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Cover Page Footnote

I would like to thank my professor and thesis director Bonnie Carr O'Neill for all the time and patience she's given me over the years.

A “Defect of Justice”: Congregationalism, the Calvinist Problem, and the Unitarian Solution in Sylvester Judd’s *Margaret*

Benjamin Michael Woods

Sylvester Judd’s 1845 novel *Margaret: A Tale of the Real and the Ideal, Blight and Bloom* is due for critical reconsideration. With the exception of Gavin Jones’ work with the novel in 2009, *Margaret* has been given little critical attention despite its popularity in the mid-nineteenth century. Though some critics emphasize the role genre plays in the novel, or how the novel is significant to the study of American folklore, the scant body of criticism reaches the consensus that Judd uses *Margaret* as an instrument for perpetuating his Transcendentalist ideals. Critics regard *Margaret* as a call for theological reform in New England society, as it rejects the incumbent Calvinist theology, which emphasizes humanity’s total depravity,¹ in favor of Transcendentalist doctrines.²

While these critics are correct in their assessment, the novel also critiques Calvinist theology as it manifests itself through the social structure of the New England village. Not only does *Margaret* illustrate the negative ramifications of the Calvinistic doctrines of total depravity, it also demonstrates how Calvinism manifested itself through the Congregationalist framework of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century New England villages. Specifically, *Margaret* addresses not only Calvinism’s role in creating social injustice in Livingston, the representative New England village, but how this injustice ironically hinders the villagers’ attempts to adhere to the Congregationalist ideals brought alongside Calvinism to New England by Puritan figures such as John Winthrop and William Bradford.³ Calvinism’s encumbering effect is primarily demonstrated in the Livingston community’s treatment of the Hart family. Portrayed as religiously unorthodox and morally lax, the Harts are frequently perceived by the villagers as irrevocably irreligious, intemperate, and violent. As the novel progresses, the Livingstonians’ assumptions of the Hart family, powered by a theological dependence on the Calvinist doctrine of total depravity, turn from prejudice to outright hostility, transforming the Hart family from habitual disturbers of the peace into enemies of the moral fabric of the community. After illustrating this failure to live up to Winthrop’s social ideal, Judd then presents in *Margaret* a reformed, post-Calvinist society that discards the Puritan legacy of Calvinism and the doctrine of total depravity. The novel, however, does not do away entirely with the Congregationalist apparatus of the community’s Puritan predecessors. Though Margaret Hart clearly embodies the transcendental ideal at the individual level, Judd’s depiction of a reformed congregationalist⁴ community, powered by Unitarian theology based

on the doctrine of moral perfectibility rather than Transcendentalism, indicates the Unitarian future he envisions for New England.⁵

The small amount of scholarship concerning *Margaret* largely interprets the novel as a work that addresses the need for philosophical and theological reform in nineteenth-century New England society. Most critics identify the novel as Judd's promotion of a Transcendentalist-driven reform that counters the social injustice Calvinist theology causes in Livingston. In "Sylvester Judd: Novelist of Transcendentalism," Philip Judd Brockway emphasizes this Transcendentalist reading, arguing that the novel "clearly portrays in the lives of the main characters . . . the living-out of the basic teachings of Emerson" (654). Bruce A. Ronda follows suit in "Sylvester Judd's *Margaret*: Open Spirits and Hidden Hearts," noting that Margaret embodies the Transcendentalist ideal, as she "communes with the all-pervasive divine spirit, understands religion intuitively, and is at once selfless and self-possessed" (217). Though there are differences in scholars' views of the novel's purpose as a whole, Brockway and Ronda's interpretation of Margaret and other characters as avatars of Emersonian philosophy in the novel has met little critical dispute.

In keeping with the interpretations of *Margaret* as championing Transcendentalist-driven theological reform in New England, Gavin Jones argues in "The Paradise of Aesthetics: Sylvester Judd's *Margaret* and Antebellum American Literature" that the novel "gains importance as an early effort to embody 'transcendental' ideas in a large and complex imaginative structure as an early instance of early American literature that promotes an idealized 'utopian social state'" (451). For Jones, Judd's purpose in writing *Margaret* was to "promote his idealistic schemes for social reform through universal Christianity," and to envision a radically new society driven by Unitarian and Transcendentalist thought (452). Like Brockway and Ronda, Jones sees the novel's promotion of Unitarian and Transcendentalist thought as working primarily through the protagonist's characterization. Though Margaret is "faced with a degenerate humanity and its corrupt institutions throughout her life, she is able to intuit the principles of natural religion, principles confirmed by her future husband Mr. Evelyn, who instructs Margaret in the true teachings of Christ" (452). Margaret's Transcendentalism, demonstrated by her ability to intuit religion independently of the socially-imposed Calvinist doctrines of her community, enables Margaret to see the value of Charles Evelyn's Unitarianism. Hence, Margaret serves as the embodiment of Judd's view of human nature as intrinsically good and morally perfectible, an example of how social and theological reform in society begins within the individual.

