indigenous peoples, the homeless, and Black Lives Matter, to name a few.) The trouble, as William Hutchinson points out, is in figuring out "how to achieve a new symbiosis between pluralism and unity without returning to the traditional melting pot formula [assimilationism]" (234).

The Disarticulation of Belief from Religion and Rethinking the Secularization Thesis

Belief is one experience Schlesinger doesn't talk about. It's been an abiding assumption throughout this dissertation that belief – just as much as race, class, gender, what have you – is integral to the shaping of the histories we find ourselves in. I am not suggesting belief is a superior explanation of how the world is or should be, nor am I implying that radically secular perspectives like biologist Richard Dawkins's or neuroscientist Sam Harris's hope for an "end of faith" are positions totally unworthy of consideration.[297] I'm saying the ground is a little more complex than the sacred/secular binary would make it out to be. I'm also saying that faith isn't invalidated just because you've launched ironclad logic at it. What the strategy of intellectual attack towards religious belief has invariably shown is that faith under siege tends to become *more* convinced of its moral and intellectual exclusivity, if not superiority (and not less because some religions interpret "persecution" as evidence of their "chosen" status). The difference of understanding, surprising for the frequency with which it *isn't* addressed, is the difference in what counts as evidence.

Take for example militant atheism, popularized by Dawkins, Harris, and the late journalist Christopher Hitchins. Dawkins is infamous for being unrestrained in his view about faith: "[f]aith, being belief that isn't based on evidence, is the principal vice of any religion" (26). Harris, too, is turned off by faith for the same reason, due to what he calls "the extravagance of its claims and...the paucity of its evidence" (25). But what Dawkins and Harris don't seem to consider, because they've already rejected it outright, is that the faithful often do understand certain experiences to be valid evidence. It seems that Dawkins, Harris, and those who share their views have fallen victim to what the theologian Paul Tillich called the "intellectualistic distortion of the meaning of faith," and its "most ordinary misinterpretation" that faith is "an act of knowledge that has a low degree of evidence" (30-31). The problem seems to be that the interlocutors don't agree as to what counts as evidence. In terms of ongoing intellectual conflicts, we aren't far epistemologically from Edwards or Finney.

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[297] Dawkins and Harris occupy the same kind of extreme position regarding the supremacy of reason over faith. Harris's position has distinct secular Enlightenment echoes, if only because it sounds like he takes reason, properly used, to be incapable of error: "[r]eligious faith represents so uncompromising a misuse of the power of our minds that it forms a kind of perverse, cultural singularity - a vanishing point beyond which rational discourse proves impossible" (25).

But there's one interesting conjunction Dawkins's brand of atheism makes, because not only does it refute the claims of faith as valid evidence, but it seems to understand religion and faith to be in some way coimplicated - "faith" is a kind of "belief" that is "of" religion. How this semantic disarticulation of faith (or belief) from religion occurred is well beyond the scope of this epilogue, but the distinction matters for the way we understand the separability of faith, belief, and religion. One can reasonably claim to have (a) faith without subscribing to any particular religion. This separability, though, isn't simply a passable quirk about certain folks' faithful lives, but utterances of self-understanding and expression that get distorted or ignored when we lose sight of exactly what we mean when we refer to things like belief. As academics have tended to emphasize the roles of race, gender, and class in how we read history and practice cultural studies, my guess is that, by including belief, we may be able to break that trinity.

Except, it might not be that easy, as Walter Benn Michaels tells us. "Like ideological affiliation but more radically, religious identity is very different from racial or cultural identity" (*Trouble* 174). What Michaels means is that belief cannot function on a liberal "cultural model" (173) of mutual respect that views all beliefs as equally valid, simply for the fact that certain beliefs make claims about the destinies of human life that are inherently unequal (and, in extreme cases, destructive to certain groups' well-being). An ecumenical evangelical Christianity, for example, may do worlds of social and political good, but it finds itself at a loss if seriously questioned as to what happens to Jews or Muslims or anyone else who don't accept Christ as their savior.[298]

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[298] Richard Rorty is more comfortable than I am in pointing out a logical possibility to this line of thinking. "We...drop the ideas of the Nature of Humanity and of the Moral Law, considered as objects that inquiry is trying to represent accurately or as objects that make true moral judgments true. So we have to give up the comforting belief that competing groups will always be able to reason together on the basis of plausible and neutral premises" (*Truth and Progress* 206). This is then a problem of sincerity, neutrality, objectivity, and conducting ourselves with the assumption that our interlocutors aren't arguing in bad faith, in deference to preconceived ideological positions, or in the cynical pursuit of ulterior interests.

