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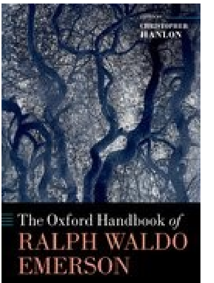

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CHAPTER

19 Emerson among the Methodists

Claudia Stokes

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Abstract

This essay examines the influence of Methodism on Emerson. During Emerson's lifetime, Methodism exerted extraordinary influence on American religious life, yet he offered little comment on this important religious movement. In spite of this omission, this essay argues that Methodism shaped Emerson's ideas about oratory, prayer, and self-determination. This essay examines two Methodist figures whom Emerson repeatedly cited as important influences: famed Methodist minister Edward Thompson Taylor and a less-remembered farm worker named Tarbox, whom Emerson met in his twenties and repeatedly mentioned in his journals. Emerson took inspiration from both men, but seems to have been unaware of the sectarian inflection of their influences; in adapting these men's ideas in his own writings, Emerson repackaged Methodist theology as denominationally ecumenical and enabled Methodist belief to gain wide circulation among some of its most ardent critics. As a result, Emerson unwittingly became one of Methodism's most effective champions.

Keywords: Ralph Waldo Emerson, Methodism, Edward Taylor, sermons, Arminianism
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IT is a long-overlooked fact that, in the first half of the nineteenth century, Methodism was the single biggest instigator of religious change in the United States. As the primary religious movement at the center of the Second Great Awakening, Methodism grew exponentially in this period, rapidly expanding from a contested eighteenth-century minority sect to the nation's largest denomination; by 1850, nearly three million Americans identified as Methodists, comprising over a third of American affiliated Christians.[1] Methodism attracted worshippers with its signature camp meetings, promotion of hymnody, and advocacy of Arminianism, the theological belief that human beings may elect salvation and the popularity of which contributed directly to the decline of Calvinist orthodoxy.[2] The meteoric rise of Methodism thus

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corresponds with a parallel decline in mainline denominations, which for decades denounced Methodism as heretical but which, by the second quarter of the nineteenth century, were willing to implement some Methodist practices in an attempt to remain viable. For instance, in 1824 theologian William Ellery Channing urged Unitarian ministers to adapt to these changes, arguing that Christians now "want a religion which will take a strong hold upon them. … It is objected to Unitarian Christianity that it does not possess this heart-stirring energy" characteristic of Methodism.[3] Numerous other Protestant denominations made similar concessions, and, through the widespread adoption of its signature customs and beliefs, Methodism gradually became mainstream and permanently changed the practice and disposition of American Christianity.

Ralph Waldo Emerson generally took interest in contemporary religious developments, but he remained indifferent to Methodism throughout his life. Despite the extraordinary religious sea change occurring around him, Emerson had little to say about it or the denomination that sparked it. In his many writings, he mentions Methodism and its founder, John Wesley, rarely and only in passing, and all evidence suggests that he never engaged in a serious inquiry into Methodist theology or practice: his personal library contained no publications by or about Wesley, and his p. 316 ↳ voluminous journals register no sustained consideration of Methodism. Furthermore, one of Emerson's rare explicit comments on Methodism was wholly contemptuous: in 1827, he expressed revulsion at the "monstrous absurdities of the Methodists at their Camp Meetings" (*JMN* 3:115).[4] Perhaps because Emerson's documented response to Methodism was so limited, it has seldom been incorporated into scholarly efforts to understand the larger religious culture that both framed and informed his work. The influences on Emerson of Calvinism, Hinduism, Quakerism, and Swedenborgianism are well chronicled, but the impact of Methodism, the most influential denomination of Emerson's own time, remains largely overlooked in our estimation of Emerson's engagement in contemporary religious matters. One might readily take Emerson's indifference at face value and presume that Methodism provided nothing of substance in the constitution of Emerson's own ideas. However, that presumption is inaccurate, and this essay seeks to show that some of Emerson's major religious ideas have a clear origin in Methodism, a denomination that merits inclusion among the diverse array of Emerson's documented religious influences. The omission of any significant discussion of Methodism among his papers suggests that Emerson himself was likely unaware of the sectarian inflection of these ideas, and he may have unconsciously followed the lead of fellow mainline clergy in adapting and absorbing some popular features of Methodism. Emerson nevertheless encountered some of the foundational tenets of Methodism through several esteemed social acquaintances whom he repeatedly cited as instrumental to his own developing religious ideas: Edward Thompson Taylor, a famed Methodist preacher whose unorthodox sermons influenced Emerson's ideas about public oratory, and Tarbox, a farm worker whom Emerson briefly encountered toward the end of his seminary studies. Taking inspiration from both these figures, Emerson embraced some of their distinctively Methodist teachings, packaged them as denominationally neutral, and propounded them to the elite social demographic that was most critical of Methodist populism. As I will show, Methodist teachings also influenced Emerson's own oratorical style as well as his renowned comments about the importance of personal experience in rhetoric.

This influence implicitly challenges an enduring scholarly narrative that construes some of the major events of Emerson's early career in the 1830s—such as his 1832 resignation from the pulpit of Boston's Second Church and his controversial 1838 address at Harvard's Divinity School—as heralding a decisive break with organized religion, a rupture that critics have characterized as both emancipatory and requisite for Emerson's subsequent promotion of an intellectual and literary independence unconfined by denominationalism. According to such eminent critics as Lawrence Buell, Alfred Kazin, Richard Poirier, and David Reynolds, Emerson's break with sectarianism was a necessary precondition for his lifelong advocacy of nonconformist individualism.[5] It has likewise served as a cornerstone in the secularization thesis of American history by seemingly evidencing a major defection from organized religion in pursuit of greater philosophical wisdom. Richard A. Grusin has contested this narrative by showing that Emerson's rupture

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with organized religion was neither as absolute nor as liberatory as has been suggested: Emerson continued p. 317 to perform ministerial duties for years after ↳ his resignation, and he kept abreast of contemporary theological developments, such as the new mode of exegesis known as the "Higher Criticism."[6] Emerson's embrace of numerous foundational Methodist tenets further complicates our understanding of his relationship with organized religion, for it affirms that his promotion of individualism by no means necessitated the rejection of denominational, creedal precepts. On the contrary, Emerson's advocacy of individualism was deeply indebted to Methodism, which supplied numerous sectarian beliefs central to Emerson's developing ideas about the religious authority of the common individual. In keeping with recent scholarly reevaluations of the secularization thesis, such as Justine S. Murison's important contribution to this collection, this essay argues that Emerson's public contestation of mainline Protestant practice was rooted in sectarian influence, not sectarian disavowal.[7]