Other critics recognize the positions Brockway, Ronda, and Jones assert concerning *Margaret* as a critique of Calvinism and promotion of a new, Unitarian social ideal powered by Transcendentalism. However, these critics move beyond the readings of the novel as an instrument for social reform and explore other possible connotations. Affirming that Judd "maintains a larger fame for his aggressive representation of the aims and ideals" of Transcendentalist thought, C. Grant Loomis argues that the novel is particularly valuable in the study of New England folklore (151). Like Loomis, John Evelev does not dispute that Judd's purpose in writing *Margaret* was to address the negative implications of Calvinist theology and to promote a primarily Transcendentalist social ideal. Instead, Evelev seeks to define *Margaret*

along with Oliver Wendell Holmes' *Elsie Venner* and Henry Ward Beecher's *Norwood* as representatives of the New England village novel genre.

Brockway, Ronda, and Jones are correct in seeing *Margaret* as Judd's critique of Calvinist theology and as a call to social reform powered by Transcendentalist thought. However, the critical emphasis on the work's Transcendentalist connections, while undeniably demonstrable, obscures the novel's Unitarian conclusion; the reformed Livingston at the end of the novel is headed by a Unitarian church, not a Transcendentalist one. This Unitarian Livingston does not disregard its Congregationalist beginnings in social reform but instead fulfills the Congregationalist ideals early New Englanders like John Winthrop espoused in his 1630 sermon "A Modell of Christian Charity." The novel also critiques the way in which aspects of Calvinist theology interact specifically with the community ideals of Congregationalism that remained integral to the social framework of many late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century New England villages as a vestige of Puritan ideology. For Judd, it is not merely Livingston's adherence to the Calvinist doctrine of total depravity which creates injustice, but the doctrine's continued perpetuation through the Congregationalist mode of social organization. Despite the original objectives of interdependence and goodwill between constituents, this model only served to oppress those who fail to live up to the moral standards of the community.

Any notion of social stratification within the New England village depends on an understanding of a member's adherence to the community's prescribed standard of religious belief and moral behavior. According to Lawrence Buell, the New England village ideal of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was essentially a "self-contained unit, sheltered from the outside world and organically interdependent: a bird's nest shielded from wind and 'foreigners'" (306). Buell's passage indicates that the village unit emphasized interdependence, encouraging its constituents to work for the mutual benefit of the community out of a sense of kinship and shared interest.

The New England village's emphasis on social interdependence is a trait directly inherited from its Calvinist, Congregationalist antecedent. In "A Modell of Christian Charity," John Winthrop argues for the importance of social interdependence in Puritan communities. He first addresses the nature of social and economic inequality in human society, arguing that "GOD ALMIGHTY in his most holy and wise providence, hath soe disposed of the condition of mankind, as in all times some must be rich, some poore, some high, and eminent in power and dignitie; others mean and in submission" (1). This idea that social and economic inequality in society is a divinely predetermined condition is the basis of Winthrop's subsequent argument.

As Winthrop assumes that social inequality is a permanent condition, his primary objective is to instruct the Puritan settlers aboard the *Arabella* in how to navigate this predetermined state of social inequality effectively. He first argues that society must "manifest the work of [God's] spirit . . . upon the wicked in moderating and restraining them," regardless of one's relative wealth or poverty to ensure that "the riche and mighty do not eate upp the poore nor the poor and dispised rise upp against and shake off thierye yoake" (1). This argument, that society could alleviate social inequality and conflict by regulating the inherently wicked natures of all its constituents regardless of social and economic status, demonstrates Winthrop's adherence to Calvin's tenet of total depravity. As humans are prone to either

