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**Belknap of New Hampshire: Human experience in early
America**

Lawson, Russell M., Ph.D.
University of New Hampshire, 1987

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BELKNAP OF NEW HAMPSHIRE:
HUMAN EXPERIENCE IN EARLY AMERICA

BY

RUSSELL H. LAWSON
Bachelor of Arts, Oklahoma State University, 1979
Master of Arts, Oklahoma State University, 1982

DISSERTATION

Submitted to the University of New Hampshire
in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

History

May, 1987

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This dissertation has been examined and approved.

Charles E. Clark

Dissertation Director, Charles E.
Clark, Professor of History

Donald J. Wilcox

Donald J. Wilcox, Professor of History

Robert C. Gilmore

Robert C. Gilmore, Professor of History

Laurel Thatcher Ulrich

Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, Assistant
Professor of History

David H. Watters

David H. Watters, Associate Professor
of English

April 29, 1987

Date

PREFACE

Humanism is a concept that has been so torn, wrenched, and dissected, particularly in the twentieth century, that it is all but meaningless. It is therefore with a just sense of irony that I denote this study "humanist." I do not mean by "humanism" a watered-down Enlightenment science and liberal program for social action, which describes the most recent American humanism. Nor is humanism a front for a cultural program where "independent" thinking is subordinated to a group defined truth, which was the goal of the New Humanists of the 1920s and 1930s, and subsequently of academic humanists in the years after World War II. These various humanisms generally hark back to Renaissance humanism either by a stress on education, an emphasis on concrete human experience, or a concern for cultural standards or social action. Nevertheless twentieth-century humanisms have ignored the basic quality that defines humanism: the concern for personal knowledge. The New Humanist Irving Babbitt did not have personal knowledge on his mind when he wrote,

The individual who is practising humanistic control is really subordinating to the part of himself which he possesses in common with other men that part of himself which is driving him apart from them. If several individuals submit to the same or similar humanistic discipline,

they will become psychically less separate, will, in short, move towards a communion. ("Humanism: An Essay at Definition," in Norman Foerster, ed. Humanism and America, (New York: 1930), 49.)

Nor did the British humanist H. J. Blackham: "Can one come to terms with oneself and thus the world unless one knows what the terms are which one has to accept?" "To come to terms means to give up trying to make one's own terms. This ceasing to be an island [is] joining the continent of other beings[,] . . . a surrender of self-sufficiency." (Humanism, (Penguin Books, 1968), 193.)

The word "humanism" implies a concern for humans across time and place rather than specific nationalities, cultures, and institutions. Although humans are diverse, changeful, and unique, coming from a variety of backgrounds, having singular experiences, humans are an inclusive group, with certain universal characteristics. We all die, for example, and love, fear, experience nature, seek truth.

Humanism is therefore internal, dealing with individual truth and experience. Each human answers differently the question, What does it mean to be human? What unites our answers is a common source, ourselves, and a few simple constants in an otherwise diverse whole. The French philosopher and Renaissance humanist, Montaigne, knew this best when he declared,

I study myself more than any other subject. This is my metaphysics, this is my physics. . . . I would rather understand myself well by self-study than by reading Cicero. . . . Caesar's life has no more examples for us than our own. . . . Let

us but listen to it, and we will tell ourselves all that we chiefly need to know. (Essays, (Penguin Books, 1958), 353-354.)

This study is humanist because it is framed upon the assumptions that individual, personal knowledge is the ultimate basis for truth, and that the type of history that promotes such an individual search for truth has the most utility. Most historical inquiry is not humanist. Historical truth, in the twentieth century, is determined by the academic community according to accepted standards of excellence, such as the thoroughness and definitiveness of the research. The layman does not decide historical truth, and in the search for personal knowledge he is rarely given the opportunity to determine the validity of the historian's work.

My goals are to use history as a tool for human understanding; to use a past life to uncover human truths that transcend time; and to use Jeremy Belknap's life to stimulate personal exploration and analysis in myself as well as in the reader. I did not select Jeremy Belknap because he is fascinating, worthy of study, or deserves better treatment by historians. I was attracted by the twenty-year correspondence between Belknap and his friend Ebenezer Hazard. In his letters to Hazard, Belknap complained and bragged, speculated and professed ignorance, wept and shouted for joy. I have peered into these openings to see Belknap's feelings toward life and death, humanity and nature, love and duty.

In Chapter Two, for example, "Duty," I focus upon the events that led Belknap, a Congregational minister, to break with his parish at Dover, New Hampshire. My intention is not to understand what caused the rupture, nor to explain Belknap's place in eighteenth-century American religious developments, nor to contribute to an understanding of Congregationalism. Rather, I want to know Belknap's bitterness and loneliness, his love and hate, his hope. To know these feelings and remain an objective observer is to love without touching, to die without pain. To feel what Belknap felt requires deep personal involvement. Ultimately to know Belknap without knowing myself is impossible.

My research is aimed at understanding the sentiments revealed by Belknap's words: What do the words tell me about Belknap? What do they tell me about myself? As a result I largely restrict my research to Belknap's writings, and to my feelings. Is it justified for the scholar to research himself? Let us pose another question: Is it justified for the scholar to try to detach himself? Historians cannot achieve objectivity, nor can they escape subjectivity. Historical scholarship that uses sociology, psychology, and other social sciences, that relies on a scientific, objective methodology, has failed to convince me of either its truth potential or its utility. Why should historians research the past for its own sake? Some may argue for the modern scientific notion of

cumulative knowledge, or declare that historical research will somehow shape future policies or help people understand their heritage. These are vague attempts to justify something that is difficult to justify. I tend to agree with Michel Foucault that discontinuity rather than continuity shapes human affairs. But I am not such a nominalist. My search for utility has resulted in a personal kind of historical analysis--this study is a brief trial, an exploration, an example.

Hence, I have painted a portrait of a man. Each stroke of the brush details something intimate about a man, something I alone feel. The painting expresses the artist's personal truth. Each observer interprets the painting differently. Yet in the subtle nuances of color and shade, or in the subject's smile, eyes, and demeanor, the observer grasps, precisely, the artists' meaning. This internal truth I seek to portray and to share.

For example, all humans cope with the ultimacy of death. Undeniably, seventeenth-century Calvinists and twentieth-century agnostics have different perceptions of death. In the seventeenth century, death was inseparable from life, constantly on the mind, woven into the culture. Death was around the corner for both young and old; it was punishment for sin; it resulted in either eternal life or eternal damnation. Today, as Philippe Aries has argued in Western Attitudes Toward Death from the Middle Ages to the Present, (Baltimore: John Hopkins, 1974), death is

ignored; people think themselves immortal; they try to hide from death. The dead, lying in a casket, embalmed and well-dressed, are considered by family as "asleep" rather than "dead". Death is ignored, unexpected; it devastates those whom it visits.

Here, then, are two opposing cultural perceptions of death. Yet both Calvinists and agnostics experience fear, and the need for hope. Even Calvinists felt uncertain about the future: would death mean Heaven or Hell? The basic elements in a human's confrontation with death--uncertainty, fear, hope, and love--I experience in myself and sense in Belknap. Although two cultures, two hundred years, and countless unique experiences separate us, in this common experience of impending death we are united in a subtle, implicit way.

* * *

A few comments are necessary to explain the mechanics of the narrative. When I use literary techniques--stories, metaphors, analogies, settings--I aim for consistency with Belknap's perspective and experiences. Whenever possible I borrow metaphors and analogies from Belknap's own writings. Literary techniques are nothing more than agencies to reach the reader's feelings and experiences; they are not meant to reflect established historical facts. Moreover, as my intention is that the

narrator remain obscure, I abstain from dealing with scholarly issues in the text, reserving such comments for the notes. A scholarly front would impede the intimate connection I want to cultivate between the reader and Belknap. The only exceptions are the introduction, "A Portrait," and the conclusion, "Eulogy." My hope is that the reader will aggressively seek knowledge from the text, using his own standards of truth to determine the validity of the narrative.

In quotes, I have not changed Belknap's spelling unless it impedes clarity. I have, however, spelled out all ampersands.

I have refrained from substituting "human" for "man," and "he or she" for "he"; my choice is made entirely for the sake of style, and where applicable "man" and "he" should be taken to represent all humans.

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CHRONOLOGY OF BELKNAP'S LIFE

- 1744 June 4th: Born to Joseph and Sarah Byles Belknap of Boston
- 1751 Entered John Lovell's South Grammar Latin School
- 1758 December: Entered Harvard College; ranked 35 out of 51
- 1762 Notes in his Diary, "Born and educated in this Country, I glory in the Name of BRITON."
- 1762 July: Graduated from Harvard College
- 1762-64 Taught public grammar school in Milton, Mass.
- 1763 Published An Eclogue Occasioned by the Death of the Reverend Alexander Cumming
- 1764 Admitted to full membership in Boston's Old South Church
- 1764 Dec.: Moved to Portsmouth, N.H.; taught English school
- 1765-66 Taught grammar school in Greenland, N.H.
- 1765 July: Received Master of Arts degree from Harvard
- 1765 Sept.: Experienced uncertainty over ministry
- 1766 Jan. 1st: Considered life as Indian missionary
- 1766 Witnessed mob action opposing the Stamp Act
- 1767 Jan. 19th: Accepted call from First Parish in Dover, N.H.
- 1767 Feb. 18th: Ordination and Confession of Faith
- 1767 June 15th: Married Ruth Eliot of Boston
- 1767 Began to question propriety of "halfway" covenant popular in New England Congregational churches
- 1768 April 7th: Daughter, Sarah, born
- 1769 Dec. 2nd: Son, Joseph, born

