

“Unenthusiastic” Proselytization: The Unitarian Effort to Merge National Identity and Religion

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Abstract

This study discusses the modes of proliferating the agenda of a rational, “unenthusiastic” religion across the mid-nineteenth-century United States, as exemplified by the Unitarian newspaper *The Christian Inquirer*. The motivations for and strategies used to spread the Unitarian creed are highly nuanced, as the leaders of that church prided themselves on having a progressive religion that relied on neither blind faith nor fanatical devotion. The chief editor of the *Inquirer* for several years, Henry Whitney Bellows, conflated American national identity with his Unitarian outlook. The main obstacle to this achievement was the influence of Calvinistic denigration embedded in the nation’s history, most significantly by the New England Puritans. The result was a careful balancing act between respect for tradition, iconoclastic humanism, and appeals to figures of national pride.

Christian proselytizing, since the first British settlements of the New World, proved a central cultural influence in what became the United States, with evangelical Christianity growing thereafter—to the point, some three-and-a-half centuries later, of having sufficient followers to qualify as a major interest group in elections. From Puritan New England to Prohibition, Christian leaders sought to make their beliefs universal and convert church doctrine into public policy. They have more recently pursued this agenda through newspapers, television, and online blogging. In the nineteenth century, Unitarian minister

Henry Whitney Bellows resolved to achieve related goals in the *Christian Inquirer*. Published in New York from 1846 to 1863—but having Bellows as its primary editor from October 1846 to June 1850,¹ the *Inquirer* conflated American identity with liberal-Christian notions of truth and morality. Unitarianism emphasized the imitableness of Christ’s character, with optimism about human potential that appealed to Americans’ sense of self-reliance. By emphasizing the overlap between religious and political outlook, the newspaper sought to place Unitarianism at the forefront of U.S. culture and destiny. The *Inquirer* thusly related American icons to religious figures and deemed truth and freedom integral to liberal Christianity. But at the same time the paper challenged the political limitations imposed by Locke and by European revolutionary outlook. By extolling the United States, in particular, the *Inquirer* subtly elevated itself as the image of a patriotic, reliable source of information and perspective that would alert readers to the importance of linking Unitarian confidence in human nature to American identity and therefore to what Bellows, incorporating political rhetoric, called “the manifest destiny of our souls” (Bellows, *Religious* 5).² In so doing, Bellows and the *Inquirer* enacted a plan to ensure the ascendancy of liberal-Christian sentiment over traditional notions of human fragility, all the while tying such melioristic outlooks on human nature to American progress, nationalism, and expansionism. Attentive to such contexts, the current study explores how the newspaper’s strategies to achieve that conflation were specifically tailored to appeal to national pride and liberal politics, all the while diminishing the influence of

orthodox Protestantism—that is, a Trinitarian outlook steeped in doctrine espousing imputed sin and imputed grace, in the New World.

Bellows chose a newspaper as the vehicle for his “theo-political” plans because newspapers had risen to singular importance in Western society. They had become universally accessible as a result of the dramatic rise in literacy in the early nineteenth-century, establishing themselves as one of the most popular reading sources for scholars and laymen alike. A Unitarian newspaper would be powerful because, in the *Inquirer’s* words, the United States’ “real national literature is found almost wholly in speeches, pamphlets, and newspapers.”³ Since the young nation had little history of literature in longer works, newspapers were the most popular reading material. They were more influential also because of their “light and clever” features⁴; they could thus hold the reader’s attention better than might lengthy treatises. Newspapers also reached people quickly and expressed multiple outlooks. Whereas books took months or even years to create, publish, and disseminate, newspapers were immediately and widely accessible. Indeed, the *Inquirer* would pronounce Americans “emphatically a reading people,”⁵ an especially significant claim, since a Unitarian newspaper would “reach where the voice of a preacher is never heard.”⁶