maliciously exploit others of lower status or violently act against those of higher status out of frustration, the community must regulate all its constituents' moral behavior. After emphasizing the need to check both the power of the richer and higher-status individuals and the resentment of the poorer and less reputable members of society, Winthrop proposes that the potential conflict between the materially and morally reputable and disreputable can be alleviated by "exercising his [God's] graces in them . . . their love, mercy, gentleness, temperance, &c." (1). Winthrop asserts that, by adhering to Christian virtues, the Puritan community will "be all knit more nearly together in the Bonds of brotherly affection," a state that will negate any difference in wealth or status in the community body, as "it appears plainly that no man is made more honorable than another or wealthier &c, out of any particular and singular respect to himselfe, but for the glory of his creator and the common good of the creature, man" (1). Though Winthrop argues for strict regulation of community members' behavior, his emphasis on the members' "exercising" Christian virtue to alleviate economic and social disparity suggests that social interdependence can be realized by encouraging a sense of religious commonality between members. If community members perceive each other as fellow creations of God, then they will be encouraged to work for the community's mutual well-being.

Though the New England village inherits Winthrop's emphasis on social interdependence from its Puritan antecedent, the example of Livingston in *Margaret* suggests the limitations of Winthrop's social ideal. Winthrop's model encourages mutual love and charity between its members to alleviate the permanent state of social inequality and check humanity's inherent wickedness. However, Livingston's strict regulation of religious and moral behavior suggests that the Congregationalist apparatus's dependence on Calvinist tenets, particularly the doctrine of total depravity, inevitably obstructs the community's attempts to meet its ideals. *Margaret* depicts a Congregationalist society that prizes a standard rigidly defined by the Calvinist doctrine of total depravity over mutual "[b]onds of brotherly affection" (Winthrop 1). Those who fail to conform to Livingston's Congregationalist standards are effectively classified as potential, if not inevitable, threats to the moral integrity of the community, facing treatment ranging from social exclusion to outright hostility.

In *Margaret*, the clearest demonstration of the negative classing of those who fail to adhere to the community's Calvinistic moral standard is the Livingstonians' distrust of and hostility towards the Hart family. The Livingston community defines the Harts, inhabitants of The Pond, by their irreligiosity and intemperance. In the second chapter, the narrator states that Pluck Hart's "fancy for giving his children scriptural names," such as Nimrod or Maharshalalhashbaz, does not indicate his religiosity, stating that "it must not be thought he had any reverence for the Bible; his conduct would belie such a supposition" (Judd, *Margaret* 13). In bequeathing some of his children biblical names, Pluck signifies a certain degree of ironic humor, even a mockery of the Congregationalist society situated in Livingston. Pluck's indifference to religion in relation to a society that is primarily informed by a Calvinist interpretation of the Christian religion places him and his family in contention with Livingston's community standards.

Pluck's explicit indifference to religion is surpassed only by his intemperance. When Margaret goes to Livingston to run errands, Martha Madeline assumes that "she wants rum"

for her family, as “Pluck and his boys drink five or six glasses a day,” an amount that Martha states is “a sin for any family to have” according to Deacon Welles (38). Social contempt for the Harts based on their intemperance is also apparent in the store clerk’s rejection of Margaret’s proposition to pay for both the items she was sent to purchase for the family as well as the rum, saying, “I tell you, we can’t and won’t trust you. Your drunken dad has run up a long chalk already . . . You are all a haggling, gulching, good-for-nothing crew” (39). In a society where excessive consumption of alcohol is regarded as a sin, Martha Madeleine and the clerk’s derogatory view of the Harts represents the marginalization faced by members of the community that fail to adhere to the community’s religiously informed moral standard. Due to their expensive drinking habits, the Hart family is deemed not only intemperate but a financial risk; the clerk refuses to take Margaret’s word on credit because the family has not been able to repay its debts.

Though most of the members of the Hart family buy and drink alcohol excessively, the injustice of the Livingston community’s view of the Hart family stems from the idea that they are, because of their intemperance, a “good-for-nothing” crew (39). For the Calvinistic citizens of Livingston, the Harts’ intemperance is not simply a bad habit and a potential financial burden to the clerk; it is a symptom of their failure to regulate their inherently depraved human natures, undoubtedly a consequence of living at the physical and social boundaries of the community itself. More significantly, the Harts’ exhibition of their inherently wicked natures marks them as a potential threat to the social and moral order of the community. For Livingstonians, Winthrop’s objective of encouraging charity between community members to create social interdependence does not extend to the intemperate. As the community places the regulation of individuals’ inherently depraved natures above the need for mutual bonds of love and charity, the Harts’ visible intemperance signifies to Livingstonians an aberration within the moral fabric of society that, if not mended, could potentially corrupt and destroy the community.