- 1770 March: Boston Massacre
- 1771 July: Defended his reformist activities to his father
- 1771 Dec. 31st: Son, Samuel, born
- 1771-1772 Began work on History of New Hampshire
- 1771 Published A Plain and Earnest Address from a Minister to a Parishioner, on the Neglect of the Publick Worship, and Preaching of the Gospel
- 1772 Nov.: Preached a Sermon on Military Duty before Gov. John Wentworth and New Hampshire militia
- 1773 Dec.: Boston Tea Party
- 1774 April 3rd: Daughter, Elizabeth, born
- 1774 Aug.: Journey to Dartmouth College
- 1774 Coercive Acts closed Boston harbor
- 1774 June: Responded negatively to proposal of nonimportation of British goods by Boston and Portsmouth Committees of Correspondence
- 1774-75 Aug. to April: Increasingly concerned over British stranglehold of Boston
- 1775 April: Fighting broke out at Lexington and Concord; Belknap hurried to Boston to help his parents escape
- 1775 Oct.: Traveled to Cambridge and Roxbury to view battlefront
- 1776 Dec. 30th: Son, John, born
- 1777 March: Letter to Dover Selectmen complaining of insufficient salary
- 1777 Articles of Confederation unofficially governing the new states
- 1779 Belknap-Hazard Correspondence began
- 1779 June 4th: Son, Andrew, born
- 1779 July: Published Apoloque of the Hen at Pennycook, a parody of a draft of the N.H. Constitution

- 1779-1781 Began outwardly to embrace Universalism
- 1782 Aug.: Addressed Dover parish for redress of his difficulties
- 1783 Sept.: Treaty of Paris ended War for Independence
- 1783 Agreed with Robert Aitken of Philadelphia to print his History of New Hampshire
- 1783 Apprenticed son Joseph to Robert Aitken
- 1784 Apprenticed son Samuel to Boston merchant Samuel Eliot
- 1784 April: Wrote Hazard a letter highly critical of Confederation
- 1784 July: Toured White Mountains of Central New Hampshire
- 1784 Published volume 1 of History of New Hampshire
- 1784 Sent History to George Washington
- 1785 Helped his friend Josiah Waters sue Dover parish for debt
- 1785 June: Preached an Election Sermon before the General Court of New Hampshire
- 1785 Sept.-Oct.: Journeyed to Philadelphia
- 1786 Jan.-Feb.: Seriously considering leaving Dover
- 1786 April 30th: Ended connection with Dover Parish
- 1786 May to Aug.: Renewed hope of reconciliation with Dover parish
- 1786 Shays' Rebellion in Mass.
- 1787 Feb.: Accepted call from parish at Long Lane in Boston
- 1787 Aug.: Son Joseph and Robert Aitken separated
- 1788 Jan.: Mass. Ratifying Convention met at Long Lane meetinghouse
- 1788 Feb.: Mass. ratified Constitution

- 1788 Petitioned Mass. General Court for abolition of slave trade
- 1788 Constitution ratified
- 1789 March 28th: Son, Samuel, died
- 1789 April: Preached at the installation of his friend Jedidiah Morse to Charlestown church
- 1789 April: George Washington inaugurated first president
- 1789 Oct.: Washington journeyed to Boston; met Belknap
- 1790 Aug.: Wrote plans for Antiquarian Society
- 1791 Historical Society begun; Belknap Corresponding Secretary
- 1791 Renewed friendship with former Gov. John Wentworth
- 1791 Published vol. 2 of History of New Hampshire
- 1792 Received Doctor of Divinity at Harvard commencement
- 1792 Published vol. 3 of History of New Hampshire
- 1792 Published Foresters
- 1793 Published Memoirs of the Lives, Characters and Writings of . . . Dr. Isaac Watts and Dr. Philip Doddridge
- 1794 Sat for portrait by Henry Sargent
- 1794 Published vol. 1 of American Biography
- 1795 June: Felt "admonition" to get his affairs in order
- 1795 Published Dissertations on the Character, Death, & Resurrection of Jesus Christ
- 1796 Journeyed to New York and toured Oneida Country
- 1797 Published Sacred Poetry
- 1798 Published vol. 2 of American Biography
- 1798 May: Delivered Fast-day sermon
- 1798 June 20th: Died of apoplexy

ABSTRACT

BELKNAP OF NEW HAMPSHIRE:
HUMAN EXPERIENCE IN EARLY AMERICA

by

Russell M. Lawson
University of New Hampshire, May, 1987

This study is a personal analysis of the eighteenth-century historian-scientist-minister, Jeremy Belknap (1744-1798). Belknap's life is used to illustrate a type of history denoted "humanist" history. The goal of humanism is to uncover general truths from specific experiences. Thus, emphasis is placed upon Belknap's life-experiences and feelings rather than his place in the culture of eighteenth-century New England. The author seeks to stimulate readers to empathy, and thus reflection. Ideally, readers will discover that a past human felt the same feelings they have felt, of love, fear, uncertainty, and hope; in seeking to understand Belknap's feelings readers will, it is hoped, seek to understand their own. By studying Belknap's life, therefore, we can learn about our own.

The methodology is twofold. A large collection of letters and personal papers are preserved at the Massachusetts Historical Society, particularly the twenty-year correspondence between Belknap and his friend

Ebenezer Hazard. These papers allow the historian who uses traditional historical methods to reconstruct not only Belknap's life but also his feelings and personal beliefs. Moreover, the author has consciously used his own experiences and feelings as a source with which to understand Belknap's. Hence, to know Belknap's feelings of love the author has analyzed his own. All historians interpret sources subjectively; this historian has merely done it explicitly and purposefully.

As a result this study portrays those internal feelings that humans experience the most but understand the least--of hope, faith, love, happiness, sorrow, harmony, and conflict. But more, this study portrays a man whose life was, rather than one of predictable normality, full of contradiction and confusion. Belknap, like all humans, was caught between the contending forces of culture and human constants, life's particulars and life's truths.

INTRODUCTION

A PORTRAIT

I entered the room and saw the portrait. Painted in 1794, it was well-preserved, very distinct and colorful. The painting was of a man I knew; although he lived two centuries ago, I had read his letters, diaries, poetry, and essays, so that when I saw his portrait I felt very comfortable in his presence, or would have had he been alive. What I saw in the portrait, in other words, was very familiar to me; my first glance revealed nothing unexpected or out of the ordinary. His dress befitted his occupation, an eighteenth-century Protestant clergyman. It gave him a distinguished look, as if he was meant for no other work. The black gown reflected authority; it set him apart from other men, raised him a notch on the hierarchical ladder of status within my imagination. He looked intelligent as well, for he held a pen and book; it appeared that he had been hard at work in intellectual exercise, and had just detached his concentration in response to the artist's bidding. What must he have been doing this day? Doubtless he either read the work of Dr. Johnson or Locke, or he wrote in his Diary the day's events, or, even more introspectively, he jotted in a journal some famous quote with his own critical comments

attached. Yet as my eyes wandered to the volumes in the background, I realized that this man of letters, this writer of histories and tales and lives, must have been similarly engaged. Volume Two, perhaps, of his American Biography was getting the finishing touches. Or, it could be that this critical man, who constantly sought the Truth, who revised to learn, was at work correcting, altering, or supplementing an earlier work from his own hand.

All of this fit my image of Jeremy Belknap nicely--it was a cozy image of a cozy room in which sat a man of intellect ceaselessly thinking, working, reflecting, writing. Did he ever sleep or eat? His eyes might have suggested the lack of one, but his body confirmed plenty of the other. The portrait suggested that he was a man of many roles. Here was a clergyman who cared deeply to be a scholar, to discover Truth for himself and not to accept it upon authority. Here was a scholar who sought not just to read the thoughts of others but to compose his own as well. Here was a writer of prose the quality of which went beyond idle scratchings to published volumes of repute and learning. Besides wisdom, his face radiated peace and friendliness. Surely this man was a good neighbor, an important part of his community. Surely he was a clergyman who sought only the well being of his flock. If at one time he was a patriot, then clearly he was a benevolent enemy, striving only to defeat not

destroy, to forgive and become friends again. He was, I knew, father, husband, lover, and poet as well. These roles were less clear from the portrait, and so lacking such explicitness, I sought harder, dug deeper.

I focused upon his face. I found his countenance pleasing. He looked to be a good man. It was difficult to find the source of his apparent goodness. His rather large nose was not attractive, though size was not the reason for its ugliness. His nose protruded downward, a dipping, hawkish thing. Nevertheless there seemed to be too much of this ugly thing, and I was repelled by it. His face was large, fat, and ruddy, burned by the cold sea breeze, a quality that comforted me, perhaps because I am attracted to the sea, perhaps because it was familiar and expected. His forehead was large, broad, expanding outward, slowly conquering the frontier of the hairline. His brown hair had streaks of grey, signifying maturity and hard work. His close-cropped hair only served to emphasize the fatness of his face; I disliked the style of the cut. His chin was not pronounced, though if his neck had been thinner the chin had potential for a distinguished squareness that could appear tied to resolution and inner strength. His eyes intrigued me. Eyes, more than anything else it seems, more than dress, bearing, speech, hair, tell me about a person. Eyes seem like port-holes to the inside, like avenues to truth. His blue eyes looked tired, as if he worried and studied long

past sunset. They were small, squinty, not particularly lovely or piercing, not large and knowing but small and peeking; they seemed forced wide apart by his expansive nose. His eyebrows were not distinguished, and gave no support to the squinty eyes. But still I was attracted to his eyes. And I found, as I looked harder and deeper into his face, that his eyes were inseparable from his mouth; they were as companions, sharing something, some secret or hidden laughter.

His thin-lipped small mouth by no means dominated his face. What struck me above all else was the smile--at least, I think it was a smile. It was more than a smirk, and less than a grin, and it bothered me a little because it appeared effeminate and soft. But when I looked at the mouth I could not help glancing at the eyes, so united were they. The eyes were not foolish looking, but appeared intelligent if not brilliant, and above all, benevolent. The eyes invited me in the same way that the nose repelled me and the mouth confused me. Why was he smiling in that strange way? Was he happy, or had he a great thought, or was he unsure how to hold his mouth, being entirely uncomfortable sitting for the portrait? This last I began to think was true, for the eyes and the books, the gown and the pen, coexisted well. The mouth seemed foreign, out of place; and it struck me that when compared to the aura of learning and wisdom in the portrait, Belknap's mouth stood out as foolish, oafish,

the grin spoiling to an extent the whole intellectual facade.

I recognized the paradox here. Belknap was a fool as well as a thinker. His eyes would reveal great thoughts but his mouth would express them clumsily. His eyes seemed open to truth, full of reason, yet his mouth would open, to drink sometimes sloppily, to eat sometimes too much. His eyes seemed detached from his face, in some sort of idea-realm, but his mouth was too attached to his body. Yet I realized that when he was sick his eyes would show sickness; when he vomited his eyes could not be more detached from ideas. His eyes betrayed sleeplessness and fatigue from inner conflict; his mouth smirked in jest at the absurdity of the conflict. And so I saw how his eyes and mouth could seem so different, but like man and woman could unite together inseparably.