Edward Taylor and Methodist Oratory

Today Methodism is a respectable Protestant denomination, but for the first half of the nineteenth century it was a controversial movement widely denounced by mainline clergy. Founded in eighteenth-century England by John Wesley, Methodism emerged in response to the emotional dispassion and social elitism that Wesley observed in religious worship, and it was designed to activate intense religious ardor and bypass any hindrances that might keep the worshipper at an emotional distance. Pulpit oratory, religious ritual, and even the physical spaces of worship all underwent transformation at the hands of Methodism, which sought to make Christian faith accessible and appealed to people on the social margins. Methodism eliminated pew fees, a common requirement that made church attendance available only to the affluent, and it likewise moved worship services into the public sphere, in makeshift tents, open plazas, and meeting halls. Methodism also did away with conventional pulpit oratory, which was typically formulaic and cerebral, and it replaced dry scriptural exegesis with an informal rhetorical style designed to be apprehensible to all auditors, regardless of education or class. Methodist populism extended even to its clergy: in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Methodism did not require clergy to attend seminary, and for many years its leadership in North America was comprised of volunteers without any formal training in theology, scripture, or oratory.[8] The Methodist spirit of populist inclusiveness reached its fullest expression in the setting of the camp meeting, which dismantled conventional social hierarchy and enabled people across social strata—laborers, middle-class women, enslaved persons, and children—to commingle in the spirit of collective worship. In contrast with the decorum of mainline worship, the Methodist camp meeting was famous for its intemperate rowdiness, as preachers incited participants to public weeping, confession, and exhortation.

Unsurprisingly, all these features met with disapproval from conservatives, who denounced the ignorance of Methodist clergy, its dissolution of conventional social hierarchy, and its promotion of a religious frenzy p. 318 that critics claimed would produce ↳ only enthusiastic, insincere conversions and backsliding. With his 1827 denunciation of the "monstrous absurdities of the Methodists at their Camp Meetings," Emerson intoned the conventional opinion of mainline clergy, and yet there is no discounting the foundational precedent of Methodism, which put into wide circulation numerous ideas that Emerson himself would promote in his lectures and essays. For example, in condemning conventional religious ritual as "dry, sore, creaking formalism," Emerson was echoing the similar claims leveled by Wesley and his Methodist followers, a position that resulted in innovative new religious practices, such as the Love Feast, and the allocation of some rites to the laity in an effort to impart vitality to these rituals (*JMN* 7:21).[9] Similarly, his repeated assertion that religious belief should both ennoble and pervade everyday life affirms the pietism already popularized by Methodism, which encouraged adherents to suffuse their workaday lives with religious devotion.

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The influence of some of these Methodist tenets was likely discursive rather than direct, but some of Emerson's signature ideas can be traced directly to his personal encounters with Edward Thompson Taylor, a famed Methodist preacher renowned for his inventive oratory.[10] Emerson first met Edward Taylor in 1831 when he attended a service at Taylor's congregation, the Seaman's Bethel in Boston, and Emerson was dazzled by Taylor's eccentric sermons, which afforded him wide international renown. The two men maintained a warm friendship for decades, with Emerson occasionally substituting for Taylor during Sunday worship services and hosting Taylor when he preached in Concord in 1845. Commentators such as Dorothy Bedford, David Reynolds, and Austin Warren have noted Emerson's longstanding admiration for Taylor, but this relationship was more than just another example of the broadmindedness of Emerson's enthusiasms, as Robert D. Richardson has suggested.[11] Rather, Taylor's preaching was a major source of influence and inspiration, as evidenced by Emerson's journals of the 1830s and 40s, which are rife with commentaries on Taylor's style and rhetoric. Indeed, it was through these private reflections on Taylor that Emerson would come to develop his landmark ideas about the intellectual import and persuasive powers of personal experience as well as his growing skepticism about the shortcomings of mainline homiletic convention. Emerson was aware of Taylor's Methodist affiliation, but he did not seem to have recognized that what he found so appealing in Taylor's sermons were their distinctively Methodist form and style. Consequently, the philosophy of oratory that Emerson developed in response to Taylor was keenly, if inadvertently, informed by the habitual practices of the Methodist pulpit. In essays and speeches in which Emerson promoted an oratorical style grounded in personal experience and liberated from generic convention, he implicitly urged audiences to emulate not only Taylor's own oratorical habits but also the common practices of Methodist preachers. In this way, Emerson's most incisive public critiques of mainline religious custom derived from the customs of another competing religious denomination. David Reynolds has argued that Emerson in these writings privileged "artistry and humanity above Christianity," but these journal entries reveal that Emerson instead implicitly advocated exchanging the oratorical practices of one Protestant denomination for another.[12]

p. 319 A former sailor who ministered to the many transient seamen of Boston's thriving port, Taylor was famous for his ability to deliver engaging sermons pitched to the educational level of his working-class audience. He was particularly renowned for his rich repertoire of maritime metaphors comparing life's struggles to the travails of the seaman, a figurative register that struck home with his seafaring audience and delighted his more educated listeners with its freshness and inventiveness. Taylor's sermons attracted such august auditors as Charles Dickens, Jenny Lind, and Harriet Martineau; Walt Whitman described Taylor as the "one essentially perfect orator" he had ever heard. Herman Melville was also awed by Taylor and used him as the inspiration for the character Father Mapple in *Moby-Dick*.[13] Emerson concurred with these opinions and frequently wrote in his journals about Taylor's sermons, as with his 1834 description of Taylor as a "godly poet" and "the Shakspeare [*sic*] of the sailor & the poor" (*JMN* 5:287).[14] Emerson did not hesitate to make this admiration public: in his essay "Eloquence," he hailed Taylor as an exemplar of oratorical brilliance, extolling his rhetoric as "all glittering and fiery with imagination" (*CW* 8:61). Similarly, in "The Problem," Emerson's autobiographical poem about his 1832 decision to resign from the pulpit, he portrayed Taylor as the ideal minister—eloquent, noble, and inspiring—whose formidable example justified Emerson's own resignation: the last verse concludes by praising "Taylor, the Shakspeare [*sic*] of divines. / His words are music in my ear, / I see his cowled portrait dear; / And yet, for all his faith could see, / I would not the good bishop be" (*CW* 9:22).

