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**HENRY JAMES, SR. AND THE AMERICAN EXPERIENCE**

*The University of Oklahoma*

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HENRY JAMES, SR. AND THE AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

A DISSERTATION  
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STEVEN ELLIOTT BROWN  
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1981

HENRY JAMES, SR. AND THE AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviations	Author and Title
<u>CCNE</u>	Henry James, Sr., <u>The Church of Christ not an Ecclesiasticism: A Letter of Remonstrance to a Member of the Soi-Distant New Church</u>
<u>CLC</u>	Henry James, Sr., <u>Christianity, the Logic of Creation</u>
<u>L &amp; M</u>	Henry James, Sr., <u>Lectures and Miscellanies</u>
<u>L in the P</u>	Victor Hennequin, <u>Love in the Phalanstery</u>
<u>L, M, &amp; D</u>	Stephen Pearl Andrews, <u>Love, Marriage, and Divorce, etc.</u>
<u>LRLHJ</u>	William James, ed., <u>The Literary Remains of the Late Henry James</u>
<u>M &amp; C</u>	Henry James, Sr., <u>Moralism and Christianity; Or, Man's Experience and Destiny</u>
<u>NE</u>	Henry James, Sr., <u>The Nature of Evil, etc.</u>
<u>NSB</u>	Henry James, <u>Notes of a Son and Brother</u>
<u>S &amp; S</u>	Henry James, Sr., <u>Substance and Shadow, etc.</u>
<u>SBO</u>	Henry James, <u>A Small Boy and Others</u>
<u>S of S</u>	Henry James, Sr., <u>The Secret of Swedenborg, etc.</u>
<u>SRFM</u>	Henry James, Sr., <u>Society the Redeemed Form of Man, etc.</u>
<u>SSI</u>	Henry James, Sr., <u>The Social Significance of Our Institutions, etc.</u>



TNT

Henry James, Sr., Tracts for the  
New Times, etc.

WCTS?

Henry James, Sr., What Constitutes  
the State?

## PREFACE

Henry James, Sr.'s experiences were those of incessant transformations. During his lifetime, which spanned the major portion of the nineteenth century, he witnessed the immense changes that affected American society, underwent an evolution in his own life from a young man of scholarly and theological ambitions to a crusader for a "redeemed" society, and observed the development of his two eldest sons, William and Henry, from precocious infants and inquisitive adolescents to writers of international repute.

In this biography, I have endeavored to discuss Henry James, Sr.'s career, his responses to the transformations--both social and personal--which marked his age and touched his life. I have tried to analyze the ideas that comprised the system he labeled "society the redeemed form of man," to discuss his impact on his family, and to discern the similarities and differences between his own experiences and those of other Americans. The first two chapters focus on the development of James' life and the progression of his works, the third chapter concentrates on his ideas and the final two chapters depict his familial relationships and his role

as a symbolic American.

At the outset of this study, I would like to define several frequently-used terms. The most important terms that James discussed were "spiritual" life and "spiritual creation." James employed the term "spiritual" to designate all non-physical existence, and believed in a "spiritual creation"--the continuously evolving process of spiritual life--rather than a merely physical or historical creation, which assumes that creation has previously occurred in a specific place and has been completed. I have used the term "teleology" to encompass James' scheme for both spiritual and temporal redemption. It should not be confused with "theology," which, unless otherwise indicated, refers solely to religious principles.

# HENRY JAMES, SR. AND THE AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

## CHAPTER I

### GENESIS

#### I

Bemused, yet tantalized, three year-old Henry James watched the spectacular fireworks sear the Albany skyline. During that dramatic night in early 1815, citizens of the New York town, like their counterparts throughout the country, celebrated the Treaty of Ghent, which concluded hostilities between the fledgling United States of America and its former guardian, Great Britain. The earliest recollection of the young boy, born June 3, 1811, was of a time when both he and the new nation had ample cause to bless their good fortune and look forward with confidence to the future.<sup>1</sup>

The United States, after all, had successfully resisted the world's mightiest state and earned worldwide recognition. Americans expressed unrestrained pride for their country's prowess and all that it portended:

The last six months is the proudest period in the history of the republic. The review presents us with a galaxy of glorious war-deeds, terminating

in an honorable peace, happily signed in the very arms of victory . . . however great the sufferings of the war, we have great countervailing advantages, such as the acquirement of knowledge, renown, internal wealth and strength, and security; . . . [we are] proud in the belief that America now stands in the first rank of nations, a rank that, granted at present by courtesy, to her gallantry, she will COMMAND a little while hence, through her increased population and multiplied resources of wealth and power.<sup>2</sup>

Warring Americans, moreover, had discovered in Andrew Jackson a hero comparable to the idolized leaders of the Revolution, Washington, Adams, Jefferson, and Hamilton. The Battle of New Orleans, fought two weeks after the Peace of Ghent (but before the news reached the United States) established Jackson, leader of the victorious Americans, as the national hero. The defender of New Orleans illumined an epoch with his magnificent aura and bestowed upon that epoch his own name.<sup>3</sup> Henry James matured during "the age of Jackson" and to comprehend him one must understand his youthful and exuberant nation.

Progenitors of James and Jackson and their America were the Founding Fathers, children of the Enlightenment. Leading Enlightenment thinkers taught that a rational understanding of themselves and their universe would enable mankind to ameliorate society. Eighteenth-century Americans, such as Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson, steadily absorbed this rationalist faith until it became one of the dominant intellectual forces of the Revolutionary

era. But in the chaotic aftermath of the Revolution, there soon arose individuals who disputed the Enlightenment emphasis on reason and advocated rival intellectual systems. One such alternative network of ideas, Romanticism, attracted numerous proponents during the early nineteenth century, in both Europe and America.

Romantic Americans reacted against the Enlightenment tendency to rely entirely on rationality. They appealed instead to emotion and instinct to balance the cold excesses of reason.<sup>4</sup> Andrew Jackson himself seemed to personify this outlook. Possessing little formal education and evincing no desire for more, he had risen to a lofty height. And enchanted by Jackson's example, many Americans reassessed the power of reason. The new generation concluded that native abilities were sometimes more to be trusted than reason.<sup>5</sup> As a mature thinker Henry James would constantly reiterate the same theme: the feelings of the heart, he would always insist, are more providentially significant than the cogitations of the intellect.<sup>6</sup>

Romantic Americans' emphasis on the innate equality of each individual, their strength and potential, constituted another evolving aspect of United States culture in the early nineteenth century. During the colonial period and the early years of the republic, Americans believed that men who were the most educated, the best

bred, and the wealthiest deserved life's highest stations. But this climate of deference eroded in the new century. Those who had inherited the advantages of wealthy or prominent families were no longer automatically assumed to be better than their poorer neighbors. Deference remained but Americans now esteemed individuals who demonstrated superiority through their achievements. An unschooled man, like Andrew Jackson, might be better qualified to direct the machinery of government than his more educated peers.<sup>7</sup> From adolescence, when Henry James vigorously questioned his father's dictates, until old age, when he was still unwilling to accept the precepts of authority, this Jacksonian American embodied the rebellion against deference that characterized the America of his youth.

James would never question the belief that the United States was the world's greatest nation. Although he traveled throughout Europe, he was never as contented away from his homeland as he was in it. James incorporated his country's characteristics in his philosophy. The conflicting ideologies of his boyhood, Enlightenment and Romantic thought, were assimilated in his writings. He constantly strove for a logical foundation for his theological system, but he always maintained that only its emotional appeal could attract a following. His faith in the efficacy of emotions encompassed an

individualism so strident that he could never force himself to bow to any formal authority. Henry James, Sr. was willing to submit only to God. The rise of individualism and the decline of deference that prevailed in the America of his boyhood permanently affected his psyche. He cannot be described simply as a writer on theology--he was an American philosopher.

In one significant way, however, James was unlike many other nineteenth-century Americans. The United States was a nation rich in natural resources, area, and people, and its citizens zealously exploited these attributes to increase their own personal prosperity. But James, the offspring of an extremely wealthy family, felt no compulsion to lead a life of pecuniary rewards.

## II

Henry James was a first-generation American. His father, William James of Albany, was a stout, clean-shaven man with an aristocratic bearing who was born December 29, 1771, at Corkish, County Cavan, in east central Ireland. The first American William James, destined to be the founder of one of America's most respected intellectual families, was the second son of William James and the former Susan McCartney. Information about William James of Albany, and about his rise to great wealth in America, is scarce. Less has been preserved



from his Irish boyhood. He probably received a good education, which he later displayed in speechmaking. Although he was a staunch Presbyterian throughout his life, a family legend held that as a young man he fled Ireland to escape a ministerial career, emigrating to the United States sometime between 1789 and 1793. Family tradition also maintains that he sailed with little money, a Latin grammar, and an unexplained desire to see a Revolutionary battlefield. He apparently fulfilled this yearning and, perhaps after a brief sojourn in New York City, settled in Albany in the early 1790s.<sup>8</sup>

The list of William James of Albany's business ventures and successes is lengthy, as befits a man whose final estate was second, in New York, only to that of the empire-building fur trader, John Jacob Astor. William James began his commercial activities as a clerk in the store of Albany's principal merchant, John A. Robinson. Eighteenth-century clerks anticipated advancement to ownership, and James was soon trading on his own account. By May 1795, as a partner of one John Horner, he established a tobacco and cigar industry. Two years later, he erected a waterfront store to receive country produce, handle dry goods, and sell groceries. By 1800, James had added at least one other store, and during the early years of the new century he also began

operations in New York City and Utica. But outside of Albany, James was most involved in Syracuse, for which he purchased the deed to the village for \$30,000, in 1824, and where he owned the saltworks, the town's principal industry. James Street, which is still one of Syracuse's main thoroughfares, was named for him, as was the nearby town of Jamesville.<sup>9</sup>

William James of Albany's commercial successes led to civic participation. He became a naturalized citizen of the United States in 1802, and he was eager to promote Albany's prosperity. He was a charter director of the New York State Bank of Albany in 1804, served as a deputy commissioner of purchases for the Army during the War of 1812, and became a trustee of the Albany Academy in 1815 and chairman of the board in 1826. While continually expanding his financial enterprises, he became most visible in civic affairs. On the first day of April, 1818, William James of Albany announced his retirement from active superintendence of his commercial interests. He hardly abandoned business, though, since he still directed moneylending, speculation and investment, particularly in land, which he purchased throughout the state of New York and as far away as Detroit. Following his official retirement from business, he helped establish both the Albany Savings Bank and the Albany Chamber of Commerce. He became the first

Vice-President of each organization, second in both instances to Stephen Van Rensselaer of the old Dutch patroon family.<sup>10</sup> The pattern of being a notch removed from the highest office of both business and civic enterprises remained throughout William James of Albany's life, although there is no indication that he resented his status.

In 1823, James became chairman of the Citizens' Committee for the preliminary celebration of the Erie Canal, a project which he had prominently supported.<sup>11</sup> His speeches at the preliminary celebration, and two years later, at the Canal's completion, are indicative of his personality and intellectual ability. As chairman of the preliminary celebration for the Canal, James delivered an inspirational speech containing some opinions about mankind and his country and reflecting his absorption of Enlightenment ideals:

It is the distinguished attribute of man to be excited by what is grand, beautiful and sublime in nature, or what is great and beneficial in the combination of intellect and art.

This principle of our nature has congregated the immense number of citizens you now behold, to celebrate . . . a work which in grandeur of conception, and benefits resulting to the human family, surpass every national improvement that has been attempted in any country; a work that sheds additional lustre on the United States, bearing the stamp of the enterprising spirit and resolution which declared our independence, and the intelligence and wisdom that cemented the union of different republics by the adoption of the federal constitution . . . .<sup>12</sup>

During his speech James also revealed his religious belief: "Americans ought to rejoice with gratitude to heaven; nothing but the torpid stupidity of atheism can prevent the reflecting mind from perceiving the special interposition of providence, in protecting and advancing our national honor and greatness."<sup>13</sup>

Two years later, while celebrating the Canal's completion, James discussed the ideal citizen, and this important fragment gives a clue for understanding his bitter disappointment with his son Henry's early endeavors:

It is those only whose genius and talents have controlled and applied electricity and steam to useful purposes, and not the first observers of the power and force of these agents, who are the benefactors to mankind. It is he who demonstrates the mode and practical power of extending our knowledge and increasing our happiness, and not he who might have dreamed or wished that such could be done, who confers benefits or merits the meed of gratitude.<sup>14</sup>

William James of Albany had proved his mettle through a life filled with just such practical successes. He intended a similar destiny for his children. And this man, who could himself be called a founding father, was as prolific in his private life as in his public endeavors.

The earliest American William James fathered three families. Two wives died shortly after marriage, but his third spouse outlived her eminent husband by a quarter of a century. James wed Elizabeth Tillman on August 19, 1796, in New York City. Less than a year afterwards

the initial Mrs. James gave birth to twin sons, Robert and William, then died several days later from some complications of childbirth. These two sons grew up to follow the interests of their father. Robert James became a businessman, who, in 1818, ascended to superintendency of his retiring parent's concerns. He guided the business for three years, until his death in 1821.<sup>15</sup> William James, Henry's older half-brother, was his most influential sibling. Born fourteen years before Henry, William attended Princeton's seminary and became a Presbyterian clergyman. During Henry's formative adolescent years William seems to have been a constant inspiration and supplier of intellectual materials. Anticipating, and perhaps contributing to his younger half-brother's religious doubts, William had a difficult time accepting all of the precepts of his father's austere Presbyterianism, and he soon retired from active clerical duties and tried to formulate his own personal theology.<sup>16</sup>

During his twin sons' infancy William James of Albany sought a stepmother for his children and a new companion for himself. On December 12, 1798, he married Mary Ann Connolly, the daughter of a Charlestown, New York, merchant. This marriage was also short-lived. The second Mrs. James bore a girl, Ellen, in April 1800, then died several months later.<sup>17</sup>

The third, and final, marriage of William James

was both long-lasting and productive. A little more than three years after his second wife's death, he married twenty-one year-old Catharine Barber of Montgomery, New York, in a Presbyterian ceremony. The successful young businessman had married into a prominent family. His new bride's father and paternal grandfather were both judges. Her father had fought in the American Revolution, and two of his brothers had been befriended by Washington and Lafayette. Henry James recalled his aged grandfather's delight in endlessly repeating tales of his Revolutionary exploits.<sup>18</sup>

Catharine James bore seven sons and three daughters from 1805 until 1828, four years before her husband's death at sixty. An infant boy, named Henry, was born to the pair in April 1809, but he died within months. Two years later, the second Henry arrived.<sup>19</sup> Despite the possibility that bearing the name of his dead brother might have adversely affected his sense of childhood security, Henry James entered life with numerous and obvious advantages.

### III

Toward the end of his life, Henry James' family persuaded him to write an autobiographical sketch. Although James minimized the facts of everyone's "outward" experiences, preferring to discuss internal or

spiritual evolution, he did include a hazy outline of his boyhood. This autobiography, Immortal Life, probably contained as much about his youth as he wanted anyone to know. James, who had once written that "every true biography vindicates its claim to be written, only by relating how some private person, from being the abject offspring of his parents, capable of rising eternally away from his earthly nest, and forgetting on occasion every rudimental natural tie . . .," naturally chose to offer a minimum of his personal experience.<sup>20</sup> But that little, combined with other writings and a wealth of letters by himself and his family, permits reconstruction of important aspects of his childhood.

When he was a child, Henry James' family resided in an Albany mansion at North Pearl Street. The old man remembered that his family had been very charitable, with his mother in charge of dispensing goods to the needy. He recalled that William James of Albany "was in the habit of having a great quantity of beef and pork and potatoes laid by in the beginning of the winter for the needy poor, the distribution of which my mother regulated; and no sooner was the original stock exhausted than the supply was renewed with ungrudging hand."<sup>21</sup> This practice reflected both his mother's involvement with charity and his father's religious concern for the destitute. But the elder James was also fulfilling a

traditional role. Wealthy citizens regarded their employees and other "inferiors" as an extension of their families and felt a responsibility to help them materially. William James' practice exemplified the paternalistic traditions of the deferential society that were only slowly eroding.<sup>22</sup>

Henry James' parents maintained an open home, welcoming visitors, especially Presbyterian clergymen. His father, who in 1820 had been elected a trustee of Albany's First Presbyterian Church, believed in a Calvinistic God who foreordained salvation or damnation. Since the success one achieved in his earthly life was generally a valid indication of one's eventual destiny, William James of Albany had little reason to be overly fearful about his prospects. While he remained staunch in his orthodox faith, however, New York was being invaded by propagators of evangelical religion. Although Albany was not within that "burned-over district" of such extreme enthusiasm, it too was affected by the rumblings of the fire and brimstone warriors.<sup>23</sup>

Widespread religious revivalism paralleled and reinforced the decline of deference which was occurring in secular society. Many Americans seemed unwilling to accept a predetermined fate. They believed that people had some control over their eternal destiny. During this second Great Awakening, evangelists preached that



individuals possessed the ability to analyze their lives, discover how they had sinned and then strive to correct their errors. When they mustered sufficient willpower to reform themselves they would then achieve individual salvation. As a sensitive and religious boy, Henry James must have felt bombarded and confused by the dictates of his father's Calvinism and the ferment of local revivalism. He would eventually reject both avenues of faith.

James recalled himself as an exuberant, robust, young lad who derived his greatest pleasures from experiences of nature. He loved to fish and hunt. He also enjoyed activities which his stern father would have forbidden, and young Henry was apparently difficult to discipline. He remembered helping himself frequently to loose money kept in his parent's drawer.<sup>24</sup> William James of Albany might have known that his mischievous son committed petty thefts, but he was probably unaware of how the boy used the money. The gregarious youngster stopped at the local shoemaker's shop on his way to and from school each day. While there he thrilled to discussions of the theater, and he delighted in entertaining the workmen with oratorical declamations from his father's library books--his tongue loosened by drafts of gin or brandy that he had purchased there.<sup>25</sup>

Young James' childhood had its unpleasant side.

Even as an old man, he could recall the dreariness of Sundays. Although James remembered himself being made inordinately aware of the Calvinistic deity, he still resented the unnatural quiet he was forced to maintain each Sabbath, both at church and at home. In his autobiography, James railed eloquently against this outrage upon the youthful spirit: "Nothing is so hard for a child as not-to-do; that is to keep his hands and feet and tongue in enforced inactivity. It is a cruel wrong to put such an obligation upon him, while his reflective faculties are still undeveloped, and his senses urge him to unrestricted action."<sup>26</sup> As the father of five children himself, James still retained this conviction: "I am persuaded, for my part at all events, that the number of things I was conventionally bound not-to-do at that tender age, has made Sunday to my imagination ever since the most oppressive or least gracious and hallowed day of the week."<sup>27</sup>

James' life changed abruptly in his thirteenth year. He was attending the Albany Academy, an institution for which his father served as a trustee. Students and tutors at the Academy frequently played a game called fireball which entailed kicking a flax ball that had been soaked in turpentine and then ignited. On this unfortunate day, the fiery ball was kicked into a nearby stable, setting some hay ablaze.

James chased the ball and bravely stamped out the fire, but he was badly burned on his left leg. This heroic deed cost the boy a good portion of his leg, which was first amputated above the knee and then, after becoming gangrenous, had to be amputated again, this time at the thigh.<sup>28</sup> At a time when anaesthetics were unknown, the young lad had undergone two extremely painful operations comforted only with whiskey, and one less robust might not have survived such an excruciating ordeal. The boy's anguish did reveal to him for the first time the degree of William James of Albany's love. His father's "sympathy with my sufferings was so excessive that my mother had the greatest possible difficulty in imposing due prudence upon his expression of it."<sup>29</sup>

James demonstrated a courage during this experience that he would exemplify repeatedly in his later years of intellectual isolation. The episode was also important in other respects. James was confined to his bed for two long years. During that period he was the primary object of his family's concern and received a measure of protectiveness from them that continued during his adult years. He probably became closest to his half-brother William, who visited often and supplied his younger brother with books.<sup>30</sup> Psychologically, James must have matured considerably while recovering from the accident. He had, primarily through

his own efforts, been able to pull through a grave physical disaster. The sense of physical dependence and psychological independence that must have resulted had to be one of the most important influences upon his personality. The highly individualistic philosophy that James developed and maintained throughout his life was probably shaped and bolstered by this experience, as was his predilection for moods of despondency.

Another significant result of the accident was the close friendship that developed between James and Joseph Henry. Famous first as an experimenter with electricity, and later as the first secretary and director of the Smithsonian Institution, Henry came to Albany when he was thirteen or fourteen. Like James he attended the Albany Academy, and he was there as a student-instructor when the accident occurred. Henry, in fact, may have been the tutor who supervised the very game in which James was burned. Following the accident, Henry, who was the same age as James' half-brother William, became the boy's tutor. An intimate relationship was maintained between the two for the succeeding fifteen years, first in Albany, then while both men were at Princeton. The young physicist exerted considerable influence upon his protégé as an intellectual mentor and a guide in scientific matters. During his two bedridden years, James studied so diligently

under Joseph Henry's supervision, that he was able to enroll in 1828 as a seventeen year-old junior at Union College in Schenectady.<sup>31</sup>

Higher education in antebellum America was not of a high quality. Many colleges were no more than glorified secondary schools, and teachers frequently possessed little more education than their students. Only those who were most interested in pursuing an advanced education or who were members of wealthy families sought a college degree. Henry James probably fit both categories. Still, at most colleges he would probably have encountered the reality of struggling institutions where social authority was lax, educational objectives obscure, and a sense of community unknown.<sup>32</sup> At Union, a dynamic President overcame these typical liabilities.

Eliaphalet Nott had been a turn-of-the-century Presbyterian clergyman in Albany and William James had been one of his parishioners. They began a long-lasting and mutually rewarding association. While in Albany, Nott formulated the principles of the Academy which Henry James eventually attended. Then, in 1804, the thirty-one year-old minister was appointed head of Union College, a position he retained until his death sixty-two years later. Under Nott's leadership Union achieved a reputation for excellence. In an age of

failing university discipline, which frequently led to bloody riots, he instituted a successful system of student self-government. Nott also introduced a curriculum of scientific courses as an alternative to the traditional classical fare.<sup>33</sup> Perhaps his most important feat, ensuring the continued success of the college, was the construction of a stable financial foundation. This stability could not have been achieved without William James of Albany.

William James' first known contribution to Union College occurred immediately prior to Nott's tenure. The enterprising businessman promised that a carpenter in an Albany jail would be released in time to complete his work at the school. James' later involvement was more meaningful. During the early 1820s he began to lend money to Union at six-and-a-half percent interest. So convenient was this arrangement that, by 1823, Union College owed James \$71,000, with collateral including the deed to the college itself. Nott had gambled dangerously, mortgaging Union College to its principal financier. But James apparently entered into negotiations with Union for reasons besides business. He was awarded a place on Union's finance committee and a trusteeship, and at his death he left the college a box full of cancelled checks and released securities.<sup>34</sup> William James of Albany's investment in the college

fulfilled his twin ambitions of business enterprise and civic aid.

Henry James enrolled at Union College as one of the privileged members of the student body who resided with President Nott.<sup>35</sup> This practice undoubtedly had been a very effective one for the President, who could learn firsthand of any student problems. He would also have been able to send back among the students those who knew and could explain the limits of Nott's tolerance toward students' actions. But in this case, Nott's arrangement may have backfired.

James was an inveterate fun-lover fond of life's luxuries. He frequently resorted to drafts upon his father's ample credit to purchase cigars, oysters, and stylish clothing. Fraternities were newly forming college institutions; and James joined the Sigma Phi, and made a special trip to Albany so he could be the first one on campus to be seen wearing a fraternity badge.<sup>36</sup> Young James must have been aware of the business relationship between his father and Nott, and he may well have been the sort of boy who would have tested the college President to determine how much leeway he would be allowed. The relationship between Henry James and Eliaphalet Nott must have been tense, but too little information remains to reconstruct its details.

James could not have entirely ignored his academic

work at Union, since he was still under the domineering authority of his father. But his own desire for learning was probably a greater spur to studiousness than was his father's strict discipline. Union's curriculum was strong in the classics and mathematics, but James slighted the latter. Records remaining from his Union days indicate his interest. During James' initial trimester he earned a 95 (out of 100) in Blair (Rhetoric), 95 in Horace, and 90 in Collecteana Graeca Major. Similar marks were attained during the remainder of the year, although he dropped to 75 in Cicero. The fragmentary record of James' senior grades shows a somewhat lower average, with an 80 in Biot's Optics and a 75 in Kames' Elements of Criticism. Despite this decline his final average placed him just below the top third of his class and he narrowly missed election to Phi Beta Kappa.<sup>37</sup>

Henry James' lower grades during his final year reflected a time of great conflict. He was growing dissatisfied with the form of his education, and was increasingly upset by his father's insistence that he enter a profession. William James of Albany, stressing, as always, practical endeavors, hoped his son would become a lawyer, and he was angered by Henry's indifference to that field and other equally solid professions. He was also annoyed by his son's extravagance. In



November, 1829, the senior James requested Archibald MacIntyre, who apparently lived nearby, to have a talk with Henry and entreat him to change his conduct. MacIntyre replied that he had discussed Henry's delinquent actions with the boy, and had warned him to cease his antics before he was completely ruined. Early in December William James of Albany informed MacIntyre that once Henry had acknowledged his erring ways he might return home where his affairs would be shielded from infamy and reproach as best they could be. In the meantime, the father wished his son to know that he would keep his brothers and sisters safe from the shame that the indolent Henry had caused.<sup>38</sup>

Unfortunately, this last of William James of Albany's letters reached Schenectady too late. Sometime in November Henry had fled Union for a more hospitable climate. Little is known about his escape from Union. James' namesake son, the novelist Henry, believed that his father was referring to this episode when he spoke of a "wild" time in his youth.<sup>39</sup> But the bulk of information that remains from this adventure is contained in one of James' earliest surviving letters, to Union math tutor Isaac Jackson.<sup>40</sup> The lame Henry James had somehow managed to get from Schenectady to Boston. There the young runaway lived on the first floor of a four story house on Hancock Street. His

landlord, Mr. Jenks, was also his employer. Jenks was a partner in the publishing firm of Jenks and Palmer and agreed to pay the young James \$200 a year, exclusive of room and board, for proofreading and translations. James wrote Jackson that he spent eight hours a day proofreading and occasionally writing notices for the Christian Examiner. This arrangement, James stated, left him plenty of time to study languages, his primary interest.

The Boston sojourn included an active social life in which James met the first families of the city. He also attended a different church each Sunday, including that of the famed Unitarian minister, William Ellery Channing. This period seems to have been a reversion to James' carefree days prior to his amputation when he could roam at will and escape the watchful eye of his intimidating father. James' mysterious flight to Boston did not last long, however. Sometime in the spring of 1830 he returned to Union College, and in July of that year he graduated with other members of his class, receiving the first degree in Arts.<sup>41</sup>

#### IV

The half-decade following James' graduation from Union is veiled in even deeper mystery. During these five years, he probably resided in Albany, where he

studied law, and in Canandaigua, where he pursued bookkeeping.<sup>42</sup> The latter endeavor seems especially strange in view of James' lifelong fiscal helplessness. Journalism is the only documented activity he was engaged in during this period. He edited, with two other men, the Albany Daily Craftsman, a newspaper which combined Jacksonianism with a dislike for Martin Van Buren's Albany Regency. This unusual partisanship developed because of the rivalry between New York's two Democratic factions--one group led by Governor DeWitt Clinton, William James of Albany's close friend, opposed another loyal to Van Buren. The Daily Craftsman consisted of three pages of advertising and one page devoted to legislative and Congressional hearings, general news, and editorials. James worked on the paper for six months, from late October 1831 until February 1832.<sup>43</sup> This experience, like James' brief journalistic endeavor in Boston, was good training for later journalistic enterprises, but the scope of his contributions are unknown, since the paper used no bylines.

Nothing during these years equalled in significance for James the death of his father. William James of Albany, at age sixty, suffered a severe apoplectic stroke on December 15, 1832. Although he retained both his speech and his reason for the next few days,

he died in the early morning hours of December 19.<sup>44</sup> Albany newspapermen freely praised William James. Both the Albany Evening Journal and the Daily Albany Argus affirmed that he had worked harder than any other man to strengthen their city and that his presence would be sorely missed. Other organizations also demonstrated their grief. Members of the Albany Academy and the Directors of the New York State Bank issued proclamations praising James and sympathizing with his family.<sup>45</sup>

James' fortune, which was primarily in real estate, was estimated at three million dollars, an enormous sum even by today's inflated standards, and an immense fortune in the early nineteenth century.<sup>46</sup> But his family failed to receive immediate benefits from this great wealth. The specter of William James of Albany's estate was to linger ominously over the entire clan for the next fourteen years.