This false equivalence between religion and belief was one of the key errors driving secularization theory.[299] By associating religion with everything primitive, atavistic, delusory, and cynical, secularization narratives and their insistence on scientific empiricism could not view belief on its own epistemological terms. For many historians, anthropologists, and social scientists, however, the secularization thesis would seem to have been utterly disproven. “No one any longer holds the secularization thesis to be universally true” (10), declares Robert Orsi. In *The Desecularization of the World*, Peter L. Berger – once a believer that religion would be confined to highly local sects – adds that the “assumption that we live in a secularized world is false. The world today...is as furiously religious as it ever was” (2).[300] Or Rodney Stark’s wry suggestion that “[a]fter nearly three centuries of utterly failed prophecies and misrepresentations of both present and past, it seems time to carry the secularization doctrine to the graveyard of failed theories, and there to whisper, ‘*requiescat in pace*’” (270).[301]

Having ostensibly laid the secularization thesis to rest, some academics have proposed alternative ways of accounting for belief in a modern world seemingly at odds with its claims. One study that takes a global approach to the issue of secularization is Pippa Norris and Ronald

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[299] Bertrand Russell’s lecture to the National Secular Society in March 1927 stands as one of the more prominent examples of virtuosic condescension toward religion in the twentieth century. Russell explains why he isn’t a Christian - nor, he implies, why anybody should be - on purely intellectual and moral grounds. He cites the shortcomings of promised justice in Christianity (not a difficult thing to do in the first half of the twentieth century) (13-14), parodies the impracticality of Christ’s teachings (mentioning that a Christian like the current Prime Minister might not turn the other cheek if smote upon the other) (14-15), points out how history has disconfirmed the literal apocalypse prophesied by Jesus (16-17), and others. Strategies of intellectual and logical assault are Russell’s weapons of choice because he’s going after *religion*, not *belief*. Indeed, it’s unclear if he even makes a distinction between them. He never entertains the view that Christianity - or religion in general - might make better lives for individuals.

[300] See also Mark Lilla’s opening to *The Stillborn God*: “[t]here are legends about the course of history, full of grand terms to describe the process supposedly at work - modernization, secularization, democratization, the ‘disenchantment of the world,’ ‘history as the story of liberty,’ and countless others. These are the fairy tales of our time” (6).

[301] Theirs isn’t the consensus, however, as some scholars - especially in the sociology of religion - continue to defend the thesis, though on qualified terms. Steve Bruce has argued that a multiplicity of factors - such as structural and social differentiation, and social and cultural diversity - contributed to what he calls a “secularization paradigm” (Segal 414-20). But his propensity for causal arguments (“[d]iversity created the secular state” (420)), I think, is readily challenged by findings in modern psychology, sociology, and literature.

Inglehart’s *Sacred and Secular* (2004). Self-consciously written in the wake of and as a direct response to 9/11, their study would have merited its ambitious goals of “updating” (4) the secularization thesis had its hypotheses not recapitulated the dubious explanations of secularization as “caused” by modernity. Norris and Inglehart’s conclusion is that secularization is rampant in modern countries because of what they call the two “axioms” of “existential security” (the sense that modern advances have minimized risks to physical and psychical life) and “cultural traditions” (the rewording of religious values in secular terms). “The main reason” they believe secularization is more prevalent in more secure nations “is that the need for religious reassurance becomes less pressing under conditions of greater security” (18). Belief is predominantly an effect of cultural insecurity.

The “paradox,” as they call it, of the pervasiveness of belief in the modern world can be explained by the disproportion between secure countries and less-secure countries. There is more belief simply because there are more poorer countries than rich ones. That their study was published in 2004 is curious, since several of their hypotheses rest on generalized assumptions about the relationship between belief and economic/social/political stability. Religion is a response to economic stress, and secularization is what happens when “religious reassurance” is no longer needed. The effect of a study like Norris and Inglehart’s is that belief is reduced to a mere compensation for the failings of the state, implying that the fundamental condition of human life is secular and whose politics are religiously neutral. It doesn’t seem to occur to either Norris or Inglehart that people who are very well off in life can be extremely and sincerely religious.

I highlight Norris and Inglehart specifically to point out that assumptions about religion, belief, and secularization have a way of creeping into even recent attempts to account for them. Part of the reason I’m arguing for belief as a historical force on par with race, class, and gender is because belief is not merely a mental phenomenon subject to secularizing forces, as Norris and Inglehart’s study suggests (nor is their position by any stretch unique). If we understand belief as separable from merely intellectual orthodoxies, not exclusively as coping responses to the manifold uncertainties of living, and not as stubborn atavisms or willful self-deceptions, we get closer to appreciating belief’s pervasive role in history and culture, its persistence as a human activity not necessarily explicable by transexperiential categories.