Celebrated by audiences of diverse religious backgrounds and renowned for his ecumenical inclusiveness, Taylor's own affiliation was patently Methodist. One biographer described him as a "Shouting Methodist," a term used to describe Methodists particularly inclined to the jubilant exclamations and public declarations that became characteristic of camp meetings and that shocked more temperate mainline clergy.[15] Largely illiterate, untrained, and unfamiliar with the finer points of theology, Taylor began preaching while held as a prisoner of war during the War of 1812, spurred by fellow prisoners frustrated by the incompetence of the

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Calvinist chaplain, and he quickly acquired appreciative audiences stirred by his inventive metaphors and heartfelt rhetoric. After having already achieved renown as a preacher, Taylor attended seminary only briefly, dropping out in frustration at his educational deficits, but he acquired official standing by delivering a sermon before the Methodist quarterly conference. Because of his illiteracy, Taylor left behind no correspondence or written sermons, and he delivered weekly homilies extemporaneously, without any notes or textual support other than the chosen Bible reading. Even Taylor's knowledge of the Bible remained tenuous, and one chronicler described how he once began a sermon by admitting that he didn't know the exact location of his chosen biblical text: he declared, " 'Praise the Lord,' that's my text: it's somewhere between these two covers. I can't tell you exactly where; but that's it, so hold on to it. 'Praise the Lord.' "[16]

Taylor lacked the conventional educational credentials of his mainline peers, but these deficits directly contributed to his effectiveness as an orator. Having never studied homiletics or attended church until his own conversion as a young man, Taylor remained unaware of the formal features of the sermon, and he employed an energetic, p. 320 improvisational style dependent upon instantaneous inspiration instead of prewritten remarks. Audiences did not condemn Taylor as unprepared or ignorant but instead warmed to the freshness of his style, taking it as evidence of Taylor's own faith and quicksilver intellect. To compensate for his lack of biblical knowledge, Taylor enlisted what he and his customary audience did know—seafaring life—and his sermons contained countless references to nautical matters. For instance, in one sermon, he described Jesus Christ as a lifeboat; in another he urged his audience to throw Satan overboard. He habitually referred to his pulpit as his quarterdeck, and on one occasion, when he lost the thread of his sermon, he exclaimed, "Hard down the helm! hard down the helm! I've lost my reckoning—we're in the region of icebergs!"[17] He even employed a maritime metaphor in his characterization of Transcendentalism, comparing it to a sea bird: "It is like a gull,—long wings, lean body, poor feathers, and miserable meat."[18]

There is nothing particularly Methodist about this figurative repertoire other than its unorthodoxy and association with the working class, but the essential kernel of Taylor's technique—namely, the enlistment of the preacher's own personal ken—was indeed characteristically Methodist in nature. While orthodox clergy employed "similitudes," or comparisons to daily life, to enliven their sermons and demonstrate the applications of their lessons, Methodist clergy used everyday speech, excised the cerebral exegesis characteristic of orthodox oratory, and focused instead on the emotional and the personal, qualities that rendered their sermons riveting and readily apprehensible. Orthodox oratory ran the risk of presenting Christianity as a rarified intellectual puzzle comprehensible only to a knowledgeable elite, but Methodist oratory instead characterized Christianity as the province of the everyday and the broader populace, and it did so by way of preachers who actively discussed the effects of Christianity on their own lives. Methodist oratory was thus distinctively experiential in nature, and preachers often made their own lives the central text of their sermons, publicly discussing their own histories and conversion experiences. Famed Methodist preacher Francis Asbury summarized the experiential character of Methodist preaching by urging clergy to "preach as if you had seen heaven and its celestial inhabitants and had hovered over the bottomless pit and beheld the tortures and heard the groans of the damned": preachers should draw on their own lived experiences in their sermons and describe Christian cosmology with the vividness of personal experience, rendering it with the same detail and intensity as their own lived encounters.[19] The Methodist emphasis on personal experience was thus at the very center of Taylor's distinctive style. In lieu of the theological knowledge or generic convention that would otherwise form the basis of sermons in the mainline tradition, Taylor substituted his personal history as a sailor, and nautical rhetoric—rather than the Bible—figured as the primary textual source of his sermons. In so doing, he forged a shared frame of reference designed to make Christianity inclusive and accessible to his maritime audience.

Taylor's oratory was a revelation to Emerson, who studied homiletics at seminary and whose own sermons were marked by their formality, cerebral nature, and generic regularity. In innumerable journal entries, Emerson attempted to analyze the successes of Taylor's oratory, and he came to endorse the inclusion of

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p. 321 personal experience ↳ characteristic of Methodist rhetoric. For instance, as early as 1832, just a few weeks after Emerson's resignation from the pulpit, Taylor's example contributed directly to Emerson's growing insistence on the credentialing powers of experience in animating a speaker's statements, noting that remarks unmoored in personal experience tended to fall flat. He wrote, "I have heard a man call himself a practical man & yet he said nothing to the purpose; but a mere recluse that could not tie a beau knot threw out the very word; forth it came, alive & ran from mouth to mouth[,] from street to street & the whole city obeyed it." Language, he concluded, is persuasive and compelling only if it derives from—and is thus animated by—the orator's personal experience: the speaker's energy and conviction implicitly corroborate the validity of his claims and elicit the listener's confidence. The succeeding sentence attests to the derivations of these observations in Emerson's encounters with Edward Taylor, for he expressly names Taylor as the exemplar of the successful, experientially-grounded orator he lauds and whose compelling, personal oratory confirms Emerson's new belief that "all Truth is practical" (*JMN* 4:59).[20] In describing the spread of these remarks from "mouth to mouth [and] from street to street," Emerson invoked the oral transmission of Methodism, which circulated not by way of printed pamphlets or tracts but through the spoken word of believers.