The old patriarch attempted to control his family's behavior from the grave as stringently as he had while he lived. His will stipulated that the estate could not be divided until all his children and grandchildren, alive at the time of his death, had reached twenty-one.<sup>47</sup> William James of Albany intended to guarantee that none of his family would become profligates because they had too easy access to his vast wealth. In the process of trying to ensure the morality of his

descendants, however, he slighted family members who were dependent upon his fortune for survival in their accustomed manner. The most grievous oversight in James' will was leaving only his mansion and an insufficient \$3,000 annuity to his wife and four young children. He disappointed other family members as well. His namesake son, who had questioned his father's Presbyterianism, was left with a permanent annual income of \$2,000. The much more rebellious Henry was bequeathed only a \$1,250 lifetime annuity. To ensure that the strictures of the will would be assiduously followed, William James of Albany appointed three trustees, including his eldest son from his third marriage, Augustus James.

Although William James of Albany provided for loans against the final division of his estate for investment, moderate speculation, and the pursuit of a trade or profession, his family was determined to break his stingy legacy. The widowed Catharine led the struggle to shatter the will. Six months after William James of Albany's death, the family's suit was heard in a New York Chancery Court.<sup>48</sup> The first settlement favored the complainants, who included all the lineal descendants of William James. But the family did not immediately reap the full economic benefits of their suit. Litigation continued well into the 1840s

while the courts decided how the property should be fairly partitioned. Not until 1846, when William James of Albany's Syracuse property was divided, would his heirs attain their full inheritance.<sup>49</sup>

For Henry James, the will provided vivid proof of the disappointment he had caused his father. During most of the 1830s, including the five mainly mysterious years, Henry James seems to have lived his life trying to placate his father, and perhaps, the trustees of his father's will. His attempts to find a home in the law and to study bookkeeping are explicable if viewed in this light. So is his decision at mid-decade, after failing at his previous pursuits, to enter the one profession for which he had any inclination--the ministry.

James enrolled in Princeton's Theological Seminary in the fall of 1835 to prepare for a career as a Presbyterian clergyman. The child who had hated Sundays spent in quiet reverence, and who was repulsed by the thought of a Calvinist God intent upon torturing his own creatures with self-doubt, had suddenly decided to become a minister. Could he have been surprised at the intense spiritual isolation he experienced at Princeton? James' sole sources of pleasure at seminary were several like-minded student friends, and a reunion with Joseph Henry, now a Princeton professor.<sup>50</sup>

Despite James' feeling of isolation, which may

have been more pronounced in memory, he remained at Princeton for two years. Then, at the conclusion of the spring 1837 term, James secured a six months leave of absence. He spent his vacation traveling to Ireland and England, a journey made possible after obtaining the first major payment from his father's estate.<sup>51</sup> William James of Albany's desires were being ironically twisted, since his son used his inheritance not to pursue a suitable vocation, but to avoid one.

James joined the vacationing Joseph Henry in London, where the two men roomed together. The physicist worried about his young companion, who was in obvious spiritual turmoil and who insisted upon locking himself in his room with his books, to the exclusion of any normal intercourse.<sup>52</sup> Eventually, Henry succeeded in engaging James in social activities and one result for the bewildered young religious student was a profound intellectual experience. Joseph Henry introduced James to his fellow scientist Michael Faraday, the gifted natural philosopher and experimenter with electricity, who, in his turn, introduced James to Sandemanianism.<sup>53</sup>

Robert Sandeman had been born in 1718 at Perth, Scotland.<sup>54</sup> While a student at the University of Edinburgh he had come under the influence of the early eighteenth-century religious philosopher John Glas,

whose daughter Catherine he married. In 1744, Sandeman abandoned an eight-year career as a linen manufacturer, to become a leader in Glassite churches first in Scotland and then in England. Twenty years later he emigrated to America where he organized congregations, now known as Sandemanians, throughout New England. By 1757, he had settled in Danbury, Connecticut, where he died in 1771. The Glassites or Sandemanians endeavored to live their lives on the basis of a literal interpretation of the New Testament. They rejected the Covenant of Works, believing that Jesus condemned self-righteous Pharisees because God esteemed all men equally. Sandemanians contended that faith in God was the epitome of religious worship and they dismissed all doctrinal disputes as insignificant. The sect's most potent appeal to James was its rejection of all forms of temporal authority and its stress on brotherly love. The Sandemanians had no professional clergy, preferring to elect lay elders. Since God perceived all men equally, a true religious community respected each man's preference for worship. The Sandemanian emphasis upon equality fit James' sense of a proper religious spirit. Although he never mentioned the Sandemanians in his writings, their philosophy would become a major part of James' own theological system.

At age twenty-six, therefore, Henry James still



sought a vocation, but in his previous endeavors he had not simply staggered mindlessly from one situation to another. He had absorbed numerous experiences that would provide the foundation for a life of ideas. He had enjoyed the energetic physical pleasures of boyhood, but had them abruptly removed by his tragic accident. He had experienced the iron will of a stern father, but had learned to rebel against authority. James had become a young adult who encompassed some standard American experiences but tempered them by his own personality. He possessed the American ideal of democracy so completely that he seemed instinctively disposed to question all superiors. Yet he was able to explore many avenues of interest because he had been blessed with an immensely wealthy father. An intensely religious man, James was incapable of tolerating the authority of any successful American faith. He understood the importance of intellectual inquiry, but he refused its precedence over innate belief. Henry James was an amalgam of contradictory forces which benefitted from no organizing principle until he learned about Sandemanianism. Then, bolstered by the force of its unorthodox religious ideals, James acquired a framework for his own beliefs. He was ready to return to the United States, in the fall of 1837, and to explore new avenues of intellectual pursuit.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Henry James, Sr., "Immortal Life: Illustrated in a Brief Autobiographic Sketch of the Late Stephen Dewhurst, edited, with an Introduction, by Henry James," in The Literary Remains of the Late Henry James, ed. by William James (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1884), 145. Although this was supposedly the reminiscence of a deceased friend, it was in fact about James himself; see William James, "Introduction," in LRLHJ, 7-8.

<sup>2</sup>Niles Weekly Register, "Remarks" (4 March 1815), 417, 419.

<sup>3</sup>John William Ward, Andrew Jackson: Symbol for an Age (London: Oxford, 1955), 5-6.

<sup>4</sup>Russell Blaine Nye, The Cultural Life of the New Nation, 1776-1830 (New York: Harper & Row, 1960), 5-9.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 9; Ward, Jackson, Chs. 2-5.

<sup>6</sup>Unpublished and untitled manuscript about Ralph Waldo Emerson, 51-52.

<sup>7</sup>Bernard Bailyn, The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution (Cambridge: Belknap, 1967), 301-319; Lynn L. Marshall, "The Strange Stillbirth of the Whig Party," American Quarterly, XXIV (Spring 1969), 24-43.

<sup>8</sup>The main source for information concerning William James of Albany is Katharine (Bagg) Hastings, "William James (1771-1832) of Albany, N.Y., and his Descendants, with Notes on Some Collateral Lines," New York Genealogical and Biographical Record, LV (April 1924), 101-119, (July 1924), 222-36, and (Oct. 1924), 301-313. Other information concerning James' early life is in Albany Evening Journal (19 Dec. 1832), 2; Daily Albany Argus (20 Dec. 1832), 2; and Gay Wilson Allen, William James: A Biography (New York: Viking, 1967), 4. Allen contends that his protagonist's grandfather resided for a year in New York City before moving to Albany. The only known portraits of William James of Albany are in

Hastings, "William James," facing p. 1; and Ralph Barton Perry, The Thought and Character of William James, as revealed in unpublished correspondence and notes, together with his published writings, Vol. 1, Inheritance and Vocation (Boston: Little, Brown, 1935), facing p. 4.

<sup>9</sup> Albany Evening Journal (19 Dec. 1832), 2; C. Hartley Grattan, The Three Jameses: A Family of Minds: Henry James, Sr., William James, Henry James (London: Longmans, Green, 1932), 7, 11-12; Allen, William James, 4; Harold A. Larrabee, "Henry James, Sr., '30 at Union," Union Alumni Monthly, XV (1926), 238; Harold A. Larrabee, "The Jameses: Financier, Heretic, Philosopher," American Scholar, I (1932), 403; Harold A. Larrabee, "The Elder Henry James and Union College," in Henry James, Sr.: Class of 1830 (Schenectady: Union, 1963), 6-7; Franklin H. Chase, Syracuse and its Environs: A History, Vol. 1 (New York: Lewis Historical, 1924), 64, 168.

<sup>10</sup> James' document of naturalization is at HLHU. Other information about James in this paragraph is in Hastings, "William James," 102; Grattan, Three Jameses, 7-10; Austin Warren, The Elder Henry James (New York: Macmillan, 1934), 2; Larrabee, "Elder Henry James," 6.

<sup>11</sup> Grattan, Three Jameses, 15; Warren, Elder Henry James, 3.

<sup>12</sup> Joel Munsell, Collections on the History of Albany, from its Discovery to the Present Time, With Notices of its Public Institutions and Biographical Sketches of Citizens Deceased, Vol. 2 (Albany: J. Munsell, 1867), 443.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 444.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 465.

<sup>15</sup> Hastings, "William James," 104, 102; Grattan, Three Jameses, 7.

<sup>16</sup> William B. Sprague, D.D., An Address Delivered on Occasion of the Funeral of the Rev. William James, D.D. (Albany: Joel Munsell, 1868), 12-14; Henry James, Sr. (hereafter referred to as HJ) to William James, 13 Nov. 1827; 4 Dec. 1827; William James, Grace for Grace: Letters of Rev. William James (New York: Dodd & Mead, 1874).

- <sup>17</sup>Hastings, "William James," 104-105.
- <sup>18</sup>Ibid., 105; James, "Immortal Life," 148-49.
- <sup>19</sup>Hastings, "William James," 110-19; Howard Feinstein, "The Double in the Autobiography of the Elder Henry James," American Imago, XXI (Fall 1974), 296.
- <sup>20</sup>William James, LRLHJ, 7; James, "Immortal Life," 145-77. James quote is in Christianity, the Logic of Creation (New York: D. Appleton, 1857), 228.
- <sup>21</sup>The quote is in James, "Immortal Life," 147-48. See also Henry James [grandson of Henry James, Sr. and son of William James], ed., The Letters of William James, Vol. 1 (Boston: Atlantic, 1920), 4.
- <sup>22</sup>Paul E. Johnson, A Shopkeeper's Millenium: Society and Revivals in Rochester, New York, 1815-1837 (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978), 38-54.
- <sup>23</sup>James, Letters of William James, I, 4; Hastings, "William James," 103; Whitney R. Cross, The Burned-Over District: The Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion in Western New York, 1800-1850 (Ithaca: Cornell, 1950).
- <sup>24</sup>"Immortal Life," 172-73, 165-66.
- <sup>25</sup>Ibid., 162-64; Leon Edel, Henry James: The Untried Years, 1843-1870 (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1953), 22.
- <sup>26</sup>"Immortal Life," 154-61. Quote is on pp. 154-55.
- <sup>27</sup>Ibid., 155.
- <sup>28</sup>Ibid., 147n; Grattan, Three Jameses, 25; Warren, Elder Henry James, 11-12; Larrabee, "Financier, Heretic, Philosopher," 407; Thomas Coulson, Joseph Henry: His Life and Work (Princeton: Princeton, 1950), 23.
- <sup>29</sup>Quote is in "Immortal Life," 147. See also ibid., 147n; Grattan, Three Jameses, 25; Warren, Elder Henry James, 11-12.

<sup>30</sup> Katharine Van Buren Wilson to Henry James III, 3 July 1920; HJ to William James, 28 Oct. [1858], and 3 Nov. 1827. Dates in brackets indicate date is left off letter but has been surmised fairly accurately. A question mark indicates date has been guessed. Most dates are on letters at HLHU.

<sup>31</sup> Coulson, Joseph Henry, 23; William F. Magie, "Joseph Henry," Dictionary of American Biography; (hereafter referred to as DAB); Warren, Elder Henry James, 12; Grattan, Three Jameses, 26; HJ to Joseph Henry, 9 July 1843.

<sup>32</sup> Burton J. Bledstein, The Culture of Professionalism: The Middle Class and the Development of Higher Education in America (New York: W.W. Norton, 1976), 203; Nye, Cultural Life of the New Nation, 178-85.

<sup>33</sup> C. Van Santvoord, D.D., with Taylor Lewis, Memoirs of Eliaphalet Nott, D.D., L.L.D., for Sixty-two Years President of Union College (New York: Sheldon, 1876), passim; Robert Francis Seybolt, "Eliaphalet Nott," DAB; Warren, Elder Henry James, 12.

<sup>34</sup> Codman Hislop, "High Finance at Union, 1814-33," Union Alumni Monthly (1933), 86-90.

<sup>35</sup> "Henry James, Sr.," Boston Sunday Herald (7 April 1881), 3.

<sup>36</sup> Warren, Elder Henry James, 16; Grattan, Three Jameses, 28; F. O. Matthiessen, The James Family: Including Selections from the Writings of Henry James, Senior, William, Henry, & Alice James (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1947), 6.

<sup>37</sup> Larrabee, "Henry James, Sr. at Union," 242-43.

<sup>38</sup> Archibald MacIntyre to HJ, 12 Nov. 1829; William James to Archibald MacIntyre, 2 Dec. 1829. Portions of MacIntyre's letter are published in Warren, Elder Henry James, 17.

<sup>39</sup> Notes of a Son and Brother (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1914), 189.

<sup>40</sup> The letter is dated 13 Jan. 1830. Portions

are published in Warren, Elder Henry James, 18-20.

<sup>41</sup>Larrabee, "Henry James, Sr. at Union," 240.

<sup>42</sup>Larrabee, "Financier, Heretic, Philosopher," 410; "Henry James, Sr.," Boston Sunday Herald (7 April 1881), 3; "Henry James, Sr.," Boston Daily Advertiser (20 Dec. 1882), 11.

<sup>43</sup>Warren, Elder Henry James, 21.

<sup>44</sup>Albany Evening Journal (17 Dec. 1832), 2; (19 Dec. 1832), 2.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid.; Daily Albany Argus (20 Dec. 1832), 2.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid.; Albany Evening Journal (19 Dec. 1832), 2.

<sup>47</sup>The Last Will and Testament of William James, Esquire, of the City of Albany.

<sup>48</sup>Robert Desty, ed., Reports of Cases Adjudged and Determined in the Court of Chancery of the State of New York (Rochester: Lawyers Co-operative, 1888), 367-69.

<sup>49</sup>Syracuse Partition Suit. Bound manuscript volume at HLHU.

<sup>50</sup>Grattan, Three Jameses, 29; Warren, Elder Henry James, 22; James, "Immortal Life," 123-24, 161; Magie, "Joseph Henry," 552.

<sup>51</sup>Warren, Elder Henry James, 29-30; Howard Marvin Feinstein, "Fathers and Sons: Work and the Inner World of William James: an Intergenerational Inquiry," (Diss. Cornell, 1977), 62.

<sup>52</sup>Coulson, Joseph Henry, 123.

<sup>53</sup>Faraday is described in William Jerome Harrison, "Michael Faraday," Dictionary of National Biography, (hereafter referred to as DNB).

<sup>54</sup>Herbert Wallace Schneider, "Robert Sandeman," DAB.

## CHAPTER II

### "VASTATION"

#### I

Henry James returned to his native country determined to discontinue his Princeton theological studies. In middle life he recalled his anguish at the seminary: "touching the righteousness which was in the law of my sect and nation, I was utterly blameless, and yet for all this my soul was destitute of peace, and while my lips were familiar with the traditional formulas of Christian praise and jubilee, I yet in all my practice cherished the spirit and exhibited the manner of an abject slave."<sup>1</sup> A fellow classmate, Hugh Walsh, shared James' disgust with Princeton's rigid theology; and together the dissatisfied pair abandoned school for Walsh's New York City home. James and Walsh, who eventually became a physician, berated Princeton's narrow Presbyterianism before Walsh's two sisters, Mary and Kate. So convincing were the rebellious students that the sisters stopped going to church. Despite the disruption, the Walsh family reacted favorably to James, and he remained in New York pursuing both his independent

theological studies and his friendship with the Walsh sisters.<sup>2</sup>

Although James' religious inquiries advanced slowly, his progress with the Walsh sisters proceeded smoothly.<sup>3</sup> He asked the eldest, Mary Robertson Walsh, to marry him, and on July 28, 1840, they were united in a civil ceremony performed by New York's mayor, Isaac Varian. The newlyweds first lived with the bride's family in fashionable Washington Square, then amidst a congregation of Jameses in Albany. They established their first permanent residence at New York City's prestigious Astor House. Although James had yet to receive the most substantial portion from his father's estate, both his mother's family and the well-to-do Walshes were willing to aid the young couple. The marriage was destined to be an extremely happy one, with Mary James providing the common sense and stability that her tempestuous husband often lacked. When she died, many years later, Henry James fondly recalled that Mary had not stimulated him intellectually, but had awakened him from selfishness and made him a man.

The Jameses remained in the plush Astor House until early 1842 when they bought a house to accommodate their first child. Henry James purchased a home in Washington Place, near his in-laws, from his younger brother John. While the new residence was being prepared, Mary James



bore a son, William, on January 11, 1842. A little over a year later, on April 15, 1843, another son, Henry Jr., arrived. William, the eldest son, became his father's favorite, and the elder James nurtured him in an intellectual atmosphere that he hoped would lead to a philosophical career. If Henry James, Sr. had done nothing else, his enormous influence upon America's most distinguished philosopher would have earned him a niche in American intellectual history. The second son shone most brightly in his mother's eyes, and Henry James, Jr.'s absorption of her refinement and his father's intense human sympathy helped prepare him for a career as the "Master" of American literature.

The birth of the children brought significant changes in the James household. The most immediate effect was the family's enlargement with the addition of Kate Walsh, Mary's sister. Aunt Kate became a permanent fixture in the James' family and provided the children a second strong maternal influence. Although Kate Walsh married late in life, the union was an unhappy one, and she soon renewed her status as a fixture in her sister's family. Since Henry James exerted an important influence upon both sisters when he first arrived in New York, and since Kate Walsh devoted much of her life to her sister's husband and his family, one suspects that she may also have loved Henry James.

But if she did, it was a secret love, betrayed in no letters or reminiscences, and her presence sparked no familial dissension or bitterness.

## II

During Henry James' first years in New York City, he continued his religious studies. He persisted with his own inquiries into Christianity, studying the Old Testament with the hope of discovering new meaning in it. Although James spoke only English, he read several languages, including Greek, Latin, Hebrew, German, and French. He analyzed Biblical texts in their earliest versions, and familiarized himself with the most important Biblical commentaries.

The initial product of his endeavors was the publication, in 1838, of a new edition of Robert Sandeman's Letters on Thereon and Aspasio, to which James added an anonymous introduction.<sup>4</sup> Sandeman's Letters highlighted the theme that had attracted James to this little-known theologian: that moral righteousness frequently hid a tenuous faith in God, and was less important than the practice of brotherly love. James claimed that Sandeman's work contained the most faithful explication of the Gospel extant although he harbored few illusions about it becoming popular.

Undaunted by Sandeman's lack of recognition James

in 1842 delivered "The Inward Reason of Christianity," his first known set of lectures at New York's Stuyvestant Institute. James offered a symbolic reading of Genesis; and although the precise content of these orations is unknown, James diverged from the literal interpretation of Creation--a theme that he would later explore in greater depth.<sup>5</sup> The reception of James' first lectures is unknown, but he probably attracted New York's leading religious thinkers because he had already become a member of the city's most important intellectual circles. James' intellectual interests led him naturally to active participation in the age's most controversial discussions.

In March, 1842, James attended Ralph Waldo Emerson's lectures on "The Times." Following the initial lecture, James introduced himself to Emerson, and thereby began a friendship that remained intimate for the next forty years. Emerson soon visited his new-found friend at the James' home, where in a moment richly symbolic for the intellectual history of the nation, he bestowed a blessing upon the infant William James. In succeeding years James arranged and managed several of Emerson's lecture tours; and America's foremost Transcendentalist stayed with the Jameses so often that they referred to their guest bedroom as "Mr. Emerson's room." For his own part, Emerson held James in high regard. After

their first meeting, Emerson wrote his wife that Henry James was the best man he had met in New York. For years Emerson attempted to persuade James to move to New England and become part of the Transcendentalist circle. But James retained his distance from the Emersonians both geographically and temperamentally.

James was attracted to Emerson because the famous philosopher stressed intuitive insights rather than intellectual deductions, and because of his spontaneous personality. In the early years of their friendship James constantly sought the secret of Emerson's genius, but always felt frustrated by the quest. Obsessed with analyzing him, James finally decided that Emerson was unable to reveal the composition of his genius because his talents were intuitive, and not the product of intellectual creativity. Other aspects of Emerson's mind also disillusioned James. Although James never relinquished his belief that Emerson was the finest person the United States had ever produced, he could not accept the Transcendentalist's implacable faith in nature's beneficence. James, unlike Emerson, believed that the spiritual sphere superseded the natural. This fundamental difference compelled James to resist Emerson's Transcendental philosophy although he continually solicited the elder man's advice and influence.<sup>6</sup>

James' association with Emerson coincided with

another event of intellectual significance--his discovery of the early nineteenth-century socialist reformer, Charles Fourier. Thirty year-old Horace Greeley, a recent Fourierist convert, established the influential New-York Tribune in 1841, and opened his paper to a weekly column by Albert Brisbane, who had spent two years studying with Fourier and was trying to implement the French philosopher's ideas in the United States. Brisbane's column introduced James to Fourierism.

Fourier, born in 1772, had been the sole heir to his prosperous merchant father's fortune, but he had detested business.<sup>7</sup> He swore a "Hannibalic oath" against commerce before he was ten, and as an adolescent, balked at his family's efforts to establish him in business; but finally he surrendered to their desires in 1789, perhaps because acquisition of his patrimony depended upon a commercial vocation. Fourier's prosperity was short-lived, however, since agents of the French Revolution confiscated his fortune soon after his receiving it. He then became a traveling salesman and for the remainder of his life, which ended in 1837, barely eked out a living.

The tumultuous 1790s proved as significant to Fourier's intellectual development as to his financial status. During these years Fourier meditated upon man's unhappy condition and, by the final year of the

century, had begun to mold his unsystematic ideas into a cohesive philosophy. He believed himself the theoretical creator of a practicable scientific community, based upon his understanding of the human passions, and believed that his quest for a "new social world" was comparable to the successful explorations of Christopher Columbus and Sir Isaac Newton.

Regarding modern society, or civilization--a pejorative term that James borrowed--Fourier was uncompromising. No system that tolerated such evils as poverty and familial divisiveness could be repaired. Civilization was corrupt and must be destroyed. Fourier's solution was a new kind of community he called a phalanx. He contended that there were 810 possible combinations of psychological character. A new community could succeed only if all variations were present, thus underpopulated proto-Fourierist communities, like Brook Farm, were doomed from their inception. When conditions were right, Fourier's phalanx would ensure that workers always performed tasks congenial to them, and that individuals acquired suitable spouses. No longer would the pervasive unhappiness of civilization prevail. Fourier's scientific system allowed its participants to adjust to any crisis while assuring everyone material well-being. Members of the phalanx would be able to lead lives "rich in gratified desire."

James' assimilation of Sandeman and Fourier strengthened his devotion to societal reform, but he still sought a more comprehensive interpretation of Christianity, one which could be applied specifically to nineteenth-century America. Continuing intellectual restlessness in the early 1840s inspired James to contemplate another trip to Europe, like the one he had undertaken in similar circumstances in 1837. James wrote Emerson that he needed to go abroad to improve his health, complaining of uneasiness in his chest.<sup>8</sup> But this physical rationale probably obscured a more pertinent desire--James sought new intellectual stimulation. Since his last European journey, James had met Emerson and many other leading American thinkers, yet he seemed no closer to a personally fulfilling understanding of Christianity than he had been several years earlier. His two most important teachers, Sandeman and Fourier, had been from Europe, and James hoped that there he might discover other fresh ideas.

James returned to Europe in October, 1843. This trip required much more planning than his first voyage, since he now traveled as the head of a large family: Mary James, the two infant boys, Aunt Kate, a family servant, and at least one of the Albany Jameses. To finance the excursion, James sold his home in Washington Place and moved to the Astor House while awaiting the

departure for England of the Great Western, the Atlantic's fastest passenger ship.<sup>9</sup> Presiding over the family entourage could not have been a simple task, and Mary James probably handled mundane affairs freeing her husband for contemplation, writing, and intellectual companionship.

While still in the United States, James solicited letters of introduction from Ralph Waldo Emerson to leading European thinkers.<sup>10</sup> James most eagerly anticipated a meeting with the English writer, Thomas Carlyle. About fifty years old, the eminent essayist, historian, and satirist was in the prime of a brilliant career. The two men favorably impressed each other, and James frequently availed himself of Carlyle's hospitality. The American visitor could have desired no better entrance into English society, since Carlyle's residence served as a meeting-place for that country's most prominent intellectuals. At Carlyle's home James met John Stuart Mill, John Sterling, and Arthur Helps, among many other English notables. But the primary attraction remained Carlyle himself.<sup>11</sup>

James harbored for Carlyle the same intense intellectual fascination that he felt toward Emerson, and his evaluations of each man underwent remarkably similar evolutions. James wrote Emerson in early 1843 that Carlyle (whom he still had not met) was "the very best



interpreter of spiritual philosophy which [sic] could be devised for this age, the age of transition and conflict."<sup>12</sup> But as James' own philosophy matured he developed a much harsher opinion of the illustrious English author, and, in his 1881 recollection of Carlyle, he chided him for being "without that breadth of humanitarian sympathy which one likes to find in distinguished men . . . he was wholly impenetrable to the solicitations both of your heart and your understanding."<sup>13</sup> Carlyle disappointed James for the same reason Emerson did--he was unwilling to gaze beyond man's temporal life into a spiritual future. But James' intense disillusionment with Carlyle was a product of his later philosophy and did not hinder their amicable relations during their first meetings.

James' easy entrance into elite English intellectual circles signified the existence of a vibrant transatlantic intellectual community. The nineteenth-century exchange of ideas between Englishmen and Americans would be part of the intellectual biographies of dozens of writers, artists, and thinkers from both countries and it allowed leading thinkers to influence developments in both countries. A man like Henry James, who was never a best-selling author in either nation, still could make his ideas felt in the intellectual life of England and the United States because of his interactions with

other, more popular, writers. This transatlantic exchange, so vital to nineteenth-century intellectuals, continued throughout the lifetime of James' sons.

Henry James relished his English surroundings, but he also wished to visit the home of his latest spiritual mentor, Charles Fourier. In the winter of 1844, therefore, the James family endured a miserable voyage across the English Channel to France--the entire family was seasick and were overjoyed at the sight of land, but their Parisian stay did not satisfy them either and they spent only three months in the French capital.<sup>14</sup> Returning to England in early 1844, the Jameses rented a house known as Frogmore Cottage in Windsor, next to the residence of the Duchess of Kent. Although the house was costly and more spacious than necessary, the surrounding environment was ideal. There were rolling meadows and parks for the boys to play in, and a variety of society to satisfy the elder Jameses. Here, Henry James continued his theological analyses, writing every morning in his study.<sup>15</sup>

James followed this routine for only a short time, however, until one evening late in May he experienced the most dramatic spiritual episode of his intensely religious life:

having eaten a comfortable dinner, I remained sitting at the table after the family had dispersed, idly gazing at the embers in the grate, thinking of nothing, and feeling only the

exhilaration incident to a good digestion, when suddenly--in a lightning-flash as it were--"fear came upon me, and trembling, which made all my bones to shake." To all appearance it was a perfectly insane and abject terror, without ostensible cause, and only to be accounted for, to my perplexed imagination, by some damned shape squatting invisible to me within the precincts of the room, and raying out from his fetid personality influences fatal to life. The thing had not lasted ten seconds before I felt myself a wreck, that is reduced from a state of firm, vigorous, joyful manhood to one of almost helpless infancy. I felt the greatest desire to run incontinently to the foot of the stairs and shout for help to my wife . . . but by an immense effort I controlled these frenzied impulses, and determined not to budge from my chair till I had recovered my self-possession. This purpose I held to for a good long hour . . . when I resolved to abandon the vain struggle, and communicate without more ado what seemed my sudden burden of inmost, implacable unrest to my wife.<sup>16</sup>

James' sudden breakdown occurred in the midst of an unpleasant personal experience. In early 1844, when James suffered his collapse, his American relatives were prosecuting their final suit against his father's estate. The last property of William James of Albany, his Syracuse holdings, was being divided among his heirs. Although his father's vast wealth had been Henry James' primary means of support for over a decade, this final division would provide an inheritance that would make him financially independent for life. The combined pressure of his studies and the final rupture from the still-dominating influence of his father proved too much for James to handle, and were probably the twin causes of his mental collapse. James' recovery from his breakdown, about a year-and-a-half later, coincided

with both the discovery of his final spiritual mentor and the ultimate settlement of his dead parent's estate.

