

The friendship of Ralph Waldo Emerson and Frederic Henry Hedge--

A theater of many moods

by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
INTRODUCTION	1
EMERSONIAN TRANSCENDENTALISM AND A CHRISTIAN EXAMINER	5
WORKS CONSULTED	29

INTRODUCTION

Frederic Henry Hedge and Ralph Waldo Emerson first met in 1825 while attending Cambridge Divinity School. Their friendship lasted approximately 55 years; however, it was not a relationship characterized by completely similar beliefs or interests. In fact, their careers turned in different directions. Emerson eventually left the church and concentrated more on his lectures, while Hedge held fast to a clerical career as a Unitarian minister. Strong with doubt about many of the traditions of the Christian church, including the role of the clergy, Emerson made a complete break with the religious profession and became the leading representative of the Transcendental movement. Hedge, on the other hand, represented the Christian Transcendentalist: a man whose primary concern was allegiance to the church although he connected Transcendental ideals to church traditions. Many of his early writings and ideas are connected with the rise of Transcendentalism, but he remains a minor figure within the movement.

Frederic Hedge was born in 1805 in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and entered school in Germany at the age of 13. He studied in Germany for four years and began to establish his knowledge of German language and literature. He returned to the United States in 1822 and graduated from Harvard in 1825. After spending three years at Cambridge Divinity School, Hedge was ordained and began his ministry as pastor at West Cambridge, Massachusetts. In 1835 he accepted a position in Bangor, Maine, and remained there for 15 years. During this period he published his first major volume of German translations, entitled Prose Writers of Germany.

He also continued to visit Boston for meetings of the Transcendental Club. In 1850, Hedge became the pastor at Westminster Congregational Society in Providence, Rhode Island, and also became Professor of Ecclesiastical History at Harvard Divinity School. He would hold this position for 21 years, although in 1857 he was called from Providence to become the minister for the First Parish of Brookline, Massachusetts. From 1857-61 Hedge served as editor of the Christian Examiner and also as president of the Unitarian Association. In 1865, he published Reason in Religion, perhaps his clearest explanation of Christian Transcendentalism. Hedge finally retired from the ministry in 1872 and accepted a position as professor of German at Harvard. In 1877 he published Ways of the Spirit, a collection of writings on topics such as historic Christianity, atonement, and theism. Hedge submitted his resignation from Harvard in 1881 and wrote several other books before his death in 1890. Besides many articles and book-length studies, he also published a small amount of verse during his lifetime.

Hedge's loyalty to the Unitarian ministry, his interest in German literature, and his association with Transcendentalism have inspired several biographical profiles. Bryan Le Beau's Frederic Henry Hedge provides the most complete details of Hedge's life, and O. W. Long's study focuses on Hedge's career and his continued interest in German literature. George H. Williams details Hedge's role in the Unitarian movement including his beliefs about the church.

It was not difficult to find biographical information on Frederic Hedge, but primary source material is not readily available. There is

currently no complete or partial edition of Hedge's work (though I understand such a project may be in the offing, to be edited by Professor Le Beau). Two of Hedge's most important book-length studies, Reason in Religion and Ways of the Spirit, were available in the Parks Library at Iowa State University as were many of the articles he published for the Christian Examiner. However, in order to discover much of Hedge's work, it was necessary to do a significant amount of searching.

Frederic Hedge's position within the Transcendental movement was the focus of many of the books and articles I consulted. Because he did correspond with Emerson and they maintained a dedicated friendship, several authors also compared Hedge's beliefs and career to Emerson's. Doreen Hunter and Joel Myerson provided the most information concerning the friendship, although their conclusions differed. According to Myerson, Hedge was a disappointed and disappointing Transcendentalist. Hunter, on the other hand, believed Hedge never significantly altered his position and remained a Christian Transcendentalist throughout his career. In fact, though Emerson and Hedge often disagreed, Emerson used much of Hedge's philosophy in several of his essays.

The Emerson-Hedge friendship provided the foundation for my conclusions. I have considered the premise that Emerson actually used much of Hedge's philosophy despite their mutual criticisms. In examining this idea, I have thoroughly checked Emerson's letters as well as journals in order to better understand their relationship. In addition, I found it important to compare several of their works. Previous scholarship focused on the externals of their friendship, but did little actual comparison of

their literary contributions. In order to better understand the relationship, I concentrated a significant amount of my research on the details found in several of Hedge's and Emerson's essays. Their letters indicate they read each other's essays and often focused upon similar topics. By actually comparing their work, I discovered they were not only concerned with the same issues, but often reached similar conclusions.

Both Hedge and Emerson described man as a "theater of many moods." Through my research, I have concluded that the Emerson-Hedge relationship itself was a theater of many moods. Transcendentalism was not just one philosophy or one set of principles. Hedge, as a Christian Transcendentalist, provided Emerson with many ideas which he acknowledged and used in his later essays. Emerson recognized the convictions of a Christian Transcendentalist.