At last I realized this portrait told me very little about Belknap's roles as historian, writer, clergyman, neighbor, father, or husband. I could not tell by his gown how distinguished he was without it, nor could I see by the book covers what was within them, nor by his pen what he was writing, nor by his eyes what he was thinking, nor by his mouth what he was tasting. I could not tell if he was happy or sad, sick or well, tired or awake, liked or hated, friendly or mean. Most of the portrait, indeed, was a masquerade, a facade, an attempt to convince by props. Only when I focused upon his face, which cannot be

masked, cannot be hid, did I learn something. To look at his face I had to use my experiences with all faces, including my own. How his eyes and mouth coordinated came from seeing many eyes and mouths, including the ones in the mirror. I approached Belknap's portrait hoping to learn about Belknap--his personality, character, and times--but I was disappointed. I came away with knowledge about the Jeremy Belknap that is usually not seen, the Jeremy Belknap that is in all of us. I went to learn about him, I returned knowing about myself.

* * *

When Jeremy Belknap died in June of 1798, he left behind, among other things, his companion of thirty years, his constant friend, his wife Ruth. He also left behind a lifetime of letters, essays, books, pamphlets, diaries, poems--and, of course, a portrait. During the eleven years that Ruth survived Jeremy, she was very fastidious in keeping "Mr. Belknap's study" and all of its "materials . . . carefully preserved, in the same state in which they were left" at his death. Indeed, a friend wrote soon after her death in 1809 that "it was often the occupation of her leisure hours to examine, arrange, and peruse his extensive manuscript collections, and to indulge a fond attention to his favorite objects, by a recurrence to his valuable library."¹ There, no doubt, she would sit at his

desk and read the things he had written. Everything she read brought back countless memories, experiences, and feelings. When she died they died too.

Let us imagine that we are in Belknap's study with Ruth Belknap, looking over her shoulder as she pages through books and letters. She will experience a variety of emotions coming from memories that are unknown to us. Nevertheless the documents can speak to us, too, if only we let them, to make us feel, reflect, and learn about ourselves.

CHAPTER NOTES

1. Ruth Belknap to Hazard, 10/1803, Belknap Papers, Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society (hereafter referred to as CMHS), ser. 5, vol. 3 (reissue, with Appendix), 370; Jane Marcou Belknap, The Life of Jeremy Belknap, D.D., (New York: 1847), 245.

CHAPTER 1

LOVE

See yon rose-bud how it Blooms,
Scatt'ring round its rich perfumes:
Should you scratch the smiling Flow'r,
Secret Thorns would shew their Pow'r.

This an Emblem is to prove,
Prudence, still should wait on Love;
For in Love's delusive Reign,
Pleasure's mingled oft with Pain.¹

"I hope my Love you will be preserved safe from every fear till my Return," Jeremy wrote Ruth from Boston in the spring of 1772. Absence stimulates fears among those in love. The imagination tells sad stories of despair and pain, increasing the emptiness, the loneliness. "Tell the Children that Daddy loves them and longs to see them and you too"--"Kiss my dear little Lambs for me." Love becomes a longing for the warmth and contentment of companionship and intimacy. Something within cries out for completion, and strangely the cries go in just the right direction, drawn toward the object of love. "My Love to you is inextinguishable--pray be easy and resigned." The feeling seems eternal, never to be snuffed; with it come tempting and convincing ideas of the transcendence of death and ultimate unity. "My dearest Life, I remember you and my dear Children with the utmost tenderness--pray

keep your Patience alive as much as possible"--Patience with the daily separation of two that should be one, patience with the knowledge of impending death, patience with the fear of eternal singularity, eternal loneliness. "I hope to see you with renewed Pleasure."²

Jeremy Belknap found many things in life pleasurable: Love for his wife, care for his children, the joys of friendship, his hope in God. God grants man the gift of pleasure, but as with many of God's gifts man rarely uses it wisely. He who gazes upon a rose and yearns to smell it, so grabs it to fulfill his wish, soon laments his decision, his hand repelled by thorns. Such it is with all pleasures. Pleasure is a relaxation, a release of tension, an explosion of loss of control. This absolute must be tempered; man can enjoy pleasure but moderately, retaining control. Likewise to forfeit all pleasure is absurd. Jeremy Belknap sought to love his wife but not be lost in love; yet neither would he repress his feelings.

Pleasure incarnate is the child, newborn, crying and laughing, then toddling and falling, searching and reaching, challenging the unknown, growing. Belknap once told a friend: why should I hesitate to enjoy my children?

It is natural to love them, it is necessary we should. Reason, prudence, and time will teach us how to set bounds to this fondness; but where is the harm of indulging it, especially at first, when the thing is new? How much more rational to play with a darling child than with a lap-dog, a parrot, or squirrel! Let Nature have vent.

'Enjoy the present, nor with needless cares
Of what may spring from blind misfortune's womb

Appal the surest hour that life bestows. . . .'

"I think it is an exercise of gratitude to Heaven for its blessings, to enjoy them. As they are sent to sweeten the bitter cup of life, let us taste the sweet, and thank the Giver."³

As shepherd to his "little Lambs," Belknap tried to instill principles and behavior that he had learned from life, such as self-control, humility, industry, piety, and curiosity. When Sally was on a lengthy visit to Boston, Belknap wrote her this advice:

Remember, my dear, that how great soever be your advantages your improvement will depend chiefly on yourself, that is on the use you make of your advantages. Good examples must be copied into your own Life and Character or they will be of no actual benefit to you. A Person may run through many books without retaining any Ideas and may be much in good Company without learning sentiment or behaviour, in that Case the fault is his own. . . . Be careful to observe and imitate every amiable Quality in those Persons you have opportunity to be acquainted with. Good manners if I am not mistaken are better learnt by imitation than instructions. But let not your attention to a proper behaviour among men put out of your mind your duty to God. He is the father of your Spirit and your best and never failing friend. Let his word be the rule of your Life, and be assured that he requires nothing of you but what is for your own comfort and happiness. A right behaviour toward God and man is the whole of Religion.

Sam, who had difficulties in ciphering and reading, received constant encouragement and admonitions. Be "very attentive to business" said the father. Read the Gospel, listen at meeting, and "say your prayers at night, and remember that you are always in the Presence of your Maker and that you must give account of yourself to God."⁴

Belknap's ideal was to provide his children with the best possible education. But how his anger would rise when he thought of their lack of formal schooling. The people of Dover appeared to disregard their childrens' moral and intellectual development. Belknap tried to alter this destructive course, but the Dover inhabitants closed their ears to the clergyman. His children, lacking education! The absurdity of such a notion, fueled by the reality of it, made Belknap conclude regarding his oldest boy, as he expressed to Ebenezer Hazard:

A sense of duty to [Jo], and a regard to his interest, in conjunction with my other children, have led me to a determination, as soon as ever they are of sufficient age, to put them out of this place. It is not in my power to place them at public schools where their board must be paid for; but if I can get them into some good family in the rank of apprentices, in places where they may have some opportunities of profiting by evening schools, and at the same time be learning some trade to get their future living in the world, it is all that I can do for them; and I must, in the use of these means, commit them to the care of Divine Providence.⁵

As a result, Belknap sought a master for his oldest son Jo, and soon had it directly from his good friend Hazard that a Philadelphia printer, Robert Aitken, would be a likely choice. During the summer of 1783 plans were made for Jo's apprenticeship. Belknap said of the coming event, Jo

has it deeply impressed on his mind that his future fortune in life will depend on his own behaviour; he knows he can have no expectations from me; and I believe that a lad of tolerable good sense, who sets out in the world with such views as these, and has the opportunity for good

instruction in a decent way to get his bread, has really a better prospect before him, and is more likely to turn out well, than one who places his dependence on a paternal inheritance.⁶

Meanwhile preparations had to be made: it took months to find a ship for passage, and Belknap had to arrange for Jo's schooling in Philadelphia as well as inquire about the possibility of inoculation for the smallpox. By the time Jo was prepared to leave, in October, smallpox became the most important obstacle to the plan: "We have had truly formidable and alarming news of an epidemical sickness in your city," Belknap told the Philadelphian, Hazard. "These accounts you may well think have affected the minds of parents concerned for a son whom they are about sending thither."⁷ Was it right to send Jo from the safety of Dover? What if he became ill? Imagine death without love, in a foreign place, alone.

From the start Belknap had determined what was best for Jo: he had analyzed the prospects, arranged with Aitken for Jo's arrival sometime in early autumn, and actively sought a ship. No matter the reports of disease, when a ship became available Jo would sail from Portsmouth. This was the most reasonable decision, and the reports from Philadelphia were, after all, only reports. But what was that feeling nipping at Belknap's shins? Why was he impatient to get a ship yet uneasy at the prospect? A decision should be acted upon. Yet this decision concerned Jo going to a place far from home, a possibly diseased, dangerous place! Sometimes the vision

of an awful future flashed into Belknap's mind; just as quickly it left. No, he could not say Jo would be all right. He could not guarantee Jo's safety. He could not guess the great Design. He could only act according to his best perceptions and instincts. A man who halts at a pond in a forest for a cool drink may use his senses, experiences, and intuition, but ultimately he takes a chance that the water is not poisonous. He drinks--the decision is made--but as he wipes his mouth he wonders: was it the right decision? And so Belknap experienced certainty and doubt over the decision to send Jo.

By the first week of November a ship had been found; Jo sailed. "If I hear of his safe arrival at Philadelphia," said the father, "my desires will be crowned." Anxiety had lessened. And why not? Pride had replaced fear--Jo had acted the part of a man, and he being only fourteen years of age! "His conduct during the parting scene was so firm and manly, and he shewed such an attention to his interest in the whole affair, that I own it left an impression on my mind much to his advantage, and greatly helped my feelings on the occasion."⁸

Still, for both Ruth and Jeremy the first few months of Jo's absence were not easy. Any word from Philadelphia met the eyes or ears of eager parents, particularly when Jo was being inoculated for smallpox. Belknap mentioned only his wife as worried on this occasion, but himself could not repress a "flood of gratitude" to Hazard and the

"beloved physician", Dr. Clarkson, upon news of Jo's safety.⁹ A burden was removed. For months all attention had been focused on Jo's well-being; it had weighed upon the minds and fears of both parents. Time itself seemed to press upon their lives. As the days passed the force lessened imperceptively. But then on a cold January day the weight of the past few months vanished--Jo was safe.