Two years later, in 1834, Emerson's esteem for Taylor resulted in his growing impatience with mainline clergy. Emerson wrote in his journal:

> If I were called upon to charge a young minister, I would say Beware of Tradition: Tradition which embarrasses all life & falsifies all teaching. The sermons that I hear are all dead to that ail. The preacher is betrayed by his ear. He begins to inveigh against some real evil & falls unconsciously into formulas of speech which have been said & sung in the church some ages & have lost all life. They never had any but when freshly & with special conviction applied … Not so with Edward Taylor that living Methodist[,] the Poet of the Church. (*JMN* 4:380–81)[21]

Emerson's denunciation of religious oratorical "Tradition" may initially suggest a rejection of established sectarian tradition altogether, but his later remarks confirm his endorsement of distinctively Methodist practice. This comparison between the "living" rhetoric of Taylor and the lifelessness of clerical "Tradition" confirmed to Emerson the perils of conventional pulpit oratory, which indicate a passive reliance on the inheritances of custom and throw into question whether the minister has actually experienced the religious precepts he propounds. If the minister cannot speak with personal conviction about the religious truths of his teachings, Emerson presumes, then neither he nor his teachings are credible. By contrast, Taylor's style confirms the potency of these religious teachings in causing regeneration, for Taylor's fresh, inspiring oratory evidences the extraordinary transformations that faith may engender.

Emerson's statement that the "preacher is betrayed by his ear" likewise references the improvisational orality of Taylor's rhetoric, which, because he was illiterate and untrained, was governed not by reliance on written scripts or convention but by his ability to improvise in response to the reactions of his auditors. p. 322 Emerson implicitly pits these ↳ two modes of address in opposition to each other—the written, the prescribed, and the conventional against the oral, improvised, and experiential mode characteristic of both Taylor and Methodism more generally—and he resoundingly endorses the latter as the more effective technique. And though this journal entry predates by four years Emerson's famed address at Harvard's Divinity School, this entry's premise, in which Emerson imagines instructing a young minister in this unorthodox sermonic style, suggests that Emerson was already planning to use Taylor's example to intervene in conventional seminary training and offer the lessons of Taylor's oratory to a broader audience of young clergy.

Another journal entry, from 1837, affirms Taylor's influence on Emerson's developing ideas about oratory as well as on Emerson's own writing style. In response to hearing Taylor preach on temperance, Emerson

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jubilantly proclaimed Taylor "a perfect orator," insisting that Taylor's "utter want & loss of all method, the ridicule of all method" imparts such "splendor." It remains unclear whether Emerson's repetition of the word "method" indicates his awareness that Taylor's rhetorical unconventionality was prototypically Methodist in character, but Taylor nonetheless confirmed for Emerson the benefits of oratorical nonconformity. What follows is a series of exclamatory proclamations that diverges from Emerson's own characteristic prose style of elaborately subordinated sentences: "what sweetness! what richness[,] what depth! what cheer! How he conciliates[,] how he humanizes! how he exhilarates & ennobles! Beautiful philanthropist! godly poet!" (*JMN* 5:287).[22] Emerson's ecstatic reaction certainly corroborates Taylor's capacity to inspire his audience, causing this particular auditor to erupt in exclamations of praise. It likewise suggests that Taylor's improvisational style inspired Emerson himself to experiment somewhat with his own prose, his fragmentary exclamations imitating the outbursts and colloquial speech of the renowned Shouting Methodist.[23]

In his two famed lectures at Harvard in the 1830s, Emerson promoted the Methodist oratorical style he encountered in Edward Taylor. The institutional setting for these remarks is not incidental, for Emerson chose his own alma mater, the site of his own training in homiletics, as the venue for these iconoclastic remarks, which denounced convention and lauded instead knowledge derived from direct personal experience. Emerson's 1837 Phi Beta Kappa lecture, "The American Scholar," addressed educational matters rather than religious ones, but Emerson nonetheless incorporated these ideas in his comments about the paramount importance of personal experience: he described experience as the "raw material out of which the intellect moulds her splendid products" and insisted, "I learn immediately from any speaker how much he has already lived, through the poverty or the splendor of his speech. Life lies behind us as the quarry from whence we get tiles and copestones for the masonry of to-day" (*CW* 1:59, 61). Emerson's remarks on the virtues of experiential learning—rather than learning through secondhand reading or rote memorization—have exerted considerable influence on American philosophies of education, but these statements, in echoing his prior comments on Taylor's oratory, also affirm the underlying influence of Methodism on ↳ Emerson's ideas about the intellectual value and persuasiveness of experience, without which one cannot be an effective teacher or preacher.

In his lecture at Harvard's Divinity School the following year, Emerson propounded an alternative model of pulpit oratory expressly derived from Taylor's Methodist influence. The lecture is best remembered for his acerbic criticism of moribund religious ceremony and routinized clergy, but at the heart of the lecture is a lengthy argument about the importance of personal experience in pulpit oratory. As Emerson describes it, the qualities that elevated clergy and made them members of the social elite—such as their advanced education and rarified knowledge—had no power whatsoever in sparking religious feeling in their audiences. Effective preaching, Emerson asserted, derives not from established convention or biblical exegesis but from the minister's own life, for, without it, the preacher's lessons register as perfunctory and flat. In stark opposition to the homiletic mode taught at Harvard, Emerson boldly declaimed, "The true preacher can be known by this, that he deals out to the people his life,—life passed through the fire of thought": the minister's own life should be the central text of his sermon, Emerson asserted (*CW* 1:86). By way of example, Emerson recounted an anecdote about listening to a dry, conventional preacher who offered abstract religious lessons without the invigorating proof of personal narrative. As Emerson recounts the story, he found himself bored by the sermon and passed the time by staring through the window at the snowstorm outside. The sermon's primary defect, Emerson notes, was its omission of any personal experience attesting to the merits of the preacher's lesson. In this anecdote, Emerson himself employed the same experiential oratorical technique he promotes here, for he substantiates and enlivens his remarks with a personal tale about his own experience with the tedium of conventional pulpit oratory. And in this respect, Emerson himself adopted the experiential oratory characteristic of Methodism and implicitly emulated Taylor's rhetorical style.