EMERSONIAN TRANSCENDENTALISM AND A CHRISTIAN EXAMINER

As the first meeting of the Transcendental Club was called to order in 1836, nine men were in attendance and the discussion focused upon the organization and membership of the group. Eventually, of the 26 persons who became associated with the Club, 17 were Unitarian ministers and 11 of these clergymen remained in the ministerial profession for a lifetime. In fact, it was a devoted Unitarian minister whose letter to Ralph Waldo Emerson in 1836 initiated the Transcendental Club:

I have a project to communicate to you, in which I trust to have your sympathy & cooperation, for, if I remember right, you once proposed something of the same sort. . . . The plan is namely this, to have a meeting, annual or oftener if possible, of certain likeminded persons of our acquaintance for the free discussion of theological & moral subjects. By likeminded persons I mean not such as agree in opinion, but such as agree in spirit,--men who earnestly seek the truth & who, with perfect toleration of other men's freedom & in the avowal of their own opinions, however abhorrent [sic] from the general faith, unite perfect toleration of other men's freedom & other men's opinions. (Myerson, "Frederic Hedge" 400)

Because of this letter the Transcendental Club was also coined "Hedge's Club," after its founder, Frederic Henry Hedge. Without retreating from his Unitarian faith, Hedge emphasized the positive points of Transcendentalism during his early career. He stressed the common goal of reform and participation in a movement of awakening. As Hedge stated, Club members did not necessarily agree as to philosophical ideas, opinions, or solutions; however, they did agree in placing "intuition" above all principles as well as on condemning Lockean sensationalism. Hedge envisioned the Transcendental Club as an organization guided by the

principles of spiritual truth. He obviously did not intend for this movement to be one of complete agreement and unity, for he pointed to toleration of others' beliefs and solutions. Hedge, a loyal Unitarian minister and a Christian Transcendentalist, was caught between conflicting roles and expectations despite his wish to avoid conflict and establish freedom of opinion.

As Ronald Wells defined the term, "Christian Transcendentalism" not only differentiated the beliefs of clergymen such as Hedge from the more secular Transcendentalism, but also characterized those whose primary concern was allegiance to the church and a reassertion of religious faith (2). Hedge connected Transcendental ideals to the traditions of the church; his belief in man's intuitive abilities provided the foundation for his Christian Transcendentalism:

Everything in religion which denounces nature and insults life must be abandoned for principles which show the present worth of nature and dignity of man. This will be nearer the true religion of Jesus, a religion of life, humanity, nature,--a religion of the present. Unless this religion grows, the theologians will give way to the philosopher, the preacher to the lecturer, and the Church will sink into oblivion before the rising lyceum. (Wells 132-33)

Thus, Hedge defined man's divinity through intuitive insights which were his source of the knowledge of God. God was not an isolated being; He was immanent and the creator and sustainer of all life. This view of God and the importance of intuitive knowledge placed Hedge in agreement with the Emersonian "Oversoul." God's spirit would unfold within man as man freely accepted His word and will through divine intuition. However, as a Christian Transcendentalist, Hedge's faith was in evolution and not

revolution (Le Beau, Frederic Hedge 173). The future would be tied to the ecclesiastical institutions of the past.

Hedge emphasized the importance of toleration and respect for other men's opinions and their right to intellectual freedom. Standing midway between the conservative Unitarians and the pure Transcendentalists, he respected the beliefs of both; however, he remained true to his own philosophy. One of Hedge's primary principles was the avoidance of controversy, although avoidance did not necessarily mean silence. He published and lectured on many issues, but avoided antagonism and contradiction. In his 1841 Phi Beta Kappa address entitled "Conservatism and Reform," Hedge defined this guiding principle:

Publish your opinions, but not your dissent; and take no notice of opposite views, but simply and steadily ignore them. Controversy on any subject is seldom productive of much profit. . . . It was a principle with Goethe . . . to deal as little as possible in negations, to state his view as if the opposite had never been stated, to work out his own problems in his own way, and let the world take its course. In the midst of conflicts, civil and religious, which agitated his time, with the din of battle always in his ear, he maintained a strict neutrality, and held in silence his steady course, well knowing that these controversies would decide themselves, and that for him to take part in the fray was only to postpone their decision. He felt that to produce somewhat of his own was better than to quarrel with the work of others; that to plant for the future was better than to war with the past. So he trode the fierce battle-field of his age with the implements of peace in his hands, and sowed philosophy and art in the upturned sod.

Peace, and not controversy, is the true and genial element of the scholar's life. . . . In the conflict between the old and the new which is raging around him, let the scholar attach himself wherever instinct may draw or conscience drive, happy if he can find a point of reconciliation common to both, and minister as mediator between the two. Having found his own position, let him gladly concede to others the like freedom, and rejoice

that there is wisdom enough on both sides to do justice to both. (161-63)

This role of the scholar was strikingly similar to Hedge's conception of the "project" he communicated to Emerson. Each member--each scholar--should pursue his steady course, but avoid conflict and controversy. The scholar must set his own example and be satisfied with his own position--a role which Hedge struggled to follow throughout his lifetime. However, finding a point of reconciliation and becoming a mediator between the old and the new actually brought controversy to Hedge's career rather than enabling him to avoid it completely. To extremists on either side, his position seemed highly illogical (Hutchison 139), yet Hedge described himself as "ecclesiastically conservative though intellectually radical." He believed these positions to be completely compatible, though they actually pulled him in different directions. He respected Transcendentalist views and he respected Unitarian beliefs. Adherents of both gained from his knowledge and ideas, yet they found it increasingly difficult to understand his position.