This reasoning would be especially important to a minister like Bellows because, though a skilled orator who was popular among congregants, he often doubted his own abilities to preach well and reach a great audience (Kring 36-37, 44). He envisioned a future in which people “would hear very little about Catholicism or Protestantism,” but he did not feel he could accomplish such a feat on his own (119). He thus believed that publishing a Unitarian

newspaper was the best way to ensure that the Unitarian message earned a national audience, thereby garnering ever-increasing support. Frequent publishing on behalf of the church would also establish an image for Unitarianism as being modern and sophisticated, while providing more consistent and more thoughtful input on issues and debates than any one preacher might alone communicate. Bellows doubtless had these advantages in mind when he wrote that the Unitarians needed a paper “for upholding and disseminating more clearly our faith.”⁷ Sharing and preserving Unitarian wisdom would be essential to the *Inquirer’s* long-term goals, encompassing policy and culture, alike, to liberate Americans from the “five points of Calvinism,” consistent with a Trinitarian godhead to make sense of infinite atonement to compensate for humanity’s infinite depravity.⁸

That notion of infinite depravity ran directly contrary to the kind of progressive liberal-Christian rationalism Bellows hoped to instill into the nation. Further, the influence of Calvinism was, at least in the Unitarian view, a religion rooted in, and sensible only in, the context of a highly stratified, static, monarchical society.⁹ Not only did Calvinism appear antiquated in form, but its orthodoxy had long been criticized for prioritizing adherence to doctrine over ethical and moral considerations (Haroutunian 10-11). This would be the initial fuel for the fire that forged Unitarianism, which was rooted in New England patriotism and secular humanitarianism (179-180). That a religion so deeply indebted to modern liberal ethics would be opposed to Calvinism’s almost single-minded focus on self-deprecating piety should come as no surprise. That same liberal-humanist sentiment persuaded many to object to the Calvinist emphasis on imputed sin. With the increasingly popular

belief that humans were essentially good, the notion that every person is inherently sinful by his very nature, regardless of intent or personal choice, came under assault by Unitarians (19-20, 200). That an individual had no possible escape from sin was antithetical to the rationalism of liberal Christianity and opposed to the individualism espoused by the Founders. Were humans unable to escape the infinite weight of sin, the idea of self-government would be absurd. To promote *both* liberal government and liberal religion, the *Inquirer* thus needed to combat the dominance of Calvinism.

To liberate Americans from a morphology of conversion predicated on human frailty—and to augment Unitarianism’s patriotic reputation—the *Inquirer* praised individualistic ideals exemplified in the Bill of Rights. The newspaper thus celebrated American freedom of the press, insisting that such protection ensured that the press could “never be bribed, or its patronage won over by unlawful means.”¹⁰ Unhindered by censorship and free from corruption, newspapers would continue to reveal the truth, ostensibly without officially sanctioned agendas, therefore rendering the American press superior to that of other countries. At its best, freedom of the press encouraged upright, proper conduct among publishers and readers. To that end, the *Inquirer* vowed “to discuss religious topics from an independent stand-point,”¹¹ providing relatively unbiased information and supporting the American ideal that a free press was the best source of factual information. This mission was, of course, a natural extension of the Unitarian creed that humans were regenerate and could ascend to higher status by education.¹² The editors therefore considered “a newspaper *rightly conducted*”—that is, one that is factual and impartial—“a potent power in promoting

the well-being of universal man.”¹³ Underlying this statement is the implication that only a Unitarian paper could effect that stature; as Channing had asserted, Trinitarianism, especially that of Calvinism, was “a doctrine which violates reason” and “breaks down the distinctions and barriers between truth and falsehood” (III: 201). Unitarian papers, on the other hand, encouraged the universal well-being envisioned by the Framers, rendering progressively spiritual oversight requisite for theo-political constitutional democracy. The *Inquirer* sought to place itself at the center of that endeavor.