After James confided his anxious state to his wife, the pair sought the best medical aid. Doctors informed James that he was exhausted from too strenuous an application to his studies and that he needed rest. They also suggested he undergo a water-cure. James dutifully followed the doctors' advice, but gained no relief. One day he visited an old friend, remembered only as Mrs. Chichester, who lived near one of the water-cures, and related to her his present unrest. Unlike James' physicians this lady received the news of James' mental state optimistically. She told him that he was probably experiencing a "vastation"--a term the eighteenth-century philosopher, Emanuel Swedenborg, used to describe the process of a spiritual state in which one could readily accept new insights. Mrs. Chichester said she was only an amateur interpreter of Swedenborg, and encouraged James to acquire some of his books. Disregarding his doctors' advice to abstain from reading, James immediately went to London and purchased two volumes. At first James merely perused the books, but their content excited him and he determined to read them through. With these two books, James later wrote, Swedenborg lifted him from morbid self-consciousness to a feeling of harmony with universal man.<sup>17</sup>

James' aroused interest led him to learn all he could about Swedenborg's philosophy. He acquired several more books, but James John Garth Wilkinson, an English Swedenborgian, whom James had probably met at Carlyle's, also aided him in understanding Swedenborg. A year younger than James, Wilkinson was struggling both to become established as a homeopathic physician and to translate and interpret Swedenborg. Their friendship ripened throughout the 1840s, and James became a major source of financial support to the Wilkinson family. Wilkinson acknowledged his debt to James in grateful letters and in his 1851 book, The Human Body and its Connexion with Man, which he dedicated to James. James' support of Wilkinson ceased in the early 1850s when the English doctor's medical practice blossomed and when James placed his funds into other causes.<sup>18</sup> But James' English friend was less important than Swedenborg himself, who became James' personal and final prophet, and his guide to the questions of God and man that had hitherto so perplexed him.

### III

Emanuel Swedenborg was born in Stockholm in 1688.<sup>19</sup> Like James, over a century later, Swedenborg was a member of a prominent family. His father, a professor of theology, attained nobility on his appointment as

Bishop of Skara. Swedenborg spent much of his first thirty-five years in a rigorous program of formal and self-directed education. He pursued philosophy at the University of Uppsala, then continued his scholarly investigations during travels to England and Holland, where he studied the natural sciences and a variety of practical mechanics; he mastered several languages, including Latin, Greek, Hebrew, English, and French. At twenty-eight, he began three decades of service as Extraordinary Assessor in the Royal College of Mines. He also served as a member of the Swedish legislature. Swedenborg attained renown during this period because of his experimental discoveries in metallurgy and biology. He also edited the scientific publication, Daedalus, and was an engineering advisor to King Charles XII. His many scientific treatises included the widely heralded three-volume Philosophical and Mineralogical Works.

In April 1745, following months of spiritual uneasiness, not unlike that experienced by Henry James a hundred years later, Swedenborg underwent a profound mystical experience which convinced him that he had been chosen to pronounce a new revelation to the world. During the next two years he carefully studied and indexed the Bible, formulating a symbolic interpretation of its meaning, which James would eventually latch onto, and began to publish anonymously his ideas. He

remained an obscure theological writer until 1759, when dining at Gothenburg, he accurately depicted the details of a fire close to his Stockholm residence--three hundred miles away. Following this well-publicized incident, Swedenborg's spiritual achievements became legendary. Ignoring as best he could his new-found notoriety, Swedenborg alternated his hours between the natural world and the spiritual, where he obtained his theological ideas. And he continued to write of his discoveries.

In the late 1760s, Sweden's dominant Lutheran church accused Swedenborg of heresy for denying the divinity of Jesus. Although it was an unfounded accusation, Swedenborg's theological doctrines were forbidden in much of Sweden. This judgment, however, did not deter Swedenborg from continuing his work. In the autumn of 1771 he traveled to London to promote his newest, and most esteemed religious work, The True Christian Religion. While there he died peacefully on March 29, 1772, just as he had earlier predicted that he would.

Swedenborg never attempted to establish a church. He stated that the "new church" was to be composed of a genuine love of goodness and truth and could not be confined to a sect.<sup>20</sup> He did not bar ecclesiastical organizations, however, since he believed old truths could be lost and new ones revealed, and a church

organization could serve to maintain or receive such truths. But Swedenborg also recognized that churches tended to derive their existence from dogmatic, doctrinal propagation which obscured fundamental spiritual truths.

Shortly after Swedenborg's death, several Londoners organized public meetings to discuss his ideas and publish his books. The first public Swedenborgian services were held in London in the 1780s. In 1784, James Glen, a member of the London group, brought copies of Swedenborg's writings to Philadelphia and established several reading circles in the United States. Eight years later, at Baltimore, a New Church Society was formed and, in 1817, when Henry James was a boy of six or seven, a general convention of the New Jerusalem in the United States of America was organized. A liturgy was soon published. The Swedenborgians experienced institutional problems when, in 1840, a schism developed between the Philadelphia and Boston churches. This was the state of the New Church when James was converted to Swedenborgian principles.

James was not influenced by the New Church, though, but by Swedenborg himself. The Swedish seer believed that God's essence was constituted of love and wisdom, and that the trinity of God's three characteristics, love, wisdom, and power, which blended love and wisdom into one cohesive force, were each manifested in Jesus.



He also thought that God was essential man, meaning that only man could comprehend God because a correspondence existed between the Creator and his creation: all things in nature were symbolic of the spiritual world. If man could only understand this correspondence, then he could comprehend God. Each of these ideas became fundamental tenets of James' thought.

Naturally, James' discovery of Swedenborg's persuasive Biblical interpretations caused him to revise his estimation of his previous studies. He disparaged his former pursuits as the efforts of a man who desired not to advance Christianity, but merely to advertise his own knowledge. A chastened James disposed of his voluminous notes and began anew.<sup>21</sup> Swedenborg had convinced James of man's ability to evolve from a temporal life to a spiritual one. Belief in this capability, combined with Sandeman's emphasis on brotherly love, and Fourier's notion of a "scientifically-adjusted" community, enabled James to develop his own philosophy which he applied to nineteenth-century American society, both spiritually and temporally. Armed with these intellectual and spiritual resources, James returned to the United States in 1845, a new man and ready to propagate his own unique vision of the world.

#### IV

After arriving in the United States, the James

family settled in New York. Then in 1846, when, at last, the father's will was finally, and totally broken, they lived with William James of Albany's widow in Albany; in 1847 they returned to New York where they made their home until the late 1850s.<sup>22</sup> In these years, Henry and Mary James had three more children. Garth Wilkinson James, named for his father's Swedenborgian friend, was born July 21, 1845, in New York; Robertson Walsh James on August 29, 1846, in Albany; and the Jameses' only daughter, Alice, destined to be an invalid, in New York, August 7, 1848.

While Mary James orchestrated the everyday chores of childrearing, Henry James immersed himself in his work. After 1846, he could have retired to a life of leisure, casually pursuing his intellectual interests. But Henry James was not an easy-going man, and he labored daily, driven to formulate a persuasive interpretation and synthesis of Sandeman, Fourier, and Swedenborg.

James' ideas were his life, and he strove to render them understandable to all who were interested. Like other nineteenth-century writers, he utilized the burgeoning lyceum circuit to deliver lectures whenever he could. James' audiences gazed upon an obviously well-fed man who betrayed his middle-age with spectacles covering his piercing blue eyes, a balding pate, and

a graying beard. Noticably limping upon his artificial left leg, and reading his lectures, James presented a less than formidable portrait to audiences who had witnessed energetic evangelists and other physically emphatic speakers. James himself disliked formal lecturing, which he felt far more demanding than extemporaneous speech. But he believed lectures were necessary to flesh out his ideas and draw an audience to his beliefs. None of his contemporaries remembered him as a magnetic lecturer although they bestowed high praise on his conversational abilities. In fact, they remembered James being at his best in informal settings where he displayed an incisive wit, endearing spontaneity, and intense empathy. Friends and acquaintances who resisted James' philosophy remembered him as the era's most brilliant anecdotist. Henry James, for his part, rendered verdicts about his contemporaries which have become commonplace in our own time. He unforgettably described his friend Nathaniel Hawthorne as a man who had the look "of a rogue in the company of detectives."<sup>23</sup> But James failed to translate his conversational acuity into a vivid lecturing style, and he was more comfortable with other avenues of expression.

James was an inveterate correspondent, writer of newspaper and magazine pieces, and eventually books. He believed that he possessed a coherent world-view,

but he was constantly dissatisfied with his inability to portray his own vivid conceptions. He longed to state his thoughts clearly "and never speak a word again," but that proved an elusive goal and he kept writing until his death.<sup>24</sup> James' frustration in depicting his beliefs is ironic since he was a brilliant stylist--the Nation's illustrious editor, E. L. Godkin, described James as the best living writer of the English language.<sup>25</sup> Yet he also acquired a reputation for obscurity. Critics, from contemporaries to present-day authors, have accused James of redefining common words and unduly confusing his readers: William Dean Howells thought that while James' books were filled with sentences which were often "brilliantly suggestive," he sometimes conveyed an "opacity which the most resolute vision could not penetrate."<sup>26</sup> Even James' own son, William, found his father's terminology bewildering.<sup>27</sup> But Henry James might have been unfairly maligned. Howells, a literary man and far from a philosopher, was not the best judge of metaphysical language, while William James' difficulty with his father's language reflected the more fundamental dilemma that try as he might, he simply could not bring himself to accept his father's ideas. James' other contemporary critics, who were legion, were also his ideological enemies, anxious to convince their readers that James' writings

were obscure. These contemporaneous criticisms have been accepted by later writers, many of whom have uncritically repeated earlier verdicts.<sup>28</sup> James was repetitious and hyperbolic; he tended to explore an idea from every conceivable angle, but he expressed distinctly his beliefs and the nuances of his thought. Those who analyze his copious writings will discover that his definitions, though possibly disagreeable to many contemporaries and later critics, are clear. James' theological system may well have been obscure, but his language was not.

James' first publication reproduced his lecture, "What Constitutes the State?" delivered to the Albany Young Men's Association in December, 1845.<sup>29</sup> James equated the current state with Fourier's pejorative civilization, and attacked it for legislating personal morality and for its apathy toward providing everyone with food, shelter, and clothing. James of course understood that he had attained leisure through a chance inheritance, and he believed any society unfair which forced only some of its members to labor for life's necessities. He attributed any good qualities he might possess, not to his character, but to his financial status.<sup>30</sup> He contended that in an ideal community, which he briefly described, the state would employ its ample resources to supply everyone's material needs,

thereby freeing each individual to pursue a desirable vocation, whether it was tilling the soil or seeking spiritual solace. James' utopian state incorporated the trinity of his major teachers--the Sandemanian principle that brotherly love inherently exists in a community which meets everyone's physical and spiritual necessities, Fourier's socialism, and Swedenborg's insistence that this community would encourage individuals to seek spiritual awareness. But James omitted his sources and, more seriously, neglected to explain how to make the transformation from a corrupt civilization to a pure state.

Charles A. Dana, of Fourierist Brook Farm, reviewed What Constitutes the State? in that community's journal, the Harbinger. Dana's comments, although generally favorable, criticized James for failing to describe the evolution of present civilization to a true state. Dana's review retains interest also for two precedents he established, and for James' reaction to it. Dana was the first critic to portray James as both an original thinker and an unclear one--as far as this pamphlet is concerned, a not entirely unfair criticism. And James' response to this review was typical--he immediately dashed off a letter to the editor of the Harbinger in which he defended his previous statements and attempted to explain them more clearly.<sup>31</sup>

A year after the appearance of his first work, James anonymously published Letter to a Swedenborgian, his sole contribution to the series, Tracts for the New Times. James' Letter paid homage to Swedenborgian ideas, but excoriated the New Church for idolizing Swedenborg and turning his ideas into a doctrine for the propagation of their own institution. James reserved his greatest vehemence for New Churchmen because he believed they, of all people, ought to have known better than to dogmatize. James could not abide sectarianism of any kind, and he believed the New Church most harmful because it prevented the dissemination of Swedenborg's ideas to a wider audience.<sup>32</sup>

In the summer of 1847, the Brook Farm community, whose activities James assiduously followed, collapsed, but its organizer, George Ripley, came to New York City, where he continued publishing the Harbinger. James soon became a member of the paper's editorial councils and a regular contributor. He briefly considered beginning his own journal, however, which he advertised in the November and December Harbingers. James' New Times, announced to appear in January, 1848, would discuss "the important social, philosophical, and religious questions which especially agitate the present epoch . . ." James proclaimed that his new periodical would "maintain in the social sphere, the essential

and permanent interests of man; in philosophy, to discover and set forth the laws of order which govern the spiritual, as well as the natural universe, and in religion to assert and illustrate the distinctive hope of christianity [sic], which is the universal establishment of fraternal relations among men, and the dominion of the divine justice on earth." James solicited an impressive array of contributors, including George Ripley, Parke Godwin, Charles A. Dana, Garth Wilkinson, G. H. Calvert, B. F. Barrett, Hugh Doherty from Paris, John Sullivan Dwight, and William Henry Channing. But the New Times never appeared; James decided to use his resources to bolster the financially-ailing Harbinger, rather than start a competitive organ.<sup>33</sup>

In 1848, the Harbinger's first full year of operation in New York, James anonymously translated and published Victor Hennequin's pamphlet, Love in the Phalanstery. Hennequin's tract explicated Fourier's system of passional attraction in an attempt to convince potential converts that sexual and familial relationships could endure in Fourier's socialist community. But Hennequin, and James in his anonymous introduction, advocated free divorce and unconventional marriage arrangements for those individuals unable to reconcile themselves to traditional marital relations.<sup>34</sup>



Publication of Hennequin's short work enraged the editors of the conventional Presbyterian newspaper, the New York Observer, who regularly denounced all attacks on institutionalized marriage.<sup>35</sup> The Observer's editorial drew James into the first of many controversies concerning traditional marital laws. He lashed back from the pages of the Harbinger at the Observer's charges. James was not opposed to marriage; indeed, he argued that he was inclined in the opposite direction and believed marriage the only proper state for two spiritually harmonious persons. He simply doubted that everyone could automatically discern his or her proper spiritual partner. He contended that men and women ought to be allowed free divorce until they found their true companions. Once such a companion was discovered, no earthly law would be required to force them to remain together--they would be permanently bound by their spiritual attraction. As an example of a spiritually-suited match, James boldly cited his own marriage. Everyone ought to have the freedom to find, as he had found, his or her own perfect mate. The Observer condemned James' ideas, arguing that marriage, no matter the consequence, was meant to be the permanent union of two people.

James' advocacy of free divorce drew other combatants into the fray, most notably a newly-ordained

Swedenborgian minister, Alfred E. Ford. James and Ford debated their views in the Harbinger from November 1848 until the journal's demise in early 1849. Ford was as nervous about James' affect upon potential Swedenborgians as he was about the truth of his views on marriage. Fourier and Swedenborg were the prophets of the New Age, Fourier for the natural world and Swedenborg for the spiritual; and Ford intended to demonstrate that not all Swedenborgians advocated Fourier's radical marital beliefs.<sup>36</sup>

James relished such debates because he thrived on controversy and believed it was the best path to truth. He mercilessly attacked those who disagreed with him, yet naively expected somehow to maintain friendships with his opponents. James spared no invective in denigrating and ridiculing his antagonist's views, but he always stated that he was attacking ideas, not personalities, and he expected his foe to feel the same way. Not surprisingly, some of James' victims proved incapable of such lofty detachment; they stubbornly harbored the suspicion that James' attacks were, in fact, personal and unduly vituperative-- which they were.<sup>37</sup>

When the Harbinger folded in February 1849, James temporarily abandoned the marriage controversy, and concentrated on promoting other ideas. A book of

essays, Moralism and Christianity, in 1850, marked the beginning of a thirty-year stream of books, magazine articles, and newspaper contributions. Moralism and Christianity contained "Socialism and Civilization," which Emerson had asked James to deliver to the Town and Country Club; "A Scientific Statement of the Christian Doctrine of the Lord, or Divine Man," which was first printed in Theodore Parker's Massachusetts Quarterly Review; and "Morality and the Perfect Life," a lecture which James greatly expanded for the book. This volume combined, for the first time, James' entire repertory of themes. Discussed in detail were his belief in the antagonism between the ideal state and civilization, his perceptions of natural, moral, and spiritual man, and his conception of the deity. James' emphasis on the interrelated roles of art and production in a true society, however, was typical of his early work, which placed less stress than his later writings on teleology.<sup>38</sup>

Two years later, James published Lectures and Miscellanies, which covered a broad spectrum of topics that he had previously presented in lectures or printed elsewhere. Major essays were "The Old and New Theology," (in two parts), which were reprinted as a book in 1861, and "The Scientific Accord of Natural and Revealed Religion." In these pieces James focused on the

differences between ecclesiasticism, that is the propagation of particular sects, and theology, a true spiritual awareness; and the correspondence between the temporal and spiritual worlds.<sup>39</sup>

Between the publication of his first two books, in May 1851, James wrote his close friend, Edmund Tweedy, that he had just invested \$10,000 in the New-York Tribune. James expected to receive a yearly return from his investment, but his primary reasons for supporting the paper were to aid his old friend, journalist Charles Dana, in acquiring stock in the paper, to influence the Tribune's editorial staff, and to obtain a vehicle for his own writings.<sup>40</sup> Thereafter James published frequently in the Tribune, and he lost no time in renewing his old controversy with the New York Observer. James started the trouble with a review of M. Edgeworth Lazarus' Love vs. Marriage (1852) which he turned into a forum for his belief that marriage was a vital institution because it was the basis of the family which comprised society's foundation, and therefore should be the union of two spiritually compatible individuals.<sup>41</sup> The Observer refused to ignore James' latest expression on marriage, repeating its previous condemnation of James' ideas concerning divorce, and chiding Horace Greeley for allowing such dangerous views in his paper.<sup>42</sup> But this debate became more than

a renewal of an old controversy when first Greeley and then Stephen Pearl Andrews voiced their beliefs. The latter's entrance into the fray ignited the spark that made this a memorable moment in newspaper history.

Born the year after James, in 1812, Andrews' interests were manifold.<sup>43</sup> A trained lawyer, he became an ardent abolitionist, proselytized for the acceptance of shorthand in the United States, advocated spelling reform, and edited two magazines, the Anglo-Saxon and the Propagandist, which were printed with phonetic spelling. Reputed to be the master of thirty-two tongues, Andrews invented an international language he called Alwato. He also established Universology, which, he claimed, was a deductive science of the universe. Andrews was a true radical who believed in individual sovereignty. And he proved a formidable opponent for the less precise and more mystical James, who at first attempted to ignore him. Once James recognized the force of Andrews' queries, the two men engaged in a months-long debate that ended when Greeley closed the Tribune's columns to James' antagonist. Andrews responded to this censorship by editing a book, Love, Marriage, and Divorce, and the Sovereignty of the Individual (1853), in which he printed the most trenchant arguments of the Observer, James, Greeley, and himself.<sup>44</sup> Although Andrews had valiantly attempted

to enlarge the discussion to include his own doctrine of radical individualism, the other three participants all stuck, more or less, to the issue of free divorce. The Observer and Greeley clung to easily definable stances. The Presbyterian newspaper continued its advocacy of a binding marriage, no matter how unhappy, while Greeley would permit divorce only on the grounds of adultery. James and Andrews set forth their views at length.

James continued to insist that only those marriages in which the pair was spiritually matched should be permanent. All others ought to be allowed to dissolve at the instigation of a discontented spouse. But he also remained firm in his belief that spiritually united couples would remain together because there would be no reason to search for new partners.

Andrews attacked James on both practical and ideological grounds.<sup>45</sup> He called James naive for believing that an individual would always discontinue a marriage for spiritual reasons, and listed other factors such as physical attraction to others and wanderlust. But instead of piously unholding the sanctity of marriage, Andrews argued that James' advocacy of free divorce was too conservative. Every individual, according to Andrews, ought to be allowed to practice free love, permitting unions and separations to occur

whenever desired. Andrews' position enraged James, who had never disdained marriage per se, but only society's imposition of it upon two spiritually unsuited mates. James' reaction to Andrews' ideas revealed his essential conventionality. Although James willingly advocated radical ideas, he stopped short of supporting their actual implementation until a true society replaced present-day corrupt civilization. James believed Andrews unwisely sought to introduce radicalism in an unprepared civilization. Although James was a radical idealist, he constantly reiterated that he was utterly traditional in his practices, and believed everybody else should be also, until the arrival of a perfect society.

Andrews, who had the last word in his own book, argued with more precision and rationality than did James. But James was less interested in logic than he was in truth. He instinctively believed that marriage was not only workable, but essential when it represented the permanent union of two spiritually compatible people. Neither participant convinced the other, but both were pleased with the large forum they had found to display their views.

Even while the debate concerning marriage raged, James continued to develop his religious ideas, particularly his theme of ecclesiasticism versus theology.

In 1854, he published The Church of Christ not an Ecclesiasticism, in which he repeated his attacks on sectarianism, and again singled out the Swedenborgian New Church as the most despicable culprit for spreading ecclesiasticism to the detriment of the prophet's spiritual truth.<sup>46</sup>

James' next effort, The Nature of Evil (1855) was a critical open letter to Edward Beecher, author of the recent Conflict of the Ages (1853).<sup>47</sup> Beecher, a Congregational minister, whose sister Harriet Beecher Stowe wrote Uncle Tom's Cabin, and whose brother Henry Ward Beecher, became the most popular clergyman in mid-nineteenth century America, stressed two arguments that James could not abide.<sup>48</sup> Beecher believed that conventional morality was the highest plateau a man could attain, a notion which collided with James' belief that spirituality superseded morality. Beecher also argued that Creation was a natural, historical event, which contradicted James' idea that spiritual creation, a concept he would soon develop more fully, was superior to a natural one. In his own book, James castigated Beecher's beliefs and offered some preliminary clues to his own theology.<sup>49</sup>

By 1855, when The Nature of Evil appeared, James concluded that his two eldest boys, who were nearing their teens, could not acquire an adequate education in



the United States, so the family crossed the Atlantic a second time. They traveled to Switzerland, where the boys attended school, and to Italy, but the parents stayed primarily in England and France. James spent time contributing traveler's letters to the New-York Tribune, printed under the general title of "An American in Europe." Many of these letters were appended to The Church of Christ not an Ecclesiasticism in its expanded 1856 edition. James discussed whatever he desired in these letters, writing about their voyage, hotels, schools, political economy, socialism, theology, and the differences between the United States and Europe.<sup>50</sup> But whatever the topic, James invariably related it to his own world view.

While the Jameses lived in Paris, Henry also busied himself with long expository letters to his old friend Garth Wilkinson. William James believed that his father derived his greatest pleasure from his correspondence and James' letters are filled with a wealth of ideological explanations. Mary James' letters described the family's numerous social activities, but Henry preferred more substantive matter. He used his letters, like his lectures, to test the intelligibility of his ideas. The Parisian letters to Wilkinson were compiled and published in 1857 as Christianity, the Logic of Creation. This work

presents James' spiritual interpretation of Genesis and his consequent belief in a spiritual, rather than a natural creation, and his perception of the historical roles of Jesus and Swedenborg.<sup>51</sup>

In the same year that Christianity, the Logic of Creation appeared, James experienced his first financial worries in more than a decade. While he was in Paris, the American recession was seriously affecting Northern industry. James, who had invested much of his wealth in railroad stocks, hurriedly wrote to his family in the United States to prepare to aid him if necessary. Then he and his wife decided to move their family to Boulogne-sur-mer where they could live less expensively than in Paris. But soon thereafter the Jameses realized that their current unstable financial status compelled them to return to America where they could live less extravagantly and more closely superintend their finances. They returned in 1858, seeking a new American residence, finally settling on Newport, Rhode Island, a seaside resort town. Their best friends, the Edmund Tweedys lived there, and they would also be close to James' New England friends.<sup>52</sup>

Once back in the United States, James rapidly became embroiled in yet another newspaper debate. In 1859, he wrote a long letter to the New-York Tribune criticizing Congregational minister Horace Bushnell's

Nature and the Supernatural (1858).<sup>53</sup> James reiterated his belief that the spiritual world dominated the natural, and he disparaged supernaturalism, which he identified with theosophy--a belief in beneficent spirits. James believed in the existence of spirits, of course, but was convinced that any spirit that participated in earthly events could only be mischievous. James and Bushnell exchanged their ideas through the Tribune for several weeks before both tired. But no sooner had James' discussion with Bushnell ended than he was once again maligning the inadequacy of society's marital laws. This time it was the Sickles tragedy, a love triangle that resulted in murder and a highly publicized New York City trial, that prompted James' criticism. He restated his now well-known views concerning matrimonial laws, but on this occasion provoked little response.<sup>54</sup>

Later that year, James' mother, Catharine, died at seventy-seven. The subsequent acquisition of an additional inheritance, and easing financial conditions enabled James to go abroad once more, and the family embarked on their final European excursion.<sup>55</sup> James abandoned Newport, where their most cherished friends resided, for Switzerland and Germany. The trip was ostensibly undertaken to provide the two younger James boys with the same educational opportunities that their

elder brothers had enjoyed. But Henry James also wished to separate his eldest son, William, from the influence of artists William Morris Hunt and John LaFarge. William frequently visited these two men in Hunt's studio and had expressed his desire to become an artist. His father hoped that young William would pursue a scientific career, and he believed that leaving Newport might entice William away from art and to science. But the Jameses remained in Europe for little less than a year. They all longed for their American friends and were exhausted from twenty years of incessant traveling. When William James persisted in his wish to become an artist, his parents relented. On September 24, 1860, the Jameses arrived back in the United States and went on to Newport where they lived for the next four years.<sup>56</sup>

In the United States, the struggle between the North and the South was heating to a fever pitch, and Henry James could not pass up the opportunity to focus on his country's most cataclysmic crisis. At Newport, he delivered the July 4, 1861, oration which was published as The Social Significance of Our Institutions.<sup>57</sup> James compared America's free society to decadent European civilization and theorized that a tragedy like the Civil War occurred for only one reason--to push American society toward a more perfect state.

The South obviously needed to be purified since any society which held human beings in slavery violated the fundamental religious principle of brotherly love. James had previously opposed slavery, but, like his friend Ralph Waldo Emerson, felt it only one of many evils in the United States and did not single it out for special condemnation until the advent of the Civil War. Then James, a fervent patriot, supporter of the Northern cause, and follower of Abraham Lincoln, isolated slavery as the single most ignominious feature of American life, and argued that the South must be cleansed if the country were to continue its journey toward greatness.

The Civil War soon became more than an abstract cause for the James family. Both William and Henry were of military age and sympathetic to the Northern mission, but both discovered medical excuses for not joining the army. But James' two younger boys, Wilky and Bob, were eager to enter the conflict. Both were in their mid-teens and living in Concord while attending Frank Sanborn's controversial school (radical not only because blacks were enrolled, but because women were also admitted). Academic life bored them, however, and they resented the intense attention their elder brothers received. The boys convinced their reluctant parents to allow them to join the Union Army. For the

first and last time in their lives, Wilky and Bob James commanded the center of their family's concern, and they reveled in their glory. They also thrived in their military roles. Robertson James served admirably as a first lieutenant, then captain, in the 55th Massachusetts Division.<sup>58</sup> But it was Garth Wilkinson James who bore the brunt of the war's ravages.