Frederic Hedge began his friendship with Ralph Waldo Emerson during his years at Cambridge Divinity School and the relationship continued until Emerson's death. Hedge's letter of suggestion concerning the Club was only one of many between the two despite their differences. They were both Transcendentalists, and of course, at one time, both Unitarian ministers. Yet the story of their friendship indicates the difficulty of avoiding self-conflict and the difficulty Hedge encountered in being a Christian Transcendentalist and avoiding controversy among his colleagues.

They both represented the ideals set forth in Hedge's original plan for the Club: they were men who followed their own truths.

At first, Hedge's career evoked enthusiasm among Transcendentalists such as Emerson, for he did play an important role in the early days of the movement. His visits to Boston signaled gatherings of "Hedge's Club," the articles he had written for the Christian Examiner first defined the "new views," and contributions to The Dial were expected of him because it was his suggestion to create a journal. In fact, writing in 1833 to his brother, Edward, Emerson attested to the potential which Hedge offered to Transcendentalism:

I mediate something more seriously than ever before, the adventure of a periodical paper which shall speak truth without fear or favor to all who desire to hear it, with such persuasion as shall compel them to speak it also. Henry Hedge is an unfolding man who has just now written the best pieces that have appeared in the Examiner and one especially was a living leaping Logos, and he may help me. (Rusk 1: 402)

The "living leaping Logos" was Hedge's 1833 essay on Coleridge in which he defended German scholarship. Hedge refused to apologize for the Germanic "obscurity," and explained that only those who had experienced the Transcendental vision could understand the literature: "The works of the transcendental philosophers may be translated word for word, but still it will be impossible to get a clear idea of their philosophy, unless we raise ourselves at once to a transcendental point of view. Unless we take our station with the philosopher and proceed from his ground as our starting point, the whole system will appear to us an inextricable puzzle" ("Coleridge" 69). Hedge distinguished between two types of consciousness

defined by Kant: the common, which was a passive receptor of the world, and the interior, which was an active state. It was from a recognition of the interior consciousness that man understood intuitive powers. The intuition provided man with the ability to reach beyond ordinary experience and discover the materials of his own consciousness. With this statement, the Unitarians received a first glimpse of the controversy surrounding Transcendentalism; Emerson was pleased with its central premises yet perhaps unaware of the essential differences which still existed between their views. Hedge asserted that the "thinking mind" and nature were manifestations of the same divine principle and were part of the same essence (Hunter 189). Yet he still held to Christian Transcendentalist beliefs:

Hedge made it quite clear that he regarded Transcendentalism as a method of philosophical inquiry and not, as claimed by Coleridge and Emerson, the sufficient grounds for a system of metaphysical and ethical belief. (Hunter 189-90)

Hedge respected the nature of institutions and their role in society. As early as 1834, Hedge wrote that human progress could be described as

. . . like the rhythm of the human heart beat. Every invention or new idea quickens the pulse of social development and is followed in turn by a systolic interval of quiet. During the interval, the new idea or invention is given outward form in institutions and rituals. . . . Institutions mark mankind's advanced position; they fit and perpetuate the improvements of the age. While progress depends upon moving beyond the outposts of society, the old forms embody hard-won victories and human truths that cannot be disregarded. (Hunter 191)

Thus, in 1833-34 Hedge argued for loosening the bonds of church and society. He wished to lift people to new ideas with his "living leaping

Logos," yet these changes would still be within the boundaries of traditional culture and institutions.

As Hedge's Club began to acquire new members and establish its foundation, there were both "new church" advocates and "no church" advocates all around him. Hedge's vision was fulfilled, for the members of the Club agreed to discuss a new religious and social order, yet were divided as to the scope of man's spiritual knowledge and its implications for existing institutions. The ranks of the Transcendentalists were divided among three groups: Ripley and Brownson represented the political democrats and reformers interested in retaining the institution of the church but on a more democratic basis (Eclectics); Emerson spoke for the "no church" advocates who viewed the existing institutions as hostile to genuine spirituality and called for a new religious order without the institution of the church; and finally, Hedge maintained the position of Transcendental-Unitarian, reminding both sides of the importance of divine revelation (Hunter 193-94). Hedge wanted to retain the institution of the church, but unlike Ripley and Brownson, he believed moral and religious truths were not the original perceptions of the mind but were God's laws. These truths were realized through man's awakened spiritual nature, but man was ultimately dependent upon God for spiritual knowledge. The Eclectics "admired the French philosopher Victor Cousin because his works supported what Ripley called 'the instinctive convictions of the human mind.' Cousin had argued that Reason (or common sense, redefined) is independent of the will and of the human personality. It is the autonomy of Reason that insures that the common-sense notions possessed by all men

are objective, authoritative, and shared" (Hunter 193-94). Thus, Hedge believed in the preservation of the Christian faith and church; the Eclectics wished to retain the church but were opposed to such strict standards. They believed man was not dependent upon divine illumination.