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Emerson was not prevaricating in this anecdote. In his 1838 journal, Emerson recounted his experience attending the Sunday service led by Rev. Barzillai Frost, the junior minister of the Concord Unitarian church, and in his journal he commented on the absence of personal experience in Frost's sermon. Emerson did not expressly mention Edward Taylor in the Divinity School address, but this journal entry confirms Taylor's influence on this speech, for in the succeeding paragraph Emerson references Taylor both directly and indirectly. Readers familiar with the Divinity School address will recognize some of its phrasings in this 1838 journal entry:

> I shrink & wince as soon as the prayers begin & am very glad if my tailor has given me a large velvet collar to my wrapper or cloak, the prayers are so bad. … Tell them that a true preacher can always be known by this, that he deals them out his life, life metamorphosed; as Taylor, Webster, Scott, Carlyle do. But of the bad preacher, it could not be told from his sermon, what age of the world he fell in, whether he had a father or a child, whether he was a freeholder or a pauper, whether he was a citizen or a countryman, or any other fact of his biography. But a man's sermon should be rammed with life. (*JMN* 5:464–65)

p. 324 In describing Frost's service, Emerson uses a suggestive pun in describing his appreciation for the protective work of his "tailor," who has equipped him with protection against Frost's tedious sermon, thereby both referencing Edward Taylor's modest working-class origins and suggesting that Taylor's robust rhetoric shields him from the numbing effects of the service. This pun is born out in Emerson's later explicit reference to Edward Taylor, whom he names first in a list of contemporary rhetoricians who serve as counterpoints to Frost and whose example Emerson would later publicly imitate and encourage Unitarian seminarians to emulate.

Unitarian clergy responded to Emerson's Divinity School address with public outrage, and this underlying context suggests that sectarian rivalry (as well as the resentments of the social elite) may have contributed to their response. Emerson did not expressly name Taylor or Methodism in his lecture, but he nonetheless stepped into the fray by tacitly acknowledging the oratorical superiority of competing denominations and urging Unitarians to join their fellow mainline denominations in adopting revivalist technique. Emerson amplified this sectarian rivalry by invoking typology, as with his assertion that the "true preacher … deals out to the people his life," a statement that characterized the Methodist orator as Christlike in his willingness to rhetorically offer up his own life for the sake of his followers. Similarly, his assertion that the successful sermon is "life metamorphosed" into text references the theological understanding of Christ, as articulated in the Gospel according to John, as the Word made flesh. The Methodist sermon, he suggests, is the obverse—fleshy experience proffered through the oratorical word. To employ Methodist pulpit technique, Emerson intimates, is to reproduce the ministerial work of Christ. By extension, he insinuated that the Unitarian insistence on homiletic convention was more in keeping with Pharisaical formalism, an implication that surely caused severe offense. It is little wonder that Emerson was for decades barred from speaking at Harvard, for, in promoting a movement that threatened Unitarianism, he committed a stark public betrayal of both the institution and the denomination that trained him.

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Tarbox and Methodist Arminianism

Edward Taylor was not the only Methodist figure who influenced Emerson's ideas. Throughout his life, Emerson also repeatedly mentioned a shadowy figure who taught him a crucial lesson that Emerson would promote throughout his life. In the summer of 1825, when Emerson was in his early twenties, he spent a summer working on his uncle's farm, where he came into contact with a Methodist farm worker named Tarbox who conveyed a bit of religious wisdom that left a lasting impression. According to Emerson's account, Tarbox informed him that "*men were always praying*, and … *their prayers were answered*"[24] (emphasis in original). Little is known about Tarbox—including his first name, which Emerson never recorded—but, because of this single statement, Emerson cited Tarbox repeatedly as one of the major influences on his life. For instance, in a ↳ journal entry dated September 1842, Emerson included "my Methodist Tarbox" alongside Bronson Alcott and Emanuel Swedenborg in his list of the "company of people who travel with me in the world" (*JMN* 7:465).[25] Tarbox's remark made an immediate impact on Emerson's ideas about prayer. Following this exchange, Emerson wrote a quatrain in his journal in which he clarified his interpretation of Tarbox's remark. He wrote, "And, tho' thy knees were never bent, / To heaven thy hourly prayers are sent, / And whether formed for good or ill, / Are registered & answered still" (*JMN* 2:388). Emerson interpreted Tarbox's statement as an important reinterpretation of prayer, which is typically understood as a mindful, intentional appeal to the divine. Tarbox, however, asserted instead that the deity heeds all our thoughts and that our unconscious musings operate as a form of direct intercourse with an attentive deity. While it is nothing new to declare that the deity attends to all our thoughts and desires, Tarbox offered a new contribution to this formulation: the deity not only "registered" all our thoughts but also "answered" them. Our thoughts, wishes, and desires—regardless of their righteousness—receive some kind of rejoinder from the divine, though the precise nature of that response remains undefined.

Tarbox's remark exerted direct influence on Emerson's first sermon, which he delivered on July 25, 1826, and preached fourteen additional times. Many years later, Emerson acknowledged Tarbox as the inspiration of this sermon: Tarbox, he recalled, "said to me that men were always praying, and that all prayers were granted. I meditated much on this saying, and wrote my first sermon therefrom."[26] The sermon's immediate scriptural source was the text "pray without ceasing" from 1 Thessalonians 5:17, but the sermon ruminates on the implications of Tarbox's statement that the deity heeds and answers all our thoughts, as with Emerson's statement that "*every desire of the human mind, is a prayer uttered to God and registered in heaven*" (emphasis in original), a declaration nowhere present in the passage from Thessalonians.[27] Emerson's indebtedness to Tarbox is particularly evident in the sermon's assertion that "the true prayers are the daily, hourly, momentary desires, that come without impediment, without fear, into the soul, and bear testimony at each instant to its shifting character. And these prayers are granted."[28] Elaborating on Tarbox's statement, Emerson asserts that all our desires, conscious and unconscious, constitute a form of prayer to a receptive deity, who grants these unspoken wishes. Emerson found this sermon—and, by extension, the lesson from Tarbox—to be so significant that, several months later, he delivered it before the Middlesex Association of Ministers to secure his license to preach.[29]

The Methodist nature of Tarbox's lesson was not limited to the incidental fact that its original purveyor had been a known adherent of Methodism. Rather, Tarbox conveyed to Emerson a sophisticated amplification of a central feature of Methodist theology. At its core, Tarbox's teaching affirms that human wishes and desires matter deeply: they are both monitored and gratified by a responsive deity, and our thoughts thus have the power to influence our lives and the world around us. Thoughts, Tarbox instructed, are not confined to the immaterial domain of consciousness but may have worldly, empirical consequences. Half a century later, a similar belief would become the cornerstone of Christian Science, as formulated by Mary Baker Eddy in *Science and Health with Key* ↳ *to the Scriptures* (1875) and the New Thought movement of the late nineteenth century, but in the 1820s this belief in the spiritual potency of the human will was a