The following autumn Belknap journeyed alone to Philadelphia to see his son. There he met Aitken, Jo's master, who reported the boy's progress. Belknap heard with pleasure of Jo's acceptance into the Aitken family; the Aitken children treated him like a brother. Both Aitken and Hazard relentlessly told Belknap trivial story after trivial story, yet Belknap yearned for more. To others they were trifling, perhaps, but to him they were endlessly fascinating, spell-binding. During more solemn moments Belknap took Jo aside and reminded him of his duty. For the fifth or sixth time (Jo could not remember) the father told the son of Dr. Franklin, of how young Ben had started out an unknown pauper, but by industry, patience, and other virtues had risen to wealth and reputation. Listen, obey, work hard; make every moment count, study, pray: these are the elements of success.¹⁰

On that night in Philadelphia the pleasure of family and friends dominated. But if Belknap could have looked into the future, as we can, he would have seen a pain so deep and penetrating it would dominate the last decade of

his life.

Pain: Sam was one of the little lambs Jeremy and Ruth caressed and adored. But this little lamb would die, when not much older. He was "aged 17 years and three months" when he died after a painful, horrible illness. The disorder first appeared in 1788: "a deep abscess, in the region of the hip-bone, the discharge of which [is] preceded by the most exquisite pain." Belknap realized from the beginning the seriousness of the illness, and began preparing himself for the support that his wife, son, and other children would need. If only he could hold up as well! His duties as minister, teacher, father, and husband made this the busiest time of his life. The forty-five year old Belknap wrote Hazard in December, "Never in my life was I so straitened for time as now. The duties of my profession, the care of my school, the innumerable callings in and callings out, scarcely leave me room for any other business; and yet other business must be done." Though sorrow would make deep inroads into his own feelings, somehow he had to find the strength to help his son through a time when life is hardest. Ruth, already delicate, would need him for those moments when tears and fatigue swell like thunderheads before a storm. As death approached, Belknap's apprehensions and expectations were fulfilled. The boy was sinking fast by mid-December, though three months of terror remained before release. Ruth never emerged from the sickroom; some inner strength

kept her going. Belknap himself by March was at the end of his emotional strength.¹¹

One Sunday evening, two weeks before Sam died, Belknap took time to write Hazard. "My son is extremely ill, cannot lie in bed, and is almost worn to death by sitting up. His distress is beyond anything that ever I was witness to. . . ." He broke off writing, his eyes fixed on the paper; was there nothing more to say? For weeks and months Belknap had seen his little lamb dying, but worse, the boy was suffering beyond belief. The whole family suffered, too. Every day the two parents watched life sapped from a person they had created and raised in love. He was part of them. They knew his movements, his likes and dislikes, his habits. They felt his happiness; they felt his distress. Two living beings, both full of life, watched existence act itself out in a cruel sort of way. Youth--in the zest of life--was no longer young. Sam was spared none of the pains of the old, none of the taxing demands on patience.

Imagine the horror of the last stages of life making death itself become desirable. Patience becomes the final challenge: Patience with life rather than death, patience with suffering, with waiting, and with the pain, the awful, lovely pain of sharing the final act of life with those one loves. Patience united them. Patience made the unendurable endurable. Patience for Jeremy Belknap was the strength to refrain from crying out to God, Why? Why

must my son endure such pain? Why must I watch him suffer so? Why, if Death is to enter my home, must I sit down with him, get to know him, indeed make him my guest? Such challenges to the unknown knower might be followed by tears, by agonizing cries for mercy, for a miracle, for renewed life, or at least quick death. But no, Jeremy Belknap had convinced himself long ago of two important lessons: one cannot hide from life, but accept it, and live it; and though life is a search for God, humility must accompany this search. God is unknown in these matters. How can man question what he does not know?¹²

Many feelings entered Belknap's soul that Sunday night, feelings that demanded release. Belknap wondered if he should tell Hazard of his anguish, his suffering, his weakness. If only his friend were present, if only. . . Belknap picked up his pen and without hesitation, but in tense desperation and anguish, ended his letter with a silent, simple message, a message that told everything: "Pray for us."

* * *

It felt good to share his pain with Hazard. The pain remained, of course, but two felt it now. Theirs was such a friendship: reciprocating, sharing, helping. Theirs was a connection of need, of desire, of lust, not as lovers but brothers; two men who yearned for the

presence of the other, to unite their thoughts and feelings, if only by letter. In a letter the other was present, if only as an image toward which thoughts and sentiments could be directed. Each loved the other; they rarely spoke the obvious: "I have not one of the right sort [of friends] within a dozen miles of me," Belknap wrote one night to the right sort, Hazard, "I mean a sympathetic and congenial soul, with whom I can mix essences, and talk upon every subject with equal ease and pleasure." "You see"--he said another time, aware of his letter's length--"I can't suppress some ebullitions of things that I have been thinking on, though I meant to confine this letter to one thing only." Or he might say to his friend, as he did in 1784: "As I have always used to write my thoughts freely to you on every subject, I shall make no apology for the following detail with which my mind has been labouring for some time, and wishing for an opportunity to give it vent." Suppose Belknap wanted to talk about the nature of God's plan in the afterlife. Such a topic demanded an active thinker like himself, someone with whom Belknap could enter into discourse around the fireplace until late at night. Sometimes Belknap felt such an urge to express his thoughts and feelings that he had to communicate them to someone.¹³

Of course! Belknap responded to himself late in 1781. It explained everything! For some time Belknap could not reconcile an apparent contradiction in

Scripture. The Lord commissioned his Apostles to carry the Gospel throughout the world, to all men. The Gospel had been spread from the Holy Land across the Mediterranean, north to the Baltic and Britain, into Russia and even the Far East. But why had the Gospel not been brought to America? Why was Christ's order not accomplished? Clearly the Apostles had not lacked the peculiar powers to accomplish such a mission. Clearly Christ was not ignorant of America. The solution of this perplexing problem came slowly to Belknap's inquiring mind, but soon the puzzle pieces rapidly fell into place. The Apostles, he declared, did not bring the Gospel to America because America was not then peopled!¹⁴

So much contemplation, so much thinking on this one subject: such a spontaneous recognition of the truth must be shared. If only Hazard were present, they could talk for hours. To write his friend after the initial excitement was a pale substitute for the kind of sharing Belknap really wanted.

Other times Belknap needed his friend less for advice or opinion, more for his ear; anger and sadness and fatigue exploded, and someone was there to listen. Thus in the spring of 1779 Belknap lamented his inability and incapacity to pursue vigorously an "American Biographical Dictionary." He shared his thoughts.

'Confined,' as Pope says, 'to lead the life of a cabbage,'--unable to stir from the spot where I am planted; burdened with the care of an

increasing family, and obliged to pursue the proper business of my station,--I have neither time nor advantages to make any improvements in science. If I can furnish hints to those who have leisure and capacity to pursue them, it is as much as I can pretend to.¹⁵

On summer nights and winter nights, Belknap repeatedly commented on his "embarrassed and heterogeneous situation": dependent upon a recalcitrant parish to feed his six children, repressed from exercising his mind in intellectual and scientific labors. Hazard read his friend's letters, listened to each word, imagined his friend's anguish, and finally counseled:

If you do as much good as you can, you do as much as you ought to do, and in this case you cannot justly censure yourself. We have different spheres of action allotted us. Providence has devolved the care of a large family upon you, which has confined your usefulness within narrower limits at present than perhaps you would wish; and this kind of usefulness does not make that show which some others do. Indeed, a man in reviewing his day's account would hardly give himself credit for it, and yet all the time he has been attending to his family he has been actually doing his duty.¹⁶

Sometimes Belknap gave the advice--he listened, understood, and tried to help. In 1789, for example, Belknap burned with praise for George Washington and the new government of the Constitution. But what of Hazard? Once Postmaster General of the Confederation, now a private citizen, Hazard was more tepid toward the man responsible for his dismissal: George Washington. After years of devotion Hazard had been thrust into a situation of uncertainty. Not a wealthy man, he had a family, and few pecuniary prospects. As Belknap read the letters

describing his friend's troubles, he recalled his own feelings of fear and instability; he recalled a time when he himself had been unconnected, searching.¹⁷

One October evening Belknap sat at his desk and thought, how can I help my friend? He wrote. When Belknap had departed from Dover in the autumn of 1787, he, too, had experienced unsettledness and uncertainty. But now, from the perspective of time, he realized the wonderful work of Providence. At the time, leaving Dover had seemed an awful misery; yet in his suffering, in this apparent evil, was a great good. Belknap's pen moved along. He told Hazard that after twenty years of following the same path, God had commanded that Belknap stop, look back to the way he had come, forward to where he was going; if the path was right continue, but if not, ahead, at the fork in the road, there would be other paths. Belknap concluded: God gives you the chance to reflect, to form new hopes, to continue or to change. What is the future? God only knows; but be assured that God creates a fork in the road for you. Do not make your decision lightly.

'T is certainly best, my dear friend, that we should sometimes be placed in such a situation as to experience more sensibly than common our dependence on Providence, the uncertainty of temporal enjoyments, and the value of what we have remaining to us when part of our comforts is cut off. The feelings and exercises of a pious mind on such occasions will serve to fix more firmly the principles on which its best hopes are built. I have myself been in such a situation, and I have reaped benefit by it. . . . There is

all the reason in the world to expect that Providence has only given you an opportunity for the exercise of those virtues which are necessary on such an occasion, and that some other door of usefulness will be opened to you, and, I hope, before long. . . . Give yourself no concern about our correspondence: it will not cease with your office. It began before you had it, and I trust it will continue, though perhaps it may not be so frequent. . . . My affection is engaged to the man, and he is the same still, though out of office.¹⁸

And so the two friends, by means of ink and paper, sympathized and empathized, advised and consented, discussed and questioned. But how irritating were ink and paper when what Belknap really wanted were eyes to look into, ears to talk to, and a hand to grasp. In his old age Belknap continued to recall with both pleasure and pain the time--when was it, in 1780?--when the expected visit of his friend Hazard never occurred. What a combination of mishaps and missed opportunities! It was summer; Hazard was visiting New Hampshire on business. Belknap looked forward to the visit: potential interferences were delayed; he was determined to avoid pressing engagements. Unsure of the exact date of the intended visit, "he was told" on Friday "by a gentleman," Belknap later recalled for his friend, "that he saw you at Portsmouth the beginning of that week." Belknap suspected that his friend was going north to Falmouth, and would return to Portsmouth the next day, Saturday, at the latest. On Monday, however, the now concerned Belknap received word that Hazard had sought to visit Dover, "but was disappointed of an horse." The prospect of his

friend's departure before they could meet thrust Belknap into action.