Wilky became an adjutant for Robert Gould Shaw, the white patrician captain of one of the North's first black contingents. His unit left Boston in May, 1863, and two months later suffered a serious setback as part of an ill-planned attack on South Carolina's Fort Wagner. Young James was seriously wounded and could not receive proper medical treatment. He probably would have died had not the father of his best friend, Cabot Russell, seeking in vain his own son, stumbled on Wilky James and brought him home to Rhode Island. James was so severely wounded that he lay for days, on his doctor's orders, just inside the front door of his home while he wavered precariously between life and death. Wilky not only recovered, but eventually rejoined his troops for the final skirmishes of the war, and he witnessed the Union flag being raised in victory over Fort Sumter.<sup>59</sup>

When the Civil War ended, neither Robertson nor Wilky James wanted to return to school. Instead they chose to operate a plantation in Reconstruction Florida

with free blacks. Aided financially by their father, the boys began optimistically, but soon floundered because of bad business sense, hostile neighbors, and poor crops caused by labor problems, caterpillars, and lack of rain. After several years, both brothers conceded defeat and moved west where they engaged in railroad careers.<sup>60</sup>

## V

While his two sons fought their nation's war, Henry James' literary activity slowed. He had given some drafts of a new book to a printer in 1861, but this most philosophical and sophisticated of his works, Substance and Shadow, did not appear until 1863.<sup>61</sup> In this book, James paraded all his old themes, but he also included long critiques of the misguided philosophies of Immanuel Kant, Georg Hegel, and Sir William Hamilton. Their philosophical materialism, James argued, only obstructed the advance of spiritual philosophy. Substance and Shadow, more than any previous book, demonstrated James' philosophic erudition. It was the first of his three masterworks.

A year after the publication of Substance and Shadow, the James family again moved. While the younger sons still fought with the Union Army, the two elder boys also left home. In 1861, William James concluded

that he was not destined to become an artist, and he enrolled in Harvard University's Scientific School. The next year, a lonely Henry James, Jr. followed his brother to Cambridge where he attended law school. Although young Henry had little inclination for the law, he did enjoy Cambridge's intellectual atmosphere and his brother's companionship. Their father, who hated being away from his boys, and who also had many friends in the Boston-Cambridge vicinity, including Emerson, longed to move to the area. After failing to find a suitable house in either Cambridge or Concord, the Jameses finally settled in Boston in 1864. The following year they moved to Cambridge, and their spacious house at 20 Quincy Street, across from Harvard Yard, was their home until Mary James' death in early 1882.<sup>62</sup>

In the mid-1860s, James began to publish articles in the Atlantic, Nation, and North American Review. The most substantial articles were adapted for his books, like the North American Review piece, "Swedenborg's Ontology," which became the nucleus of his most popular book, The Secret of Swedenborg (1869).<sup>63</sup> James discussed Swedenborg's most influential ideas, including the notion of selfhood, and the nature of creation and redemption. He made it clear that he was not interested in glorifying the person of Emanuel Swedenborg, but



that he wished to solidify and spread Swedenborg's ideas.

Ten years elapsed before James' next book was published, but he was not idle during this time. He wrote several articles depicting the differences between spiritually-oriented woman and rationally-oriented man and the efficacy of this distinction.<sup>64</sup> He also entered into an exchange with Francis Ellingwood Abbott, editor of the Free Religious Association's Index, concerning such ideas as deliverance and perfection in religion.<sup>65</sup> Then, in 1879, though suffering from the lingering affects of a stroke, James published his most accessible and comprehensive work, Society the Redeemed Form of Man, from which we learn of his early breakdown and subsequent conversion to Swedenborg.<sup>66</sup> Although every detail of James' life's work is not included in this book, he discussed in a lucid and lively style both his theological conceptions and how those ideas would be realized. Several journals printed reviews of this work, most notably the New Church Independent, where W. H. Galbraith offered both praise and criticism. He believed James to be a profound thinker and purveyor of Swedenborg's ideas, but he denounced several specific concepts, such as James' belief in the eventual abolition of evil.<sup>67</sup> Galbraith's review led to an exchange with James, and then to James

contributing approximately twenty articles to the periodical over the succeeding two years. Many of these pieces were written in preparation for James' last book, which was to have concentrated on spiritual creation.<sup>68</sup>

Before James could publish another book, however, personal tragedy struck. In February, 1882, after several months of illness, Mary James succumbed to heart disease.<sup>69</sup> James was devastated by the loss of his wife of forty-one years. He quickly deteriorated from his vibrant, if hypochondrical, self into an enfeebled old man dependent upon the care of his invalid daughter, Alice. After Mary's death, James, now seventy years old, moved to a Boston apartment in plush Beacon Hill, where he continued to write his book. But he could barely bring himself to correspond with his sons or to retain an interest in temporal affairs. He fell ill in early autumn 1882, and consciously decided that it was time for him to die and join his departed wife in the spiritual world. Although he showed some signs of improvement during the following months, by early winter he was so determined to die that he refused all food. Very weak, but extremely happy, he expired on December 19, 1882. His last words were "Mary--my Mary."<sup>70</sup>

James had appointed his son, Henry Jr., now a well

known novelist, to be his financial executor, and his son, William, now a well known psychologist, to be his literary executor. Henry James, Sr. apparently forgot how easily wills could cause familial dissension. He had split his estate equally between all his children, except Wilky, who had borrowed the most money during his father's lifetime. But Wilky was in extremely poor health and was the most impoverished of the James children, and his siblings wanted him to share an equal portion of the estate. They informally broke their father's will so each child could inherit equal sums.<sup>71</sup>

William James, who handled the estate after Henry returned to Europe, also served as his father's literary executor. He spent two years editing his father's unpublished writings and composing an introduction for The Literary Remains of the Late Henry James (1884).<sup>72</sup> This book consisted of James' unfinished autobiography, the incomplete "Spiritual Creation," and an article about Carlyle which had earlier appeared in the Atlantic. The work, the last book by Henry James, Sr. and the first from William, never achieved much popularity.

Henry James, Sr. had lived a long and productive life. When he first began to explore his teleological concepts his discussions were obscure and incomplete, but with the passing years and continuous thought and

study he achieved a coherent and comprehensive philosophy. By the time that he published his most incisive work, Society the Redeemed Form of Man, in 1879, he had attracted the attention of an elite group of distinguished American and European thinkers. He had also drawn both praise and ire from the Christian intellectual community-- the group that he most wanted to influence. The ideas, which absorbed the greater part of James' adult life, and which constitute his chief legacy to the intellectual history of the United States, are worthy of systematic and detailed consideration.

NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Lectures and Miscellanies (New York: Redfield, 1852), 378-79.

<sup>2</sup>Rev. William Walsh, A Record and Sketch of Hugh Walsh's Family (Newburgh, N.Y.: Newburgh Journal Print, 1903), 9-10.

<sup>3</sup>Information in the following three paragraphs is from Allen, William James, 9-11; Edel, Untried Years, Book One; HJ to Henry James, 9 May 1882.

<sup>4</sup>(New York: John S. Taylor, 1838), vii.

<sup>5</sup>Allen, William James, 43; "Books from the Library of Henry James, Senior," in Books and Pamphlets Selected from the Library of William James and Presented to Harvard College Library by his Family, 1923, 122-24; Frederick Harold Young, The Philosophy of Henry James, Sr. (New York: Bookman, 1951), 221; New-York Daily Tribune (23 Jan. 1843), 3; (1 Feb. 1843), 3; (7 Feb. 1843), 2; (15 Feb. 1843), 3.

<sup>6</sup>Perry, William James: Inheritance and Vocation, 39; Emerson to Lidian Emerson, 5 March 1842 in Ralph L. Rusk, The Letters of Ralph Waldo Emerson, III (New York: Columbia, 1939), 23; Emerson to Margaret Fuller, 10? Oct. 1843 in Rusk, Letters, III, 212; HJ to Emerson, 15 Jan. 1852, in Perry, William James: Inheritance and Vocation, 72; Edel, Untried Years, 23, 29, 37, 39-40; James, "Spiritual Creation," 26-68, 295-99; HJ to Emerson, 18 June 1855; James, "Essay on Creation," folder 1, 32-33.

<sup>7</sup>Information regarding Fourier is from Jonathan Beecher and Richard Bienvenu, trans. ed. & intro. to The Utopian Vision of Charles Fourier: Selected Texts on Work, Love, and Passionate Attraction (Boston: Beacon, 1971), 3-10, 36, 54-64; Frank E. Manuel and Fritzie P. Manuel, Utopian Thought in the Western World (Cambridge: Harvard, 1979), 645.

<sup>8</sup>HJ to Emerson, 3 Oct. 1843, in Perry, William James: Inheritance and Vocation, 51.

<sup>9</sup>New-York Daily Tribune, (21 Oct. 1843), 3; Allen, William James, 14.

<sup>10</sup>HJ to Emerson, 3 Oct. 1843, in Perry, William James: Inheritance and Vocation, 51.

<sup>11</sup>Warren, Elder Henry James, 50-51.

<sup>12</sup>HJ to Emerson, 11 May 1843, in Perry, William James: Inheritance and Vocation, 47.

<sup>13</sup>"Some Personal Recollections of Carlyle," LR LHJ, 423.

<sup>14</sup>Allen, William James, 14-15.

<sup>15</sup>HJ to Catharine Barber James, 1 May 1844; James, NSB, 155.

<sup>16</sup>Society the Redeemed Form of Man, and the Earnest of God's Omnipotence in Human Nature: Affirmed in Letters to a Friend (Boston: Houghton, Osgood, 1879), 44-45.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 46-53; James, NSB, 173. Using new evidence from a surviving collection of James' books stored at the Swedenborg School of Religion in Newton, MA, Raymond H. Deck, Jr., "The 'Vastation' of Henry James, Sr.: New Light on James' Theological Career," Bulletin of Research in the Humanities (Summer 1980), 226-27, demonstrates inaccuracies in James' account of the books purchased. James said he bought Divine Love and Wisdom and Divine Providence, but Deck contends that James acquired The True Christian Religion and A Brief Exposition of the Doctrine of the New Church, The New Jerusalem and its Heavenly Doctrines, and either forgot or intentionally mentioned the two other books in his 1879 account. Deck also argues that James' vastation was over by December 1844 when the family returned to America, but, I believe, James' recollection of a two-year breakdown included both his spiritual and his financial problems. See ibid.

<sup>18</sup>Edward Irving Carlyle, "James John Garth Wilkinson," DNB; Wilkinson to HJ, 17 Oct. 1846, 18 Jan. 1847, 24 Oct. 1850, 8 Nov. 1850; Mrs. J.J.G. Wilkinson to HJ, 26 Jan. 1849.

<sup>19</sup>Information concerning Swedenborg is from Sig Synnestvedt, ed. & intro. to The Essential Swedenborg:

Basic Teachings of Emanuel Swedenborg, Scientist, Philosopher, and Theologian (New York: Twayne, 1970), 15-34.

<sup>20</sup>Data regarding the New Church and Swedenborg's theological ideas is from L. B. de Beaumont, "Swedenborg," in Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, XII, ed. by James Hastings with John A. Silbie & Louis H. Gray (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, n.d.), 129-32; William H. Harris & Judith S. Levey, eds., "Emanuel Swedenborg," The New Columbia Encyclopedia (New York: Columbia, 1975), 1924; J. Gordon Melton, "Swedenborg and the New Jerusalem," The Encyclopedia of American Religions (Wilmington, N.C.: McGrath, 1978), 89-90.

<sup>21</sup>SRFM, 48.

<sup>22</sup>Edel, Untried Years, 84-88.

<sup>23</sup>James' description of Hawthorne is in a letter to Emerson, quoted in Perry, William James: Inheritance and Vocation, 88. A portrait of James is the frontispiece to Henry James, Jr., A Small Boy and Others (London: Macmillan, 1913). Clement John Wilkinson, James John Garth Wilkinson: A Memoir of his Life, with a Selection from his Letters (London: Kegan-Paul, Trench, Triibner, 1911), 45; James, NSB, 249; W. D. Howells, Literary Friends and Acquaintances: A Personal Retrospect of American Authorship (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1901), 267; Julia Ward Howe, Reminiscences: 1819-1899 (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1900), 323-24; Charles A. Dana, "The Death of Henry James," New York Sun, L (20 Dec. 1882), 2; Mrs. John T. Sargent, ed., Sketches and Reminiscences of the Radical Club of Chestnut Street, Boston (Boston: James R. Osgood, 1880), 37.

<sup>24</sup>William James, "Introduction," LRHJ, 16.

<sup>25</sup>Rollo Ogden, ed., Life and Letters of Edwin Lawrence Godkin, II (New York: Macmillan, 1907), 118.

<sup>26</sup>"Some Literary Memories of Cambridge," Harper's, CI (Nov. 1900), 828.

<sup>27</sup>For example, William James to HJ, 5 Sept. 1867.

<sup>28</sup>See Warren, Elder Henry James, 191.

<sup>29</sup>What Constitutes the State? A Lecture Delivered before the Young Men's Association of the City of Albany (New York: John Allen, 1846).

<sup>30</sup>James' opinion about his good qualities resulting from his wealth is in M. A. DeWolfe Howe, Memories of a Hostess: A Chronicle of Eminent Friendships, drawn chiefly from the diaries of Mrs. James T. Fields (Boston: Atlantic, 1922), 75.

<sup>31</sup>Charles A. Dana, "What Constitutes the State? A Lecture Delivered before the Young Men's Association of the City of Albany," Harbinger, II (25 April 1846), 312-14. James' reply was headed "The Social and Religious Movements," Harbinger, II (23 May 1846), 378-79. James' first effort also elicited favorable comment from the New-York Daily Tribune (9 March 1846), 1, which confined its review primarily to extracts from the work.

<sup>32</sup>Tracts for the New Times, No. 1, Letter to a Swedenborgian (New York: John Allen, 1847). James, as it was pointed out to him by various critics, overlooked in his condemnation of the New Church that their organization was primarily responsible for the printing and translating of Swedenborg, thus they were very much active in disseminating the seer's ideas. John Sullivan Dwight, music critic and charter member of the Transcendentalist Club, as well as part-time editor of the Harbinger reviewed TNT in Brook Farm's journal, repeating both the praise and condemnation that Dana applied to WCTS? The author did not fare so well in the Swedenborgian New Jerusalem Magazine which viewed James' work as an unworthy attack. But William Lloyd Garrison's Liberator felt it to be a distinguished pamphlet which struck at the root of many of America's problems. See John S. Dwight, "Tracts for the New Times, No. 1, Letter to a Swedenborgian," Harbinger, IV, (1 May 1847), 329-31; review of Tracts for the New Times, New Jerusalem Magazine, XX (June 1847), 419-20; "Swedenborgianism," Liberator, XVII (7 May 1847), 2.

<sup>33</sup>Quote is from Harbinger, VI (6 Nov. 1847), 8 to (4 Dec. 1847), 40. See also Wilkinson to HJ, 17 Aug. 1847.

<sup>34</sup>Victor Hennequin, Love in the Phalanstery, trans. H. James (New York: Dewitt and Davenport, 1849).



<sup>35</sup>The particular Observer with the critique of James is no longer extant, but is referred to in James, "The Observer and Hennequin," Harbinger, VII (21 Oct. 1848), 197-98.

<sup>36</sup>The exchange began with Ford, "Love in the Phalanstery," Harbinger, VII (11 Nov. 1848), 12-13 and ended with James, "Reply to A.E.F. in last week's Harbinger," Harbinger, VIII (10 Feb. 1849), 116-17.

<sup>37</sup>Clarence L. F. Gohdes, The Periodicals of American Transcendentalists (Durham: Duke, 1931), 118; Perry, William James: Inheritance and Vocation, 131; Grattan, Three Jameses, 63. An example of an opponent who felt unduly attacked is in Stephen Pearl Andrews, ed., Love, Marriage, and Divorce, and the Sovereignty of the Individual. A Discussion Between Henry James, Horace Greeley and Stephen Pearl Andrews, Including the Final Replies of Mr. Andrews, Rejected by the New York Tribune and a Subsequent Discussion, Occurring Twenty Years Later, Between Mr. James and Mr. Andrews (Boston: Benj. R. Tucker, 1889), 25.

<sup>38</sup>Moralism and Christianity: Or, Man's Experience and Destiny (New York: J.S. Redfield, 1850). William Henry Channing subjected M&C to a long review in his Spirit of the Age in which he accused James of being blinded by the brilliance of his own rhetoric and stated that James' book contained three large errors. Channing disagreed that a belief in the finality of nature bolstered self-love, he argued that all societal institutions did not necessarily finite man, and he condemned James for not taking breaches of morality seriously. He also indicted James' philosophy for being pantheistic and cautioned his readers to be wary of James' judgments. He indicated the gravity of his beliefs when he did not allow James any response even though James did contribute to his magazine. See Channing, "Tendencies of Socialism," Spirit of the Age, II (9 March 1850, 16 March 1850, 23 March 1850, 13 April 1850), 152-55, 168-71, 184-87, 232-36. The summations of his criticisms are found on 154, 234.

<sup>39</sup>(New York: Redfield, 1852). I have only been able to discover one review of this long volume, a favorable analysis in London's Leader, which proclaimed James an original thinker and defined him as a philosophical socialist who believed that political solutions were inadequate for the rectification of social problems.

"The Old and New Theology," Leader, III (21 Aug. 1852), 805-806.

<sup>40</sup>30 May 1851.

<sup>41</sup>"The Marriage Question," New-York Daily Tribune, XII (18 Sept 1852), 6.

<sup>42</sup>"Marriage and Reformers," New York Observer, XXX (11 Nov. 1852), 366.

<sup>43</sup>William Bristol Shaw & Ernest Sutherland Bates, "Stephen Pearl Andrews," DAB.

<sup>44</sup>See note 37 for the second edition of this work and complete bibliographic information.

<sup>45</sup>There is apparently some evidence that Andrews requested Greeley to withdraw James from the debate because he could not be precise. See Sidney Ditzion, Marriage, Morris and Sex in America: A History of Ideas, expanded ed. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1969), 156.

<sup>46</sup>The Church of Christ not an Ecclesiasticism: A Letter of Remonstrance to a Member of the Soi-Distant New Church, 2nd ed. (London: W. White, 1856; 1854). This work received a critical, although not hostile, notice in George Bush's New Church Repository and Monthly Review. Like James' Harbinger antagonist, Alfred E. Ford, Bush had converted to Swedenborgianism in the 1840s. He was not opposed to James' attack on Phariseism or formalist sects, but believed James excessive when he dismissed the entire New Church, rather than condemning specific untenable practices. Like Andrews, Bush wished James would follow a more closely reasoned argument and avoid wild exaggeration. But Bush also realized that the superlative was ingrained in James' personality and did not expect him to change. James unsurprisingly responded to Bush and the two men debated for several months. See "The Church of Christ not an Ecclesiasticism," New Church Repository and Monthly Review, VII (March 1854, April 1854, May 1854), 123-31, 166-81, 220-28. Data about Bush is in Harris Elwood Starr, "George Bush," DAB. Their exchange began with James' "Letter of Explanation from Mr. James," New Church Repository and Monthly Review, VII (April 1854), 184-87 and continued through Bush, "Remarks," ibid., (June 1854), 272-80.

<sup>47</sup>The Nature of Evil, considered in a letter to the Rev. Edward Beecher, D.D., author of 'The Conflict of the Ages,' (New York: Appleton, 1855).

<sup>48</sup>The Conflict of the Ages; or, The Great Debate on the Moral Relation of God and Man (Boston: Phillips, 1853). Charles Henry Rammelkamp, "Edward Beecher," DAB.

<sup>49</sup>The Unitarian reformer, James Freeman Clarke, reviewed James' work in the Christian Examiner. Clarke astutely focused on James' central assumption, that the only true evil is man's delusion that his self-consciousness is his highest state. But Clarke tended to confuse James' discussion of the earthly world with his thoughts about the infinite. Clarke correctly labeled James a metaphysician instead of a purveyor of well-reasoned argumentation, and rebuked James' patronizing attitude toward Beecher. Although Clarke's reaction to the book was mixed, his review was an indication that James was reaching the entire Christian intellectual community--his intended audience--who believed that James' command of the language and the attractiveness of his beliefs were forceful enough to be denied. See Clarke, "James on the Nature of Evil," Christian Examiner, LIX (July 1855), 116-36.

<sup>50</sup>Edel, Untried Years, 118-36. See note 46 for new ed. of CCNE.

<sup>51</sup>William James, "Introduction," LRLHJ, 11-12. CLC apparently attracted no reviews.

<sup>52</sup>HJ to Rev. William James, 28 Oct. 1857; Edel, Untried Years, 133-36.

<sup>53</sup>"Dr. Bushnell's New Book, Reviewed by one who is Neither Naturalist nor Supernaturalist," New-York Daily Tribune, XVIII (22 Feb. 1859), 3. The last of the series was James, "Dr. Bushnell on the Origin of Evil," New-York Daily Tribune, XVIII (5 April 1859), 6.

<sup>54</sup>James' initial article was "The Lesson of the Sickles Tragedy," New-York Daily Tribune, XVIII (16 April 1859), 9. The last article was "Marriage--Divorce, H.J.," New-York Daily Tribune, XVIII (4 May 1859), 6. This attracted a response from Greeley which followed the letter.

<sup>55</sup>The Last Will and Testament of Catharine James, document at HLHU.

<sup>56</sup>HJ to Samuel Gray Ward, 18 Sept. 1858; HJ to Edmund Tweedy, 24 July 1860; Allen, William James, 53-55, 61-63; Edel, Untried Years, 155-57.

<sup>57</sup>The Social Significance of Our Institutions: An Oration delivered by request of the citizens at Newport, R.I., July 4, 1861 (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1861).

<sup>58</sup>Edel, Untried Years, 170-87; Allen, William James, 86.

<sup>59</sup>Edel, Untried Years, 185-87; Garth Wilkinson James, "Story of the War," Milwaukee Sentinel (2 Dec. 1883), n.p.

<sup>60</sup>Edel, Untried Years, 189; Savage & Haile to Garth Wilkinson James, 25 Aug. 1869.

<sup>61</sup>Substance and Shadow, or Morality and Religion in their Relation to Life: An Essay Upon the Physics of Creation (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1863). This book attracted the attention once again of James Freeman Clarke, who still derided James for redefining common terms, but the bulk of his analysis consisted of an attempted synopsis of the book. Since James' book was multifaceted, this was a difficult task, but Clarke admitted that no review could do Substance and Shadow justice. Clarke particularly admired James' success in reinstating teleology in philosophy, and noted the force of his attack on the nineteenth century's extreme individualism, but he disagreed with James' onslaught on virtually every existing institution. See Clarke, "Henry James on Creation," Christian Examiner, LXXV (Sept. 1863), 212-24.

<sup>62</sup>Allen, William James, 73-91, 98; Edel, Untried Years, 193, 202; "Henry James," New-York Daily Tribune, XLII (20 Dec. 1882), 5.

<sup>63</sup>"Swedenborg's Ontology," North American Review, CV (July 1867), 89-123; The Secret of Swedenborg: Being an Elucidation of his Doctrine of the Divine Natural Humanity (Boston: Fields, Osgood, 1869). The pragmatist philosopher, Charles Saunders Peirce, who

was a friend of both Henry James, Sr. and William James, published the most perceptive review of the book. He wrote that James was deficient in argumentation and out of harmony with the interests of the age, but that to the prepared mind he could be understood and to others he offered spiritual nutriment. Another religious figure, C. P. Cranch, a Unitarian minister, also offered a review in which he stated that James' latest book was clearer than earlier efforts, but that it was a copious restatement of previous writings. He also commented that Swedenborg himself might not agree with all that James claimed the seer professed. But the most remembered criticism is that of William Dean Howells who gave the book a favorable review, but is recalled for his later quip to Charles Eliot Norton that James had written The Secret of Swedenborg, and then kept it. See Peirce, "The Secret of Swedenborg," North American Review, CX (April 1870), 436-68; Cranch, "Mr. James's "Secret of Swedenborg," Nation, IX (18 Nov. 1869), 436-37; Howells, "The Secret of Swedenborg," Atlantic, XXIV (Dec. 1869), 762-63; Sara Norton & M. A. DeWolfe Howe, eds., Letters of Charles Eliot Norton with Biographical Comment, Vol. II (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1913), 379.

<sup>64</sup>For example, "The Woman Thou Gavest Me," Atlantic, XXV (Jan. 1870), 66-72; "The Logic of Marriage and Murder," Atlantic, XXV (June 1870), 744-49.

<sup>65</sup>This exchange began with James' "Deliverance, not Perfection, the Aim of Religion," Index, VII (20 Jan. 1876), 26, and ended with his "The Philosophy of the Heart," Index, VII (18 May 1876), 230-31.

<sup>66</sup>See note 16 for bibliographic information. The stroke is mentioned in William James, "Introduction," LRLHJ, 10.

<sup>67</sup>New Church Independent and Monthly Review, 27 (May 1879), 229-35.

<sup>68</sup>These began with "Letter from Henry James: Rejoinder to W.H.G.," ibid., (Sept. 1879), 409-414; and concluded with "Henry James on the New Church of the Future," ibid., 30 (Sept. 1881), 397-98.

<sup>69</sup>HJ to Margaret Fuller (Channing) Loring, 26 Feb. 1882.

<sup>70</sup>Quote is in Henry James to William James, 28 Dec. 1882 in Leon Edel, ed., Henry James Letters, Volume II, 1875-1883 (Cambridge: Harvard, 1975), 397. Alice H.G. James' letters to her husband, William, are the best account of Henry James, Sr.'s final days, but are not yet available for publication. They are at HLHU. For a general account, see Allen, William James, 241-57.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid., 258; William James to Henry James, 9 Jan. 1883; William James to Alice Howe Gibbens James, 11 Jan. 1883,

<sup>72</sup>Allen, William James, 270.

## CHAPTER III

### CREATION AND REDEMPTION

#### I

Henry James, Sr.'s explosive personality was a representative manifestation of the vibrant and dynamic expansiveness of his era. His laborious and traumatic transformation from a confused and disenchanted student to an emphatic and prolific author contains its own intrinsic drama. Yet his conflict with Calvinism and his subsequent discovery and adoption of Sandeman, Fourier, and Swedenborg also reflect nineteenth-century America's intellectual elasticity. James' incorporation of these particular unconventional philosophies exemplified his unusual contempt for traditional institutions, but the intensity of his spiritual quest mirrored the American experience from seventeenth-century Puritanism to the intoxicating revivals of the second Great Awakening.

Although James' intellectual journey was initially chaotic, his fully developed philosophical ideas exerted a genuine influence in American life. A thorough discussion of Henry James, Sr.'s ideas is an essential prerequisite to understanding both the experiences of

his own life and his impact on American society.

Rendering James' ideas and iconoclastic attitudes explicable as an aspect of American society may be facilitated with the use of a heuristic device for comparison with other religious quests. Such a paradigm is presented in Robert S. Ellwood's book about unconventional religion in America, Alternative Altars.<sup>1</sup> Ellwood posits two fundamental, but distinct kinds of religion: established and emergent. Established religion applies to conventional worship which fits easily in the framework of American society, such as the rites of mainstream Protestants, Catholics, and Jews. Emergent religion, however, identifies people who seek spiritual solace in unconventional religious practices and beliefs, such as theosophy and meditation. Individuals engaged in emergent religion are labeled "excursive." Henry James, Sr., who rejected conventional Presbyterianism for his own highly personalized combination of the philosophies of Sandeman, Fourier, and Swedenborg, must be considered a practitioner of excursive religion. Although his intellectual career is not completely explained by Ellwood's model, his experiences closely parallel the typical excursive quest.

The first stage in the excursive experience is alienation from one's established religion, in James'



case, his father's austere Calvinism with its harsh deity so often antagonistic toward man. The intensity of James' rejection of Calvinism may, of course, have been the faulty memory of an old man reviewing his life's story. But the gravity of his schoolboy burns and subsequent amputations must certainly have compelled James to ponder both the existence and nature of divinity. Moreover, certain evidence indicates that James, as a very young man, was deeply concerned with the spiritual side of life. After he fled Union College he worked for the Christian Examiner, and when he failed to maintain an interest in any other profession he enrolled in a Presbyterian seminary. James' persistent early attempts to reconcile himself with the religion of his birth and his ultimate rejection of that faith conform to the initial step of Ellwood's excursive model.