To tie that democratic mission to systematic Unitarianism, the paper extended its praise far beyond freedom of the press. Indeed, if humans were capable of elevated character and comportment, they were obliged to demonstrate as much in a host of venues, including political enlightenment. The writers of the *Christian Inquirer* were therefore self-proclaimed “earnest lovers of everything popular and free,” as good members of a democracy ought to be.¹⁴ The paper encouraged liberal doctrine as necessary for encouraging an upright citizenry. Just as the United States rejected the formal hierarchy of nobility, so Protestant religion had departed from the hierarchical structure of the Catholic and Anglican churches. In the young, democratic United States, the ideal religion would have no ties to such rule; the doctrine of the religion, like the law of the land, would instead be determined by the people. Unitarianism was indeed a prime example of a religion based on notions of democracy and popular rule, to a degree that some orthodox Christians would call heretical. Calvinists in particular took issue with the Unitarian confidence in humanity’s limitless potential; they certainly would have disagreed with the *Inquirer*’s claim that the Bible was not “superior to man. It was made

for man, and not man for it.”¹⁵ William Ellery Channing—a major influence on Bellows’ belief and career¹⁶—described Unitarian Christianity as “not a mere code of laws, not an abstract system. . . . It is a living, embodied religion.”¹⁷ The claim that the Bible and its religion helped people to guide their lives—rather than dictating prescriptive standards of comportment—fit neatly into liberal insistence on non-intervention into personal self-governance. The Unitarian church would therefore reflect popular American political philosophy. The stronger this conviction, the more persuasive the argument for Unitarian dominance in America.

Reinforcing that connection between liberal theology and enlightened governance required a cohesive political theory that satisfied both Unitarian beliefs and traditional American convictions. To this end, the *Inquirer* assured its readers that “duty to government and duty to God are not inconsistent.”¹⁸ Such compatibility was vital to maintaining a viable society; and Unitarians, if they had any hope of becoming *the* American religion, needed a creed to enforce such responsibilities. It therefore prescribed a philosophy that maintained democratic ideals sans mob rule. The *Inquirer* fancied itself advancing this agenda by echoing the Founding Fathers—that is, by encouraging a small centralized government. In such a progressive society, the duty of a citizen, especially that of a Christian citizen, was to “look upon the civil government . . . with as unblanching an eye” as one “would look upon anything else.”¹⁹ And to ensure that government remain small and non-intrusive, the Christian citizen would be “at liberty to inquire whether any act of government transgresses” its proper limits of authority.²⁰ The *Inquirer* thereby encouraged readers to live within the limits of civil society and the rule of law without compromising religious values. Limited

government, it asserted, was the best way to achieve a balance between freedom and tyranny. Democracy was, of course, necessary to maintain that balance. Channing points out that the “best code is that which had its origin in the will of the people who obey it” (I:75). By appropriating the arguments made by the most influential philosophers in the American consciousness and linking them to a Unitarian worldview, the *Inquirer* would conjoin liberal Christianity and American republicanism.

In thusly balancing religious and patriotic sentiment, the *Inquirer* prescribed a solution for the Christian citizen who might find fault in a civil government that enhanced its religious compatibility with American democracy. That outlook in some degree contrasted with that of the Founding Fathers, as the newspaper discouraged overthrowing the government, even if tyrannical. It advocated instead for the civil disobedience that would soon be popularized by William Lloyd Garrison’s Non-Resistant Society and then by Thoreau. It advised its readers that “subjection under government is a duty. . . . But obedience is a duty only under certain conditions, and to a certain extent.”²¹ Bellows, by elsewhere advocating the supremacy of conscience, was in accord with Thoreau in stating that a citizen had conscientiously to defy immoral laws. That stance mirrored outlooks of Channing and Harvard Unitarians who believed that human conscience was founded in religion (Duban 216, 213). Channing, in fact, insisted on the ascendancy of individual piety—necessary for proper conscience—over physical freedom; for if one lacks “this inward, spiritual freedom, outward liberty is of little worth” (*Works*, I: 76). He argued that tyranny is worst when it robs persons of devotion to God, breaking their spirit and turning them against Christian values. To