Charles Taylor offers one of the more nuanced approaches to rethinking secularization. His “third sense” of secularity, with which his magisterial *A Secular Age* is largely concerned, paves a middle way between the often uncompromising terms of secularization theses and notions of unbelief as inevitable responses to modernization and existential uncertainty. This secularity is a “change...which takes us from a society in which it is virtually impossible not to believe in God, to one in which faith, even for the staunchest believer, is one human possibility among others” (3). Secularization for Taylor has less to do with the distinction between sacred and secular and more to do with the amplification of a field of possibilities. In this way, secularization isn’t the gradual diminishing of faith (significantly, Taylor doesn’t say “religion”), but its reconception as “one *human* possibility among others.”[302] This egalitarian context in which faith becomes epistemologically open to experimentation (an openness that also requires a fair degree of social acceptability) is the reality where the practice of lived religion, bolstered by a pragmatic sense of the utility of faith for individual lives, finds its academic livelihood and, I’d argue, is the most useful context in which to think about belief and its future in academic life. It reminds us, to use John Lardas Modern’s phrasing, that “one’s identity becomes bound up with one’s relationship to the religious” (3).[303]

Religion in the American University

As the scholarly practice of lived religion shows, then, these issues are not separate from the intellectual spaces of American universities. But more often than not, the regnant ethos ranges from polite reticence to undisguised antipathy toward religion and belief. It was common knowledge to the mentor of one of my former professors of religion that he would “never get a job,” just as it was perplexing to one of my graduate student fellows why I was “wasting time studying religion. There’s so much more interesting stuff out there.” One doesn’t get very far with “the kind of hostility to religion that has characterized so many academics, especially in the humanities and social sciences” (Wolfe viii). One does, however, like my former mentor, get a job at a highly ranked university teaching religion, as one does, in fact, write a (hopefully) compelling dissertation about it.

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[302] For all its nuance and respect for alternative forms of belief, though, Taylor’s definition implicitly repeats an assumption about the “impossibility” of past cultures to be anything but faithful, as if agnosticism or atheism were unthinkable categories for them but not for us. In the 1970s, Keith Thomas observed with a humanistic realism ahead of his time that “[n]ot enough justice has been done to the volume of apathy, heterodoxy and agnosticism which existed long before the onset of industrialism. Even the most primitive societies have their religious sceptics” (173). An account, in other words, that grounds historical analyses on heterogeneities of belief, rather than on a putative, “natural” distinction between the sacred and the secular does more justice to historical reality.

[303] Modern is using Taylor to offer a description of the American nineteenth century, but I would argue his apt observation is applicable to our modern moment as well.

As dismissal doesn’t get us very far in understanding religion or belief, neither does subsuming them within grander, secular political narratives. As Tracy Fessenden points out, “[p]articularly in American literary studies, religion receives little attention except when it figures as crucial to a progressive, emancipatory politics” (2). The tendency to focus on or even canonize figures deemed nonreligious – or whose religious commitments remain ambiguous or muted – has the effect of not only rendering large portions of history invisible, but also characterizing the history we do see as either fundamentally secular or one well on its way to becoming so. We remember and celebrate, for example, Sojourner Truth’s Christian abolitionism, but not the role these beliefs had in her devotion to alleged murderer and self-proclaimed apocalyptic prophet Robert Matthews.[304] It’s telling, for another example, that even non-academics are familiar in some sense with the agnostic James, while his close friend the Christian philosopher Josiah Royce is often known only to specialists.[305] What has in large part inspired the thinking behind this dissertation has been the idea that it is quite valuable to consider figures like Finney and Swedenborg as participants in aspects of American history that we don't immediately read as religious in nature.

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[304] For Baumfree’s history within the turbulent apocalyptic group headed by Robert “Matthias” Matthews, including her role in the murder trial that ultimately undid the patriarch, see Johnson and Wilentz’s *Kingdom of Matthias*.

[305] James might even be baffled to how history has remembered him and not his philosopher friend. Royce was an idealist, and so qualified for James’s intellectual ire. But even so, their relationship appeared to be conducted on terms of competitive amicability, or so James thought: “[w]hen I write, ‘t is with one eye on the page, and one on you. When I compose my Gifford lectures mentally, ‘t is with the design exclusively of overthrowing your system, and ruining your peace. I lead a parasitic life upon you, for my highest flight of ambitious ideality is to become your conqueror, and go down in history as such, you and I rolled in one another’s arms and silent (or rather loquacious still) in one last death-grapple of an embrace” (*LWJ, 2* 136).