The succeeding phase of the typical excursive experience Ellwood terms liminality, a tension-fraught transition period between rejection of traditional religious beliefs and incorporation of unconventional ideas. Once more, James' activities correspond to the model. Upon finally rejecting Princeton in 1837--at least in principle, if not yet formally--James traveled abroad, analyzed the Bible, lectured, and wrote in an incessant and restless attempt to discover religious peace. Although he appropriated Sandemanian and

Fourierist concepts, it was not until his discovery of Swedenborg in the mid-1840s that he finally accepted his unconventional religious aspirations.

Even James' dramatic nervous breakdown fits Ellwood's model; indeed Ellwood observes that this shaky transition period often continues until the individual becomes incapable of performing everyday functions. Immersed in an alternative reality, the excursivist is absorbed in an emotional vigil of massive proportions. Some sort of cathartic experience, spontaneous and unexpected, like James' emotional disintegration, frequently precedes the most intense phase of liminality. But Ellwood stressed that such a collapse is not necessarily a detrimental experience. It may be the positive indication that the individual is preparing to incorporate his alternative spiritual reality into his mundane life and resume his interaction with traditional society. Viewed in this context, James' breakdown is indeed a vastation, a spiritual cleansing, which concluded with his discovery of Swedenborg's writings. (Although, as indicated, there were worldly as well as spiritual factors which help account for the timing of his breakdown and recovery).

Completing the process of transition, or liminality, the excursive individual returns to society, but with a different outlook than before and a new awareness

of his societal role.

## II

The mature Henry James, Sr., after this transforming experience of excursus, naturally abandoned many tenets of his youthful Calvinism. But his own highly personalized theology never entailed a wholesale dismissal of all Presbyterian ideas. Although he extensively analyzed both traditional and unconventional beliefs, he never formally questioned one integral aspect of orthodoxy--the existence of God. James unquestioningly assumed the necessity of a Divine Being as the source of humanity. His interpretation of God's relationship to man, however, followed a less traditional route. James, like other excursive individuals, employed a peculiar symbolism to support his unique religious notions. He meticulously reviewed the Bible to grasp its symbolic meaning, adhering to Swedenborg's belief that the Bible was literally the key to unlocking the internal sense of the word of God and the only available clue for comprehending the link between God and man. In the end, his reading of Swedenborg's symbolic Biblical interpretation enabled him to develop a complete teleology.<sup>2</sup>

James believed that God was the only absolute existence or universal reality--all else was phenomenal

or illusory. No material substance contained its own source, all things depended on a spiritual genesis. He believed, unlike his contemporaries, that God could not be defined as being inclusive of all time and space, but that He was actually no time and no space. Only man's finite and limited understanding of nature--the phenomenal or illusory world--necessitated the adoption of these two concepts. James acknowledged that nature could be explicated only through the definitions of time and space, which were its own finite laws. But to assume therefore that time and space also applied to God was to assume erroneously that the same constraints which bounded the finite sphere also limited infinity. To James this was the epitome of ludicrousness. Nature and man were both phenomenal concepts that were meaningless to infinity. Since all nature (which included man) was illusory, it was secondary to, and caused by, occurrences in the infinite realm.<sup>3</sup>

The primacy of the spiritual world in James' philosophy resulted from his assimilation of the Swedenborgian idea of correspondence, which included the notion that the spirituality of the deity was the original force of the universe and had its initial impact in a world of spirits--a real, although not a visible sphere. Each occurrence of this spiritual world both preceded and caused events in the natural world. The very existence of the natural world was a consequence of activities in the spiritual realm. In this sense, James believed in the correspondence of the finite and the infinite, and that the

natural world served as a guide to comprehension of the spiritual, if only that correspondence could be understood. To facilitate such an understanding, James thought there were two categories of knowledge: information, or knowledge of nature or the finite; and revelation, or knowledge of the spiritual or infinite. Information came from science, which analyzed the laws of time and space; revelation required spiritual insight. Both were necessary to understand correspondence. Swedenborg's role as a central figure in explaining correspondence resulted from his unusual ability to alternate his time between the spiritual and natural worlds, and to report accurately the fundamental meaning of phenomenal events as they were described to him by his contacts in the spiritual realm. Although James never claimed to penetrate the world of the spirits himself, he was convinced that Swedenborg had done so and had correctly disseminated the information that he had gleaned during his visits.<sup>4</sup>

James' acceptance of Swedenborg's belief in the supremacy of the spiritual world legitimized his use of Swedenborg's symbolic reinterpretation of Genesis. James' most fundamental theological assumption was that creation was a spiritual, not a natural process. Creation did not mean, as most of his contemporaries supposed, that the earth had been established during a particular time and at a specific place because the very ideas of time and space were spiritually meaningless.

Indeed, phenomenal existence was the least important aspect of the universe.<sup>5</sup>

James believed that a God who was unconfined by any natural limitations could be interested only in those characteristics of his creatures which were also infinite. This made man God's most distinguished creature, because only man, through his soul, could transcend finite nature and worship God spiritually. James perceived man as a meeting of two realms--the material and the spiritual. The material, that is, the limitations of time and space, "finited" him; the soul "in-finited" him. The material aspect of man was both secondary and ministerial to man's spiritual aspect--just as the natural world was secondary and ministerial to the spiritual world. Spiritual creation, which was the foundation of James' entire teleology, meant that man's most significant characteristic was his link with the infinite and that because of that link man was God's most cherished creature.<sup>6</sup> James' affection for man, or homocentrism, was so highly developed that he refused to consider any other theological possibility: "If human nature, the human race, mankind or humanity, be not spiritually the true name of God, exhausting the conception, then I at least do not know the true name of God, and certainly shall never care to know it."<sup>7</sup>

James' veneration of mankind compelled him to account for man's habitual spiritual distance from his Creator. Once again, he ascribed the proper explanation to a symbolic understanding of Genesis--and a novel interpretation of the fall of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden. When this representative pair ate of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (he always purposefully employed the entire phrase), James believed, they did not simply acquire forbidden knowledge--they also attained self-consciousness. This discovery entailed two diverse, but related, results. First, they began to perceive themselves as distinctly self-sufficient individuals, separate from God because they now possessed moral awareness, that is, knowledge of good and evil. Second, this positive conception of themselves and their new-found morality caused them to lose sight of their divine origin. James contended that knowledge of good and evil was a phenomenal, not a spiritual, insight, because the only possible spiritual evil was obliviousness to man's divine source. This belief in his own peculiar self-consciousness, or self-hood, and the consequent detachment from God, provided the only conceivable explanation of the fall of man, as typified by Adam and Eve.<sup>8</sup> Yet James believed that such a fall was absolutely essential.

God, above all else a Being of total love, could

not accept man's reunion with divinity unless man himself chose to establish such rapport. Divine coercion would mean that man exerted no control over his own destiny--a powerlessness alien to the notion of God's complete love for His creatures and thus inconceivable.<sup>9</sup> Man's mistaken belief in the supremacy of his own self-consciousness had to precede his search for a universal existence more powerful than himself.

The idea of man's self-consciousness, or selfhood, and its ramifications was the most important concept that James borrowed from Swedenborg, next to the belief in spiritual creation.<sup>10</sup> Although selfhood inspired man to the erroneous belief in his own supremacy, James thought it was also the most important step to true spiritual awareness. He wondered how any man could possibly contemplate the natural world's numerous ills without eventually acknowledging the intrinsic worthlessness of man's self-consciousness. The eventual realization of man's own insufficiency would cause him to search for a more potent universal existence--God. When this occurred, man would defer to and seek rapport with God, and selfhood would have fulfilled its beneficent purpose. If any man ignored or did not feel the need for a higher existence and continued to believe in the supremacy of his own selfhood, then he would suffer spiritual death. A natural death simply meant escape from the confining boundaries of time and space,



but spiritual death signified alienation from the divine source of the universe. Such self-sufficiency and renunciation of God from man's life constituted the universe's only meaningful evil.<sup>11</sup>

### III

James' philosophies of creation and selfhood shaped his interpretation of Christianity, which, he argued, was the world's only true religion.<sup>12</sup> He attributed his belief that God encompassed all life--both spiritual and material--to Christianity, and he contended that Christianity was unique among the world's religions in sanctioning both temporal and spiritual salvation. James thought that man's ability to overcome his own selfhood and seek spiritual direction would lead to a more benevolent earthly life, which he considered to be nearly as important as a spiritual existence. He believed that faith in an afterlife should not obscure the significance of material existence. A God who was complete love must reveal that love to all His beings in whatever realm they inhabited:

Because if the other world exhibit a more favorable set of influences with respect to our spiritual progress than this world exhibits, then clearly God might if He had pleased have ordained precisely the same influences here: and not having done so, we should be constrained to say that He had not done the best thing possible for us here: which would be a [negative and therefore

unthinkable) reflection either upon His love or His wisdom, or else upon both.<sup>13</sup>

Christianity's most vital symbol, Jesus Christ, demonstrated man's role as connecting link between the physical and spiritual worlds. Characteristically, James lacked interest in Jesus as a historic personality, but sought instead his representative significance. James argued that Jesus' fundamental message was that all men are united before God: national, racial, or moral differences were insignificant. According to James, Jesus taught that man was incapable of offending God because all man's proclivities were divinely implanted. James' belief that it was nonsensical for God to be offended by any trait that He had instilled was related to the Calvinist notion that God had explicitly pre-ordained all of man's actions. James believed that Jesus had also taught that God was essentially unconcerned with individual lives; He was interested primarily in the welfare of the race of man, the only species capable of transcending finite surroundings to communicate with Divinity.<sup>14</sup>

James argued that Jesus rejected his brethren, the Jewish people, because they enlarged the illusory concept of selfhood by applying it to themselves as a group, and this belief in their own group-supremacy opposed the fundamental notion of the unity of the human race.<sup>15</sup> Jesus himself best demonstrated the

fallacy of selfhood in the crucifixion and resurrection. Jesus permitted himself to be martyred to demonstrate the necessity of remaining loyal to the divinity within oneself even to the ultimate extent of sacrificing natural life. But his subsequent resurrection as a flesh-and-blood person signified that man's natural existence was inferior to his spiritual life--which continued, in a knowable form, beyond the grave.<sup>16</sup>

James retained the Christian beliefs in heaven and hell, but he reinterpreted their meaning. He argued that heaven and hell were states of consciousness, not specific places. If a person stubbornly retained his belief in the supremacy of his own selfhood, then he would find his proximity to those who had renounced their selfhoods as a state of hell and would prefer to be close to likeminded beings. Individuals who had progressed beyond the belief in the omnipotence of their own selfhoods would find it heaven-like to be close to others like themselves. But these conditions were capable of changing and a person could move from one state of consciousness to the other as sentiments dictated. Personal transition and evolution was possible in the spiritual realm, just as it had been in the natural.<sup>17</sup>

Man's faith in his own self-consciousness and consequent renunciation of God was spiritual evil--the

only evil that James considered worth acknowledging. Belief in the supremacy of man led to the sin of pride, the error that some were superior to others, and was the basis for standard morality. Traditional morality reflected man's undying faith in selfhood because it distinguished one man from another and singled out particular actions as right and others as wrong. It was based on natural delusions, not spiritual truths, since no individual deed in itself could be offensive to God. But men who only understood nature's laws, and not their spiritual foundations, could easily find fault with other men. Laws and customs limited by the restrictions of time and space were pernicious to James because they obscured comprehension of spiritual evil. James worked himself into a frenzy over such cultural taboos as the United States marital codes precisely because they depicted man's ideas of natural, not spiritual, evil. James, in short, betrayed a nascent ethical relativism which permitted acceptance of all customs as long as they did not counter his own idea of spiritual propriety.<sup>18</sup>

#### IV

James' theology provided the foundation for his interpretation of man's social destiny. His most fundamental religious concept of spiritual creation, which

argued that every man inherently possessed a spark of divinity, explained human progress toward a better life. And his notion of the Deity as total perfection meant that creation would remain forever incomplete unless it led to man's deliverance from his own nature, redemption from his selfhood, to a spiritual unity with both God and man. James' faith in ultimate redemption caused him to predict temporal, as well as spiritual, salvation for man. Since, of all natural creatures, only man possessed the ability to communicate spiritually, James believed that human redemption must have been the sole objective of God's spiritual creation. Man's physical nature, or his phenomenality, was the sole non-spiritual aspect of this creation.<sup>19</sup>

James, as he vividly demonstrated in his analysis of Jesus, felt that an individual's fate was inconsequential when compared to the ultimate destiny of the entire human race. His faith in a complete earthly redemption incorporated both his version of the Swedenborgian doctrine of correspondence and his interpretation of selfhood. According to the doctrine of correspondence, temporal salvation would be unattainable until events in the spiritual world assured the proper environment for mundane reform. But Swedenborg reported that the spiritual world had already observed the Last Judgment in 1757, and that this occurrence had portended temporal

regeneration. James, unlike many of his contemporaries who were millennialists, vehemently denied that earthly reform would result from an apocalyptic event. Instead, he made the immensely significant assumption that redemption would be the consequence of individual reformation--each individual relinquishing the idea of his own vaunted selfhood, and sharing the fortunes of all mankind, that is, being willing to establish a true community. James thought that this process of redemption explained all of human history and he wished to analyze its ramifications on society.<sup>20</sup>

James viewed history, which he saw as the path from darkness to light, as a perpetual conflict between the forces of human nature, or selfhood, and those of human regeneration, or redemption. Since all societal conflicts could be explicated as the result of this antagonism, he proposed to illuminate didactically the meaning of this ongoing struggle.<sup>21</sup>

## V

James discerned a fundamental conflict between ecclesiasticism and religion, which he labeled respectively the Old and New Theologies. The Old Theology served groups that were more interested in their sectarian preservation than they were in communicating spiritual precepts. A church became a sect when

maintaining itself as an institution displaced its mission as a symbol of spiritual life. Since each sect tended to think of itself as the only existing representative of the divine will, sectarianism was nothing more than the institutional equivalent of selfhood. Like the individual who was utterly confident of the finality of his own selfconsciousness, the sect forgot its dependency on the Creator, and promoted itself as supreme. This very attribute led James to vilify the Swedenborgian New Church as an organization that had succumbed to the danger, when, more than any other church, it should have realized the need to guard against it.<sup>22</sup>

James was also incensed by churches of the Old Theology because he believed that they corrupted the meaning of Jesus' mission. Jesus symbolized the complete harmony between God and mankind, through his total allegiance to the Deity and his consequent resurrection and redemption. But the churches of the Old Theology, according to James, had twisted Jesus' mission from providing a symbol of man's capacity for perfection to an individual quest for his own ultimate glory. Churches had mistakenly transformed Jesus from a symbol of temporal redemption and spiritual salvation into a mere historical figure who deserved worship because of his own achievements. This interpretation resulted from the Old Theology's belief in a historical, rather than

a spiritual, creation. Given such an erroneous view, man's only conceivable salvation lay in an afterlife replete with a physical heaven and hell. The Old Theology substituted the notion of man's bodily resurrection after death for the establishment of goodness and truth, or God's kingdom, on earth.<sup>23</sup>

The Old Theology's literal interpretation of a physical creation and redemption also angered James because he saw that it increased the power of the church. Clergymen, in their capacity as the foremost religious authorities, were expected to direct their parishioners toward a more religious life. They thereby convinced their followers of the necessity of an intermediary between God and man, an intermediary which James believed totally unnecessary. Even worse, churches, which competed with one another for membership, tended to view good and evil not as spiritual states, but as reflections of ecclesiastical affiliation. James cited the Jews as the most notorious example of this belief, and insisted that they had fallen from God's favor because they had separated themselves from the rest of mankind, just as the Christian members of the Old Theology were doing.<sup>24</sup>

The Old Theology exasperated James for its blind devotion to all the characteristics of individual selfhood. This brand of worship must be replaced by a



New Theology, which would have no ecclesiastical organization, but would instead identify itself with the whole of humanity. This "new church" could retain only two rituals, baptism and communion, because Jesus had prescribed each as traditions which united, rather than divided, man. James was adamantly unwilling, however, to sanction any action which separated one man from the remainder of humanity, and he argued that Christianity itself tolerated no such separation: "The true Christian allows others to separate from him as much as they please, as much as their unfortunate narrowness makes it inevitable to them, but he feels it necessary to separate himself from no one."<sup>25</sup>

The great difference between the Old Theology and the New was that the former satisfied itself with merely an outward, contractual relationship with God, premised on a theological system of merits and demerits which the church defined; the latter advocated man's individual, spontaneous, and perpetual interaction with both the Deity and his spiritual partners, the whole of mankind. The Old Theology's contractual system nurtured pride and selfhood, and led to traditional morality, which James castigated as a non-spiritual value system.<sup>26</sup>

James' unusual (but not, as some of his contemporaries would have us believe, incomprehensible) conception of morality, compelled him to view unconventionally the

role of religious leaders. They were to be critics of any culture's morality, not upholders of it. James believed that the total scope of man's religious responsibility was to overcome any merely personal claim to God's consideration, and find favor only in God's work of universal love to the entire race of mankind. The proper role of the church was to humble man materially and morally so that it could exalt him spiritually. This belief led James to condemn wholeheartedly prayers which were selfishly directed toward individual gain and not toward amelioration of the race. Only when man became conscious of his natural imperfection would he become disengaged from his physical foundations (like Jesus) and exchange his native pride and obduracy for modesty and docility, and inwardly seek God. Then he would no longer be "a mere abject creature of God, but his sympathetic associate or fellow; no longer a servant, but a son."<sup>27</sup>

Despite James' persistent and vehement denouncing of traditional morality, he did not view morality, just as he did not perceive selfhood, as an entirely negative attribute. He contended that morality was the sole human feature which distinguished man from all other natural species since only man was able to comprehend a distinction between good and evil. The belief in traditional morality (or the absence of that belief)

defined the difference between a false understanding of men as complete individual entities and the true belief in man as one partial member of the entire race. Until mankind perceived the beneficence of a redeemed society the artificially created morality of societal institutions would be permanently counterproductive because it would constantly reinforce man's concept of his own finiteness. He employed the example of a criminal to explain his theory that in an unredeemed society man and his institutions would be continuously antagonistic. Criminals enacted their evil deeds, James argued, only as a result of a struggle between their needs and the limitations imposed on those needs by an unredeemed society. If men were allowed to pursue their own proclivities, without being condemned to fight for food, shelter, and clothing, then crime would either be eliminated, or society, by gentle persuasion, would be able to convince criminals to reform.<sup>28</sup> James introduced this notion in his early essay, "Morality and the Perfect Life," and one long passage is worth quoting since it portrays James' positive vision of life in a redeemed society, his unbridled optimism, and his naivete about man's various interior motivations:

Suppose that society, animated by these truths, should go to the criminal whom we suppose to have been convicted of murder, and address him thus: "Friend, we have erred, and have come to recall our error. We are convinced that the odium of

murder does not attach to your soul. We are convinced that you would never have felt a prompting to injure him who now lies dead had we previously done our duty towards you, that is, had we previously insured you both that ample supply of all your natural and social wants, which it is alike our interest and duty to ensure all our members, and which would have forever prevented either of you falling under the other's obligation. Failing thus in our duty, we have tempted you to mutual rapacity and injury. One of you lies low, hurried out of nature in the midst of health and joy; to him it is too late to make amends. But to you, the less happy survivor, we can at least do justice, by assuming the odium of your guilt. We are the really guilty party. The inhuman relations we have organized between you pronounce us criminal. Are we not accordingly suffering the award due to crime in those innocent yet bleeding hearts more intimately connected with the deceased and yourself? Wherefore we do not condemn thee; go and sin no more."

Now, my friends, do you conceive that if society should act with this magnanimity, with this truth, the criminal would not melt into instant tenderness? Would he not at once cry out to this beneficent society--"My life, my all shall be yours. It was not the suffering that I dreaded, it was not my approaching violent doom that I contended against. It was the stigma you cast upon my private soul that outraged me, the feeling that I was to suffer unblest of God, unblest of man, unblest even of that noble and tender wife whom my deed has disgraced, and of those fond confiding children I have so patiently reared to manhood. This was the wormwood and the gall, that I should die and no man say, God bless you, die abhorred of my own flesh and blood. But your magnanimity restores me to myself. It justifies my inmost loathing and abhorrence of this guilt, and restores me to self-respect, restores me to God. For whoso is at peace with his own heart is at peace with God. Take therefore the life you have given. Use it freely, to its last gasp if occasion serve. Can a man value his body when he possessed himself in God? Try me and see. Reconciled to myself, reconciled to God, rejoicing by your truth in a soul washed clean from all defilement, rejoicing for the first time in virgin innocence of soul, I abandon this bleak existence to your service as freely as ever saint upon the verge of the beatific vision abandoned himself to God.<sup>29</sup>

Man's morality was a sham because it furthered the separation of one man from his brother and thus separated the species of man from its spiritual bonds. Morality would be non-existent in a perfect, or redeemed, society, James contended, because traditional definitions of good and evil would be meaningless--there would be only spiritual communion with God and whatever was godly in man, or there would be alienation from the Deity and his spirit in man.<sup>30</sup>

## VI

James was an acerbic critic of his society. But he was also very much interested in promulgating the benefits of a redeemed society. He did this partly by focusing on the differences between the arrangements in a traditional and those of a reformed society, just as he had contrasted the Old and New Theology. One of his favorite subjects, of course, was the relationships between the sexes. Marriage, the most elemental societal institution, engaged James' attention both as an independent social institution in the unredeemed society and as a symbol of life in the redeemed one. He felt that before man could hope to achieve unity with God, he must first discover the variety and sociability of his own species. The most obvious example of human differences was the sexual distinction,

which led to mankind's initial and most simplistic social form--the unity of marriage.<sup>31</sup>

As he eagerly stated in his many public controversies about marriage, James believed that modern marital laws were self-defeating. In his anonymous preface to Hennequin's Love in the Phalanstery, James indicted marriage laws for leading individuals to believe that their spouses, like so much property, belonged to them. The dissension that this belief produced led partners to promiscuity, deception, adultery, and domestic tyranny. This litany of evils could be eradicated only if marriage reflected a spiritual, rather than a legal, union. Such an objective was desirable not only for the married couple, but also for society because marriage preceded society's most fundamental institution--the family. James, in his review of Lazarus' Love vs. Marriage, argued for spiritual marriage precisely because a loving, spiritually-oriented setting would provide the most suitable environment for child nurture.<sup>32</sup>

James' ideas about marriage resulted partly from his beliefs concerning the distinctive roles of the sexes. Man and woman together represented the total "divine natural man" (Swedenborg's and James' term for redeemed humanity), but individually each possessed certain characteristics which guaranteed compatibility.

Women epitomized humanity's spontaneous accord with the divine source and were thus more easily able to discern spiritual affection and alienation. But women were also less capable of grasping mundane affairs than were men, who epitomized humanity's moral revolt, or the ascension of selfhood. The male's powerful self-consciousness enabled him to survive in the ruthlessly competitive world of practical affairs. Therefore, James deduced, men should depend on women for recognition of life's spiritual qualities, and women on men for material concerns. This view was tied to James' symbolic interpretation of Genesis: the making of Eve from Adam's rib indicated a mutual dependency. But James' depiction of the sexes also reflected contemporaneous attitudes towards the proper role of each.<sup>33</sup>

Ironically, James formulated a stereotypical image of the sexes which belied the relationships in his own marriage. There he was clearly the more spiritually inclined while his wife managed the practical affairs. Although James apparently overlooked the reversal of "proper" sexual roles in his own household (and even if he had noticed it, he would probably have argued that this was merely an individual aberration which did not disprove the general contention), he nevertheless believed that he had discovered the formula for maintaining good marriages. In general, marriage

would work best when women, the spiritual sex, accepted responsibility for its honor and were most interested in its stability.<sup>34</sup>

## VII

While marriage and the family comprised its principal components, the culmination of a redeemed society would be the implementation of the state--a term James confusingly described in his first acknowledged publication, What Constitutes the State? But after more than thirty years of constant thinking and writing about the state, he was able to present a comprehensible vision of this aspect of the perfect society.

James emphasized from the very first that the state was not synonymous with government, a political institution which, like the churches of the Old Theology, upheld and intensified man's conventional morality. The true state, like the New Theology, was appropriate to a redeemed society. Unsurprisingly, James insisted that the state should feel no compulsion to define or standardize its citizens' morals. Rather, it existed solely to ensure that its members adhered to just and equal laws and to guarantee that every citizen's material necessities would be supplied. To render James' concept in its simplest terms, the state was to oversee the universal application of the golden rule.<sup>35</sup>



James unreservedly depicted the United States, of all the world's nations, as the one that most nearly fulfilled his idea of the perfect state. When the Civil War began he leaped at the opportunity to elaborate this belief and explain the differences between a nation that forged toward perfection and others that lagged behind. James' longest, most explicit, political statement was his early Civil War oration, The Social Significance of Our Institutions. Displaying his youthful assimilation of Jacksonian America and its characteristic Romantic chauvinism, James boasted that in the United States men were superior to institutions while in decadent European civilization, institutions controlled the destinies of men. This contrast between the United States and Europe fit perfectly into James' contrast between socialism and civilization, which he had discussed theoretically in Moralism and Christianity. Since man battles society only when it inhibits his activities (as James contended in the example of the imaginary criminal cited earlier), socialism will be successful when society is subjected to man's inward or divine personality, the reverse of civilization which subjects man to society.<sup>36</sup>

Although the United States was obviously not a completely redeemed society, its two legendary documents, the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution,

recognized all men as inherently equal--that is, spiritually indistinguishable before God. The very foundations of America's political arrangements placed men above institutions and consciously subjugated the selfish instinct to the service of social needs. This predisposition could be seen in the nation's assault against traditional institutions of both politics and religion: monarchy and Catholicism were the most vivid examples of the tendency to place institutions over men, but democracy and Protestantism in America checked their potential for evil. James viewed democracy and Protestantism not as new institutions, but as destroyers of institutions. Democracy was government which required the least possible governance and therefore set the stage for self-government; Protestantism accomplished a similar blessing by advocating individual interaction with God without the necessity of a priestly intermediary. Therefore, a republic like the United States, the bastion of both Protestantism and democracy and sanctioned by the entire people, represented God's final form of institution in human affairs because it was the largest possible liberal order and could be succeeded only by a free and spontaneous society.<sup>37</sup>

The Civil War symbolized, for James, his country's continuous path toward redemption. The advancing social consciousness of the North, which insisted on the

abolition of slavery, was a sign that the United States was no longer willing to tolerate the most odious of man's actions--enslaving another human being against his will. Slavery was the direct opposite of the golden rule and it therefore epitomized spiritual evil in society. Ridding the United States of this most ignominious evil would clear the way for continued reform.<sup>38</sup>

The greatest weakness in James' system, one typical of many utopians, was that he never outlined (and may not have been interested in so doing) the practical stages which would lead to a redeemed society. Although he explored the process which particular individuals would undergo in the transition from self-consciousness to spiritual awareness, he did not undertake a similar explanation for society. But he did depict the positive life of individuals who would live in such a society.

James labeled the redeemed man an artist or a productive man. Such an individual would fulfill simultaneously his own spiritual personality and society's general needs. James had no intention of suggesting that this artist would necessarily be a painter or a creative artisan; instead he would be any person who performed a labor of love, no matter what his calling. James was convinced that all men begrudged the labor required to provide material necessities, but he was also certain that every person was specially suited

to a particular occupation, which was an outgrowth of his spiritual inclinations. The artist would exhibit the unity of his individual and universal life because his career would represent the productive combination of his self-love and his brotherly love.<sup>39</sup> James offered an example of just such an artist, though he also reflected typical elitist views of the innate abilities of men, in his essay, "A Scientific Statement of the Christian Doctrine of the Lord, or Divine Man":

The humblest theatre of action furnishes him a platform. I pay my waiter so much a day for putting my dinner on the table. But he performs his function in a way so entirely sui generis, with so exquisite an attention to beauty in all the details of the service . . . to convert one's habitual "grace before meat" into a spontaneous tribute, instinct with divine recognition.