My own horse being then at pasture two miles off, I immediately borrowed one, mounted my chaise, and leaving my business, in which I was much engaged, rode express to the ferry, indulging the pleasing hope of seeing you . . . that I might bring you home for at least one night. You may judge of my feelings when on my arrival I learnt that you had been there on a morning's ride, and was gone three hours before.

Belknap was deeply disappointed. Playfully he later questioned Hazard: "I have been examining myself to see if there has been any thing in my conduct that could possibly lead you to a suspicion that I should not have been glad to see you, and I cannot find the shadow of any thing, except it to be the omission of my writing since your return from Philadelphia." But he was quite serious when he wrote his friend ten weeks later that "I think I have candour enough to excuse what has happened, but I am not Stoic enough not to regret the disappointment every time I think on it, and I cannot bear to think a repetition of it admissible into the rank of probabilities." Another long winter loomed in the future, where the only means of sharing experiences with his good friend was by the same old pen, ink, and paper.¹⁹

Friendship. It was trust. It was confidence in a friend's candor. It was the certainty that his friend would allow Belknap to expose his soul--his ideas, feelings, inclinations, absurdities--without regret. It was an awareness that his friend could translate words in

a letter to the images and feelings of life itself. It was feeling what a friend felt, thinking what he thought (though he might disagree), loving what he loved. It was warmth. The paper was the fuel, the ink the light, the words the roaring fire, the meaning of the words the grasping of hands and the clinking of glasses--a toast to friendship. Friendship was a unity, a sharing, a oneness that transcended distance and time. It was two that when together--even by letter--were one in their affection and feelings.

* * *

The year was 1769. Belknap at age 25 had been married for almost two years; Sally, their first child, was almost a year old. It was early spring, a fairly busy time for Belknap. A minister for two years, he was a settled, mature young man. His young friend, Peter Thatcher, having decided upon the ministry, had asked Belknap for advice; Belknap took an afternoon from his busy schedule to compose a response. Advice: the voice of experience. Young as he was, it seemed to Belknap that he had a great deal of experience. It had been only four years since his difficult time. He remembered it clearly . . .

. . . But how could it not have been the saving change? Was this not what each Christian awaited, what each

Christian sought? Yet he felt no different. He still believed in God, of course. He had always believed in God and the divine mercy of Christ. He knew that it was not his choice, but God's, and that the Holy Spirit comes to renew. How could anyone believe more strenuously and forcefully than he? He must search harder. Somewhere within he would find the answer, somewhere . . .

. . . If only he knew! He had never believed so hard in his life. He had resolved to devote his life to God, to give himself entirely. Surely the pain he felt, the suffering he experienced, was saving. Surely his burning desire was ignited by the Holy Spirit. Surely such devotion came from one who was changed. It must be so . . .

Visions of the past left Belknap as he remembered his duty to Thatcher.

You will find many things to damp your hopes, and shake your confidence, if you are a true Christian--the more you grow acquainted with your own heart the more vile and odious will you appear in the sight of God and the less reason you will have to value and approve yourself. You will find that the Assurance of hope is not to be obtained, but by the most laborious and painful pursuit, that you cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven, but through much Tribulation: you must remember that humility and meekness are distinguishing marks of a Christian and self flattery a certain mark of an hypocrite.²⁰

It came slowly, not in a blinding moment of glory and knowledge. It came with awareness. How man fools himself! Why did he not recognize about himself what he knew of Nature? Knowledge of himself, as well as of Nature, comes slowly, deliberately. Did it happen as he

walked beside the raging Atlantic on a misty October day? Or was on a solitary stroll through the woods? He did not know when. This knowledge, this awareness, was something he gained in the course of daily living.

He desired the grace of God, he awaited the saving change, but it never seemed to come. Yet was he not like the bullfrog who puffed himself up as big as an ox, only to burst? Why should he be worthy of grace? Why assume that God would save him over another? Was he so special? He was merely a single part of a vast whole. And no matter how much Belknap desired reunion with God, it was not his choice. Daily existence was Belknap's concern, not eternal destiny. God held him by a taut line. But should he fear? He knew in his heart that God was Goodness, that God was pure Benevolence. How could he fear God?

Belknap was a small, insignificant part of Creation; yet, his awareness of his insignificance and unworthiness somehow made him feel happier about life. Once he stopped worrying about the necessity of a saving change, he began to feel a comfort in the future. How strange, that ignorance of the future could bring contentment. He was content because he knew more about himself and his role in Creation. If he lacked knowledge of who he would become, he at least knew who he was. Only God knows the future-- how can a mere human challenge this future? Belknap was content because he finally realized that he had been trying to force God, trying to force the future. No

wonder it had hurt so much! The agony he had suffered was punishment for the sin of self-importance. His current happiness was reward for the virtue of humility. What the future would become Belknap could only guess. What he knew was that he, Jeremy Belknap, would be a part of a future ordered by a benevolent God.²¹

Belknap's new found knowledge gave him confidence to act, to go forward in the work of God. He had learned by life's toughest route--his own trials and sufferings; these life experiences would guide him in the coming years. He might be "a puny New Hampshire pedagogue," but he was sure of his convictions in 1769 when he counseled Thatcher. Humility to God was an important guide, but he was humble to no man: "Let my dear Friend Remember that he is to call no man master; for one is his Master even Christ." Human authority should be rejected, he told his younger friend. The Gospel is our guide, not those who comment on the Gospel. No man can tell us a truth that comes to each of us directly from the divine Word.

Would you know the virtues of any particular Sort of Water, it would be more irrational to seek it in the muddy Streams, than in the pure original fount. So if you would know the truth as it is in Jesus you must not seek it in the writings of uninspired Men, but in the oracles of unerring Truth. Divinity is not the art of disputing about divine truth, nor of puzzling yourself and others with Metaphysical Subtleties but it is the knowledge of God and Christ and the Gospel. And where is this to be found but in the Revelation which God has made to the world: To these pure and unerring oracles I would direct you; there you may search for and receive Divine Truth, without the least Suspicion of being deceived,

provided you come with an humble, meek and teachable Soul, as a new-born babe desiring the Sincere Milk of the Word.²²

Another hint may be Serviceable [he continued] i.e, when you are Studying Divine Truth, remember that it is not a Speculative Science like Mathematics or Astronomy, but 'tis of the utmost Importance to your own soul; 'tis the knowledge of what is necessary to your own eternal well-being. Let this influence you to make personal and particular Application to yourself of what you read--thus you will not only improve your understanding, but grow in holiness--which you will find of unspeakable advantage to your future Ministrations especially in private Visits and Conversation. A minister must not only know divine Truth as a distant speculative Notion, but have it in his heart as a living operative Principle.²³

Divine truth. For Belknap life was the search for Truth. He was like a traveller searching for the best path home. But why did he travel? Why was he forever searching, forever journeying? It could not be helped. It was just as likely that he would lie down and die as that he would rest from his sojourn. Something drove him on, without rest, pursuing some goal only he knew. What was the best path? He hinted to Hazard:

The surest way . . . to arrive at the highest state of improvement in natural knowledge is by aiming at that character to which the promise of eternal life is made, by faith in Him whose creating, upholding, reconciling, and renovating power is equally extensive, and whose boundless perfections are unceasingly employed in administering the moral government, and in bringing the universal plan of God into effect.²⁴

How could he but pursue the path outlined for him by what was not human, but divine? Christ establishes His moral government upon this earth; man must subject himself to this government. Life becomes a struggle to cultivate

virtues that bring one nearer to God. Man must be the river, which begins in a place far from the sea, but slowly, with quickening earnest, moves closer and closer to its destination until finally it rushes into the sea, unites, becomes a part of it. Jesus was Belknap's guide. Life must be an endless act toward the holy. Man must extend himself outward, the light of a weak star at night. He must share his blessings, his thoughts, his talents. Belknap could still be Belknap, but he must also be man, a unity of parts, each part unique, but with the others merging together into one. To help another person is difficult and tiring, but Belknap always felt a certain warmth after a benevolent act. Strange that sharing a part of himself made him feel that much more whole. Strange that another's happiness extended to himself. Belknap had the secret. He had acquired it long ago. Love. Why else was he a father and a husband? Why else did he become a minister of the Gospel? Why else was he a concerned citizen? Did he not write the History of New Hampshire, The Foresters, and American Biography to share a part of himself, to extend himself, if only through his ideas, judgments, and experiences, to others, humans, like himself? It was like a father sharing knowledge with a son, or a brother offering to help a brother. Why else did Belknap search for the secrets of Creation if not out of love for the Creator? Was not knowledge of God commensurate with love of God? How could he love that of

which he was ignorant? The more Belknap learned about Creation the more he respected God's goodness and benevolence. There was much to be thankful for: Life, the joys of earthly love, the beauties of Nature. God grants eternal happiness in Heaven just as He provides guidelines for happiness on earth. The "wisdom and benevolence" of God extends outward to all creatures with a great, eternal power. Belknap had an intense desire to know this great Giver. As the flower that is shaded for days opens its petals to receive new sunlight, Belknap yearned to digest the light of God. To live one's days in complete abandon seeking knowledge of God! To find total release in divine love! Day after day Belknap sought knowledge--of himself, Nature, everything. This insatiability, he hoped, would not end with death.