It became increasingly difficult for Hedge to maintain an active and dominant role in the Transcendental Club when, in 1835, he put aside a possible literary career to become pastor for the Independent Congregational Society in Bangor, Maine. He would remain in Bangor for the next fifteen years, but continued to correspond with Emerson throughout this period as well as visit Boston whenever possible. In 1839, six years after Hedge's defense of Transcendentalism, Emerson still enthusiastically stated his opposition to the Old Unitarian Church: "I fancy I see everywhere more resolute inquiry than heretofore, more good heads, & that we are fast coming to fuller explanations. The present Church rattles ominously. It must vanish presently; & we shall have a real one . . ." (Rusk 2: 219). Despite his absence from the "center" of the movement, as a Christian Transcendentalist, Hedge maintained his own position. He emphasized that moral truths were God's laws and all true religion was revealed religion (a position he unfolded in Reason in Religion). Hedge insisted that any future church must "grow on another branch of the same trunk,--& not on the ruins" (Hunter 195). Caught between the new and the old, Hedge sought for himself a curious amalgam of the conservative and the radical, as his later reminiscence about the Club revealed:

". . . though I hugely enjoyed the sessions, and shared many of the ideas which ruled the conclave, and the

ferment they engendered, I had no belief in ecclesiastical revolutions. . . . My historical conscience, then as since, balanced my neology, and kept me ecclesiastically conservative, though intellectually radical." (Hutchison 140)

Avoiding conflict became increasingly difficult as many did not find these positions compatible.

Emerson and Hedge continued to share their mutual respect yet occasional frustration at one another's words and actions. At the time he urged founding a club, Hedge also proposed a journal with the possibility of becoming the editor. The Dial was soon created, but during the few years between his proposal and the actual publication of the journal, Hedge decided against the editorship. In fact, in a letter to Hedge dated January 1840, Margaret Fuller announced her intention to become the editor of The Dial and requested contributions for the opening issue. While still a pastor in Bangor, Hedge replied with a refusal which greatly disappointed both Fuller and Emerson. His reply of January 20, 1840, reflected both personal as well as ideational differences for his refusal:

I conceived the plan of [a journal] & urged its execution in conversation with Ripley and others some five years since. Then, I could have been the editor. I felt equal to any amount of literary labor. But I have grown less enterprising & more diffident & though I feel as much interested in [torn] journal as I then did, I should like now, if possible to have no other part in it than that of reader & subscriber. Forgive me therefore, if my first feeling after reading your letter was not one of unmingled satisfaction. (Hunter 197)

Certainly, Hedge could have met the literary standards of the journal; his contributions to the Christian Examiner reflected his clear and logical style and standards. However, although Hedge was an early messenger for

the Transcendental movement, he could not assume a commanding role in later years. Emerson's disappointment in this position was evident in a letter he wrote to Margaret Fuller on March 30, 1840:

I do not wish any colleagues whom I do not love, and though the Journal we have all regarded as something gay & not something solemn, yet were I responsible, I would rather trust for its wit & its verses to the eight or nine persons in whose affections I have a sure place, than to eighty or ninety celebrated contributors. So on the matter of strength I cannot regret any loss of numbers.--But I am very sorry for Henry Hedge. It is a sad letter for his biography: he will grieve his heart out by & by & perhaps very soon, that he ever wrote it. As I have told you, we (Hedge & I) never quite meet; there is always a fence betwixt us. But he has such a fine free wit such accomplishments & talents & then such an affectionate selfhealing nature that I always revere him & subscribe gladly to all the warm eulogies that George Bradford & the Waltham people utter. Then I owe him gratitude for all his manifest kindness to me, though he is wrong to say he loves me, for I am sure he does not quite. All this makes me heartily sorry for him,--but I know he will nigh kill himself with vexation at his own letter, after a few months be past. So that I think you must only show it to such as it instantly concerns, & to none others; for he will certainly beg it of you again, & beg you to forget it. It is much for him, but it is not important to the book. The book would be glad of his aid, but it will do as well without. . . . Hedge's view of the matter is to me quite worthless. The poor old public stand just where they always did,--garrulous orthodox conservative whilst you say nothing; silent the instant you speak; and perfectly & universally convertible the moment the right word comes. (Rusk 2: 270-71)

After becoming one of the first defenders of Transcendentalism, Hedge found it increasingly difficult not to disappoint those who remained a strong part of the movement. Attempting to avoid controversy among his parish and avoid conflict with his Christian-Transcendental beliefs, Hedge

would never compose another Emersonian version of a "living leaping Logos."

It was interesting to note that while Emerson was obviously disappointed in many of Hedge's decisions, he still maintained a certain respect and affection for their relationship. He may have felt a "fence" between them and called Hedge's view worthless, but several years after this dismissal, Emerson wrote in a much different tone of admiration and hope:

Henry Hedge has been here & made us some good promises of aid for the time to come. We liked him better than ever. He is an excellent element of a good society, & we should need to look long for a man like him. He would be very content to live in Concord, if he had confidence that he could gain a support from lectures in the winter. . . .
(Rusk 3: 49-50)

Emerson obviously did appreciate Hedge's accomplishments and talents. Calling him an "excellent element of a good society," he was aware of Hedge's intellectual capabilities and grateful for the continuing friendship with him. Perhaps they would never quite meet in their relationship--the fence would not completely disappear between a more conservative and a pure Transcendentalist--but an absolute barrier never existed. Whether advocating no church, new church, or a modified church, Transcendentalists still educated one another.