revolt against the government, then, would be reminiscent of Aesop's "The Dog and His Shadow": the perpetrators would sacrifice their Christian morals for the lesser prize of civil liberties. Taking the stance of disobedience over revolution put the *Inquirer* in the most favorable position by appealing to Americans' self-reliant nature without appearing to be politically seditious. By advocating peaceful means of checking government, Unitarian outlook could be bold and patriotic without becoming militant.

Perhaps because any undermining of the American government would jeopardize Bellows' mission to place Unitarianism at the forefront of American culture, the *Inquirer* rebuked violent revolutionary action. Were readers to use the newspaper to justify political rebellion, their actions would sow disorder and would endanger a unified American identity, nullifying the *Inquirer's* end goal. The endurance of, and faith in, democratic institutions were essential to the paper's liberal-Christian goals. Unitarians looked to civil government to maintain social cohesion, as they believed that "an emotional reverence for American institutions had to be created if society were not to disintegrate in the vast new continent" (Howe 130). Bellows was thus adamantly opposed to the secession of the Southern states just before the Civil War; he insisted that the sanctity of the Union was important above all else—but not so much that the Northern states should sacrifice their integrity to preserve it from secession (Kring 219). The *Inquirer* supported this stance when it rejected revolution as a viable course of action in 1850, stating that, were one to pursue this goal by "raising a popular commotion and exciting armed resistance, he would be guilty of want of submission to rulers."²² This argument was a vital step, because an overthrown government would issue in social chaos. So passionately did

Bellows champion cohesion between government and religion that he would preach, during the Civil War, that those entities shared "common organs and functions," amounting to a sort of conflation of the structure of American government as itself a form of religion (Kring 223). Accordingly, he saw the *Inquirer* as a vehicle with which to replace revolutionary political theory with philosophy more suitable to a cohesive, Unitarian-inspired national identity.

This line of pro-civil-government reasoning, a necessary component to Unitarian dominance in the U.S., runs directly contrary to the social contract outlined by John Locke, subverting the arguments that were central to the ideological origins of the United States. That the *Inquirer* would adopt such a strategy is initially somewhat surprising, considering that Locke so immensely influenced Unitarian rationalism (Howe 36-37). In fact, the rejection by Unitarians of the necessity of revelation was an extension of Locke's "firm reliance on the knowledge which God offered mankind, . . . which was independent of scriptural revelation" (Howe 38). Unitarianism rested on Lockean-inspired belief in knowledge and its power to improve the human experience. Additionally, Arminians (to whom Unitarians were indebted) drew upon Locke's arguments concerning personal identity to refute the doctrine of imputed sin, a mainstay of Calvinism (Wright 85). Clearly, the ideas that form the basis of Unitarian philosophy—and therefore the basis for the ideas with which the *Inquirer* sought to imbue the American identity—are predicated on Locke's contributions to Western discourse.

For all that, the *Inquirer* needed to encourage a pro-civil-government attitude to promote a Unitarian merger with American