It is . . . a pleasing idea, which I often indulge, that in the future state there will be sufficient leisure, and the greatest advantages, for searching the boundless variety of the works of God; and I don't know that it is at all out of point to suppose that persons will pursue different branches of improvement suited to their respective geniuses, in the other state as well as in this, ascending in a rational line through second causes to the First, and turning all their knowledge into matter of divine love and praise. . . . Let our improvements then, in the present state, be of such a nature as not to be discontinued (except for a short intermission by death), but pursued with greater ardour and to vastly better purpose, when at the resurrection we shall be 'clothed upon' with our 'house from heaven,' and 'mortality shall be swallowed up of life'.²⁵

CHAPTER NOTES

1. Belknap to Ruth Eliot, 9/20/64, Belknap Papers, New Hampshire Historical Society (hereafter referred to as NHMSS), quoting the London Magazine. This poem was misquoted by Charles Wetherell in "New England's 'Pumpkin Poetry': A Jeremy Belknap Letter of 1764," Historical New Hampshire 39(1984): 64-68, where he read "providence" for "prudence" on line 6.

2. There are a great many love letters in the Belknap Papers at the New Hampshire Historical Society. The quotes are from Belknap to Ruth, 4/30/72, 5/4/72.

3. Belknap to Ebenezer Hazard, 11/27/84, CMHS, ser. 5, vol. 2, 409.

4. Belknap to Sally Belknap, 7/6/81; Belknap to Samuel Belknap, 9/2/84, 1/8/85, NHMSS. Also Belknap to Hazard, 7/14/83, 8/19/84, CMHS, ser. 5, vol. 2, 118, 231, where he wrote, "I always endeavor to acquaint my children (as they are able) with matters of curiosity."

5. Belknap to Hazard, 12/21/83, *Ibid.*, 289.

6. Belknap first inquired of Aitken in a letter to Hazard from 6/10/83, *Ibid.*, 215. Also, Belknap to Hazard, 12/21/83, *Ibid.*, 289-290.

7. For all the matters relating to the rumors and difficulty getting a ship see Belknap to Hazard, 7/14/83, 9/29/83, 10/12/83, *Ibid.*, 230-232, 257, 259. The quote is from Belknap to Hazard, 10/12/83, *Ibid.*, 261.

8. Belknap to Hazard 11/11/83, 11/30/83 *Ibid.*, 274-275, 279.

9. Belknap to Hazard, 12/8/83, 12/17/83, 12/30/83, 1/13/84, *Ibid.*, 284, 286, 290, 293.

10. Belknap to Hazard, 2/27/84, 2/11/85 *Ibid.*, 304-305, 412-413. On Franklin, Belknap to Joseph Belknap, 10/6/90, NHMSS: "Remember my Son that the great Dr Franklin set out to get his living in the world with much less than you will have." He also said, "Be patient, be industrious, be faithful and you will find that these virtues will lay a deep foundation for your future Reputation and Success." This letter was written after JO

broke with Aitken and was put with a new master, Mycall of Newburyport. For these matters see Belknap to Hazard, 5/18/87, Hazard to Belknap, 8/2/87, CMHS, ser. 5, vol. 2, 479-480, 483-484. When Jo developed difficulties with his new master, Mycall, he wrote his father (Joseph Belknap, Jr., to Belknap and Ruth, 8/30/89, NHMSS):

Dear Sir: to you alone I look for succour in all my troubles, and I can do it with more confidence when I feel innocent, and am conscious that I have not intentionally offended any one. It is the greatest comfort I have, that I have an affectionate father to whom I can tell all my grievances and who I know will do all that is just and reasonable to promote the welfare and happiness of his Affectionate and Dutiful son.

Recently Philip Greven has attempted to categorize early American family and religious life in The Protestant Temperament: Patterns of Child-Rearing, Religious Experience, and the Self in Early America (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977). Greven divides early Americans into three types: evangelical, moderate, and genteel. As is the nature of such generalizations, specific individuals are with difficulty firmly placed in any one category. Belknap, for example, had both moderate and genteel characteristics. Thus at the same time that Belknap emphasized duty, self-control, and child-rearing according to prescribed standards--characteristics of a moderate--he also was apt to advocate an indulgent attitude toward the raising of children: "Let Nature have vent," he declared in a "genteel" manner. Belknap was mostly "moderate," less "genteel," and even less "evangelical." But "most," "less," and "least" do not provide the definitiveness that Greven's types demand.

11. Letters relating to Sam's disease and death are: Belknap to Hazard, 11/16/88, 12/20/88, 1/3/89, 1/24/89, CMHS, ser. 5, vol. 3, 76, 86, 90, 100. the quotes are from Belknap's Diary of 1789, Belknap Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society (hereafter referred to as MHS); and Belknap to Hazard, 12/13/88, CMHS, ser. 5, vol. 3, 81.

12. The letter in question is Belknap to Hazard, 3/14/89, Ibid., 110. Belknap described his son's death in Belknap to Hazard, 3/29/89, Ibid., 373³⁰; Marcou, Life of Belknap, 171-172; Belknap to Joseph Belknap, Sr., 3/29/89, NHMSS.

13. Belknap to Hazard, 3/18/84, 7/14/83, 3/3/84, CMHS, ser. 5, vol. 2, 320, 232, 308.

14. Belknap to John Eliot, 12/5/81, CMHS, ser. 6, vol.

4, 219-222. Belknap wrote a similar letter to Hazard, where he asked his friend, "I beg you to be extremely critical upon [my theory], point out any defect, or suggest any amendment, and give me your opinion with that severe impartiality which a regard to truth ought to inspire." (Belknap to Hazard, 5/10/82, CMHS, ser. 5, vol. 2, 127.) Belknap sent a copy of the theory apart from the letter. For the theory itself I relied on Belknap to Eliot. Hazard, unlike Eliot, responded unfavorably to Belknap's theory. (Hazard to Belknap, 7/1/82, *Ibid.*, 135-136.)

15. Belknap to Hazard, 5/12/79, *Ibid.*, 5-6.

16. Hazard to Belknap, 9/5/81, *Ibid.*, 107.

17. Hazard to Belknap, 9/27/89, CMHS, ser. 5, vol. 3, 190-194.

18. Belknap to Hazard, 10/3/89, *Ibid.*, 373³⁰-32.

19. Belknap to Hazard, 8/5/80, CMHS, ser. 5, vol. 2, 64-66; Belknap to Hazard, 10/25/80, *Ibid.*, 79. On friendship see also Belknap to Manasseh Cutler 3/1/86 in William Cutler and Julia P. Cutler, Life, Journals, and Correspondence of Rev. Manasseh Cutler, LL. D., 2 vols., (Cincinnati: Robert Clarke & Co., 1888), 2:240-241; Belknap to Hazard, 3/13/80, 6/5/80, CMHS, ser. 5, vol. 2, 40, 56.

20. Belknap to Peter Thatcher, 2/1769, MHS, reprinted in Marcou, Life of Belknap, 37-42. I also relied on Belknap's "Confession of Faith, February 10, 1767," CMHS, ser. 6, vol. 4, 18-23 and Jonathan Edwards's "Personal Narrative" in Ola Winslow, ed., Basic Writings, (New York: New American Library, 1966), where he notes how his desire for regeneration led to a mistaken impression that God had indeed granted it (p. 82). Belknap, by the way, thought highly of Edwards (Marcou, Life of Belknap, 42).

21. Belknap's letter to Mather Byles, 9/5/65, MHS, reprinted in Marcou, Life of Belknap, 15-16, is revealing here:

It is a fixed and settled opinion with me, that no person ought to take on him the office of a minister of the gospel, unless he has experienced the renovating power of it on his own soul; but, unhappy me! I have never experienced this, and therefore I dare not preach, though I have been much urged to it. . . . When I asked admission into the church, I was deceived with regard to my condition. I had before had many agonies of soul, and in the midst of these agonies resolved

to be the Lord's; but God himself knows that I never experienced a saving change. . . . I am yet in a state of unrenewed nature, and farther from God than ever.

The humility and the unworthiness described in this letter were followed by apparent ease and acceptance of the situation in his letter to Byles of a month later. Rather than continued worry about the ministry, he sought alternatives, such as missionary work, that would still allow him to serve God. See Marcou, Life of Belknap, 19.

22. Belknap to Peter Thatcher, 2/1769, MHS. Also, Belknap to Penuel Bowen in Marcou, Life of Belknap, 28-29.

23. Belknap to Thatcher, 2/1769, MHS.

24. Belknap to Hazard, 6/5/80, CMHS, ser. 5, vol. 2, 57.

25. Ibid. My comments also come from Belknap to Hazard, 3/8/81, 12/2/82, 7/2/84, Ibid., 86, 166, 364-368, in the latter of which he said: "to be righteous, to be conformed to God, is the substance or essence of salvation." Moreover,

God, in forming the Sacred Canon, has had so much regard to the curiosity of good men as to throw out some hints, . . . which may serve, if not to give full satisfaction, yet as a clue to satisfy us that there are some parts of the grand design not proper for us to be fully acquainted with at present, but which we may amuse ourselves with in the hope of gaining more knowledge hereafter.

Also Belknap's journal of his trip to the White Mountains, Ibid., 395; Belknap to Hazard, 3/9/86, *ibid.*, 432, where he told Hazard that his History of New Hampshire was an "exercise of self-denial and disinterested benevolence"--here, following upon Edwards, I take "benevolence" to indicate love. Finally, Belknap to Benjamin Rush, 7/29/89, CMHS ser. 6, vol. 4, 442, where Belknap wrote that "the main business of all philosophical researches is to fix our attention to the great 'Cause uncaus'd,' and the deeper we penetrate the arcana of Nature, the more reason do we find for wonder, love, and praise." My metaphor of the flower comes from a beautiful passage in Edwards' "Personal Narrative" (p. 87):

The soul of a true christian . . . appeared like such a little white flower as we see in the spring of the year; low and humble on the ground, opening its bosom, to receive the pleasant beams of the sun's glory; rejoicing, as it were, in a

calm rapture; diffusing around a sweet fragrancy; standing peacefully and lovingly, in the midst of other flowers round about; all in like manner opening their bosoms, to drink in the light of the sun.