From the moment Emerson hailed Hedge as a kindred spirit in 1833 until their temporary parting of the ways in the early 1840's, the relationship between these two men influenced their respective stances and shaped the inner dynamics of the Club. If in 1842, Emerson was "disappointed" by Hedge's version of Transcendentalism, he did not fail to appreciate the value of much that Hedge had to say. (Hunter 188)

Of course part of this statement could be reversed: as a scholar who respected the nature of institutions, Hedge was probably disappointed in some of Emerson's ideas yet respected his original thought and judgment.

Hunter mentioned that Emerson was disappointed by Hedge's version of Transcendentalism, which was most clearly defined in his 1841 Harvard Phi Beta Kappa oration "Conservatism and Reform." In fact, soon after hearing this oration, Emerson responded to Hedge's argument much as he had when he dismissed Hedge's view of The Dial, save that he treated "Conservatism and Reform" with some added sarcasm:

Henry Hedge's ØBK Oration was a very successful performance in its way & gratified all parties; a conciliatory concio ad clerum on the Old & the New things, and a very good exhibition of his peculiar talents. I suppose all Hedge's friends feel much alike with regard to him: they care not what he says, but only that he should say it well: as he is one who has not so much an interest in any ideas or principles as a love of intellectual exercise. Therefore all were well contented with so good a discourse; leaving the whole radical questions quite aside. (Rusk 2: 444)

If in 1840 Emerson believed Hedge's view to be worthless, by 1842 he held that Hedge was a mere lover of intellectual exercise and not specific ideas. Depicting Hedge as an orator of style but no substance, Emerson defined his own relationship with Hedge as an appreciation of his wit but not his wisdom.

Sometimes praising Hedge's intellectual ability and sometimes diminishing his capabilities, Emerson continued to correspond and request personal visits with him. His letters remained somewhat contradictory; Emerson did value what Hedge had to say, for in March of 1842, after assuming editorship of The Dial, he requested scholarly contributions from

his friend. In 1833, it was not Hedge's wit but rather his wisdom that caused Emerson to praise his work as a "living leaping Logos." It was his wisdom again that prompted Emerson, as the editor of The Dial, to write Hedge just as Margaret Fuller had done two years earlier. Explaining that the journal was in trouble and Fuller in ill health, Emerson used a straightforward approach:

I recall the friends & favorers of the book, & you among the first. Frederic Henry Hedge, What say you? Have you any word to print on these Times? fact or thought; history, poem, or exhortation? I heartily wish you would send me some fragment of verse or prose that interests you, if you have not leisure or readiness to settle yourself to any labor for our thankless Magazine. . . .

There is public enough, I am sure, for a spiritual writer. I was at New York lately & conversed with many persons who would gladly read him. The old things rattle louder & louder & will soon blow away. Yet this is not a question of *time* All obstructions are already blown away from him who has a thought a purpose in his mind. We cheat ourselves with hunting for phantoms of Church & State. When we awake they are fled dreams. But I wish to say of the Dial that I rely on one expedient to make it valuable namely a liberal selection of good matter from old or from foreign books when dull papers are offered & rejected. . . . If now, my dear friend, you have any hints for its better conduct or any matter in possession or in prospect or contingency for its pages will you not for the love of America & of your friends & of me, send me it, or promise of it. (Rusk 3: 37)

Hedge did not refuse contributions to Emerson and The Dial. Instead, he sent him the Phi Beta Kappa oration which Emerson had criticized in his letters. Although Hedge may have been unaware, it was a contribution such as "Conservatism and Reform" that Emerson considered as an obstruction that "rattled" louder and louder until eventually blowing away. Emerson had many reservations about printing a piece which he considered to be yet another example of Hedge's inability to take a pronounced position,

although it was his strongest statement of why Transcendentalism in its developing form no longer attracted him (Myerson, "Frederic Hedge" 407). Thus, in a final diplomatic letter to Hedge, Emerson returned the manuscript with a comment that a separate publication would be more appropriate:

I conclude to send the Oration to Boston; I think it juster & better for it, that it should appear separate, or the college asks for it; and my design was rather to make large extracts, perhaps at two several times, then to print it at once. Another circumstance decides me, that my Second Lecture, prepared for this Number of the Dial, is entitled 'The Conservative.' . . . Yet I look at the MS hungrily; & doubtfully do I let it depart. I have read it carefully through, with no small curiosity, & with the more that I have just had under special revision my speech on the same matter; and some smart sentences of my new Lecture which I thought were original enough, I read here in your Discourse which I cannot deny that I heard a twelvemonth ago. Some things I like well--many are admirably said,--to some I should like to append a criticism, but the whole Oration is one which Colleges should be very thankful for. (Rusk 3: 84)

Although Emerson never printed Hedge's essay in The Dial, it was this letter of September 1842, which suggests an absolute fence never existed. Emerson may have been disappointed at Hedge as "ecclesiastically conservative," yet he admitted that parts of his own lecture "The Conservative" were a reflection of Hedge's work. "Conservatism and Reform" represented Hedge's position as mediator between the old and the new. Representing the Party of the Past and the Party of the Future (Hunter 199), Hedge and Emerson yet were forced to struggle with questions of the present. Though differing in their interpretations of idealism and the reliability of Reason, several of Emerson's essays indicated a partial acknowledgment of Hedge's Christian Transcendentalism.