Still, attempts to exclude religion and belief, or find some way of curtailing their broader involvement do emerge. German philosopher Jürgen Habermas has argued that "[t]he liberal state must not transform the requisite *institutional* separation of religion and politics into an undue *mental* and *psychological* burden for those of its citizens who follow a faith." Notwithstanding Habermas's even-handedness when it comes to the inclusion of faith-based discourse in the public sphere of a liberal state, he nonetheless prioritizes "secular reasons." "Every citizen must know and accept that only secular reasons count beyond the institutional threshold that divides the informal public sphere from parliaments, courts, ministries, and administrations" (9). Though Habermas grants that "[r]eligious traditions have a special power to articulate moral intuitions [and] this potential makes religious speech a serious candidate to transporting possible truth contents," there are "institutional thresholds" that function as a "filter that...allows only secular contributions to pass through" (10). Ultimately, religious discourse may be permitted to enter political processes if they have undergone requisite "translation" (10-11) into - using a phrase that perhaps at one time was as unambiguous as Habermas intends it to be - "secular reasons." On a practical level, this exclusionary model misses the possibility in some people of seeing no difference between religious and secular commitments (such as equating American nationhood with God's providential majesty), or people whose religiosity would rather sacrifice the secular before ceding any faithful ground.[306] More deleterious is the bald expulsion from institutions of anything having to do with faith. An academic culture that encourages the willing suspension of belief further marks these beliefs as superfluous to academic conversations or naturally unsusceptible to critical or historical analysis.

This exclusionary model rests on a secularization thesis that doesn't deny the reality of religion, but marginalizes that reality to its "proper" sphere – the private. If understood to operate just fine independently of claims about eternal salvation and morality, the secular domain may thrive unperturbed by the inevitably partisan special interests of faith groups. This dynamic, as

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[306] In fairness to Habermas, his views on the role of religious belief in society have softened over the years. Philippe Portier has identified three stages in the evolution of Habermas on religion, the third of which "stressed that religion should not be limited to the private sphere. Rather, it should intervene in the public sphere and use its founding documents and traditions to refine 'moral intuitions'" (426).

Jakobsen and Pellegrini point out, was an effect of secular dominance: “within the traditional secularization narrative, any religion, if not completely privatized, does become configured as antimodern and dangerous” (11). From the secular side, religion is seen with distrust. The religious side, interestingly, didn’t necessarily counter with distrust, but tended to reinforce the very model that excluded it. The privatization of belief, while it can be read as a kind of persecution or social neglect, can and is sometimes read as enabling the preservation of cherished beliefs, protected from the corrosive effects of modernity and secular humanism.

But there is value in integrating religion and belief in our academic conversations. Robert A. Segal’s opening to *The Blackwell Companion to the Study of Religion* argues that “religion is best deciphered when it is connected to as much of the rest of human life as possible,” adding that “religion does not thereby lose its distinctiveness” (xviii). My argument is that the aim to preserve the “distinctiveness” (the “sacred” character even) of religion, while inviting its connection to “the rest of human life” isn’t necessarily a zero-sum game. If we view the university space as existing, not separate from, but on a continuum – psychologically, emotionally, ethically – with life, there seems to be little justification for asking students, whether we’re aware we’re doing it or not, to leave their beliefs at the door.[307]

It’s beyond this dissertation to tackle the roles of media bias, the insensitivity or obliviousness of political or social leaders, the impact of internet trolls anonymous or otherwise, conspiracy theories, and elementary education in the gross misrepresentations of belief, but our current world is no stranger to their pernicious effects. When students assume a posture of assurance in denying religious belief (or as one of mine memorably put it, “just brainwashing”), my immediate response is that you aren’t obligated to agree, like, or even respect others’ beliefs.

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[307] There have been challenges to exclusionary models of the role of religion in society. The English cleric and academic Martyn Percy argues that the “salt” of faith

> is a social nutrient. That said, however, there are many within faith communities who see their ‘salt’ as being contained, either through their own separatist choice, or because of their perception of the apparent marginalization of religion by contemporary culture. In contrast, I hold that many aspects of Western society remain unavoidably saturated, soaked, seasoned and affected by religious ideas, symbols, motifs and values. (19)

But a posture of understanding – understanding the history of a belief, its appeal to believers, and its effects on non-believers – is one step in the right direction. I'm inclined to agree with Mark U. Edwards, Jr that "[o]ne's religious affiliation ought not to be an "autobiographical footnote" (Jacobsen 81). Those groups central to diversity committees and cultural studies, who have made significant progress in academic and cultural representation in the past decades, know all too well what it is to be a footnote.

Simplest solutions may be the way to go. Describing the abiding interpersonal ethic in their small-group faith session, one Catholic put it, "[n]o one is to preach and no one is to teach. We're only there to share, and whatever's said is acceptable. You don't have to believe it, but you have to accept...that that person believes it, and that's fine" (Wolfe 16). In focusing exclusively on the "experiences of [individuals] in their solitude" (*VRE* 31), James was perhaps more prescient than he may have thought. Recognizing the faithful commitments of the believing remnant among us may prove, if not a solution, then at least an opened way.

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