My ideas on love have been influenced by a number of writers, most explicitly Erich Fromm, The Art of Loving, (New York: Harper & Row, 1956), the writings of Meister Eckhart, particularly the Talks of Instruction, trans., Raymond B. Blakney (New York: Harper & Row, 1941), Gerhard Ebeling, Luther: An Introduction to His Thought, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970), and finally Jonathan Edwards. In many ways Belknap was like Edwards. He agreed with Edwards, for example, that knowledge was a thing of both the mind and the heart (Edwards, "A Divine and Supernatural Light" and "A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections"). Both men attempted to combine the reason of the Enlightenment with the intuition of Calvinism or Romanticism. To be sure, Edwards was more expressive of his emotions than Belknap; nevertheless, upon reading "Personal Narrative," one gets the unmistakable impression that Belknap agreed with and felt much of what Edwards expressed. Besides those already noted, another Edwards essay extremely important for an understanding of love of God is "The Nature of True Virtue".

Historians have frequently viewed the period from the Great Awakening to the Revolution and beyond as a time when two religious factions fought for control: the revivalist, liberal, democratic, intuitive yet Calvinistic New Lights and the conservative, elitist, rational and scientific Old Lights. The former, it has been argued by one historian (Alan Heimert, Religion and the American Mind: From the Great Awakening to the Revolution, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965)), pushed for the regenerative Revolution, while the latter resisted such change. It is difficult to place Belknap in such categories--as it is with Edwards. As Paul Conkin argues (Puritans and Pragmatists: Eight Eminent American Thinkers, (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Co., 1968)), Edwards was exclusively neither a rationalist nor an experientialist--he was eclectic. Similarly, although Belknap was a follower of the Old Light, Charles Chauncey, and eventually converted to Universalism, rejecting many of his former Calvinist (Edwardian) beliefs, he still retained a strong intuitive, experiential leaning. He cannot be pigeon-holed. For another good discussion of these issues see Stow Persons, American Minds: A History of Ideas, (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1958).

CHAPTER 2

DUTY

Jeremy Belknap, A Sermon Preached at the Installation of the Rev. Jedidiah Morse..., (Boston: 1789):

The gospel must in some measure have its genuine influence on our own hearts, before we can, with any propriety or consistency, recommend it to others; and when we have begun to feel this happy influence, and to declare to others what we ourselves know to be true, the pursuit of those sacred studies will be a noble advantage to us, not only in acquiring and methodising our speculative sentiments, but in restraining our passions, regulating our affections, directing our views, and forming our true characters. We shall not only grow in knowledge, but that knowledge will be reduced to practice; we shall be cast into the mould of divine truth; our hearts and lives will be fashioned according to the doctrines which we preach, the duties which we inculcate, the examples which we recommend, and the prospects which we open from the word of God. Every discourse, which we prepare for public delivery, will be first preached to ourselves; we shall feel the force of what we say; our hearts, like wax under seal, will receive the impression, and our lives will shew to the world that the gospel which we preach has its proper effect on ourselves.

* * *

The last day of December: 1766 nudged 1765 into oblivion. At such times young Jeremy Belknap usually reflected on where he had been and where he was going--

this year even more than usual. The year had begun at Portsmouth, New Hampshire, where Belknap continued an occupation he had started when fresh out of Harvard in 1762: teaching. By June of '65 Belknap was keeping school at the village of Greenland, a few miles from Portsmouth. Schoolteaching satisfied Belknap because he enjoyed cultivating the students' young minds. Nevertheless, his parents had sent him to Harvard to prepare for the ministry; Harvard was the great New England seminary. Belknap also desired the ministry. As a youngster in Boston he had been fascinated by the sermons of Thomas Prince. Imagine Jeremy Belknap in his pulpit! Belknap was attracted not only by the importance of such work; the Puritan heritage weighed upon his mind as well.¹

The Puritans, Belknap believed, came to the New World to serve God by continuing the war of the Reformation against enemies who opposed His will, who opted for human rather than divine authority. In the purity of the American wilderness the Puritans sought to erect a settlement that was pure in motives and in execution, a center of godliness amid Creation, an outpost of humanity in the dark forest. They escaped from those who rejected the brightening light of the Reformation for the bigotry of established uniformity. "The Puritans in England," Belknap once wrote, "carried their Ideas of Reformation farther than any Set of Men in their day[;] and some of

the First Settlers of New England who were of this Stamp, set up Churches very near the ancient Apostolic Model." They left England to search for a place where they could worship God freely. Their mission was to reform the worship of God to match the purity of the early Church. Belknap, more than a century later, felt akin to his ancestors, for he shared their ideals: to devote himself to a pure church; to carve a good society out of the wilderness; to conform to God's will for the sake of this world and the next.²

To do good, to do what is right, to be worthy of his heritage and himself: thoughts tumbled upon his brain like the snow that softly pelted the ground. Now a schoolteacher, what would he be next year? in ten years? He desired work that would bring significance and worthiness to his life. Yet herein lay a paradox. How can the insignificant become significant? Sometimes his life seemed of vast importance--more than other lives. Other times he realized he was a dot on a map, a small person in a small New Hampshire town. Some lines came to him penned by his own hand in a similar moment:

Oh! Sons of men, attempt ye still to rise
By mountains pil'd on mountains to ye Skies
Heav'n still with Laughter the vain Toil survey,
And buries madmen in the heaps they raise.³

At the time he wrote these lines they seemed more beautiful, but even now they expressed a continuing truth.

Belknap was aware that he was not a permanent resident of the earth. Death beckoned him to finish his

visit. Time reminded him of life's shortness. Aware of his insignificance, Belknap nevertheless did not want to feel insignificant or to spend his life trifling. He was here for a reason--he knew that much. A destiny, yet unknown, guided his life. What was going to make his life worthwhile? Schoolteaching, he knew, was only a transition to something better, something at which he could employ his talents and realize his potential. The ministry? Again he was unsure. As he had written Uncle Mather Byles a few months before,

It is a fixed and settled opinion with me, that no Person ought to take on him the office of a minister of the Gospel unless he has experienced the renovating Power of it on his own Soul--but, unhappy me, I have never experienced this and therefore I dare not preach tho' I have been much urged to it.

Belknap feared he would build his life "on a false foundation." He was fit for the ministry, no doubt, but was this consistent with his destiny? Or was there other work to do? Most important was work itself. Above all he felt a duty to contribute to the Puritan mission and the support of Christ's moral government upon earth--if not in the ministry, then perhaps in some other work.

I am sensible that a great Load of Guilt lies heavy on this Land [he thought] in neglecting the means which may be used for the Conversion of our Indian Neighbors and Countrymen to Christianity, and that it is the Duty of every person, who professes a regard to the Kingdom and Interest of Jesus Christ, to contribute his part for this glorious purpose.⁴

Belknap was considering the life of an Indian

missionary on this December night. Would it be such a step down from the ministry, to work for this "glorious purpose"?

The Charity School in Lebanon [Connecticut] seems to be the right Plan inasmuch as divine Providence has so remarkably smiled on that Institution and hitherto succeeded the design of it--it is therefore of the utmost Importance that it should be continued and I am sincerely willing to lend what assistance is in my Power.

Of course his assistance, he reminded himself, might be meaningless--perhaps the school did not need him. To be sure, his lifework--whether the ministry, missionary work, or something else--would not alter the world: the contribution would be small indeed. Yet it was important to do something. Action was needed! Perhaps his life would not affect the world, but it would affect him. Jeremy Belknap felt a deep need to spend each day in an active, useful endeavor. He felt much the same on this New Year's Eve as he had three years before, when he had written:

Thus Ends the year, the rolling Seasons Run--
They vanish e're we think they're half begun,
O Lend an Ear ye thoughtless sons of Men
Reflect on what you are, on what you've been
Improve your Precious hours, e're long we must
Thoughtless and Breathless, be reduc'd to Dust.

As long as he could fill his days working toward some object that supported the moral government of this world, then his work would not lack significance, if for no one other than himself, and God.⁵

This self-image was the shelter that kept Belknap dry and warm in the years ahead. The form of the image

varied, but the foundation was constant. The Image: a man who works for others, who devotes his life to help the "good people" and reform the wicked; a man who understands the true state of human existence, a humble man who never forgets his origins or the path to the future--Christ rules a moral government and he is His obedient subject; a man who in his small corner of the world wants to make his life significant, make it worth the time and effort. As he wrote a decade later, "Let us cheerfully serve our generation while we are capable; for what else are we sent into the world for but to do good?"⁶

* * *

Five years passed--1771. Rather than soft December snowflakes Belknap saw July raindrops when he looked out of his window onto the wet fields and cloudy skies of Dover. His spirits were hardly brighter. Once again he read his father's letter. Anger swept through him, not so much because of his father as because of the ignorance of mankind in general. Why were men so blank about the true meaning of the Reformation? Calvin and Luther were like candles in a dark room: light rescues the room from darkness, but shadows still lurk, many things remain dim and unclear. Calvin directed men in the search for Truth, but he was not himself the arbiter of Truth. Likewise his followers, the New England Puritans, were men, subject to

error. The great Puritan divines had decided upon their own authority "to administer the ordinance of baptism to the children of persons who are not in full communion with the church." Hence children of those who had not experienced the saving change, a possible sign of God's grace, were allowed baptism, but denied communion. "If this distinction . . . has its foundation in the word of God," he had written a friend earlier, "I desire with all reverence to admit and own it as of divine authority; but at present I cannot see the grounds on which it is vindicated." Belknap often pondered the prestige of the "venerable fathers" of the seventeenth century who had instituted this halfway-covenant. He thought:

There is at least a possibility that these venerable fathers were mistaken. . . ; and it is my poor opinion that then the churches of New England took a grand leap in the dark from the primitive purity and simplicity of the gospel. If we must give implicit faith to the determination of fathers and councils, let us throw away the Bible at once, and adopt the infallible decrees of Trent, Nice, Dort, and Boston, as the pure, uncorrupted Catholic faith. For, allowing the members who composed all these celebrated councils aforesaid to have been honest, guileless, unprejudiced men, there is as much reason to adopt the decrees of one as of the other, however absurd and contradictory. But I think it is time that Scripture should be regarded as the only infallible form of sound words. . . . 7

Jeremy Belknap burned with desire to know the Truth. He burned so deeply, the heat of the fire was so extensive, that others ignited like trees in a forest. To wipe away human authority, Belknap declared fiercely, all

vestiges of man's creation must be ousted: we must approach the original purity of the Apostolic church. The halfway covenant must be abolished. And, Belknap told his Dover parish, we must make a new agreement with God, basing it upon His authority; we must renew our covenant with God! Some people smoldered in the young minister's idealism, but others remained coolly out of reach. The young firebrand called the former saints, the latter "Scandalous Sinners," and drew his flock of followers closer.⁸ These active few will be enough until the others ignite, he dreamed. Belknap burned so bright it could be seen for miles around. People in Boston had seen it and told Joseph Belknap. Why, my son, the elder Belknap had exclaimed, do you force your parish apart, and drive people away? Why not learn from the men of your parish, who refuse to reap the harvest before the grain is ripe?