The charm in this case is not that the dinner is all before me . . . . No, it is exclusively the way in which it is set before me, a way altogether peculiar to this man, which attests that in doing it he is not thinking either of earning his wages, or doing his duty towards me, but only of satisfying his own conception of beauty with the resources before him. The consequence is that the pecuniary relation between us merges into a higher one.<sup>40</sup>

But even in a perfect society, James believed, there could still be unredeemed individuals. Each man should be free to choose his own destiny and if the life in which selfhood still reigned supreme satisfied an individual's desire, then so be it. But such an individual in a redeemed society would probably be living in an earthly hell, alienated from his peers.<sup>41</sup>

Concerning the perfect society and its appeal to

all men, James himself should be allowed the final word, from his most trenchant and comprehensive work, Society the Redeemed Form of Man:

We cannot hope then to see God avouching himself both inwardly and outwardly, both really and actually, both spiritually and naturally, true man, and alone fit to bear the untarnished name of Man, until the human race becomes so fused within itself--that is, so constituted in felt or conscious unity with itself--as to form a perfect society, brotherhood or fellowship of its particular and universal elements, each of its members spontaneously devoting himself to the welfare of all, and all the members in their turn freely espousing the welfare of each.<sup>42</sup>

### VIII

James' fundamental teleologic beliefs, based on the belief in spiritual creation, comprised the foundation of his entire philosophic system. An understanding of these concepts render his views of life and society meaningful, and aid comprehension of both his work and its effects.

Although James studied theological problems, his ultimate objective was societal reform. If he had completely fulfilled Ellwood's excursive model, with which this chapter began, then following his adoption of Swedenborgian principles, he would have sought to organize a group through which he could have disseminated his ideas. But James was a committed anti-institutionalist who disdained all groups because they eventually deteriorated into sects. He was, however, intensely

interested in the acceptance of his ideas and in promoting the final stage of Ellwood's excursive model--the development of communitas, in which individuals spontaneously relate to one another from the vantage of spiritual consciousness, rather than their role identities.<sup>43</sup> The entire society should reflect this communitas, for that was the way to fulfillment of society's only true objective--divine harmony, both spiritually and materially. But an understanding of James' vision would be incomplete without an analysis of its influence: first as it affected his own immediate and illustrious family and finally for its ramifications on American society.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Robert S. Ellwood, Jr., Alternative Altars: Unconventional and Eastern Spirituality in America (Chicago: Chicago, 1979). For discussion of established and emergent religions see Ch. 1; for excursus see 20-21, 28-32, 42-52.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 89.

<sup>3</sup>"The Laws of Creation," in L & M, 322; CLC, 3, 161n; S & S, 50-54, 65-72, 406, 429; S of S, 22; SRFM, 126.

<sup>4</sup>"A Scientific Statement of the Christian Doctrine of the Lord, or Divine Man," Massachusetts Quarterly Review, III (Dec. 1849), 52-53; CLC, iii, 26, 44-49, 195, 233n; S & S, 106-107, 112-13; S of S, 11, 13, 29, 66, 238; SRFM, 123, 187-88; NE, 307-308; Henry James, Sr., "Works of Sir William Hamilton," Putnam's Monthly Magazine, II (Nov. 1853), 472; Henry James, "Human Freedom," Harbinger, VII (19 Aug. 1848), 126; Henry James, "Modern Diabolism," Atlantic, XXXII (Aug. 1873), 221.

<sup>5</sup>NE, 292-93; CLC, 4, 23, 39, 72, 109, 156-57, 170, 179; S & S, 80, 241, 386, 394-435; S of S, 15-66; SRFM, 145, 239; "Spiritual Creation," in LRLHJ, 248-55.

<sup>6</sup>"A Scientific Statement of the Christian Doctrine of the Lord, or Divine Man," 53, 55-56; "Morality and the Perfect Life," in M & C, 100; "The Old and New Theology; 2," in L & M, 220-25; "Man," in ibid., 347; CLC, 56, 96-99; S & S, 385-86, 425-26; S of S, 80; SRFM, 22, 156-57.

<sup>7</sup>Quote is in "Spiritual Creation," 363. See also "Property as Symbol," in L & M, 59-61; "Man," in ibid., 346; NE, 297-98; CLC, 82-84, 96, 172, 217; S & S, 22, 73-74, 240, 406-22; 370; S of S, vii; SRFM, 176, 264, 334.

<sup>8</sup>"Morality and the Perfect Life," 170-71; NE, 69, 129-31, 143-47, 243; SRFM, 202-203; "Physical and Moral Maladies," Liberator, (22 July 1859), 116; "Swedenborg as a Theologian," Massachusetts Quarterly Review, I (June 1848), 299; "Spiritual Creation," 346-50, 355-59.

<sup>9</sup>"Swedenborg as a Theologian," 300; "The Scientific Accord of Natural and Revealed Religion," in L & M, 274; CLC, 149-50; CCNE, 50-51; NE, 103; S & S, 18-19, 49, 58-64, 77, 83-84, 442, 482; S of S, 41; SRFM, 5-6, 27-28.

<sup>10</sup>CCNE, 71; CLC, 81-82; "Dr. Bushnell Himself a Naturalist," New-York Daily Tribune, (11 March 1859), 3; S & S, 51, 63, 469; S of S, 32; SRFM, 69.

<sup>11</sup>CLC, 223; NE, 69, 77; S & S, 58-61, Ch. 4, 130, 408-20; S of S, 113, 166-67; 182-83; "Proprium," New Church Independent and Monthly Review, XVIII (Dec. 1870), 281; SRFM, 76, 170-73, 190.

<sup>12</sup>CCNE, 98; S & S, 19, 230.

<sup>13</sup>Quote is in S & S, 239. See also "Christianity," in L & M, 438; CCNE, 113; S & S, 238.

<sup>14</sup>"Morality and the Perfect Life," 135; "Property as Symbol," 70, 72; "The Old and New Theology: 1," 146, 179-182; "The Old and New Theology: 2," 197, 217, 232; "The Scientific Accord of Natural and Revealed Religion," 307; "The Laws of Creation," in L & M, 317; CCNE, 83, 147; CLC, 2, 5-6, 163n, 197-98; SRFM, 113, 136-37, 185; "Spiritual Creation," in LRLHJ, 360; S & S, 35, 173; "Socialism and Civilization in Relation to the Development of the Individual Life," in M & C, 71-72; NE, 58, 234-35; S of S, 78, 176.

<sup>15</sup>"Morality and the Perfect Life," 140-42; "The Scientific Accord of Natural and Revealed Religion," 287, 297; CCNE, 147-48; S & S, 158; "Spiritual Creation," in LRLHJ, 399-400.

<sup>16</sup>"Redemption, Natural not Personal," New Church Independent and Monthly Review, XXIX (June 1881), 269; "Morality and the Perfect Life," 135; CCNE, 83; CLC, 6-7, 16.

<sup>17</sup>"Spiritual Creation," in LRLHJ, 364-67; SRFM, 57, 95, 255-56; "Immortal Life," 134-37; CLC, 19-21; S & S, 100, 221.

<sup>18</sup>CLC, 100-101, S & S, 3; NE, 3-4, 93-98, 133-34, 143, 180, 212, 215, 222-24, 233, 247-48, 268-69, 300-



303; S of S, 160; Review of Horace Bushnell's The Vicarious Sacrifice, grounded in principles of Universal Obligation, North American Review, CII (April 1866), 568.

<sup>19</sup> CCNE, 60-61, 72; S & S, 55, 73-74; S of S, 48, 114-16, 122, 132-33; SRFM, 19, 266-67, 328; "Letter from Henry James on Creation and True Marriage," New Church Independent and Monthly Review, XXVIII (March 1880), 114.

<sup>20</sup> Ellwood, Alternative Altars, 87; SRFM, 5-6, 362; S & S, 146, 511, 527-30; CLC, 13, 104, 228.

<sup>21</sup> WCTS?, 22-23; CCNE, 61-63; CLC, 134, 174-75; S & S, 258, 262, 461; S of S, 54; SRFM, 19.

<sup>22</sup> "The Old and New Theology: 1," 142-44, 147, 167; TNT, 13-16, 21; CCNE, 28, 33-37, 126; NE, 17; "Swedenborg as a Theologian," 295; CLC, iii; S of S, 209-210; SRFM, 185, 309-310, 381; "Spiritual Creation," in LRLHJ, 377; "Ecclesiasticism--Mr. James' Rejoinder," New Church Repository and Monthly Review, VII (June 1854), 262.

<sup>23</sup> "The Old and New Theology: 1," 146-47, 157; "The Old and New Theology: 2," 199, 225-26; "The Scientific Accord of Natural and Revealed Religion," 305-306, 308; S & S, 242; S of S, v; SRFM, 86n.

<sup>24</sup> "The Old and New Theology: 1," 145; CCNE, 143-44; 147-48; NE, 165, 215; S & S, 213; SRFM, 195, 208, 383; S of S, 209-210.

<sup>25</sup> Quote is in CCNE, 13. See also ibid., 10-11, 21-22, 121-22; TNT, 18, 24; "Is Human Nature Positively Evil?" Harbinger, VII (30 Sept. 1848), 173; "The Old and New Theology: 1," 163-66; "Swedenborg as a Theologian," 297; NE, 37; S of S, 83, 95, 175-76. In TNT, 18, James argued that a true "christian" may never have heard of Jesus which has led some scholars to wonder if James himself was Christian. James always argued that Christianity was the only true religion and he always considered himself a practitioner of it. This debate, I believe, centers around a semantic dispute, with James meaning that any person could practice the charity and selflessness inherent in the golden rule

and thus be "christian," no matter his religious background or knowledge. Yet he still believed that as far as the world's religions were concerned that only Christianity established and conveyed those spiritual truths in which he believed. See also, Young, Philosophy of Henry James, Sr., 318-19.

<sup>26</sup>"Morality and the Perfect Life," 142; "The Old and New Theology: 1," 171; CCNE, 48-49; NE, 152, 231-33, 238; S & S, 128, 188-97.

<sup>27</sup>Quote is in S & S, 443. See also "Socialism and Civilization," 76, 78-79; CCNE, 67; S of S, 81, 133-35; "William Blake's Poems," Spirit of the Age, I (25 Aug. 1849), 113; CLC, 236-37; S & S, 11, 154, 170, 256; L, M, & D, 85; "The Old and New Religion," Radical, I (Nov. 1865), 100; Review of Swedenborg's Posthumous Philosophical Tracts; No. 1; J.E. Le Boys Des Guays' Letters to a Man of the World; New Jerusalem Magazine, June 1848; New Church Repository, for July, Harbinger, VII (8 July 1848), 79; "The Old and New Theology: 1," 151.

<sup>28</sup>NE, 118-19; CLC, 24; S & S, 4, 115-16, 391; S of S, 72-73, 108; "Practical Morality and Association," Harbinger, VII (29 July 1848), 101; "Socialism and Civilization," 44, 74; "Morality and the Perfect Life," 111-13, 150, 160-180; "Man," 349.

<sup>29</sup>"Morality and the Perfect Life," 182-84.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., 165-71; WCTS?, 30; "A Very Long Letter," in L & M, 388.

<sup>31</sup>"Morality and the Perfect Life," 109-110; "New York Observer and James," New-York Daily Tribune (16 Nov. 1852), 5; "The Woman Thou Gavest Me," Atlantic, XXV (March 1870), 363-64.

<sup>32</sup>L in the P, vi; "Morality and the Perfect Life," 110; "The Marriage Question," New-York Daily Tribune (18 Sept. 1852), 6.

<sup>33</sup>"Woman and the Woman's Movement," Putnam's Monthly Magazine, I (March 1853), 279, 281-85, 288; "Goethe and his Morality," New-York Daily Tribune (15 Jan. 1856), 6; CLC, 120-24, 256-58; S & S, 147, 210-11, 425-29; "The Woman Thou Gavest Me," 67-68, 72; "Representative Characters of the Sexes," New Church Independent and Monthly Review, XXIX (April 1881), 164; "Whom do MAN and WOMAN IN NATURE

Represent?" New Church Independent and Monthly Review, XXIX (May 1881), 223; S of S, 45; "Spiritual Creation," in LRLHJ, 259, 247-57.

<sup>34</sup> S & S, 519.

<sup>35</sup> WCTS?, 7, 14, 15; "Socialism and Civilization," 80-81; "Property as Symbol," 87; "Physical and Moral Maladies," 116; SSI, 255; Review of the Cincinnati Superior Court Decision, "The Bible in the Public Schools," and Rufus W. Clarke's The Question of the Hour, Atlantic, XXV (May 1870), 638.

<sup>36</sup> SSI, reprinted in Joseph L. Blau, American Philosophic Addresses, 1700-1900 (New York: Columbia, 1946), 234-56. See pp. 238-43.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 243-50; "Democracy and its Issues," in L & M, 1-4, 8, 11-12, 44; CCNE, 35, 87-93; "Society and the Church in England," New-York Daily Tribune, (26 Dec. 1855), 6; NE, 346-47; CIC, 208-209; S & S, 211; SRFM, 306; "Immortal Life," 176. James also disparaged conservatism for placing institutions in a superior position to men. See "Spiritual Creation," 199-206; "Socialism and Civilization," 41. His belief in a society which is cohesive because of its reliance upon individual cooperation fits into similar beliefs of many other nineteenth-century reformers who have been labeled and discussed as radical abolitionists. See Lewis Perry, Radical Abolitionism: Anarchy and the Government of God in Antislavery Thought (Ithaca: Cornell, 1973).

<sup>38</sup> SSI, 251-54.

<sup>39</sup> "The Principle of Universality in Art," in L & M, 111-13, 117, 120-21, 126-27, 131; "A Scientific Statement of the Christian Doctrine of the Lord, or Divine Man," 57, 62-66; "Human Freedom--No. 2," Harbinger, VII (26 Aug. 1848), 134; "Swedenborg as a Theologian," 302-323, 306; "Socialism and Civilization," 59; "Morality and the Perfect Life," 120; S & S, 13; S of S, 237-38.

<sup>40</sup> "A Scientific Statement of the Christian Doctrine of the Lord, or Divine Man," 62.

<sup>41</sup> James insisted that an individual's own free will must continue to be exerted, even if he chose not to accept spiritual life. For this reason, James not only condoned the existence of unredeemed individuals like the Universalists, who believed in everyone's

salvation. See SRFM, 5-6.

<sup>42</sup>448-49.

<sup>43</sup>Alternative Altars, 30-35.

## CHAPTER IV

### FATHER'S IDEAS

#### I

From his first ecstatic months of parenthood, when he proudly escorted the visiting Ralph Waldo Emerson to observe his infant son William, until the time, twenty years later, when he moved from Newport to Boston to be as near as possible to his four grown sons, Henry James, Sr. demonstrated an intense affection for, and an extraordinarily persistent longing to be close to, his beloved family. James viewed the family, philosophically, as the cornerstone of society, man's most important relationship next to marriage, which preceded it. And just as in the case of marriage, James believed the family could develop into a cohesive unit only through mutual affection and spiritual compatibility, never through societal coercion. But his ideas concerning the family, like other aspects of his thought, were greatly influenced by his own powerful emotional needs. James' vigorous attachment to his loved ones was one of his many characteristics which his family found highly amusing. He was especially renowned for his homesickness, which frequently caused

him to interrupt trips and unexpectedly return, with ill-concealed delight, to the warm bosom of his adoring family. Once, when he managed to stay away long enough to receive letters, one of his sons began a letter by addressing "the same old good for-nothing home-sick papa as ever," teasing him, yet showing the entire family's affection and bemusement.<sup>1</sup>

Particular members of the family have been and continue to be the subjects of much scrutiny. But no individual in the James family can be properly understood when isolated from their familial environment. The novelist Henry James, in his last completed work, the second volume of his autobiography, recalled the children's reaction to their imposing father:

. . . 'Father's Ideas' . . . pervaded and supported his existence, and very considerably our own; but what comes back to me . . . is the fact that though we thus easily and naturally lived with them and . . . breathed them in and enjoyed both their quickening and their embarrassing presence, . . . we were left as free and unattacked by them as if they had been so many droppings of gold and silver coin on tables or chimney-pieces, to be 'taken' or not according to our sense and delicacy, that is our felt need and felt honour.<sup>2</sup>

Henry's memory of his father's house evokes both the pervasive influence and persistent resistance the children harbored toward their father's intellectual system. Henry James, Sr.'s forceful personality and incisive wit penetrated, both individually and collectively, his family's consciousness. The relationship

between James and his five children, however, was a symbiotic one which influenced all six individuals and especially the manner in which the three most famous--the two Henrys and William--have been portrayed historically. The relationship of these three American intellectual giants has been aptly described in the title of a recent study of the two Henrys--A Complex Inheritance.<sup>3</sup> Not only did Henry James, Sr. provide an environment conducive to the intellectual growth of his two most talented sons, but those two have depicted their father so vividly that they should rightfully be considered his initial biographers, and praised or condemned for the enduring role that they have assigned him in the pantheon of American intellectual history.

## II

James' family acted toward one another as he probably believed that a redeemed family would, with the proper mixture of affection and penetrating intellectual analysis. Ralph Waldo Emerson's son, Edward, recalled the friendly verbal sparring of the family when he visited the Jameses' home with the two youngest boys, his companions at Sanborn's school. "'The adipose and affectionate Wilkie,' as his father called him, would say something and be instantly

corrected or disputed by the little cock-sparrow Bob, the youngest [sic], but goodnatureedly defend his statement, and then Henry (Junior) would emerge from his silence in defence of Wilkie. Then Bob would be more impertinently insistent, and Mr. James would advance as Moderator, and William, the eldest, join in." The entire family, young Emerson observed, engaged in the conversation, except the women--an ominous sign for the witty, but intellectually neglected Alice James. The discussion continued more heatedly: "The voice of the Moderator presently would be drowned by the combatants and he soon came down vigorously into the arena, and when, in the excited argument, the dinner knives might not be absent from eagerly gesticulating hands, dear Mrs. James, more conventional, but bright as well as motherly, would look at me, laughingly reassuring, saying, 'Don't be disturbed, Edward; they won't stab each other. This is usual when the boys come home.'"<sup>4</sup>

This dinner table confrontation suggests the competitiveness of the James household and the children's agitated endeavor to outmaneuver and outwit one another before the intellectual master of the family, their father. The conversation also indicates the extraordinary indulgence the family harbored toward one another since they were able both to give and



to accept the continual barbs, while remaining affectionate and loving. Indeed the family was constrained to remain loyal because they frequently had no one else to take comfort in. One of the most striking ironies of the James family circle was that although they were intensely social, they were very often socially isolated. Despite trips to the theater, the opera, painting exhibitions, and wondrous days at P. T. Barnum's Great American Museum, the James children were socially bereft. Constantly moving between America and Europe and between various cities on both continents, never staying for long at any of the numerous schools they attended, they had little opportunity to become closely acquainted with anyone else. Lacking time to develop friendships, the James children cherished each other's companionship. Between their father's intense passion for their intellectual and social well-being, and both their mother's and their maternal aunt's concern for their domestic affairs, the children were smothered into each other, with profound consequences for their relationships with each other and with their dominant father.

The religious vision of Henry James, Sr. was as mysterious to his family as it was to many of his readers. Yet though they did not understand their father's theological pursuits, they evinced a typical

pride and affection for him. The James children believed that Henry James, Sr. was the most provocative man they had ever known, overshadowing such brilliant friends as Ralph Waldo Emerson, William Dean Howells, and the two Oliver Wendell Holmeses from their youth, and such imposing figures as Sigmund Freud, Ivan Turgenev, Charles Saunders Peirce, and George Eliot, from their adult years. Such distinguished company never impressed them more than the beloved "pater" of their youth. Yet despite their reverence for him, they were all too aware of his many foibles and eccentricities, particularly his disdain for respectable societal institutions.<sup>5</sup>

In a light-hearted vein, Alice James remembered her father perennially spoiling the children's Christmases when a week or so before the special day, he would wait until Mary was away, then lead the children to the closet where their gifts had been carefully hidden and joyfully unwrap and display them. But the eventual absence of surprises on Christmas Day was less disturbing than some other characteristics of their father.<sup>6</sup>

Henry James, Sr.'s refusal to be pinned down to a specific occupation was especially galling. Young Henry repeatedly asked his father to pass on "some presentable account of him that would prove us

respectable," would that is, enable the children to convince their acquaintances that their father worked. But the senior James, who listed no occupation in the New York Directory until 1855 when he declared himself a writer, would only reply: "Say I'm a philosopher, say I'm a seeker for truth, say I'm a lover of my kind, say I'm an author of books if you like; or, best of all, just say I'm a Student." This answer hardly provided the young Jameses with the kind of respectability they desired, particularly when up against some lad who could proudly point to his father as a stevedore, which the young Henry remembered as a fine-sounding occupation though he had no inkling of its meaning.<sup>7</sup>

The elder James was just as obscure when queried about the family's religious practices. The novelist remembered that "It was colder than any criticism, I recall, to hear our father reply that we could plead nothing less than the whole of Christendom, and that there was no communion, even that of the Catholics, even that of the Jews, even that of the Swedenborgians, from which we need find ourselves excluded."<sup>8</sup>

The children's embarrassment over their family's irregularities was one reason why they were forced to maintain an enormous pride in themselves--which they manifested in various ways. The elder James, for example, was so confident of young Henry's genius

that he saved his son's early letters for the novelist's future use. The Jameses also assembled to hear and criticize a family member's literary endeavors, and in the case of the young novelist away in Europe, they brazenly edited one of his stories prior to publication.<sup>9</sup>

The closeness of the James family and their impressive intellectual outpouring necessitates a closer examination of their work in the context of the family than has hitherto been attempted. And any analysis of Henry James, Sr.'s legacy to his children must begin with the formidable William and Henry.

### III

Born only eighteen months apart, William and Henry James were destined to be companions in childhood and intellectual peers as adults, despite their differing disciplines and their never-ending difficulty understanding each other's work. But even as children they displayed vastly disparate personalities. William was fun-loving, spontaneous, and possessed of a fluid wit, while Henry was somber, slow to show humor, and preoccupied with fiction.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, the closeness in age and their apparent intellectual compatibility led their parents to perceive their educational needs similarly. Had they been more unlike, though, Henry

James, Sr. would probably have chosen the same peripatetic and miscellaneous educational path for his children that he prescribed. As the eldest and seemingly most gifted children, William and Henry received the full brunt of their father's incoherent, if innovative, educational theories.

Henry James, Sr. remembered the harsh constrictions of his own education, and he wished to expose his boys to all manner of impressions and educational diversity. His great fear was that his children's schooling would prove too narrow, limiting their spiritual vision. Henry James, Sr. wanted his children to be well-rounded so that they would be socially useful. He paid little attention, however, to any practical application of his children's studies, displaying a typical, but to the rest of the family unsettling, apathy toward the prospect of making a living.<sup>11</sup>

James believed that a true education (the title of one of his unpublished manuscripts) would consist of mastering those intangible qualities that would enable a person to be "good," that is, to fit within society as a "social" or "useful" entity. A proper education's emphasis on personal freedom, love as exemplified in the golden rule, and spontaneity, combined with an appreciation of the importance of society would imperceptibly blend an individual's personal

and social desires and lead to harmony with the great design of Providence--a redeemed society. Without knowledge of Henry James, Sr.'s teleology his educational theories appear surprisingly modern. But like all his other ideas, his educational views were molded by his religious beliefs, and an understanding of his theology and its social ramifications renders his educational concepts easily comprehensible: "The thoroughly educated man is not he who merely knows the most, but he who is able to do the most in his proper sphere of action."<sup>12</sup> Although James' theories may have gained later prominence, albeit for different reasons than he himself would have anticipated, his notions of education were not always approved by his own children.<sup>13</sup>

The lengthy list of educational institutions and mentors to which William and Henry were exposed is astonishing, even considering their father's volatility.<sup>14</sup> They rarely attended any institution longer than a year and were removed from many schools before even that short time had expired. Henry James, Sr. was perfectly indifferent to academic calendars when he arranged his travels, and his sons were frequently enrolled late and removed from their schools before the term had ended. The elder James, moreover, sometimes pulled his boys from some school because he longed

to be near them, to observe first-hand their educational and emotional progress. Both William and Henry realized that their haphazard education might be detrimental to choosing careers; and they both struggled to persuade their family to allow them to pursue a more systematic apprenticeship.

William, whose vocational uncertainties led to a personal crisis similar to that experienced by his father, soon demonstrated that he was the most intellectually agile of the children and he therefore became the focus of his father's educational experiments. While young Henry immersed himself in novels and literary magazines, William was fascinated with science, a subject which Henry James, Sr. lamented that he had never known well enough. William's father clearly wanted the boy to pursue science, and he delighted in William's excitement with scientific instruments. When he was fifteen, William's Christmas surprise may, as usual, have been spoiled, but he was still thrilled with his new microscope. The entire family had already learned to be wary about settling into a chair and triggering some mild electric device that William enjoyed leaving in strategic places. But William's interest in drawing and painting rivaled his interest in science, and after his family's initial sojourn in Newport, where William met the artist William Morris

Hunt and his apprentice John LaFarge, he longed to study art. Although Henry James, Sr. staged a final European trip to divert William from painting, he probably was as influential in stimulating William's fascination with painting as he was in discouraging it.<sup>15</sup>

Unlike the other James children, William, early in his life, struggled to understand his father's philosophy, and Henry James, Sr.'s vision of "the artist" as representative of divine man may have unduly influenced William--who seems to have read it as a plea for more artists. He therefore had difficulty understanding why his father wished to dissuade him from becoming an artist. But Henry James, Sr. feared that William's too early entrance into the profession of painting would be spiritually inhibiting. He also believed that the superficial, bohemian, and quasi-intellectual life that an artist often led was unlikely to hold enduring spiritual satisfaction. William, however, like his father, was not easily distracted from his impulses, and he argued that painting was indeed spiritually rewarding, and that despite his enjoyment of scientific studies, he still wished to try art. Their dialogue continued for a year while the family remained in Europe until the elder James, homesick for Newport and weary of twenty years of



traveling, agreed to return to America and permit William to begin instruction with William Morris Hunt.<sup>16</sup>

Although William James enjoyed his apprenticeship in Hunt's studio and showed some talent, after a year he mysteriously abandoned an artistic career. He may have stopped because of his increasing visual problems, or he may have decided that he simply did not possess great talent. Whatever the reason, however, he returned to science, much to his father's satisfaction. At the beginning of the 1861 academic year William James began his half-century association with Harvard University by enrolling in the Lawrence Scientific School under the direction of Charles W. Eliot in chemistry. James continued his study with Eliot for two years, despite chronic interruptions due to poor health. At the end of this period, he more seriously considered vocational options and commenced medical studies. He temporarily discontinued this course, however, in the spring of 1865, and joined Louis Agassiz' excursion to Brazil to collect specimens for the new Agassiz Museum. Following a tempestuous and not entirely satisfying nine months with the expedition, William once more returned home to continue his previous study. He received his medical degree in 1869, after an informal examination in which the old family friend, Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes, quizzed him not about his learning, but about

the health of his family. James recognized that his ill-conceived instruction and ludicrous exam had not prepared him to be a conscientious physician and he still despaired of a vocational choice. He pursued further independent study, spent some months in Europe seeking to restore his precarious health, and underwent a traumatic nervous collapse before being offered, in 1873, an instructorship in anatomy and physiology on Harvard's scientific faculty. William's former professor, Eliot, now Harvard's President, had recommended him for the job. James began his pedagogical duties inauspiciously, taking a great deal of time off because of his continuing poor health. He contracted to write a basic textbook for the new discipline of psychology, but he worked for over a decade before the Principles of Psychology was published in 1890. Despite these problems, he was a popular and devoted teacher who impressed both his students and his colleagues. As is well known, he eventually left his instructorship in medicine for a professorship in psychology and then for one in philosophy--his ultimate vocational resting-place.<sup>17</sup>

While William James, like his father before him, engaged in a lengthy educational odyssey, young Henry spent only a few years in professional limbo before he began his intense pursuit of the only career that

that had ever appealed to him--that of a writer. When William started his apprenticeship with Hunt, Henry tagged along until he realized how much his own talent paled compared to his brother's. He then spent his days reading in Newport libraries and cementing his friendship with T. S. Perry, who would also become a prolific author. When William entered Harvard, the lonely Henry followed and enrolled in Law School. Legal studies, however, quickly lost any appeal they might have had, and he instead perused in Harvard's vast libraries. Beginning in 1869, Henry embarked upon his true professional apprenticeship--several years of European travel, which stimulated him much as it had his father three decades earlier. From a very early age, Henry had stored memories and impressions which he would later use in his writings. As an independent traveler for the first time, he met interesting people, visited numerous regions, and collected anecdotes which appeared in his work. While traveling, Henry started to publish and begin the career that would eventually lead him to be considered one of America's greatest writers.<sup>18</sup>

In the late 1860s and early 1870s, Henry James, Sr. had the satisfaction of watching both William and Henry begin their mature intellectual lives. Although his sons' paths finally diverged, their early educational

experiences, under his direction and supervision, had been unusually similar. The two brothers loved their other siblings, but for one another they possessed a reciprocal affection and esteem that resulted from long years of similar activities and from mutual intellectual respect. The great irony of their relationship was that although they were always personally congenial, shared common social concerns, and practiced similar styles of writings, neither of Henry James, Sr.'s brilliant sons could ever entirely approve of the other's work. That they had been shaped by "Father's Ideas," however, is beyond dispute.<sup>19</sup>

#### IV

Although Henry James, Sr. and his two eldest sons often expressed controversial ideas, few have doubted that each was a genius capable of incisive analyses of the human condition. Interestingly, all three were also late bloomers, unable to persuasively communicate their ideas until mid-life. Henry James, Sr., although praised for his wit and intelligence at an early age, did not finally develop his teleologic vision until his discovery of Swedenborg when he was in his mid-thirties. His eldest son, William, who of all the James children most clearly displayed an early intellectual promise, did not attain his first

professional position until he was thirty, and his long-awaited initial book did not appear until 1890 when he was nearing fifty. Henry James, the novelist, although certain from an early age that he wanted to write, and actively practicing his art since early adulthood, did not achieve his first masterpiece until 1880 when he was almost forty. Although many great men do not discover, let alone develop, their talent until late in life, the careers of the three Jameses indicate more than a gradual intellectual evolution--they also expose some characteristics of the family's obsession with the value of work.