The perceived social and moral threat the Harts pose to Livingston suggests that Livingstonians are guided by the same fears that Puritans like William Bradford expressed in the seventeenth century: the community’s moral disintegration would result in the splintering of the community itself. In *Of Plymouth Plantation*, Bradford depicts a Congregationalist community’s annihilation due to moral laxity and irreligious sentiment. Bradford recounts a “breaking out of sundry notorious sins . . . especially drunkenness and uncleanness” amongst members of the Plymouth settlement (351). Attempting to locate the cause of the sudden spate of immorality and irreligiosity, Bradford first points to the inherently “corrupt natures” of all humans, “which are so hardly bridled, subdued and mortified,” regardless of the Congregation’s supposed status as elected to salvation (351). However, unlike the Livingston community, Bradford’s conclusion does not lead him to call for even stricter laws or for more severe punishments. Rather, Bradford questions if the Plymouth community laws are too strict and severe on the populace despite his belief in the doctrine of total depravity, stating that “[w]hen [the community] get[s] passage they flow with more violence and make noise and disturbance than when they are suffered to run quietly in their own channels” (352). For Bradford, Plymouth’s laws potentially cause more damage to the community by policing moral

behavior so strictly that instances of immorality and irreligiosity are far more heinous than they would have been otherwise.

Bradford ultimately points to who might have been responsible for enacting this regime of rigid moral regulation: the community itself. In musing that there are “not more evils in this kind, nor nothing near so many by proportion in other places,” Bradford observes that in Puritan society “the churches look narrowly to their members, and the magistrates over all, more strictly than in other places” (352). Because the Congregationalist churches demanded such a blinkered state of moral surveillance from both the highest echelon of Puritan governance and the individual members constituting the congregation, all infractions against the moral order regardless of its actual severity registered as equal to the “many horrible evils by that means are never seen or known” (352). What Bradford’s musings suggest is that the Plymouth community at best fostered unnecessary paranoia, and at worst set in motion a reactionary trend of increasingly transgressive behavior from the settlement. The result of either conclusion is the same nonetheless: the inevitable disintegration of the congregation.

Livingston’s fear of moral regression, inherited from Bradford and other Puritan ancestors, is most apparent when the community’s distrust and hostility towards the Harts reach the levels of judicial authority with the arrest, imprisonment, and execution of Chilion Hart. Solomon Smith harasses Margaret while drinking with the Hart family, earning him Rose and Chilion’s scorn. Solomon’s continued impositions end with Chilion’s file “thrown towards Solomon” and becoming buried in “an artery of his neck” (Judd, *Margaret* 311). As the novel’s vague language implies, it is not clear who threw Chilion’s file. Though Chilion is certainly maddened by Solomon’s treatment of Margaret, it is Rose who exclaims to Chilion, “Lend me your file. I will stop his wicked presumption!” (310). When the “more considerable inhabitants” of Livingston gather at Deacon Penrose’s store to discuss the murder case, they mostly assume Chilion Hart is Solomon’s killer. Though some of the deacons and other prominent townsmen withhold their judgement of Chilion until more solid evidence is procured, the deacons presiding over the case, particularly Penrose and Hadlock, share the community’s general perception of the Hart family. When Judge Morris asks for a summary of the case, Deacon Penrose answers that “it was an unprovoked and malicious attack of some members of that depraved family on the unfortunate young man” (313). When Esquire Beach tries to amend Penrose’s narrative with a more objective version, Deacon Hadlock dismisses him:

Why do we mince the matter? I can tell you it is all owing to defect of justice; that we haven’t heavier penalties, tighter execution, more wholesome laws. If these persons had only been kept under, or been enough broke by the chastisements they have already had, they would never have gone these lengths. Truly we can say, we let the wicked go unpunished. For their Sabbath-breaking, their disobedience to rulers, their unbelief, their blasphemies, their hardness of heart, their stiff-neckedness and perverse ways, this has come upon them. And for our sinful remissness has this judgement lit upon the town. (314)

Deacon Hadlock’s statement resembles Bradford’s initial reason for the sudden increase in immorality and irreligiosity in Plymouth: the unquestionably degenerate nature of humanity.