"Conservatism and Reform" distinguished between two polarities--the old and the new. These forces divided the world: Faith instinctively moved to the new, and fear cautiously grasped the old. Hedge believed men arranged themselves around one of the poles--dividing the world into conflict (131). Hedge, however, always caught between the old and the new, used most of his essay to take the best features from each. Conservatism was praiseworthy for two reasons: its deference to authority and its veneration for the Past (132). Authority gave direction to the individual mind with the church as a perfect example of this direction. In conjunction with authority, the Past also provided direction because the individual was the product of preceding generations. He was born into certain traditions and institutions which shaped his destiny, and as Hedge stated: "The most air-blown reformer cannot overcome the moral gravitation which connects him with his time. He owes to existing institutions the whole philosophy of his dissent, and draws from Church and State the very ideas by which he would fight against them or rise above them" (143). In return, Hedge also did justice to the good in Reform. The conservative had to recognize the falsehood and corruption gathered around him and be willing to accept the need for religious and governmental reform. Thus, these two antagonisms must be reconciled--an idea which Hedge emphatically supported as late as 1867, shortly after an encounter between conservative Unitarians and Free Religionists:

I care not . . . whether a man be a conservative or a radical in his theology, provided he has sight of this fact [that there is a fundamental difference between religion and philosophy]; provided also he possesses the faculty of self-criticism, which shall teach him his own limitations and the limits of his theme. Conservatism is

wise, so it be the conservatism of intelligent homage to the past, and not the conservatism of worldliness and self-interest, or fear. But radicalism is wiser: I mean the radicalism of disciplined thought, not of impatience, of pugnacity and self-conceit. Wiser yet, wisest of all, is that historic sense which acknowledges the good in both these tendencies, but is too wide-eyed and self-possessed to be entangled in either; which sees that both are polarizations of a truth that neither quite understands. . . . (Williams 14-15)

Hedge's 1833 definition of human progress never drastically changed. Progress was marked by a moving beyond existing forms, yet old forms could not be disregarded. Although Hedge did not use the terms "Conservatism" and "Reform" in 1833, his definition of progress was essentially an acknowledgment and a synthesis of both.

Though quite different in style from "Conservatism and Reform," Emerson's 1841 essay "The Conservative" owes a great deal to Hedge's distinctions between the old and new. Emerson's argument was characterized by a much more dramatic style, thus forming a more memorable picture as Conservatism battled with Reform. Essentially, Emerson used the same introduction: a definition of the two parties and a recognition of their age-old conflict. However, Emerson used vivid imagery and example to illustrate his position. His first example portrayed a conversation between Conservatism and Reform--represented as Saturn and Uranus. One appealed to fate and the other to motion; however, after Saturn finally did move forward and created Jupiter, he was frozen in fear and Jupiter was forced to kill his father in order to save nature from moving backward. Emerson created a stronger argument for the position of Reform, but admitted finally that the two must combine to form a good

society. In a statement much like Hedge's, strong natural images help to illustrate how Conservatism and Reform equaled progress:

. . . it may be safely affirmed of these two metaphysical antagonists, that each is a good half, but an impossible whole. Each exposes the abuses of the other, but in a true society, in a true man, both must combine. Nature does not give the crown of its approbation, namely, beauty, to any action or emblem or actor, but to one which combines both these elements; not to the rock which resists the waves from age to age, nor to the wave which lashes incessantly the rock, but the superior beauty is with the oak which stands with its hundred arms against the storms of a century, and grows every year like a sapling; or the river which ever flowing, yet is found in the same bed from age to age; or, greatest of all, the man who has subsisted for years amid the changes of nature, yet has distanced himself, so that when you remember what he was, and see what he is, you say, what strides! what a disparity is here! (175)

Emerson defined what was best about Conservatism as the Inevitable, or "Fate." While Hedge praised Conservatism for its veneration of the Past, Emerson's Fate was connected with the facts of universal experience. The existing world was the ground on which man stood and the product of all the past. Reform proposed dreams and possibilities, and Emerson challenged the reformer to dream; yet it was the existing world which would stand until "a better cast of the dice is made" (177). In Hedge's words, the most air-blown reformer could not overcome the gravitation which connected him with his time. In the words of Emerson: "the existing world is not a dream, and cannot with impunity be treated as a dream; neither is it a disease; but it is the ground on which you stand, it is the mother of whom you were born. Reform converses with possibilities, perchance with impossibilities; but here is sacred fact" (177). Emerson also addressed Hedge's second valuable quality of

Conservatism: deference to authority. Emerson admitted that man loved the protection of a strong law, although it caused him to rely on the virtue of others. Thus, although the style and the direction of argument often differed, Hedge and Emerson covered many of the same points and reached the same conclusion--an acknowledgment of the good in both the old and the new.