Henry James, Sr., who had discussed the detrimental effects of undesired occupations early in his career, discouraged all his children from specializing while they were young. He also believed that no man, especially one possessed of great ability like his two eldest sons, should be swayed by considerations of earning a living, but that he should instead search diligently for a spiritually rewarding vocation. This attitude helps to explain why William James, a highly-reputed teacher and writer, was dissatisfied with his career until he became recognized as a philosopher, both in practice and by designation. But at the same time that the senior James discouraged his children's desires to carve special vocational niches and urged

them not to let the prospect of financial rewards influence their career choices, both he and Mary James imparted a constant concern about their family's expenditures. Mary James especially worried about her children's chances of finding remunerative positions, a feeling which challenged the very ideals about work taught by her husband.<sup>20</sup>

The considerable value that the James parents, consciously and subconsciously, placed on the importance of money, combined with Henry James, Sr.'s emphasis on the spiritual importance of work, contributed to making the idea of labor an important aspect of the Jameses' familial politics. Although Henry James, Sr. was a tireless writer, and his two eldest sons energetic in pursuit of their goals, the entire family believed that too much work was unhealthy.<sup>21</sup> This idea resulted from the doctors' attribution of Henry James, Sr.'s breakdown to overwork, and from the fragile physical condition of each of the James children--which included the nervous collapses of both William and the younger Henry.

William James' nervous breakdown, which was in many ways remarkably similar to his father's experience, is particularly instructive. Both father and son suffered from a sense of inadequacy and a belief that a distinct foreign presence was responsible for their enervation, and both experienced their collapses

during vocational crises. Henry James, Sr.'s distress occurred while he agonized over both his spiritual progress and his financial condition. William was also burdened with those same concerns: almost thirty, with a degree in medicine, he had yet to earn an income, an inadequacy of which he was acutely aware since his two youngest brothers had been working for close to a decade. And William James also despaired of his spiritual progress. His nervous collapse, in this context, reveals much about the James family's concept of work. Labor was a double-edged sword, which with proper diligence and spiritual contentment could be extremely beneficial, but which if pursued too industriously or if spiritually unsatisfying, could only be harmful. The quandary may also have affected the young Henry, who when he was almost twenty, suffered from a "vast visitation"--a mysterious and still unexplained physical ailment. Like his father and brother, Henry overcame his mysterious problems only upon discovering vocational identity.<sup>22</sup>

Unlike their eldest brothers, Wilky, Bob, and Alice James never experienced a single traumatic nervous collapse. But instead of benefitting by missing this experience, the three youngest James children may have spent much of their adult lives in psychological torment, partly because they failed to undergo

one enormous crisis.

V

The lives of Garth Wilkinson and Robertson Walsh James seemed for many years as closely parallel as did those of their two more illustrious brothers. But the two younger sons appeared consciously disconcerted by the realization that their experiences, both as children and as adults, were somehow less worthy than the achievements of William and Henry.<sup>23</sup> The elder Jameses were not intentionally malicious, of course, merely neglectful. Wilky and Bob were dragged along in the wake of the opportunities offered to their brothers. To make matters worse, the obvious brilliance of William and Henry threw Wilky and Bob into the shadows, where they had little chance to prove their talents, intellectually or otherwise. Their frustration probably propelled both to abandon Sanborn's innovative school and enlist in the Union Army, an act which briefly forced them to the center of their family's attention. Following the War, the boys continued to be admired by the family because of their effort to establish a plantation of freedmen in Reconstruction Florida. But when this venture failed and the boys moved West to pursue railroad careers, they became an even less visible part of the family's interests.



Both were tragic figures.

Only Wilky, of all the James children, was completely uninterested in intellectual endeavors, and only he could claim valid and obvious physiological causes for his numerous ailments. Although he returned to his unit before the end of the Civil War, Wilky never fully recovered from the severity of his wounds. His entire adult life was filled with minor aches and serious illnesses attributable to his war experiences. Unlike his similarly wounded nation, he slowly sunk into invalidism, but like the post-Civil War United States, he was primarily consumed by economic endeavors. Lacking the business acumen of many of his countrymen, Wilky accumulated a debt so enormous that even his wealthy father could not liquidate it and he was compelled to declare bankruptcy, and live out the rest of his life as a debtor.<sup>24</sup>

Throughout Wilky's miserable adulthood, he remained congenial, primarily due to the solace afforded him by his own family. Wilky's wife, Carrie, like Mary James, bolstered her husband's self-esteem and helped him maintain a fairly stable emotional temper. Unfortunately, their life together was destined to be short-lived. Wilky, who in a sense, substituted his traumatic Civil War experiences for his family's traditional nervous breakdowns, never recovered from those wounds. He died

at thirty-eight, in November 1883, less than a year after the death of his father, from the combined ravages of rheumatism and heart disease.<sup>25</sup>

Unlike his closest brother, Robertson James lived a long, but extremely unfulfilling life. Though healthy and wealthy, he was plagued by personal and psychological problems. Successful in his railroad endeavors, he seemed to contract a good marriage with Mary Holton. The James family was unimpressed with Mary whom they likened to an uninteresting, but comfortable, pet, but they came to have an enormous respect for her patience with the undependable Bob. The beneficiary of money from his wife's family as well as his own, Bob was neither compelled to earn his living nor able to discover a meaningful vocation. Like Wilky, Bob never underwent a significant nervous collapse, but he was fated to suffer through a lifetime of psychological neuroses. Sometime in the 1870s he became very unhappy with his work, his spiritual state, and his family. He became a heavy drinker and womanizer while desperately seeking his own place in life. When his mother died in 1882 he returned East and held long and intense conversations with his father. Back in Wisconsin he began to read the works of the elder Henry James and Swedenborg, both of whom he seemed to find comforting. But after his father died in late

1882, Bob abandoned his family and returned permanently to the East. His sullen and resentful personality made his brother William extremely uncomfortable. In one letter, William wrote to Henry that the only honorable thing for Bob to do would be to commit suicide but that he lacked the courage to follow such a course. Later William wrote that Bob's presence was so upsetting that he could only deal with him through an intermediary. Although this was only temporary, it vividly demonstrates the inability of the rest of the family to handle Bob.

Bob continued to read Henry James, Sr. and Swedenborg, and claimed to feel his father's spiritual presence. He became so involved in his father's philosophy that he conducted sessions in which he read Swedenborg to some ladies in Concord, where he resided. He dabbled in painting and poetry, with his brother Henry praising his latter efforts, but he lacked the direction or motivation to pursue conscientiously either art. His final years were filled with emotional wanderings, such as a temporary conversion to Catholicism, which failed to provide contentment. Distant from his family and resentful of the successes of William and Henry, Robertson James died a broken and unfulfilled talent, on July 7, 1910, only a few months before the death of his eldest brother William.<sup>26</sup>

Better known to American historians than her two brothers, Wilky and Bob, but popularly unheralded was Alice James, who, although beloved and appreciated in her own immediate environment, was perhaps the most tragic figure in the James family.<sup>27</sup> Her life was filled with adversity, and she acquired few friends beyond the family circle. Although she lived into her early forties, she seems never to have attracted male companions or to have been able to tolerate more than one or two close female friends. But she has left her mark on our understanding of the James family with an incisive diary which helped sustain her during her final three years.

Born in 1847, Alice, like Wilky and Bob, was swept along the educational paths designed for William and Henry. Until early adolescence she experienced a succession of governesses and tutors which she usually shared with whichever brother was temporarily indisposed. Not until her family's final settlement in Newport in the early 1860s did she briefly attend a conventional school. Like all her brothers, she suffered from childhood illnesses, but unlike them, she, as a young teenager, began to exhibit neurasthenic symptoms that never dissipated. From the age of fourteen or fifteen, she would faint when overexcited. She vainly battled her illnesses with numerous "cures,"

including massages, ice and electric therapy, "blistering" baths, sojourns in sanatoriums, and forays in correspondence teaching and charitable work.<sup>28</sup> Perhaps the most fulfilling moment of Alice James' life was the six months she spent in the early 1870s traveling throughout Europe--with Aunt Kate and her brother Henry. But once back home, seemingly reinvigorated, she declined again. This may have been due, in large part, to the demands of her father, who seemed to view Alice as the only one of his five children on whom he could depend to remain near him, and to bolster his own often shaky spirits, as well as to stimulate him intellectually. She usually remained close to home during the following decade, and when her mother died, Alice, though often unwell, devoted herself to her father's care.<sup>29</sup> When he died in December, 1882, Alice was left with no one to care for and she became increasingly dependent on Katharine Loring, whom she had met in the mid-1870s. Two years later, Alice sailed with Katharine for a vacation in Europe which quickly turned into a permanent English stay. Overseas, she received emotional support and physical care from both her brother Henry and Katharine, who remained with Alice, more or less permanently, until the latter's death in 1892.<sup>30</sup>

During the final three years of her life she wrote her diary, which included the gossip passed on

and enlivened by her brother Henry, and often acerbic comments on her relatives and the state of society in general. The diary records Alice's joy when her physicians finally discovered genuine physical problems to substantiate her chronic complaints. She had developed breast cancer and with this diagnosis she anticipated a conclusion to her unsatisfactory life. She had previously complained that she could neither die nor live a healthy life, and assailed the general helplessness of the medical profession--a sentiment which her brother William seconded. The diagnosis of cancer happily provided her with a sound reason for her physical distress and provided order, with her imminent death, for a life previously inexplicable and chaotic. When Alice finally passed away, Katharine Loring printed four copies of the diary to be distributed among Alice's living brothers along with one for herself. At Alice's instigation, Katharine intended, with the brothers' approval, to publish it. Although William James marveled at his sister's perspicacity and recommended the diary's publication, Henry was aghast at Alice's indiscretion in reproducing actual names that he had passed to her in gossip. He was so fearful of the diary being discovered that he successfully entreated Katharine not to distribute the final copy to the irresponsible Robertson and destroyed his own copy.<sup>31</sup>

Like Robertson James, her closest brother in age, Alice lived a tragic life because of its unexploited talent. But Alice James symbolized more than simple unrecognized genius--she represents an aspect both of the the Jameses' familial concerns and the general suppression of nineteenth-century women. Although Alice was probably as intelligent and perceptive as her two eldest brothers, she, like Wilky and Bob, was all too easy to neglect in the shadow of William and Henry. No doubt the family expected that she would eventually find some suitable man with whom she could share domestic happiness. But rather than developing into the stereotypical nineteenth-century young lady whose greatest objective was snaring a male, Alice made her intellectual assets into weapons that could be used in combination with the family's obsession with invalidism. As part of a family in which sickness played so vital a role, Alice's often vicious temperament and excessive illnesses may have been, at least partially, an attempt to acquire attention and status within a highly competitive, male-oriented household. One episode illustrates both her great determination and her ability to use her illnesses to her own benefit. While in the throes of one of her extended sicknesses, Alice demanded the constant presence of her father. In one conversation she asked him why she should not take her own life and

immediately end her misery--Alice enjoyed rebellion and had seriously contemplated suicide. But Henry James, Sr. sagaciously informed her that it was his opinion that if she were unaffected by mind-altering drugs or suffering some kind of derangement, then she should feel free to employ her own body as she deemed fit, including even its destruction, although in a gentle manner so as not to unduly upset anyone. Alice concluded from this advice that she was physically independent and she decided, then and there, never to take her own life, but to let fate play its course.<sup>32</sup> And in remaining alive she continued to possess, to some degree, those who loved and cared for her. The story also illustrates how Henry James, Sr. frequently persuaded his children to pursue actions which he approved, while still granting them complete freedom of action.

Alice James, who was fiercely independent and intellectually astute, evokes the trauma expressed by many women who struggled to break from the mold of standard Victorian womanhood. Her transformation of her best characteristics--wit, intelligence, and honesty--into ones that could be more easily accepted from an invalid, began in childhood, and as she was reinforced, they became permanent fixtures of her character in adolescence and early adulthood. As a symbol of both some of the least admirable characteristics



of the James family and of nineteenth-century attitudes toward women, Alice James is not only a tragic figure in the context of her most intimate surroundings--she is also representative of an American tragedy from which women are still trying to recover.

## VI

Both William and Henry James managed to incorporate their father's ideas into their own lives and work in constructive and permanent ways. The symbiotic relationship between Henry James, Sr. and his two eldest sons encompasses not only the enormous influence of the father on the personal and philosophical lives of William and Henry, but also the enormous influence that the sons' descriptions of their father (at times misleading) have had on the reputation of Henry James, Sr.

Of all the James children, William was probably the most dependent on his father, both personally and philosophically. William began to read his father's writings when he was a young man and desperately attempted to understand his iconoclastic philosophy. At twenty-five, William corresponded with his father about those doctrines which eluded him. But while William remained mystified by his father's teleology he was certain that trying to understand it was an eminently worthwhile objective.

William also benefitted from his father in other ways. Henry James, Sr. was responsible for bringing to his attention two of the most important people in his son's life. On one fortuitous day in 1876, the senior James returned home from a meeting of Boston's Radical Club and announced that he had been introduced to the lady that William would one day wed. Naturally curious, William eagerly attended the next Radical Club gathering, where he did indeed meet his future spouse. Alice Howe Gibbens, intelligent, emotionally secure, and just as cosmopolitan as William, would become the most stabilizing influence on her emotionally unsettled husband. She thereby served in William's life, the same function that Mary James served in the life of William's father, and the marriage was to be as happy as that of the father.<sup>33</sup>

Another friendship initiated by the elder James was with Josiah Royce, whom William encountered at his father's house, a year after his introduction to Alice. Although Royce and William were not in total intellectual accord, they established a close, permanent friendship which inspired the exchange of many ideas, a relentless and intense dialogue which lasted for a third of a century. William was so impressed with Royce that he convinced Harvard to add him to the Philosophy Department.<sup>34</sup> These chance encounters, in which the

father initially looms as the main attraction, indicate that while the senior James lived his eldest son remained overshadowed--a relationship that many twentieth-century Americans would probably not suspect.

When William James edited his father's literary remains he asserted that he was puzzled by many of the elder James' notions.<sup>35</sup> In spite of this declaration, however, many of Henry James, Sr.'s most fundamental and important concerns are evident in the work of his eldest child. Perhaps the most obvious similarity is the interest that both Jameses expressed in mystical phenomena. Although Henry James, Sr. berated contemporaneous theosophy, he based his religious vision on a belief in the existence of a spiritual world which corresponded to the natural. Even though William could not completely accept his father's religious vision, he refused to discount mystical phenomena and urged that psychic experiences be scientifically verified or denied. To meet this objective, he became the chief instigator of the founding of the American Society for Psychical Research, modeled on an English counterpart, and encouraged scientific testing of mediums and other spiritually-oriented persons.<sup>36</sup> But Henry James, Sr.'s ideas are also apparent in William's published work. Indeed, one scholar has suggested that much of William's career entailed the defining of the

scientific facets of his father's philosophy.<sup>37</sup> William James is appropriately remembered as a wide-ranging thinker who discussed a myriad of individual and social topics--like his father. A brief exposition of four of his most memorable works ought to substantiate the contention that his father exerted a considerable impact on his philosophy.

One of William's most famous works is The Varieties of Religious Experience, in which he expanded his 1901-1902 Gifford Lectures at the University of Edinburgh. In this work, William defined several conceivable religious states, including that of the "twice-born type" who believed in a dual existence of the spiritual and the natural. This type was clearly based on his own father, whom William labeled "twice-born" in the introduction to Henry James, Sr.'s Atlantic article about Emerson. William also emphasized that an individual's institutional affiliation had little to do with his religious convictions, which were peculiarly personal sentiments concerning man and the spiritual universe--a feeling unmistakably derived from his father's statements about faith. Additional evidence, aside from the very topic itself, that William recalled his father while preparing the Varieties is his reference to his father's "vastation" as a dramatic example of one possible kind of religious experience.<sup>38</sup>

Another of William's most noted pieces, the famous essay, "The Will to Believe," also reflects one of his father's concerns. In this work, William argued that man's first act of free will could very well be his conviction of the existence of a supreme being, a belief which results not from a rational conviction, but from a conscious and unforced decision to acknowledge an entity superior to man.<sup>39</sup> This concept echoed Henry James, Sr.'s idea that one can only come to believe in man's finiteness through a process that culminates in believing that man's selfhood cannot, in view of all his limitations, be supreme. Both William and Henry James, Sr. assert that a degree of free will is an important aspect of man's religious faith, and by implication of other aspects of his existence as well.

The pervasiveness of Henry James, Sr.'s ideas in William's thought becomes more apparent in works that are not specifically concerned with religion or spiritual phenomena. One would expect to find remnants of Henry James, Sr.'s notions, after all, in writings oriented toward mystical processes, but the parent's beliefs also mark the other writings of the younger James.

William James' primary impact on American ideas resulted from his philosophy of pragmatism which was

expounded in two books: Pragmatism: A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking and The Meaning of Truth, A Sequel to "Pragmatism." William contended that the range of man's problems constantly changed and that therefore man's solutions to his problems should also constantly evolve. The pragmatist should rely on the scientific method to seek solutions to his problems and while such solutions appear viable they should be employed. But when new ideas were not credible or when they proved unworkable or harmful they should then be discarded.<sup>40</sup> William's pragmatism was founded on the idea that man's ultimate goal should be to ameliorate individual lives, presumably resulting in a better society. William's concentration on improving individual lives and the subsequent benefits of this approach pointed to Henry James, Sr.'s standard notion that as the world continually progressed man must always adjust to it and to his conviction that a redeemed society will occur only when most individuals themselves become redeemed.

Although Henry James, Sr.'s impact on the personal life of the young Henry was not as dramatic as his influence on William, it was still profound. The aging novelist's statement quoted in the opening pages of this chapter, that he and his siblings were able to ignore their father's ideas, is unconvincing. As both

a child and young adult, Henry was constantly aware of his father, if for no other reason than the identity of their names, which the son found extremely distasteful. At his father's death, Henry immediately dropped the appellation, "Junior," and he later attempted to persuade his brother William not to saddle one of his own boys with his parent's name. But Henry James, Sr. also exerted a substantial influence on his son's fiction. Several scholars have, in fact, claimed that Henry James was the only person ever to have understood his father's philosophy, and that he worked out his father's ideas in many of his novels.<sup>41</sup>

In his autobiographies, Henry demonstrated his awareness of at least one aspect of his father's philosophy when he stated that his family was taught that it was not so important to be good, that is, conventionally righteous, as to be socially responsible. Beyond this, though, Henry James' novels, such as The Ambassadors, revolve around the development of his characters' inward lives and their evolution from individuals of slight social awareness to a growing understanding of their own psychological needs and their societal roles. Although this concern with consciousness is typical of many novelists, Henry's commitment to its exploration and the impact of his writing on other American novelists renders it especially pertinent in his career.

This process of developing consciousness is clearly evoked in the personality of Lambert Strether, protagonist of The Ambassadors. Although critics disagree about how much Strether's consciousness evolves in the course of the novel and whether he is a better person by the end of the book than he was at its beginning, they concur in their appraisal that it is his developing awareness that is the focal point of the novel. And the novelist's commitment to exploring his character's consciousness reflects Henry James, Sr.'s emphasis on man constantly striving for a better understanding of himself and his world.<sup>42</sup>

Both William and Henry James, despite claims of possessing little understanding of their father's ideas, were affected by him in instrumental ways. The sons most vividly emulated their father in their total commitment to the life of the mind and their habitual sharing of their discoveries in incisive and elegant literary endeavors. Yet the portraits each son has left of his father has led to the common depiction of Henry James, Sr. as an unclear and isolated thinker. William James, both while his father lived and afterward, damned the senior James with faint praise, pronouncing him mystical and unheeded. Indeed, while William, at the relatively youthful age of twenty-five, was trying to understand his father's philosophy, he



wrote candidly: "You live in such mental isolation that I cannot help often feeling bitterly at the thought that you must see in even your own children strangers to what you consider the best part of yourself. But it is a matter in wh[ich] one's wishes are of little influence, and until something better comes, you can be sure of the fullest & heartiest respect I feel for any living person." This sentiment never changed, and William always discussed his father as a lonely metaphysician, portraying him as more isolated than he ever was, but not more distant than he actually was from his eldest son.<sup>43</sup>

In his introduction to The Literary Remains, William compounded the mistaken portrait of his father when he claimed that Henry James, Sr. was relatively unconcerned with his system's logic--which was blatantly false, though the elder James did not believe that anyone would adhere to his system because of its rationality. William also depicted his father as a man who irrevocably separated emotion from intellect and was obsessed with the former.<sup>44</sup> Although Henry James, Sr. did indeed stress the heart over the head in matters of spiritual import, he respected the sphere of rational thought, at which he was just as astute as his eldest son.

The novelist Henry James was not as precise in describing his father as was William. But his

autobiographies portray the senior Henry as a man out of tune with his times--a humorous and eccentric genius at home in the realm of spiritual affairs, but befuddled by the mundane affairs of nineteenth-century society. Though Henry James, Sr. was certainly out of his element when it came to practical concerns, he was not unaware of the social benefits or limitations of his time. One of the young Henry's most frequently quoted statements--that his family had not been guilty of a single stroke of business for two generations--should be enough to demonstrate the literary license and falsehoods of many of his autobiographical depictions.<sup>45</sup> Despite the novelist's claim that his family knew no business practices, his parents owned rental properties and invested in stocks, his brother Wilky established his own business, both the younger brothers attempted to run a plantation, and he himself successfully managed his own financial affairs. The Henry James, Sr. who was paraded through the pages of his son's autobiographies is as much an invention of the novelist's literary imagination as he was a replica of the living human being. In fact, just as Henry James, Sr. might be said to have popularized the myth that Ralph Waldo Emerson was completely unaware of the existence of evil, so too might William and Henry James be depicted as generating the common stereotypes which continue to hinder our understanding of

their father. Was Henry James, Sr., then, a pathetic and isolated genius? A proper response will emerge more profitably when he is analyzed in the context of the American experience.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>One of the boys wrote the first sentence of this letter for Alice. Alice James to HJ, 11 March 1860. See also Edel, Untried Years, 44; James, SBO, 76.

<sup>2</sup>NSB, 156.

<sup>3</sup>James G. Moseley, Jr., A Complex Inheritance: The Idea of Self-Transcendence in the Theology of Henry James, Sr., and the Novels of Henry James, (Missoula, Montana: American Academy of Religion and Scholars, 1975). Other works which specifically discuss the influence of the senior James on his children include Quentin Anderson, The American Henry James (London: John Calder, 1958); Lynda Sue Boren, "A Study of the Relationship of the Philosophical Ideas of Henry James, Senior, and William James to the Later Fiction of Henry James," (Diss. Tulane, 1979); Judith Carol Collas, "Henry James and his Father's Ideas: A Study of The American," (Diss., UCLA, 1974); Howard Marvin Feinstein, "Fathers and Sons;" Leon Edel, "Father and Sons," Henry James, Sr.: Class of '30 (Schenectady: Union, 1963). Other scholars, in addition, have discussed the family as a topic: Harold A. Larrabee, "The Jameses: Financier, Heretic, Philosopher;" Edwin Markham, "Our Most Distinguished American Family," Cosmopolitan, L (Dec. 1910), 145-46; Ralph Barton Perry, "The James Family," Saturday Review of Literature, X (16 June 1934), 749-50; Percy F. Bicknell, "Glimpses of a Gifted Family," Dial, LVI (1914), 289-91; Leon Edel, "An Amazing Family," Saturday Review of Literature, IX (12 Nov. 1932), 236; C. Hartley Grattan, Three Jameses: Matthiessen, The James Family.

<sup>4</sup>Edward Waldo Emerson, The Early Years of the Saturday Club, 1855-1870 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1918), 328.

<sup>5</sup>Henry James, Letters of William James, I, 10.

<sup>6</sup>Leon Edel, ed., The Diary of Alice James (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1965), 72.

<sup>7</sup>NSB, 69. See also Edel, Untried Years, 52.

<sup>8</sup>SBO, 246.

<sup>9</sup> Mary James to Henry James, 5 April [1870]; HJ to Henry James, 14 Jan. [1873] ; Henry James to HJ, 1 Feb. 1873.

<sup>10</sup> Allen, William James, 19; James, NSB, 4.

<sup>11</sup> James, SBO, 227, 231-32; NSB, 49-51; Matthiessen, James Family, 88; Warren, Elder Henry James, 128, 145; Edel, Untried Years, 115; Allen, William James, 42, 97.

<sup>12</sup> Quote is in "True Education," 22. See also ibid., 7-9, 14-19.

<sup>13</sup> William once complained that he had never had an education. Allen, William James, 140.

<sup>14</sup> Listing the various institutions that William and Henry attended is difficult and probably unrewarding, but a brief review of some of the places where they stayed longest provides a feeling for their educational experiences. In New York City during the early 1850s they spent a year at Maurice Vergnes' school, which was notable primarily for its abundance of homesick Cuban and Mexican immigrants and teachers who seemed constantly, though inexplicably, enraged. This experience preceded a year with Richard Puling Jenks, about whom little is known, then schooling with two teachers named Forest and Quackenbos, although whether William was a pupil of one and Henry of the other or if they ran a school together is unknown. Then, in the middle of the decade, Henry James, Sr. traveled again to Europe, ostensibly for his children's education and he enrolled them in the Geneva Institute of a German expatriate, Achilles Roediger. James highly recommended this school in two of his New-York Daily Tribune travel letters, but shortly afterwards decided to remove the boys and move with them to London where he engaged several private tutors, notably Robert Thomson, who later taught Robert Louis Stevenson. Never one to remain stationary long, James left London for Paris where he briefly enrolled his boys in a Fourierist school, the Institution Fezandie, but they were there for only a short time before the recession of the late 1850s forced the Jameses to move to Boulogne where the boys attended the unimpressive College Imperial. Then, the family headed back to Newport, where the boys enrolled in the Berkeley Institute which the curate of the city's Trinity Church managed. But they

were soon to return to Europe and attend the Geneva Academy before coming back to the United States for the final time. Such a sampling of William and Henry's education indicates their difficulty in acquiring either an organized education or long-term friends. See Edelman, Untried Years, 113-200; passim; Allen, William James, 24-62; Henry James, Sr., "From New-York to Geneva--The Schools There," New-York Daily Tribune, (3 Sept. 1855), 3; Henry James, Sr., "Sunday at Geneva--Sabbatical Observance," ibid., (8 Sept. 1855), 6; James, SBO, passim.

<sup>15</sup> HJ to Edmund Tweedy, 24 July [1860]; Allen, William James, 47-48, 54; Feinstein, "Fathers and Sons," 154; James, Letters of William James, I, 21; William James to HJ, [19 Aug. 1860]; [24] Aug. [1860].