identity; this meant dispensing with Locke's views on governmental power. His political theory, so popular with the writers of the Constitution, left little room for liberal-Christian humanism; the *Inquirer* therefore needed to convince its readers to reevaluate this philosophy and accept a more forward-looking creed. Locke had asserted that government was merely a necessary evil, protecting society from itself without need for further responsibility. Channing openly refutes this notion by stating that, although "government has so often been the scourge of mankind," that deleterious tendency has arisen because "statesmen have seldom understood the sacredness of human society" (I: 69), and because proper democratic institutions "contribute in no small degree to freedom and force of mind, by teaching the essential equality of men" (I:75). Channing rejects even Locke's premise for government, stating that people do not "agree to live together for the protection of private interests" alone (*Works*, I: 101). In the same spirit, Bellows preached that true liberty required both positive and negative input, for absolute freedom to act according to one's interests alone resulted in a freedom "worse than tyranny" (Kring 119). Accordingly, the newspaper echoed Channing's statement, claiming that, in searching for a "higher and purer form of religious thought, men will not rest contented until they embody it in practical institutions."²³ This belief that people are so drawn to institutions stands in direct contrast to Locke's statement that when people "enter into society" they "give up the equality, liberty, and executive power they had in the state of Nature into the hands of the society" (Locke, *Treatises* 161).²⁴ Without explicitly mentioning the name or works of Locke, the *Inquirer* sought to convince its readers of the philosopher's political irrelevance. In refuting Locke's civic ideas—while retaining reliance on his

outlooks on moral certitude and human reasonableness—Unitarians could further their theories on human potential, both as individuals and as a collective. Doing so allowed the *Inquirer* to push an agenda friendlier to civil government.

Although Unitarian humanism insisted on the potential of each individual and the ability of the government to enhance it, the *Inquirer* still needed to augment the capacity of liberal Christians to live up to that potential to gain cultural power. Thus arose the case that religion was necessary to support both the individual and the government. To that end, the *Inquirer* stated that France was unable to achieve prosperity akin to that of the U.S. because France "lack[ed] religion, and the kind of home education that comes from religion."²⁵ Bellows doubtless here refers to revolutionary France. The piety of Americans allegedly created a more righteous society, which reinforced the *Inquirer's* message that the American identity was both compatible with, and improved by, Unitarian ethos. Without Christianity's driving progress, the country would allegedly fall behind in the French manner of political and social regression. This accusation drew a clear connection between religious and socio-political progress, as liberal Christianity allied with progressive society in opposition to old-world worship and chaos.

To highlight the vital role of Unitarianism in American social and political progress, the *Inquirer* took after Bellows' co-religionists in implicating orthodox religion in criticism of Europe. Polemics against Catholicism and Calvinism especially were common among Unitarians, and those countries in which orthodoxy was predominant were most often targets of attack. Channing, as a skilled writer and scholar, was especially clever in his

critiques of Old-World religion and politics. In a meeting with Channing, Alexis de Tocqueville had quipped that Catholicism bred aristocratic rule whereas Protestantism birthed democracy. Although Channing was wary of certain features of American democracy, he does not refute the superiority of either Christianity or democracy; nor does he deny the connection between the two.²⁶ In fact, he goes so far as to claim that religion ought to be more democratically oriented than even government. Clearly, he wished to affirm Tocqueville's sentiment without appearing vain.

Channing nonetheless did not hesitate to publish strong statements about the superiority of Christianity. In "Evidences of Christianity" he explicitly states that Christianity in (predominantly Catholic) Spain and Portugal was manifested "only as a bulwark of despotism, as a rearer [*sic*] of inquisitions, as a stern jailer. . . as an executioner stained with the blood. . . of the friends of freedom" (*Works*, III: 323). Channing here identified the predominant interpretation of Christianity as complicit in those states' wrongdoings. His criticism of European Catholicism becomes all the more virulent when he claims that the situation arose because "the Scriptures are not common" in those nations—a clear criticism of Catholic practice (III: 323). The proliferation of Protestantism, and especially Unitarianism, would of course prevent such injustice from reigning in America. Thus, just as Unitarians sought to improve upon orthodox and Trinitarian Christianity, so the United States, already more inclined toward Protestantism than toward Catholicism, would move beyond the social order of Europe. If both Unitarian and American success were measured by increased individual freedom and a greater focus on modern reason, then the *Inquirer* needed only articulate the connection to suggest the

reasonableness of sanctifying the connection via adherence to Unitarian doctrine.