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contested, heretical belief with a marked Methodist pedigree. In the Calvinist reformed tradition, individuals have no influence whatsoever on divine action or their own salvation, but sixteenth-century Dutch theologian Jacobus Arminius developed a countervailing theology arguing that human beings possess considerable influence on divine acts and on their own fates. This theology, which has come to be known as Arminianism, contends that human beings need not be passive bystanders of divine providence, as Calvinism argued, but they may instead direct the course of their own lives and salvation. In this theology, the mere desire to become converted and saved is sufficient to sway the divine will and may initiate religious regeneration: we may wish or pray ourselves into the fold of the converted, and this belief by implication suggests that the divine heeds and answers at least some of our desires. As a theology of human agency, Arminianism suggests that our salvation may be of our own making and derives from the divine execution of our innermost desires and thoughts.

Long deemed heretical in the Calvinist orthodox tradition, Arminianism was a central tenet of Methodism from the very outset: the name "Methodism" derives from John and Charles Wesley's early efforts to develop a systematic method of activating intense religious ardor and effecting conversion. Transatlantic missionary efforts brought Arminianism to North America, though it was only in the aftermath of the American Revolution that this theology found purchase among American Protestants. The new climate of political self-governance rendered the Arminian belief in religious self-determination newly appealing and relevant, and the popularity of Arminianism contributed directly to Methodism's exponential growth in the early national period.[30] Perry Miller has described Arminianism as "wholly American" because of its promotion of a religious egalitarianism that makes salvation accessible to all: as Miller put it, "everybody *can* help it."[31]

Emerson was already familiar with Arminianism before his encounter with Tarbox: it had long been the subject of lively theological debate among Unitarians, and Emerson's own father was known to have been a proponent.[32] However, it was Tarbox's particular distillation of Arminianism that Emerson would elaborate on throughout his life. Tarbox's lesson underlies, for instance, the Divinity School address, in which Emerson not only propounded Methodist oratory but also offered a similar vision of human interactions with the divine. Like Tarbox, Emerson contends that the commonplace acts of everyday life have spiritual reverberations that confirm their essential moral tenor. Emerson elaborated on this teaching with the assertion that "he who does a good deed, is instantly ennobled. He who does a mean deed, is by the action itself contracted" (*CW* 1:78, 76). And in accord with Tarbox's claims about the spiritual consequences of everyday life, Emerson asserts here that the ordinary acts of daily life are of immense importance, for "divine laws" mandate that their ethical character is replicated ad infinitum in our lives: like causes like, and in this way the morality of our actions directly determines the nature of the world we experience (*CW* 1:77, 76). Emerson's lecture also ↳ expands the particulars of Tarbox's lesson with a discussion of the specific repercussions of our thoughts and actions. For instance, Emerson wrote:

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> If a man dissemble, deceive, he deceives himself, and goes out of acquaintance with his own being. … a man is made the Providence to himself, dispensing good to his goodness, and evil to his sin. … As we are, so we associate. The good, by affinity, seek the good; the vile, by affinity, the vile. Thus of their own volition, souls proceed into heaven, into hell. (*CW* 1:78, 76–77)

The ethical character of our actions directly attracts people with corresponding ethics, so our social circles thereby convey our own moral natures. The Methodist origins of this formulation are also evident in Emerson's assertion that this moral, cosmic unity renders "a man … Providence to himself," an unambiguous declaration of Arminian sympathy. Our fates are determined not by the inscrutable judgment of an aloof deity, he insists, but are instead of our own making, our salvation or damnation enabled through the moral character of our own actions and through the consequences effected by a receptive deity.

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Emerson's published corpus bears overwhelming testimony to Tarbox's lasting influence, for Emerson repeatedly elaborated on this teaching and propounded it widely, urging his audiences to recognize the moral symmetry between actions and reactions, as enabled by an attentive deity. However, in all his numerous instances in which he publicly promoted this belief, he never once characterized it as sectarian, an omission that suggests that Emerson himself failed to recognize the denominational origins of this belief and which likely contributed to the receptivity of mainline Protestant audiences to these remarks. This influence, for instance, is evident in Emerson's 1841 collection, *Essays: First Series,* which contains several essays that reflect on the implications of Tarbox's lesson. The collection's most famous essay, "Self-Reliance," amply registers this influence in his remarks about prayer, which he characterizes not as a deliberate appeal to the divine but as an unconscious product of daily life, as with his assertion that there is "prayer in all action" (*CW* 2:44). The essay's central argument that we should rely more fully on the truth of our own convictions is likewise indebted to the Methodist climate of populism and Arminian autonomy, which invests the common person with religious authority and renders the individual responsible for his or her own fate. Ordained clergy and established theological convention, he insists, are false idols, and we should instead recognize that "all persons that ever existed are … forgotten ministers," a statement that vested common people with the wisdom of sages and derives from the Methodist democratization of religious authority (*CW* 2:39). The essay's concluding remarks are noticeably influenced by Arminianism, which can be construed as the apogee of theological self-reliance: "Nothing can bring you peace but yourself," Emerson contended, and "nothing can bring you peace but the triumph of principles," a final assertion that the ethical reciprocity engendered by our actions may allows us to achieve fulfillment (*CW* 2:51).

p. 328 The collection's third essay, "Compensation," similarly attests to Emerson's continuing efforts to interpret Tarbox's lesson. The essay does not discuss Methodism per se, but its opening references the populist uprising against both clericalism and orthodoxy that characterized the Second Great Awakening and enabled the rise of Methodism. Emerson begins by summarizing Calvinist teachings about worldly compensation, which argue that virtue is rewarded with poverty and sin with wealth, an arrangement that Calvinists claim will be reversed in the afterlife. Such a belief is altogether devoid of common sense, Emerson insists, and he frames his essay as an attempt to offer an opposing theory anchored in personal experience rather than theology. The essay begins as follows: "Ever since I was a boy, I have wished to write a discourse on Compensation: for it seemed to me when very young, that on this subject life was ahead of theology, and the people knew more than the preachers taught" (*CW* 2:55). This account offers several explanations at once: in addition to describing the origin of the essay itself, it also describes both the early childhood sources of Emerson's adult resignation from the clergy and metonymically recounts the social changes underlying Methodism's growth and Calvinism's decline. He articulates growing opinion that orthodox clergy are out of touch, and the essay begins by joining Methodist efforts to elevate common people as worthy sources of religious wisdom.