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., William James to HJ, [19 Aug. 1860]; Allen, William James, 61-64.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., Chs. V-XVII, passim. Although William undoubtedly merited Eliot's confidence, his first teaching appointment was not without parental aid--or interference. Mary James made a point of discussing her son's readiness for the job with Eliot. See Mary James to Henry & Alice James, 26 July [1872?].

<sup>18</sup> Edelman, Untried Years, 161-62, 190-201, Book Six, passim.

<sup>19</sup> Leon Edelman, ed., Henry James Letters, Volume I, 1843-1875 (Cambridge: Harvard, 1974), xxvi; Allen, William James, 176-77.

<sup>20</sup> The family's financial concerns are vividly conveyed in letters from Mary James to her two eldest sons, and in the sons' correspondence with their parents. See esp. Henry James, to Mary James, 5 Feb. 1870. Also Henry James, to parents, 29 Sept. 1872; 4 May 1873; 27 Feb. 1874; Henry James to HJ, Nov. 1872; 26 Oct. 1873; 18 Nov. 1875; 12 Dec. 1873; 24 Oct. [1878]; Henry James to Mary James, 27 Oct. [1878]; William James to Mary James, [Dec. 1861?]; William James to HJ, 15 Dec. [1861?]; 16 March [1868?]; 3 July 1868; 22 Sept. [1868?]; William James to home, 3 June 1865; Mary James to William James, 21 Nov. [1867]; [1874]; Mary James to Henry James, 15 Dec. [1872]; 21 Jan. 1873.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 15 Dec. [1872]; Feinstein, "Fathers and Sons," 229, 309-10.

<sup>22</sup>Allen, William James, 164-67; William James, The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature (New York: Mentor, 1958), 135-36, supposedly describes a Frenchman's experience, but Allen, William James, 165, contends that it was a portrayal of William's collapse. On Henry's "vast visitation," see Edel, Untried Years, Book Four, *passim*. Even late in his life, Henry James, Sr.'s health problems were still being attributed to overwork. See, for example, Mary James to Henry James, 15 Dec. [1872].

<sup>23</sup>Robertson James once described himself as a foundling. See Jean Strouse, Alice James: A Biography (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1980), xii.

<sup>24</sup>Henry James to Mary Mathews, 13 Feb. [1882], in Leon Edel, Henry James Letters, II, 379; James, NSB, 372; Allen, William James, 227. Henry James, Sr. once wrote, in one of his despondent moods, that none of his boys had any intellectual leanings. See HJ to Edmund Tweedy, 18 July 1860. Wilky had opened a business manufacturing iron chains and bolts, but despite his diligent labor he accrued an \$80,000 debt. See Allen, William James, 159, 190, 227, 271.

<sup>25</sup>Garth Wilkinson James to Alice and Henry James, 28 Aug. 1872; Garth Wilkinson James to William James, 16 May 1878; Garth Wilkinson James to Frances R. Morse, 8 July 1872; Allen, William James, 270-71; James, NSB, 380.

<sup>26</sup>Mary James to Henry James, 15 Dec. [1872]; Allen, William James, 178, 229, 237, 259, 273, 383, 389, 487; William James to Henry James, 14 Nov. 1875; 1 April 1885; 11 July 1885; 23 Oct. 1885; 6 Feb. 1888; 11 April 1892; 22 Sept. 1893; 17 April 1896; Robertson James to HJ, 23 Oct. 1872; Henry James to William James, 26 May [1884]; 5 Oct. [1884]; 7 April 1896; 17 Oct. 1907; 31 Oct. 1909; Henry James, NSB, 377. Robertson's wife, Mary, attempted unsuccessfully to reunite with her husband. See Allen, William James, 470. While living in the East, Bob participated in psychic experiments for William. See Robertson James to William James, 11 March [1890]; [Oct. 1910].

<sup>27</sup>Books about Alice James include Anna Robeson Burr, ed., Alice James, Her Brothers--Her Journal (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1934); Edel, Diary of Alice James. Two books about Alice have appeared within the last year: Jean Strouse's Alice James, which I acquired after writing the bulk of this chapter, but with whose tenor, although not all conclusions, I concur; and Ruth Bernard Yeazell, The Death and Letters of Alice James (Berkeley: California, 1980), which I have so far not been able to obtain. Alice also figures prominently in works about her brothers. See Edel's multi-volume biography, Henry James; and Allen, William James.

<sup>28</sup>Edel, Diary of Alice James, 4, 7-8, 14; Strouse, Alice James, ix-225, passim. Alice joined The Bee, a charitable Cambridge group, in the mid-1860s and in 1875 joined the Society to Encourage Studies at Home and taught world history. See ibid., 132-35, 170-76.

<sup>29</sup>There is some doubt that Alice was as well during her early 1870s trip as her parents believed. She seems, as usual, to have had problems coping with great stimulation, and showed great jealousy when having to share her brother Henry's and Aunt Kate's attention with others. For details of this trip, see ibid., 144-60. Despite Mary James' prediction that Alice would have to remain near her father for the rest of his life, Alice did manage to get abroad again the year before her father passed away. See Mary James to Henry James, 15 Dec. [1872]; 27 April [1873]; Strouse, Alice James, 197-200.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., Chs. 13-17, passim.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., Chs. 16-17; Edel, Diary of Alice James, 207-208. The story of how the diary eventually came to be published by the descendants of Robertson James, and the favorable reviews that it received, is discussed in Strouse, Alice James, 319-26. See also Allen, William James, 227, 273-74; Henry James to William James, 24 May [1894], for William's and Henry's reactions to reading the diary.

<sup>32</sup>Edel, Diary of Alice James, 206, 229-32.

<sup>33</sup>Allen, William James, 214-19.



<sup>34</sup>Ibid., 244.

<sup>35</sup>LRLHJ, 9.

<sup>36</sup>Allen, William James, 281-82.

<sup>37</sup>Eugene Taylor, "William James and Helen Keller," An Address Delivered at the 156th General Convention of the Swedenborgian Churches, Wellesley College, 26 June 1980, 15. I am grateful to the author for giving me a copy of this paper.

<sup>38</sup>James, Varieties, 140, 262, 136; James, "Emerson," 740.

<sup>39</sup>"The Will to Believe," in John K. Roth, ed., The Moral Philosophy of William James (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1969), 199-213.

<sup>40</sup>William James, Pragmatism and four Essays from the Meaning of Truth, ed., Ralph Barton Perry (Cleveland: Meridian, 1935), passim; Perry, Thought and Character of William James, II, 480-81.

<sup>41</sup>Edel, Untried Years, 56-58; Boren, "Philosophical Ideas," 129, 167, 169, 205, 252; Alfred Kazin, "William and Henry James; "'Our Passion Is Our Task,'" in The Inmost Leaf: A Selection of Essays (New York: Noonday, 1959; 1941), 15; Moseley, "Complex Inheritance," ix, 4, 7-9, 20; Anderson, American Henry James, 67.

<sup>42</sup>SBO, 227; NSB, 50-51, 66; Anderson, American Henry James, 210-23; Boren, "Philosophical Ideas," 136-46, 168-89; Henry James, The Art of the Novel: Critical Prefaces (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1907), 307-26. Other similarities between the senior and junior Henry include ideas of spiritual rebirth coming on the heels of an emotional upheaval, and their hostile attitude toward Jews. See R. W. B. Lewis, The American Adam: Innocence, Tragedy and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century (Chicago: Chicago, 1955), 62; Michael N. Dobkowski, The Tarnished Dream: The Basis of American Anti-Semitism (Westport: Greenwood, 1979), 88.

<sup>43</sup>Quote is in William James to HJ, 27 Sept. [1867?]. For William's later view, see LRLHJ, 11.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., 13-16.

<sup>45</sup>SBO, 200.

## CHAPTER V

### HENRY JAMES, SR. AND THE AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

#### I

Henry James, Sr.'s children grew up in an atmosphere of nearly stifling religious toleration. They were never compelled to attend church or declare any kind of formal religious loyalty. Yet the subject of man's relation to God was never further away than their omnipresent and delightfully loquacious father. Such a situation was glaringly opposite to that of the elder Henry James' own childhood, when the authoritarian entrepreneur, William James of Albany, required his family to demonstrate their allegiance to his brand of Presbyterianism or else risk their patrimony. The enormous difference between the home supervised by William James of Albany and that supervised by his son illuminates many of the social changes that occurred during Henry James, Sr.'s lifetime.

William James of Albany trusted completely a deity that actively participated in man's day-to-day affairs and showed pleasure or wrath in man's deeds. His steadfast Presbyterianism maintained the dominant ideas of seventeenth-century Puritans who had believed

that God, as much as any human being who lived among them, was perceptibly involved in their daily activities. The Puritan faith in a dynamic God was not unique--even the less intensely religious colonists of Episcopalian Virginia acknowledged such a God as the center of their universe. The pervasive influence that religion obviously exerted from the beginning of American life continued, through three centuries, to be an impressive force addressed by both philosophers and laymen, and is clearly present even today.

Despite their never-ending presence, however, American religious ideas changed noticeably during Henry James, Sr.'s lifetime, and especially in the early nineteenth century--his formative years. Leaders of the notorious religious revivals that enveloped territories in the young republic persuaded many that salvation, like other aspects of life, no longer depended on the sanctity of an entire group, but would result from the reformation of individuals through their own efforts. Men and women who, like Henry James, Sr., objected to authoritarian clergymen and secular leaders announced that many of these figures of authority were no longer necessary; everyday men and women, utilizing their innate gift of common sense, could also interpret the mysteries of the universe and provide for their own welfare. Such an immense change

in attitude--symbolized most clearly by the decline in deference--left many Americans wondering what would replace the old ideals.

Henry James, Sr.'s beliefs represent one man's attempt to substitute a new view of society for outmoded concepts. Although he was primarily concerned with his own spiritual quest, James recognized that alongside the overwhelming rejection of spiritual and temporal authority lay a desperate need for new guidelines to govern human life. He therefore sought to justify a new kind of authority, one which simultaneously respected recently acquired individual rights and satisfied man's spiritual and secular needs. His search was only one of many similar attempts that help explain the burgeoning number of antebellum reformers.

Henry James, Sr. derived his teleology--beyond his simple Sandemanian-influenced insistence on maintaining the golden rule--from Fourierists and Swedenborgians, two recent reformist groups. James first accepted the Fourierist notion of a scientifically-adjusted community which would respect individual rights and consequently form a tranquil and beneficent society. Then from Swedenborg he appropriated the symbolic interpretation of the Bible and the system of correspondence, which supplied him with the long-sought solution to his own spiritual confusion. James

combined the ideas of these three Europeans and thought he had invented a system that could meet the needs of nineteenth-century Americans.

Both Fourier and Swedenborg implicitly supported the golden rule. And both promised a beneficent society--temporally and spiritually--which would not only respect, but enhance the rights of individuals. Reformers who, unlike James, emphasized only one of the preceding kinds of systems simply demonstrated their own unspoken assumption that the needs of the temporal sphere outweighed those of the spiritual, or vice-versa. But James, who sought for himself as much as his voracious soul could engulf, was satisfied with nothing less than the path to a totally good life--both spiritually and temporally--and he therefore advocated the complete reformation he believed present in his own iconoclastic combination of Sandeman, Fourier and Swedenborg.

## II

Reform, like religion, has pervaded American life since the time of the first English settlers. It was not only Massachusetts Bay that pursued the dream of creating a "city on a hill." In some measure each of the colonies engaged in the attempt to establish the good society, to form, by social experiment or legal

device or spontaneous popular effort, a community in harmony with some vision of the ideal. This reformist impulse eventually culminated in the American Revolution and the former colonists' subsequent experiment with a radical, republican government. The history of America--at least, in part--has been the history of perennial reform.

Henry James, Sr.'s religious vision fits comfortably into the utopian tradition of American reform. Like John Winthrop's Puritans or William Penn's Quakers, James embraced equally appealing, and unattainable, visions. His conviction that redemption must be inherent in any spiritual creation underscored his firm faith that a perfect life was not merely an idea to strive toward, but a concrete achievement that must be fulfilled. But despite the similarities in the quality of their idealism, James' reform ideas differed markedly from those of his colonial predecessors.

Reform concepts, like religious beliefs, had undergone a transformation between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. The early colonists and their eighteenth-century intellectual descendants, advocates of the American Enlightenment, believed that viable reform must begin in the upper echelons of society and then be filtered down to the masses. Reform would be implemented not because those in need

had demonstrated its utility, but because paternalistic leaders subscribed to its efficacy. These patrician attitudes existed concomitantly with the prevalent philosophy of deference. Both the elite members of society and their "inferiors" felt social responsibility and amelioration to be the province of the upper class. But just as the religious revivals of the mid-eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries eroded unquestioning obedience to religious leaders, so too did they augur a gradual rebellion against secular authority. If individuals were capable of accepting responsibility for their own salvation--religious reformation--then it was only natural for them to conclude that they could also manage their temporal affairs.

The early nineteenth-century's growing faith in individual capabilities reflected some of the changes subtly transforming America from an Enlightened to a Romantic society.<sup>1</sup> Men like Henry James, Sr. imbibed this attitude along with a faith in common sense, the proclivity to elevate emotion over intellect, a staunch anti-institutionalism, and an unbounded optimism. But this powerful creed that promulgated the individual's ability to accomplish reform, preeminent in Henry James, Sr.'s formative years, diminished about the time of the Civil War. It was replaced by a new respect



for organizational potential that developed when Americans observed the successes of such institutions as the United States Sanitary Commission, which used vast manpower and material resources to accomplish its charitable objectives. The postbellum popularity of organizational reform was a consequence not only of superior successes, but also of a change in thinking. During the early years of the century, reformers had, in general, tried to improve the quality of individual lives (and thereby gradually improve society), but as Americans became more obviously fragmented there surfaced an urgent need to establish the components of an American community which could unify the vast and disparate nation.<sup>2</sup>

Henry James, Sr.'s vision of a large state in which common spiritual interests united all citizens encompassed this transition from private social amelioration to the search for community. But despite James' modern concern with community, he held fast to the individualistic Romantic notions of his boyhood to achieve this goal. He insisted that a redeemed society could only come into being when individuals independently recognized and overthrew their fallacious belief in the supremacy of selfhood and spontaneously implemented a redeemed society. James' belief that man would only participate in communitas--a spiritually-based state--

when he understood, then overcame, his own sense of evil, or selfhood, was not unique. Two other prominent American writers, Nathaniel Hawthorne and Herman Melville, professed, like James, that only if man could admit his evil tendencies would he then be able to do something to correct them.<sup>3</sup> But James, ironically, in his quest to overcome selfhood tended to downplay evil as an individual characteristic. As Jean Strouse vividly demonstrates in her analysis of James' relations with his daughter, Alice, and as James himself shows, in his ideal description of the criminal trial cited earlier, he too easily glossed over individual failings while habitually attributing the source of all wrongdoing to the evil inherent in civilization.<sup>4</sup> In this sense, James, who made evil into an abstraction, albeit an extremely significant one in his own system, was less perspicacious than Hawthorne and Melville, who not only recognized, but were obsessed with the importance of tragic human failings.

This belief that society is ultimately responsible for man's problems and conversely responsible for his welfare anticipated one of the most important reform movements of the late nineteenth-century--the Social Gospel. James' assumption that government should accept responsibility for providing man's necessities and that the state's fundamental commitment should

be to the practice of the golden rule, meshed perfectly with Social Gospel ideals. (It also stimulated him to explore some principles which would govern man's redeemed life. In this quest, he was both anticipating and contributing to the acceptance of the newly-heralded "science" of sociology. Like his European counterparts, Auguste Comte and Herbert Spencer, and his fellow Americans, Lester Frank Ward and William Graham Sumner, James endeavored to discern tendencies that would benefit society. His notions of spiritual marriage, and the responsibilities incumbent on the government and the state should be approached in that light.) Of even greater significance is the evolution of these Social Gospel ideals into the formative characteristics of Progressivism--the most important reform movement of post-Civil War America. The obvious similarity between James' intellectual values and those of the Progressives leads one to wonder if this supposedly unheeded visionary exerted any direct affect on the later reform movement. Such an immediate link is difficult to establish, but the career of one of James' intellectual followers provides an instructive response.

Although James would never have tolerated any organizational efforts to spread his ideas, he did attract several disciples. These included Charles H. Mann, a New Church pastor who eventually republished

James' "Morality and the Perfect Life;" Samuel C. Eby, a one-time New Church clergyman; William White, a biographer of Swedenborg; Edward Welch, an architect; and Horace Field, a writer. And despite James' formidable anti-institutionalism, a mid-1890s group called The Ontological Society, led by Rev. E. Payson Walton, attempted to propagate his ideas.<sup>5</sup> The career of James' most notable disciple, Julia A. Kellogg, is illustrative of the similarity of ideals between James and later Progressive reformers.<sup>6</sup> James probably met Kellogg in Cambridge where she had temporarily resided. After she left that city in the early 1870s, she began a lengthy correspondence with James, in which she devoted herself to understanding the intricacies of his philosophy. Following his death, Kellogg published the first work about him, The Philosophy of Henry James, which consisted primarily of quotations from his works.<sup>7</sup> Kellogg's attraction to James, however, was not her sole intellectual activity. In later years, she became a staunch advocate and propagandist for the single-tax scheme of the early Progressive, Henry George. Kellogg's activities indicate that although one cannot unhesitatingly proclaim a direct influence on Progressive philosophy, James' emphasis on the efficacy of the state accepting responsibility for the welfare of its citizens preceded and could have influenced the

later reform movement.<sup>8</sup> Even if he was not immediately responsible for the existence of Progressive goals, however, the power and scope of his ideas did contribute to an intellectual atmosphere conducive to the emergence of Progressive ideals.

### III

Whether one explores his books first-hand or discovers him through his children's vivid portraits, Henry James, Sr. emerges as a passionate figure of devastating proportions, and his intense emotional attachments, like his ideas, embodied his love affair with America. James embraced the traditional American sentiment that his continent was not only a recently discovered world, but a kind of tabula rasa fit to become the site of a bold new venture--an earthly paradise. As a prospective guide to this nascent Garden of Eden, James was merely one of many new American Adams eagerly offering to escort others to his utopian landscape.<sup>9</sup>

James' belief that the United States was man's best hope for an earthly heaven was clearly trumpeted in his patriotic oration of 1861, The Social Significance of Our Institutions. Although not directly concerned with America's territorial aggrandizement, James reflected his country's explosive feeling of manifest

destiny in his contention that the rest of the world should regard the United States as the leader in recognizing individual liberties and should attempt to emulate its example. His blatant chauvinism was most unmistakably demonstrated in his unfavorable comparison of the corrupt and entrenched institutions of the Old World with the happily disintegrating ones of the New. Like other nineteenth-century Americans, from Noah Webster to Frederick Jackson Turner, James firmly believed that his countrymen were a uniquely admirable people, though he entirely missed the irony of the obvious similarity of his own worship for his country and the same feeling of an exceptional destiny for which he continually condemned the Jewish nation.

The James family's personal history typified the country in which they lived. The imposing patriarch, William James of Albany, concentrated his enormous energies on an unending quest to amass wealth and guarantee his future security. Like his nation, he looked to the West as he bought property as far away as Detroit. But once his immense wealth was firmly secured in the family coffers, he, like most of his children, became less interested in its perpetual increase. Many of the second generation American Jameses, following their father's lead, and in accord with many similarly prosperous fellow citizens, became

more inclined to concern themselves with social welfare than their immediate (and comfortably secure) fortunes. Like the leaders of the deferential society whom they believed they were replacing these new leaders, including Henry James, Sr., amply demonstrated their paternal zeal for social amelioration.

It is not surprising that James' quest for social amelioration, so typical of Americans of his class and status, linked him more strongly to the North than the South. The staunch individualism of his Romantic upbringing contributed to his deprecation of Southern slave society. But James, who regularly measured the progress being made toward a redeemed society, sensed that an autocratic South insistent on maintaining a slave society also blocked other avenues of progress, and he therefore identified with the modernizing Northern society in its war with the static traditionalism of the South. As a reformer with an eye always on the future, James would have felt philosophically compelled to favor the North even had he not been outraged with the institution of slavery.<sup>10</sup>

James' characteristically American qualities extended to the kinds of problems that he discussed in his works. His lifelong intellectual dispute with Ralph Waldo Emerson, for example, partially revolved around the latter's undying belief in a beneficent

nature. James, who was quick to perceive the diabolic fury unleashed in natural disasters, espoused the typically American idea that man's spiritual duty was not to coexist peacefully with nature, but to conquer it: "the supremacy of Man over Nature, is what is meant by historic progress."<sup>11</sup> Like many other nineteenth-century thinkers, moreover, James optimistically believed that man was finally discovering ways to control nature. But his perception of the subsequent utility of this knowledge was radically different from most other Americans. James believed that as scientists learned more about nature they would discover how little their own mere sensuous understanding could unfold, and they would then emphasize that only through philosophy could the universe's secrets be comprehended. Science, according to James, should function as the handmaiden of philosophy--which was man's best guide to matters of spiritual import.<sup>12</sup>

James' contributions to the American discussions of nature and science did not exhaust his concern for the problems facing his beloved country. Early in his career, before such interests were popular, for example, James probed the difficulties inherent in the life of the laboring man. He saw the plight of workers who were neither lucky enough to select their desired vocation nor prominent enough to attract sympathetic



attention. Despite his sensitivity to laborers' spiritual turmoil, however, James stubbornly refused to confront all of the workingman's reality in his lifelong neglect of the significance of earning a living-- a consequence, perhaps, of his wealthy heritage.

Unlike his rare, if incomplete, depiction of the American laborer's downtrodden life, James was only one of many national writers who addressed the subject of proper sexual roles. Nineteenth-century women, unlike their colonial counterparts, were no longer vital to the management of the family economy since the development of the marketplace separated the spheres of men and women. James, like the great mass of Americans, pictured the domestic life as women's kingdom and the affairs of the world as the province of men. His ideas concerning the woman's place are so conventional (with the single exception of his advocacy of free divorce, which was radical only in regard to the law, not in its ultimate purpose) that if only that aspect of his thought were analyzed one would conclude that James merited no special intellectual consideration. Yet his ideas about the family were far more unconventional than the beliefs of his countrymen. His extraordinary indulgence stands out in the midst of a society in which parents expected to possess uncontested dominance over their children's lives. And his encouragement

of a boldly general education defied the standard American conception that schooling simply served as a steppingstone to a career. James' new views of the family, though, reflected some changing nineteenth-century attitudes toward children. No longer were youngsters perceived as miniature adults, but instead as gradually developing individuals who deserved special consideration during progressing stages of maturity.<sup>13</sup>

Perhaps the most vivid reminder that James struggled with representative American problems was his implicit recognition of the quintessential American conflict--the inherent disparity between the goals of freedom and those of equality. These two concepts have been permanently linked in the American mind since they were dramatized in the Declaration of Independence, and the potential antagonism between them has been widely debated from Madison's Tenth Federalist to the incisive French traveler, Alexis de Tocqueville. The ideal of complete freedom, which would inevitably lead to the dominance of more physically, intellectually, and financially capable individuals, has been constantly at odds with the ideal of equality, which is believed to lead to excessive mediocrity. James' entire system revolves around this issue. "Society the redeemed form of man" is appealing precisely because it would enable all men to share with one another equally, while retaining

their individual liberties. Whether to favor competition over cooperation, selfishness over selflessness, liberty over equality, has been the central American struggle from the days of the Revolution until the present. And Henry James, Sr.'s ideas were lodged directly in the middle of this uniquely American controversy as he doggedly attempted to satisfy advocates of every persuasion.

#### IV

Whether Henry James, Sr. influenced America more than America influenced him remains an open question. His concerns certainly matched those of his nation even if his solutions often did not. Like the Romantic America of his youth, he stressed the ideals of individualism, anti-institutionalism, common sense, and optimism. Like the developing America of his maturity, he stressed the efficacy of science, the importance of community, and the necessity of state involvement in the welfare of its citizens. And like the infant America, whose ideals comprised his intellectual heritage, he struggled over a plan for a better society in which those contentious twins, liberty and equality, could be concurrently realized.

James' lifelong quest sometimes coincided with that of his fellow citizens, sometimes lagged behind, and

sometimes rushed to the forefront. But whether anticipating new avenues or running into dead-ends, he always provided provocative analyses of fundamental issues. The elder Henry James' legitimate claim to intellectual America's attention is threefold. His personal intellectual drama showcased a multitude of ideas that still deserve careful analysis. His formative influence on one of America's most famous intellectual dynasties can never be forgotten (as William James once wrote about his literary brother: "he's . . . but a native of the James family, and has no other country . . .").<sup>14</sup> And Henry James, Sr.'s entire work depicts the evolution of an exceptional spokesman of the American experience.

More than half a century ago, in an introduction to a collection of William James' writings, Horace Kallen remarked that "No one would ever dream of calling Henry James the elder's mutations of Swedenborg in any way typical of America, whether of its intellectual conventions or intellectual rebellions."<sup>15</sup> But Kallen overlooked the possibility that it was exactly because James so faithfully represented nineteenth-century America that he did alter Swedenborg's ideas. James' intellectual congruence with the hugely successful Romantic and Progressive ideals reflected his absorption of the most typical American values and objectives.

And his doomed struggle to formulate an attractive philosophy demonstrated how his own idiosyncrasies prevented the wider distribution of his ideas. But when one expends the effort to knock down the thick wall that has always encircled this supposedly eccentric and unmemorable thinker, one discovers that James' life and work addressed the spiritual and secular characteristics of the three most essential facets of American life--the roles of the individual, the family, and the state. The American discussion of these three phases of our national character would have been less rich had there been no such eccentric and individualistic genius as the senior Henry James.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Excellent monographs depicting these vast social changes include David J. Rothman, The Discovery of the Asylum: Social Order and Disorder in the New Republic (Boston: Little, Brown, 1971); Douglas T. Miller, Jacksonian Aristocracy: Class and Democracy in New York, 1830-1860 (New York: Oxford, 1967); George Rogers Taylor, The Transportation Revolution, 1815-1860 (New York: Rinehart, 1951); Stanley K. Schultz, The Culture Factory: Boston Public Schools, 1789-1860 (New York: Oxford, 1973); Ward, Andrew Jackson; Major L. Wilson, Space, Time, and Freedom: The Quest for Nationality and the Irrepressible Conflict, 1815-1861 (Westport: Greenwood, 1974); George M. Fredrickson, The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914 (New York: Harper & Row, 1971); Eric Foner, Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party Before the Civil War (New York: Oxford, 1970); Richard D. Brown, Modernization: The Transformation of American Life, 1660-1865 (New York: Hill and Wang, 1976).

<sup>2</sup>George M. Fredrickson, The Inner Civil War: Northern Intellectuals and the Crisis of the Union (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), esp. Ch. 7; R. Jackson Wilson, In Quest of Community: Social Philosophy in the United States, 1860-1920 (New York: Wiley, 1968).

<sup>3</sup>Lewis, American Adam, Chs. 6-7.

<sup>4</sup>Strouse, Alice James, 187-88.

<sup>5</sup>E. Payson Walton, "A Card to the Rich Men and Women of Christendom;" E. Payson Walton, "The Ontological Society." Both documents are at HLHU.

<sup>6</sup>Alice Thacher Post, "Julia A. Kellogg," Public, XVIII (22 Jan 1915), 79-80. Mary James to Henry James, 27 April [1873]. James' letters to Kellogg are at HLHU. The whereabouts of Kellogg's letters is unknown.

<sup>7</sup>J. A. Kellogg, The Philosophy of Henry James: A Digest (New York: John W. Lovell, 1883).

<sup>8</sup>James, of course, differed from the Progressives because of his belief that the state should not legislate

morality.

<sup>9</sup> Lewis, American Adam; Leo Marx, The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America (New York: Oxford, 1967).

<sup>10</sup> Foner, Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men; Wilson, Space, Time, and Freedom.

<sup>11</sup> S & S, 424.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 144-60; Henry James, Sr., "Old and New Theology: I," 153; Henry James, Sr., "Faith and Science," passim.

<sup>13</sup> Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860," American Quarterly, XVIII (Summer 1966), 151-74; G. W. Barker-Benfield, "The Spermatic Economy: A Nineteenth Century View of Sexuality," Feminist Studies, I (Summer 1972), 45-74; Bernard W. Wishy, The Child and the Republic: The Dawn of Modern American Child Nurture (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania, 1967).

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