To make liberal Christianity yet more enticing as a national religion to the average citizen, the *Christian Inquirer* not only framed itself and its religion as ideal candidates to augment American culture and politics generally, but also to improve journalism and education specifically. The newspaper thus asserted that the reliability and "purity of the public press will be increased as Christianity advances"²⁷—meaning, of course, the kind of Christianity from which the *Inquirer* was born. The truth, according to the newspaper, could be fully understood only if placed in proper religious context. Publishing a paper would therefore benefit readers by dispersing the Unitarian viewpoint and providing more reliable access to all issues. A wholly secular press, on the other hand, would be akin to the distorted outlook in atheistic France and would as readily regress. Accordingly, the *Inquirer* saw itself as a pillar of reliable and productive journalism. It would denounce dishonest reporting in religious terms and with religious solutions, enhancing its own reputation. It would also berate sensationalist news as a product of the "satanic press, the effect of which is to sear the conscience and debase the mind."²⁸ The *Inquirer* proclaimed absolute disbelief in the audacity of such publications, placing them in direct opposition to its own independent, inquisitive reporting. The only conceivable solution for this issue appeared to be "the most thorough moral and religious training" for "those minds which have been debased by unhealthy stimulus."²⁹ In other words, the best way to avoid falling victim to false reporting would be to adhere to Unitarian teaching. Connecting itself with education would further the paper's mission, as readers would seek answers to their problems in the *Inquirer*'s pages and, from there, search for more within the Unitarian

church. Such answers as the church provided would, of course, support the claim that Unitarianism was the proper religion for the United States. Without papers like the *Inquirer*, therefore, the country would be victimized—beyond despotic unreligious government and failing secular education—by dishonest reporting and inferior education, therefore never living up to its democratic and personal potential.

So that it might further convince Americans of the timeliness of adopting Unitarianism, the *Inquirer* embraced an innovative agenda in accord with the zeitgeist of the day—individualism, as best characterized by Manifest Destiny. The *Inquirer* would therefore not hesitate to publish strong opinions that may not have been entirely popular; nor would its authors shy away from direct criticisms of other papers or of fellow citizens. Indeed, the publishers stated that they would “sometimes feel like pitting ourselves, or rather the truth, against the world.”³⁰ Such a statement appealed to readers’ pride in American rugged individualism, a staple of the nation’s culture. The *Inquirer*, established already as a herald of democracy and personal freedom, sought to tie itself to this most enduring American value. And never was the spirit of individualism more potent than in the Mexican War of 1846-1848; in the annexation of new territories (soon to be states) following the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo; in 1858, when the country laid even more claim to the land from the Atlantic to the Pacific, in 1869; and with a railway-accessible American frontier occupying an important place in the nation’s imagination. As self-proclaimed advocates of individual liberty and progress, Unitarians were uniquely disposed to uphold the nation’s ideals in such a narrative.

The script sought to promulgate belief in the greatness of the nation and, by

extension, in the superiority of the ideals that built it. Just as Unitarianism sought to free its followers from Old World religion, so the United States claimed a righteous battle against European influence in the New World—first in the Monroe Doctrine, and then in President Polk’s attack on “European interference” (Graebner 110). Though the “empire on the Pacific” may not have been born of the fervent expansionist sentiment that appears on the surface, this fact only brings the narrative closer to the Unitarian outlook (Graebner 226-227). Accepting Graebner’s thesis that there existed a “magnificent vision for a democratic purpose” but that the real force behind expansionism was “precise and calculated movement” (218), then the “unenthusiastic” strategies employed by Unitarians to achieve a far loftier goal is easily analogous. On the surface, as well, capturing the spirit of individualism as a rational Unitarian feature could detract from the “messianic fervor” and Calvinistic determinism with which expansionism was otherwise identified.³¹ Showing Unitarianism to be not only compatible, but ideally suited for, manifest destiny would carry significant cultural weight. Of course, were the *Inquirer* to become overcommitted to that cause, such sentiment might morph into the kind of fanaticism from which, following the anti-revivalists of the eighteenth-century, it had sought to separate. The best solution was to appeal to the individualism that fueled expansionism without committing wholly to the concept of manifest destiny.