The essay provides Emerson's fullest elaboration on Tarbox's lesson, arguing in great detail that the ethical character of our ambitions, actions, and thoughts directly determines their outcomes. Envisioning the correspondence between action and reaction as a balance sheet, Emerson insists, "Take what figure you will, its exact value, nor more nor less, still returns to you" (*CW* 2:60). What we put into the world, Emerson asserts, will come back to us, in precisely the same character and with comparable consequences, effecting in us what we hoped to effect in the world. "Every act rewards itself," he wrote, and he considers at length how goodness yields only comparable goodness and vice generates only more vice (*CW* 2:60). "Love, and you shall be loved," Emerson wrote, and the thief likewise "steals from himself. The swindler swindles himself" (*CW* 2:68, 66). It bears stressing that Emerson does not envision a moral universe governed entirely by human actions. Rather, he concurs with Tarbox in his assertion that "there is a third silent party to all our bargains," who heeds all our desires and ensures "the fulfillment of every contract" (*CW* 2:69). However, the divine role is primarily reactive to the actions and wishes of the individual, and Emerson

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concludes his essay with an affirmation of the Methodist Arminian belief in the power of the individual to direct his or her own fate: "Thus do all things preach the indifferency of circumstances. The man is all" (*CW* 2:70).

Tarbox's influence by no means diminished with the passing of time but seems only to have intensified. In 1860, twenty-five years after this original encounter and during Emerson's late mid-life, Emerson made Tarbox's remarks the centerpiece of his essay "Fate." The essay takes up a topic of immediate relevance to Tarbox's remark: the nature of our fates and the roles we play in determining our lives. Emerson contends that our fates are of our own making, made possible by our constant reciprocal intercourse with the divine, which is receptive to our wishes. He writes, "The soul contains the event that p. 329 ↳ shall befall it, for the event is only the actualization of its thoughts; and what we pray to ourselves for is always granted. ... Events are the children of his body and mind" (*CW* 6:21–22). This statement paraphrases Tarbox's original statement that "men were always praying, and ... their prayers were answered," and it asserts both that our thoughts and actions constitute a form of prayer and that our actions directly influence future events. What happens to us is not fated by an external third party but is the direct result of our own thoughts and deeds.

In all these ways, Tarbox's 1825 remark figures as an unacknowledged source text underlying numerous essays and lectures, just as significant as Edward Taylor's oratory in providing content for some of Emerson's most influential writings. As the contributions of these two men illustrate, Methodism provided important precedents for Emerson's ideas about the potent significance of the individual, whose personal experiences have extraordinary persuasive power and who is capable of determining his or her own fate. However, the invisibility of Methodism in the history of these ideas demonstrates the unfortunate historiographical consequences of relying primarily on written, printed materials in our reconstruction of the past. This medium necessarily commemorates the lives and contributions of a privileged sector of the population, those who have the standing and education to leave written, preserved records. It also omits a significant sector of the population who were either incapable of writing—such as the illiterate Taylor, who influenced countless lives but left behind no papers—or who, like Tarbox, left no historical paper trail. The written archive will always be incomplete, but this is particularly the case with populist movements that operated in the oral medium, with instruction passed "from mouth to mouth [and] from street to street," with few surviving written transcriptions of these important exchanges. Even Emerson recorded only a single sentence from his conversation with Tarbox, with the rest lost to history.

Reliance on the spoken word did not prevent Methodism from permeating American culture, but it did result in the omission of Methodism from our understanding of Emerson, whose avid, documented reading has directed the researches of scholars but who seems never to have read or written about Methodism. As a result, Methodism is underrepresented both in the written archive of the period and in Emerson's own vast written corpus. In his journals, Emerson frequently acknowledged the importance of these two Methodist men, and to track their influence is both to recognize the vast gaps in the historical written record and to wonder what other vital populist influences have also been overlooked in the annals of American intellectual history.

This genealogy has several other important implications, for it provides a vital data point in nineteenth-century American intellectual and religious history. In the first place, it suggests that Transcendentalism was more heavily influenced by the events of the Second Great Awakening than we have previously recognized and that its immediate religious sources were not restricted to such regional sects as Unitarianism and Calvinist orthodoxy.[33] The populist leanings of Transcendentalism were thus not limited to merely promoting individualism and the rejection of hierarchical convention but also entailed the enlistment of anti-authoritarian religious ideas circulating p. 330 ↳ among the public.[34] In Emerson's encounters with Taylor and Tarbox, one might realistically expect the more educated, affluent man to occupy the tutelary role and offer instruction to his less cultivated counterpart. However, in both cases Emerson was the recipient, not the purveyor, of religious teaching. While this trajectory comports with Emerson's

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lifelong willingness to glean insight from figures across the social spectrum, it also reveals the bottom-up circulation of some major ideas of the nineteenth century, which originated not amid the learned cerebrations of the seminary or the Transcendental Club but in the open-air tents of the revival meeting. In this case, eminent New Englanders were not at the forefront of progressive developments in religious belief, as we might expect, but instead were late arrivals to a populist movement already well underway.

This genealogy also illuminates the circumstances of Methodism's rapid spread in the first half of the nineteenth century, when it moved from the religious periphery to the Protestant mainstream, its teachings and practices so widely assimilated that, by the end of the century, these sectarian features lost all lingering associations with this denomination.[35] To trace the influence of Methodism on Emerson is to affirm his involvement within this larger national context, as his writings both registered and contributed to the integration of Methodist teachings within mainstream American culture. That Emerson would unwittingly embrace Methodist doctrine in his own work suggests that these teachings were already well on their way to becoming conventional. At the same time, these writings demonstrate that Emerson actively participated in this process: in offering cogent defenses of Methodist precepts and refining this denomination's often rough public presentation, Emerson imparted intellectual respectability to Methodist doctrines and enabled them to circulate in more privileged social spheres than they might have otherwise reached. Emerson's promotion helped Methodist tenets to shed their populist associations and to be received as vehicles of self-improvement and high-minded refinement, a transition that aided their adoption among the educated elite and absorption into the Protestant mainstream.