Hedge's oration on Conservatism was also a critique of Emerson's claims for the power of Reason. Emerson exalted the powers of Reason in Nature and "Self-Reliance," yet the death of his son Waldo in 1842 and his realization of the limits of the Transcendental movement caused him to reconsider this lofty placement (Hunter 200). He discovered his opportunity in the 1843 essay "Experience." If Emerson emphatically argued for the power of the self-reliant soul, it was not without having acknowledged an important part of Hedge's Christian Transcendentalism: the need for institutions and the necessity of revelation. As Hedge believed, the tradition of institutions formed a guard against the subjectivity of Reason:

The only policy for an enlightened Conservatism, in this day of judgment, is to confront Reason with Reason,--to show the philosopher that his philosophy is comprehended and seen through by a philosophy older than his, and that beneath those inquiries which he deems so profound . . . there lies a region of perpetual calm, where rest the rock-foundations of Church and State, and where gushes in secret the everlasting fountain which he who drinketh shall thirst no more. ("Conservatism and Reform" 147)

Man embraced the laws of institutions which provided the foundation for his experience. Institutions represented God; man's intuitive insights, taken directly from the divine in every man, also represented God.

Knowledge of God "was a concept given in the nature of man, or the product of God's self-revelation from within each man to those who were ready to receive Him" (Le Beau, "Frederic Hedge" 5). Man was not the author of ideas, but rather the receiver. "Conservatism and Reform" argued that ideas were ordered by a higher power; "Experience" acknowledged this power of revelation. Emerson, perhaps, recalled his own life experiences to explain this position:

Life is a series of surprises, and would not be worth taking or keeping if it were not. God delights to isolate us every day, and hide from us the past and the future. We would look about us, but with grand politeness he draws down before us an impenetrable screen of purest sky, and another behind us of purest sky. 'You will not remember,' he seems to say, 'and you will not expect.' . . . The ardors of piety agree at last with the coldest scepticism--that nothing is of us or our works--that all is of God. . . . The results of life are uncalculated and uncalculable. (483)

By the mid 1840s, Emerson would no longer dismiss the constraints which Hedge placed upon Reason as mere "phantoms." Perhaps Emerson's definition of "self-culture"--self-growth or man's ability to perceive his own revelation--was somewhat less emphatic since he realized the controlling influence of God established certain limitations on the power of the self-reliant soul. Not all spiritual truth could be known intuitively through man's higher power of Reason. Emerson described God's power of revelation as the ability to lower an impenetrable screen of purest sky which only He had the power to lift. This screen limited man's ability to know the past and the future; it provided an element of mystery in His creation. The "uncalculated" and the "uncalculable" became a necessary part of Emerson's "Experience": "Dream delivers us to dream, and there is no end to

illusion. Life is a train of moods like a string of beads . . ." (473). Similarly, Hedge defined man as a "theater of many moods," ruled by laws beyond his control and incorporated into existing institutions.

Hedge had the opportunity to review Emerson's second series of essays in an 1845 article for the Christian Examiner, and he commented that the second volume possessed less interest and charm than the first. Nevertheless, he pronounced this judgment with some hesitation, for he devoted much of the review to an explanation of the merits of Emerson's "Experience." Hedge believed the essay unusually complete and a perfect illustration of the individuality of the author. It was Emerson's statement of the many moods of human life: a recognition of life's phases, forces, illusions, and realities. Emerson was the philosopher taking account of life like an astronomer from his private observatory (89).

Hedge believed Emerson defined seven factors which he labeled the primary components of man's being: Illusion, Temperament, Succession, Surface, Surprise, Reality, and Subjectiveness. These were the "threads on the loom of time . . . the lords of life" (Emerson, "Experience" 490-91). Hedge initially felt these classifications rather arbitrary, but they became more comprehensible with further study. "Experience" pleased Hedge because of the strong emphasis it gave to present and momentary life--the variety of man's moods:

It is too much the fashion with good people, and is thought to be the genuine language of piety, to flout and degrade the present life, to speak disparagingly of this world, to call it a vale of tears, a state of sin and sorrow, scarce worthy a single thought or care from a rational and immortal being. . . . The doctrine of a life

to come has been so handled as to throw, not light, but a shadow on the life that now is. We doubt, more harm than good is done by such representations. Harm is done by every thing which tends to beget indifference to the present, and to disgust us with the actual conditions of our being. On this account, the frequent use of that metaphor, so beloved by the preachers of religion, which likens life to a pilgrimage, has seemed to us of doubtful expediency. Beautiful and appropriate as it was in its original, Scriptural application, the inordinate expansion of it in the popular theology has served to throw a sad and false covering over the being of man, and to cherish a weakly, peeling sentimentality, incompatible with a healthy and vigorous life. A heavy day's journey through a tedious, barren land, with a comfortable inn at the end of it;--is the translation of this metaphor, as it lies in the common apprehension. It is time the popular theology should reconsider this view of life. We need to set up the strong claims of the present against a hereafter, which would cheat us out of here and now. This life is no more a pilgrimage than every future state. The conditions of well-being are the same for man in all states. The way to heaven is heaven, and heaven is nothing but a way--a method of the soul. The true doctrine is, as Mr. Emerson states it, "to find the journey's end in every step of the road." (Hedge, "Emerson's Writings" 90-91).