To highlight that commitment to individualism, thereby supporting the conflation of Unitarianism and subdued political policy, the *Inquirer* emphasized that both the Protestant Reformation and the American Revolution shared a narrative of rebelling against the establishment for personal freedom and individualism. Finding commonality between the two such

monumental events would put other shared characteristics into clear relief, encouraging a qualified merger of religion and state. If both Protestantism and American democracy shared a common goal, surely their respective leaders had much in common. Or so *Inquirer* sought to convince readers by proclaiming that “Luther and Washington together represent the great idea of modern times: practical freedom, civil and religious.”³² Their missions—minus difference in belief of imputed sin—were nearly identical and consistent with the *Inquirer*’s main goals. The *Inquirer* stressed the urgency of embracing the ideals of those leaders, for the influence of each “was never more potent, their inspiration never more precious, than now.”³³ Both the United States and Protestantism were at the height of their influences, so they ought to be united at such an opportune time—by implication in the *Inquirer*’s outlook. Once the *Inquirer* convinced its readers of this consonance, a coherent system of thought would follow.

The *Inquirer* played its part in a long tradition of religious proselytization, though markedly less “enthusiastic” than its revivalist predecessors. As implied by its name, the paper hoped to incorporate into its own vision of American identity a disposition toward open-mindedness and discussion, similar to the way democracy had brought political philosophy into popular discourse—as illustrated in Tocqueville’s comments on America, and in Channing’s response (above). Unitarians thus sought to enrich, for perpetuity, American religion, politics, and culture. Their plans to do so mandated the support, beyond that of the social intelligentsia, of a literate populace. The *Inquirer* conveyed its outlook at a pivotal point in American history when newspapers were becoming increasingly popular. At such a juncture, writers, artists, and thinkers were redefining

popular ideas about life and society. These creators required a theology and outlook that would embrace their contributions, whereas Calvinism denied their ability to achieve anything that could surmount inherent sin. Unitarianism, in contrast, emphasized the imitableness of Christ’s character, with such optimism about human potential aiding to spread the message of liberal Christianity to Americans *en masse*, at the same time challenging the political limitations imposed by Locke and by European revolutionary outlook.

As a result of the *Inquirer*’s efforts and those of other religious media, many Americans to this day conceive of their identity, beyond federalist thinking, in a manner consistent with Unitarian optimism about human potential, constitutional and permanent republicanism, and a unity of values implied by a destiny to free one’s self and others from denigration. Bellows, like many of his predecessors and successors, believed that proselytization was a necessary component to his religion, and that localizing religion inherently hindered its progress (Kring 183). This firm insistence on geographic universalism affected not only the future of Unitarianism, but also American religion at large. Generations of charismatic preachers like Bellows have attempted to conflate national-political and religious values in accord with what they believed to be a vital component of each of their faiths. The *Christian Inquirer* set an example by using the most popular medium of its time and passionate but not partisan political commentary, along with declarations of national pride, to convince readers of the importance of Unitarianism. Though Henry Whitney Bellows would have taken issue with being called “enthusiastic,” the strategies used by the *Christian Inquirer* sometimes approach those used by evangelicals and other religious groups who would yet wear that label with pride.