Notes

1. Roger Finke and Rodney Stark, *The Churching of America, 1776–2005: Winners and Losers in Our Religious Economy* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2005), 56, 71, 121.

2. Finke and Stark, *Churching*, 56.

3. William Ellery Channing, 1882, "The Demands of the Age on the Ministry," in *The Works of William Ellery Channing* (New York: Lenox Hill, 1970), 273; Daniel Walker Howe, *The Unitarian Conscience: Harvard Moral Philosophy, 1805–1861* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970), 163.

4. Emerson recorded this entry on March 1, 1827.

5. Lawrence Buell, *Literary Transcendentalism: Style and Vision in the American Renaissance* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1978), 21–22; Alfred Kazin, *An American Procession* (New York: Vintage, 1985), xiii; Richard Poirier, *A World Elsewhere: The Place of Style in American Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), 63–64; David S. Reynolds, p. 331 ↳ *Beneath the American Renaissance: The Subversive Imagination in the Age of Emerson and Melville* (New York: Knopf, 1988), 16–24.

6. Richard A. Grusin, *Transcendentalist Hermeneutics: Institutional Authority and the Higher Criticism of the Bible* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991), 57, 61ff.

7. Such work includes Peter Coviello and Jared Hickman, "Introduction: After the Postsecular," *American Literature* 86, no. 4 (2015): 645–54; Tracy Fessenden, *Culture and Redemption: Religion, the Secular, and American Literature* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007); Michael W. Kaufmann, "The Religious, the Secular, and Literary Studies: Rethinking the Secularization Narrative in Histories of the Profession," *New Literary History* 38, no. 4 (2007): 607–28; John Lardas Modern, *Secularism in Antebellum America* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2011); Ashley Reed, *Heaven's Interpreters: Women Writers and Religious Agency in Nineteenth-Century America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2020).

8. By the second quarter of the nineteenth century, however, Methodism would establish institutions of higher learning. Perhaps because of a perceived sympathy for Methodist doctrine in his writings, Emerson would receive an invitation to lecture at one such school, Wesleyan University, in 1845. An account of Emerson's address, as well as its poor reception, was printed in the *Zion's Herald* under the title, "Emerson among the Methodists," a name that is indeed the forerunner of this essay.

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9. This entry derives from Journal D, 1838.

10. David Reynolds has written about Taylor's influence on Emerson, though he overlooks the distinctively sectarian character of Taylor's oratory and instead deems it evidence of the "secularization of religious discourse" (*Beneath the American Renaissance*, 21).

11. Dorothy Anna Bedford, *Ralph Waldo Emerson and Father Taylor* (master's thesis, Pennsylvania State University, n.d.); Reynolds, *Beneath the American Renaissance*, 21–22; Austin Warren, *New England Saints* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1956), 111; Robert D. Richardson, Jr., *Emerson: The Mind on Fire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 120.

12. Reynolds, *Beneath the American Renaissance*, 23.

13. Boston Port and Seamen's Aid Society, *Life of Father Taylor the Sailor Preacher* (Boston: Boston Port and Seamen's Aid Society, 1904), lxvii. Whitman's essay "Father Taylor and Oratory" was originally published in *Century* in February 1887.

14. This entry derives from Journal C, March 4, 1837.

15. Rev. Gilbert Haven and Rev. Thomas Russell, *Father Taylor, The Sailor Preacher. Incidents and Anecdotes of Rev. Edward T. Taylor, for Over Forty Years Pastor Seaman's Bethel, Boston* (Boston: B. B. Russell, 1871), 29.

16. Warren, *New England Saints*, 109.

17. Haven and Russell, *Father Taylor*, 171. This anecdote is also repeated in Warren, *New England Saints*, 109.

18. *Life of Father Taylor*, xxxvii.

19. Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), 137.

20. This entry derives from Journal Q, November 14, 1832.

21. This entry derives from Journal A, December 28, 1834.

22. This entry derives from Journal C, March 4, 1837.

23. Julie Ellison has noted Emerson's tendency to imitate writers or speakers he admired. See Julie Ellison, *Emerson's Romantic Style* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 17.

24. Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Journals of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, ed. Edward Waldo Emerson and Waldo Emerson Forbes, vol. 2 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1909), 98, n. 1.

25. This entry was composed on September 4, 1842.

26. Quoted in Richardson, *Emerson*, 64.

27. Ralph Waldo Emerson, *The Complete Sermons of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, vol. 1, ed. Albert J. Frank (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1989), 57.

28. Emerson, *Complete Sermons* 1:57.

29. Emerson, *Complete Sermons* 1:55; Ralph L. Rusk, *The Life of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (New York: Scribner's, 1949), 117.

30. William G. McLoughlin, *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform: An Essay on Religion and Social Change in America, 1607–1977* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 98.

31. Perry Miller, *The Life of the Mind in America: From the Revolution to the Civil War* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1965), 32.

32. David Robinson, *Apostle of Culture: Emerson as Preacher and Lecturer* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982), 30; David M. Robinson, "Emerson and Religion," in *A Historical Guide to Ralph Waldo Emerson*, ed. Joel Porte (New York: Oxford, 2000), 152; Conrad Wright, *The Beginnings of Unitarianism in America* (Boston: Starr King, 1955), 3.

33. This context receives only passing mention in a few studies. See, for instance, Miller, *Life of the Mind,* 14; Robinson, *Apostle of Culture*, 12. Barry Hankins's study of Transcendentalism and the Second Great Awakening largely summarizes these

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parallel movements but declines to show the intellectual and discursive overlaps between them. Barry Hankins, *The Second Great Awakening and Transcendentalism* (Westport: Greenwood, 2004).

34. Nancy Ruttenburg has shown the significant contributions of nineteenth-century American literature to the construction of the era's populism, showing in particular Emerson's involvement in the creation of a national "democratic personality." See Nancy Ruttenburg, *Democratic Personality: Popular Voice and the Trial of America Authorship* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 290–97.

35. Nathan Hatch terms this process the "democratization of American Christianity." Amanda Porterfield's recent study contests some of Hatch's claims about the politics of this process, but she nonetheless confirms this larger national religious shift. See Hatch, *Democratization of American Christianity*; Amanda Porterfield, *Conceived in Doubt: Religion and Politics in the New American Nation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012).

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