However, unlike Bradford, Hadlock remains closed to the idea that Livingston's strict laws and program of comprehensive moral regulation is to blame. He instead claims that the Livingston community has not adequately enforced religious observance and moral behavior, and the Harts' many infractions against the Calvinistic moral structure of Livingston are simply an inevitable consequence. For Hadlock, it is not just Chilion who is guilty; the entire Hart family is complicit in the murder. The Hart family's irreligiosity and intemperance mark them as hostile threats to the well-being of the community, threats that could have been neutralized earlier had the family been "kept under, or been enough broke" by the village authorities and punished for their failure to adjust and conform to the community's status quo.

The Hart family's expulsion from the Livingston community's boundaries after Chilion's execution further indicates their classification as threats to the Congregationalism defining Livingston. After the trial, Mr. Smith is given leave to claim "the forfeiture of the conditions on which Pluck held the [Harts'] estate," ordering "the immediate removal of the family" from the premises; this forces the family to split apart and look for shelter and employment elsewhere outside of both Livingston and The Pond region. While Pluck leaves "to seek employment wherever it should offer" and Hash and Brown Moll go to live with Sybil Radney, Margaret returns to work as a governess for the Beach family (327). However, Mrs. Beach and her husband relieve Margaret of her services, claiming that "it would be unsafe to our property, and perhaps to our lives, to have anything to do with you" (327). When Margaret asks what she could possibly do without the Beach's employment, Mrs. Beach callously refers her to the poorhouse, saying that Margaret "may be able to find employment with that class of people to whom you properly belong" (327). The government of Livingston's unjust allowance of Mr. Smith to effectively render the entire Hart family homeless and the open hostility Margaret and other family members face in Livingston indicate their classification as threats to the community. Mrs. Beach's response to Margaret, to relocate to a poorhouse, suggests that Mrs. Beach now perceives Margaret as belonging to an undesirable class of people she clearly associates with immoral behavior.

As Margaret passes the jailhouse where Chilion is imprisoned, a child comments, "I can see the devil in her eye." Another regards the Hart family as "the most dangerous wretches that ever walked God's earth" (329). The Calvinist doctrine of total depravity informs the Congregationalism dominating Livingston society. These passages indicate that Margaret and the entire Hart family are now regarded as belonging fully to the fallen world outside of the community, along with its inherently wicked human inhabitants that are doomed to eternal damnation.

The Hart family's descent from distasteful community members to infamous deplorables demonstrates Sylvester Judd's purpose in rejecting a Congregationalist mode of social organization primarily informed by Calvinist theology. If *Margaret* initially depicts the limitations of Winthrop's original Calvinist version of the Congregationalist ideal at work in Livingston, the new Livingston at the end of the novel, though free of Calvinism, does not discard Winthrop's congregational standard. For Judd, discarding Calvinist theology did not mean also discarding the Congregationalist mode of church organization. In his sermon "The Church, illustrated by the Family and The State," Judd makes it clear that, like the "Universalist, Baptist and Swedenborgian" churches, the Unitarian church had "what is called a

congregational constitution, which in church matters means the same as democratic in state matters" (87). As Judd's primary intention in writing *Margaret* was to provide an ideological antidote for the social ills caused by Calvinist theology, the novel concludes with Livingstonians building a new Unitarian church, "a model suggested by Mr. Evelyn," in place of the old Congregationalist meeting-house (404). Congregationalist elites such as Deacon Hadlock are "inconsolable and inapproachable," refusing to recognize that their hold over the village is diminishing (404). The Congregationalist mode remains noticeably intact as the ideal of church and social organization, despite the apostolic appointment of its first minister. Though Christ-Church attempts to elect a local minister in the Congregationalist fashion, a lack of candidates forces the congregation to appoint a minister from Boston to the position; this is the source of Margaret's humorous statement to Anna that "we have an Apostolic Bishop ordained over this diocese of Livingston!" (405). However, the Livingston community's initial attempt to choose a Unitarian minister from their own congregation indicates that the Congregationalist polity has been retained as the ideal model of church governance in Livingston.