Notes

1. Duban, "Emerson to Edwards." Pg. 392 n. 16.
2. Bellows, *Religious Education* (Boston: Crosby, Nichols, and Co., 1857).
3. Bellows, "American Literature." *The Christian Inquirer*, 31 March 1849, pg. 100 col. 2.
4. Bellows, "Newspapers and Novels." *CI*, 15 March 1856, pg. 1 col. 2.
5. Bellows, "Periodical Journals." *The Christian Inquirer*, 11 January 1851, pg. 1 col. 2.
6. Bellows, "Our Duty as Unitarians." *CI*, 22 May 1847, pg. 1 col. 1.
7. Bellows, "Our Duty as Unitarians." *CI*, 22 May 1847, pg. 1 col. 1.
8. Wright, *The Liberal Christians* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970).
9. Haroutunian, *Piety Versus Moralism* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, Inc., 1932).
10. Bellows, "Newspapers." *CI*, 22 April 1854, pg. 3 col. 1.
11. Bellows, "Prospectus of the Christian Inquirer." *CI*, 2 October 1858, pg. 2 col. 1.
12. Howe, *The Unitarian Conscience* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970).
13. Bellows, "Newspapers." *CI*, 22 April 1854, pg. 3 col. 1.
14. Bellows, "Letter From France." *CI*, 22 July 1848, pg. 162 col. 6.
15. Bellows, "Christian Denomination." *CI*, 23 October 1858, pg. 1 col. 7.
16. For more extensive discussion of Channing's influence on Bellows, see Walter Donald Kring, *Henry Whitney Bellows*, esp. pp. 44, 119.
17. Channing, *Works vol. I* (Boston: James Munroe and Company, 1845). Pg. 135.
18. G.F.S., "The Two Kingdoms." *CI*, 28 December 1850, pg. 1 col. 6.
19. Bellows, "Duties of a Citizen." *CI*, 13 May 1858, pg. 121 col. 6.
20. Bellows, "Duties of a Citizen." *CI*, 13 May 1848, pg. 121 col. 6.
21. G.F.S., "The Two Kingdoms." *CI*, 28 December 1850, pg. 1 col. 6.
22. G.F.S., "The Two Kingdoms." *CI*, 28 December 1850, pg. 1 col. 6.
23. Bellows, "Nature of the Cristian Inquirer." *CI*, 2 October 1858, pg. 2 col. 1.
24. Locke, John. *Two Treatises of Government*. 1823.
25. Bellows, "The French Ouvrier." *CI*, 5 August 1848, pg. 170 col. 5.
26. Pierson, *Tocqueville and Beaumont* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1938). Pp. 393-396, 448.
27. Bellows, "Newspapers." *CI*, 22 April 1854, pg. 3 col. 1.
28. Bellows, "Magazine Literature." *CI*, 13 August 1853, pg. 3 col. 1.
29. Bellows, "Magazine Literature." *CI*, 13 August 1853, pg. 3 col. 1.
30. Bellows, "Christian Denomination." *CI*, 23 October 1858, pg. 1 col. 7.
31. Duban, *Melville's Major Fiction*. Pp. 90-91. Melville, who for several years was involved with Henry Whitney Bellows' All Souls Church, criticized the rhetoric behind Manifest Destiny, via *Vivenza in Mardi*, as "inspired by self-serving outlooks which are more hypocritical than redemptive" (Duban 30). Considering that Melville maintained "liberal Christian ideas about human regeneracy" while harboring at least the beginnings of "discontent with excessive liberal optimism" by the publication of *Mardi* (Duban 31, 35), as well as Bellows' appropriation of the phrase in speaking of "the manifest destiny of our souls" (see note 1), it would not be surprising that Melville and Bellows could have agreed on the negative aspects of manifest destiny, but had

opposed reactions: Melville denouncing and Bellows attempting to lay religious claim to it. Duban more recently seeks to reconcile aspects of Melville's encounter with Unitarianism; see Duban, James. "The Oracle of God Within": Human Nature and Personal Faith in the Epilogue to *Clarel* and Melville's Annotated Bible." *Literature & Theology*, vol. 28, no. 4, 2014, pp. 425-437.

32. Bellows, "Luther and Washington." *CI*, 8 May 1852, pg. 1 col. 4.
 33. Bellows, "Luther and Washington." *CI*, 8 May 1852, pg. 1 col. 4.

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