Hedge agreed with Emerson's concern for the present. Man should focus on the beauty of the present rather than dwell on a past or future state.

Hedge called for a change in the view of life as a pilgrimage. A heavy day's journey should be replaced by a vigorous life, or as Emerson phrased it: "to live the greatest number of good hours, is wisdom" (479).

Hedge expressed disappointment with many of Emerson's other essays. The one identity he wished to maintain in judging was that of Christian examiner and a Christian spirit of examination (94). Hedge admitted that Emerson was not a Christian in the traditional sense; he did not believe in miraculous revelation. He regarded Christ as a teacher of religious truths and a reformer. Thus, the Christian church was like a school

founded by the philosopher, Jesus. Hedge condemned this view of Christianity, stating that the church grew from the acts of Divine Providence and the powers of revelation. At the same time, however, he judged Emerson to be a true Christian because of his deep sympathy with humankind and his regard for the rights of individual man. Jesus's words emphasized the individual soul and Emerson was concerned with the nourishment of the soul.

Mr. Emerson is by no means a denier of the Christian faith. If he errs in rejecting the form of revelation, he is very far from rejecting its substance and its spirit; very far from being a general unbeliever. . . . He is not a denier, but an affirmer; a sincere and consistent affirmer of moral and spiritual truth. . . . He who embraces a few great principles, with heart and soul, though he reject much that is worthy to be received, has a better title to be called believer, ay, and Christian too, than one who yields a feeble and politic assent to all that tradition prescribes, without converting the smallest portion of it into spiritual life. (98-99)

Hedge appreciated much of Emerson's essay because he had at least acknowledged many of the ideas of the Christian Transcendentalist. Hedge's 1845 review seemed characteristic of the Emerson-Hedge friendship: he criticized Emerson's beliefs but also wished to praise him. Emerson also followed this pattern, and eventually, both men had to acknowledge the ideas they shared.

Both Emerson and Hedge described man as existing within a train of many moods. It seems only appropriate to describe their relationship in the same manner: their friendship was a theater of many moods. Hedge's early defense of Transcendentalism was an emphatic statement; a position which Emerson considered to be one of conviction. Hedge also considered

his early statements to rest on a strong foundation, yet he always placed this foundation within the boundaries of the church. He represented the Christian Transcendentalist--struggling to move outside the realm of traditional Unitarianism yet never embracing the pure Transcendentalist philosophy. His position never significantly changed. Emerson was somewhat baffled by Hedge's ability to be "ecclesiastically conservative" yet "intellectually radical," yet it was Emerson who perhaps modified his position in later years. At the least, he recognized the convictions of a Christian Transcendentalist.

Hedge and Emerson never existed on opposite sides of a strong barrier. Despite his occasional dismissals of Hedge's ability as a true scholar, Emerson yet found many of his friend's ideas within his own argument. Rising above personal resentment, their friendship perhaps represents the ideas which Hedge used to conclude "Conservatism and Reform": In the conflict between the old and the new, one must be happy to find a point of reconciliation common to both. One must stand his own ground and produce something of his own yet be aware of the power to discover common ground with others. Emerson was certainly aware of this power as he imagined a group of friends who would live near him and form a complete neighborhood and a good society. He recorded this dream in his journal:

There is something grand in the relation of two men between whom a perfect good understanding subsists.

Here is a proposition for the formation of a good neighborhood. Hedge shall live at Concord, & Mr Hawthorn: George Bradford shall come then; & Mrs Ripley afterward. Who knows but Margaret Fuller & Charles Newcomb would presently be added? These if added to our present kings & queens, would make a rare, an unrivalled company. If these all had (all) their hearth & home here, we might have a solid social satisfaction, instead

of the disgust & depression of visitation. We might find that each of us was more completely isolated & sacred than before. You may come--no matter how near in place, so that you have metes & bounds, instead of the confounding & chaos of visiting.

(Ghostlike we glide through life & should not know the place again.) (Gilman and Parsons 8: 172-73)

Interestingly, Emerson's last sentence, written in ink over the same sentence in pencil, was used in his essay "Experience."

Hedge was always a member of Emerson's "good society," though a messenger for Transcendentalism and not the strong leader of the movement. One can only speculate how the Transcendentalist movement would have differed had Hedge been a leader. Hedge's contemporary and fellow Transcendental Club member Elizabeth Peabody commented on this possibility approximately 20 years after the general demise of the movement. If Hedge had assumed the leadership, he "might have introduced Transcendentalism in such a way that it would not have become identified with the extreme Individualism which is now perhaps indelibly associated with it in America" (Le Beau, "Frederic Hedge" 12). Hedge's contemporaries as well as modern day readers certainly find evidence for this possibility in the words of Hedge himself. Continually caught between the old and the new, between the role as Unitarian minister and the potential role as leading Transcendentalist, Hedge searched for his own ideals--using the good from all his roles--and remained a Christian Examiner. In "Conservatism and Reform," Hedge explains his position: "There is no stand-point out of society from which society can be reformed. 'Give me where to stand,' was the ancient postulate. 'Find where to stand,' says modern Dissent. 'Stand where you are,' said Goethe, 'and move the world'" (144).

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