Livingston's new Christ-Church retains more than the congregationalist mode of church organization; it also maintains Winthrop's specific Congregationalist vision of an interdependent community built on common charity and shared religious beliefs. Livingston's new Unitarian church, adhering to the tenet of moral perfectibility, attempts to fulfill Winthrop's objective of interdependence by discarding his dependence on Calvin's doctrine of total depravity. As Margaret's letter to Anna indicates, this arrival of Unitarianism to Livingston brings "a delightful change" over The Pond, now known as Mons Christi (409). Whereas in the era of the Calvinist meeting-house the area was defined by its inhabitants' "indolence and dissipation," the No. 4 tavern area now possesses a "truly picturesque appearance," since its inhabitants no longer "drink any ardent spirits" (410). Though the Unitarian Bishop of Livingston preaches "strongly against the Sin of Intemperance" like his Congregationalist predecessor Parson Welles, the inhabitants of The Pond area reform their intemperance voluntarily, due to the more positive Unitarian view of human nature. The positive change in the former Pond region has spread to the town of Livingston itself, as "many have abandoned drinking, and four distilleries have stopped" (410). For Margaret, the change depicted in The Pond region signifies the community's religious and moral transformation in abandoning the old Congregationalism; she states in a letter that "God made [Mons Christi] a beautiful spot, and man has restored its fallen image" (410). The spiritual transformation of Livingston, indicated by the wholesale abandonment of alcohol and subsequent restoration of their "fallen image," is the result of both the abandonment of the old Calvinistic social order and the new Unitarian church's view of humanity's moral capacity and capability.

Instead of conforming to the original Congregationalist model's Calvinist moral standards under threat of social exclusion and outright banishment, members of the new Unitarian-powered system voluntarily amend and regulate their behavior because they sincerely believe that it is in their power to morally improve themselves. In the context of Winthrop's social ideal, this new Unitarian-driven congregationalist social construct fulfills the requirement of a prescribed set of moral guidelines for the community while ensuring that each segment acts with the well-being of the community in mind. The new social construct discards the Calvinist view of human nature that formerly necessitated the need for strict moral

regulation. If human nature is essentially good and morally perfectible as the Unitarians held, then the need for moral regulation by the community is less urgent.

Sylvester Judd addresses social injustices in New England society by exposing the negative social consequences of Calvinist doctrines regarding human nature through a critique of the Puritan Congregationalist ideal as it existed in villages like Livingston. Though early Puritan leaders such as John Winthrop present a Congregationalist ideal defined by interdependence, charity, and goodwill between members, their reliance on the doctrine of total depravity limited their successor's ability to successfully meet these very standards. The new congregationalist Livingston at the end of the novel demonstrates the fulfillment of John Winthrop's social ideal by discarding Calvinism for Unitarianism. Through the example of the congregationalist Livingston community guided by Unitarian theology, *Margaret* depicts Judd's vision of a society based on essential human goodness and moral perfectibility, an ideal that does not work to classify, marginalize, and demonize those who fail to meet the community's prescribed standards of religiosity and moral behavior. Judd's Unitarian social model instead encourages voluntary adherence to community moral guidelines on the premise of individual self-improvement. This vision, however, must not be misconstrued as Judd's call for radical social transformation or even revolution; this is no utopian fever-dream. Judd's reconfiguration of Winthrop's Congregationalist ideal demonstrates that he, as a New Englander and a Unitarian minister of Puritan extract, has faith in the existing social structure prevalent in New England villages. What Judd offers is a pragmatic reform of New England village society that replaces its Calvinist theological engine for one that is more effective and beneficial to its constituents.

Notes

1. First delineated in John Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1536), total depravity states that "no one is capable of saving oneself" because of one's inherently wicked state, the result of the Original Sin (Calvin xv). It is the first doctrine of traditional "five-point Calvinism" or T.U.L.I.P., common in many reformed Protestant churches (Calvin xv).

2. An offshoot of Unitarian thought, Transcendentalism is primarily defined by Ralph Waldo Emerson's eclectic concepts of Nature, God, and the doctrine of self-reliance, or the act of recognizing one's individual capacity to discern what is good or just independently of an external religious or social system. For Emerson and other Transcendentalists, one "must not be hindered by the name of goodness but must explore it if it be goodness" (Emerson 267).

3. Congregationalism as a mode of church organization arose in late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century England. The movement "emphasized the right and responsibility of each properly organized congregation to determine its own affairs, without having to submit these decisions to the judgment of any higher human authority" (Jenkins).

4. When describing the Brownist and Puritan mode of church organization, Congregationalism is capitalized. When referencing other denominations' use of the framework, congregationalism is left in a lower-case form.

5. A direct refutation of the tenet of total depravity, Unitarian minister William Ellery Channing (1740-1842) defined the concept of moral perfectibility in his sermon "Likeness to God" (1828). Channing held that "by the development of our [moral] potential.... we can approach God," a position diametrically opposed to Calvinism's stance of humanity's inherent moral incapability. Unitarianism's vehement disagreement with Calvinism's view of human nature defined the intense theological debates of early nineteenth-century New England (118).

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