And so on this wet summer day Belknap paced back and forth, thinking, trying to form an apology for his actions. No doubt it was difficult to write. His father's words must have tugged at his conscience. In this rural world it was confidently expected that the grain would ultimately ripen. But what of the Reformation? As the visible church of earth bound worshippers only approximates the invisible, true church of the Saved, so no matter how extensive the Reformation, the temporal counterpart of Christ's moral government will be imperfect because it is human. The visible and

invisible worlds meet only in Christ, nowhere else. Ripe grain is found only in Heaven; on earth it is either rotten or mildewed or, eternally, unripe. Yet something within Belknap cast aside this realization, and he tried to approach the unapproachable. Did not Luther, did not Calvin, make great strides forward for Christ? He knew he was a minor New Hampshire clergyman, but there was great work to do! Belknap had a goal: perhaps he would eventually be minister to a congregation of pure, simple country folk living in harmony and peace, devoted to God, following the purity of Scripture as defined by their pastor. Was this goal so absurd? Not to Belknap. The goal became something for which he deeply yearned, something that tied the days together, something that was out of reach, but not uncomfortably so, something he could smell but not taste, imagine if not see; it was something for which he preached, something that he stayed awake thinking about, and dreamed about when once he slept. It was something to which he had arrived in his own scriptural studies, his own spiritual contemplation. Perhaps others could not see what was ingrained upon his heart. But he would help them see, he would lead his flock and cajole them if necessary, so that they could believe what Jeremy Belknap believed.

He sat and he wrote. Perhaps his actions were harsh, he told his father, but they were "agreeable to the will of Christ and an indispensable Duty required of me as his

Servant." How could he, or anyone else, justify words of reformation without action? Action, not words, is the true test of conviction. Men heed the speaker much less than the doer. He could neither restrict nor smother the fire that he felt. How could he still the voice from within that called aloud: "Repent and do the first works"? "If an Individual is so affected with the Solemnity and Importance of this Voice as to think himself inexcusable in not obeying it, what must he do?" He repeated: "What must a poor individual do who is determin'd to live godly in Christ Jesus and follow after that Purity in Faith and Practice which he believes Christ requires in his people now as much as he did in his primitive churches"?⁹ To deny the call of Christ is to sacrifice public spirit to private interest, to live as a coward, and to act like a field mouse scurrying into his hole at the first sign of trouble. The clergy hesitated to end the halfway covenant because it was in their interest, it made for popularity. But is popularity consistent with Christ's moral government? Popularity is chimeric, a wisp of smoke. Belknap determined to give it no heed.

* * *

August, 1782. Belknap sat alone. Tomorrow he planned to address the parish. His speech should surprise no one--his difficulties were familiar to anyone who

followed parish matters. He was convinced that to lay the truth down cold, to state the facts openly, was the only way. Perhaps he had been too desirous of parish unanimity, peace, and goodwill. How far should public interest go? How much should he sacrifice for duty? True, his troubles were subordinate to his duty to Christ. He had a calling from God, to be sure, but he also had a responsibility to his family. If the parish would not willingly provide the means of sustenance then he had a choice: to suffer for the sake of peace or to confront his parishioners concerning their duty. The former alternative had hitherto been his choice: in continual debt since the start of the war, he had been forced "to handle the hoe as a common laborer." He spent his time "keeping the belly and back from grumbling, . . . the kitchen-fire from going out," providing pasture for his horse, or instructing his children in their lessons. "These things are a continual source of vexation both of body and mind; they take off my attention from my proper business, and unfit me for the duties of my station." This ridiculous town! How could people be so ignorant? so selfish? Was education less important than their daily grog? It seemed so. He had tried, over and over, to stimulate a regard for education in these people, but in these war years education, like religion, was to them an added burden. Of course the war meant suffering. But to turn selfishly inward was to cultivate the charact then an

added burden. Of course the war meant suffering. But to turn selfishly inward was to cultivate the characteristics of the enemy, the British. He knew quite well that some people who declared themselves unable to pay the parish rate had "been growing rich on the spoils of their country"; "there are at this day," he had written four years earlier, "hundreds of bushels of bread-corn withheld for a price. It is with difficulty I can get a supply."¹⁰

When he had accepted the call from Dover sixteen years ago he had not expected this trouble. How can a minister pursue his calling if he spends his time trying to promote the unanimity and peace that should come naturally? Had they not expressed their love and support when he first joined them? It had fit so well his image of life in Dover: Peace, harmony, and love would reign as he led his flock in benevolence to God and man, instructing them in God's moral government and His requirements for happiness. He had wanted and still desired a parish made up of "a few solid firm friends" "closely united and zealously engaged," acting for God and His kingdom.¹¹

All of this he had wanted and more. He had spent countless hours trying to reform the religious habits of his parishioners. All he demanded in return was support--emotional and material. Yet what had happened? His image continued to exist, of course, but reality no longer shadowed it. He had a few friends but more enemies. He

had some peace but more conflict. He had little happiness.

Tomorrow he was going to confront them and convince them that he had their welfare in mind, but that he could not ignore his own. He would tell them in the only way he knew. He would argue, he would relate the facts, but he would also go straight to the heart. He felt much: anger, despair, sadness--and love, too. He still wanted them. He still wanted that sixteen-year-old dream to become real. He would forgive, he would stay, but only if they showed that he was wanted.

He recorded his thoughts; he would tell them this:

Your unanimity and your earnest desire of my settling among you were the principal inducements which I had to comply with your request. If this unanimity is destroyed, the ground on which I stood is removed. I have lived among you about sixteen years, and in that time I hope I have been the means of doing some good; I wish it had been more. I know I have many errors and failings to be humbled for, but I am not sensible that I have injured any person but myself. I know I am deficient in some qualities which are necessary to render a minister popular in such a place as this, and I know it is not in my power to remedy that defect. However, you have known and proved me, and I have known and proved you. I have made as few complaints as possible, and always with extreme reluctance; but my mind has many a time been strongly agitated, thrown out of its due byass, and unfitted for its proper exercise, by thinking on the difficulties of my situation. Nevertheless, as Providence has placed me here, I tho't it my duty to give you this account of my difficulties, that you may have another opportunity of removing them.¹²

This was not a simple connection, breakable at will. This was a connection bonded by sweat and tears, a connection ordained by God. And, by God, the connection

would persist as long as he could humanly endure it. When it broke, they would break it, they would decide it.

* * *

1786. Still they had not provided the proper sustenance. When he first came to Dover the parish had agreed to pay one hundred pounds per year. Not only had they been sometimes recalcitrant in payment, but because of the economic problems caused by the war Belknap had been compelled to ask for more support. The evasions, the subterfuge, and the unwillingness to establish a firm basis for support during wartime had aggravated the harmony of the parish. Then two years ago, in 1784, Josiah Waters of Boston, Belknap's old friend, had requested payment of an old debt. Belknap had been at a loss. The emotional meeting with the parish of August, 1782, had resulted in the promise of a note--never fulfilled--for one hundred twelve pounds to compensate for the rapidly depreciating currency. To raise the money Belknap had decided to sign the note over to his friend, who would sue the parish for payment of the debt.¹³

Belknap narrated what happened next:

The suit was commenced at the Inferior Court in June, 1785, and by the appeal of the defendants carried to the Superior Court in September following, when judgment was given against the Parish for L 85.10.5 damages, and L 4.12 costs. Execution was issued, and though, as I have been informed, it might have been levied on the

estates of all the three men who signed the note, yet it was actually levied on the body of one of them only.¹⁴

A man was to be imprisoned, and still the debt was unpaid. Belknap was horrified by the proceedings. That the parish refused to pay did not surprise him, but he had no intention of taking this man "from his family and business." What sort of people would treat their minister this way? Perhaps it no longer mattered why these things had come to pass. The reality was that "discord, hatred, and envy" had replaced "love, peace, and goodwill" in this parish. Clearly, his usefulness had ended in Dover. Could he pretend that his image of working for God would ever be realized in Dover? The connection had been broken, in his mind. Accordingly, he acted to release the parish from their burden.

To prevent any future difficulties of the like kind [he told the parishioners in late April], relying on the protection and blessing of a kind Providence, and trusting that I am in the way of my duty, I do now seriously and deliberately resign, release, and quitclaim to the First Parish in Dover all right and title to any salary which might after this day become due to me by virtue of any contract heretofore made between me and them, or any engagement from them to me. . . . The consequence of this will be that in [the] future my connexion with this parish will be altogether voluntary, and may be dissolved at the pleasure of either party, or if continued will be upon a different footing from what it has been heretofore.¹⁵

* * *

Spring became summer. June, as always, was a month

of contrasts. Cloudless one day, the sun peeps through tall pines, revealing the lush, bright green of the forest growth. Meadow grass looks dry and crisp in the warm breeze. Yet as clouds roll in and the sky darkens the symbol of summer becomes a rich dark green that forms a pleasant contrast to the gray sky. The wet trees and bushes look cool and fertile, autumnlike, spawning thoughts of harvest. Hence can the dreariness of a summer rain reveal a deep beauty seldom seen when the sun reigns.

June reminded Jeremy Belknap of marriage, for in this month nineteen years before he and Ruth had wed. Marriage, like the weather, constantly changes: some days arguments, some days affection, some days hate, some days love. How Ruth angered him sometimes! particularly when she treated his work in history as a waste of time. Was she so blind to its value? Yet as the dismal rain spawns a peculiar beauty in Nature, so beneath Belknap's anger love waited to dart back to prominence. Love and hate: life would not be life without such contrasts.

It was such a June day--of both sun and rain--that Belknap realized how like marriage was his relationship with the Dover parish: the familiarity, the shared experiences, the love, the anger, the hate. Not the least of the similarities was that some marriages end in divorce. Divorce: of joys there were many, never again but in memory; of sorrows many, and to them is added the final parting. How strange is the sadness of divorcing a

person one hates, but such is the force of accumulated time on feelings. The Dover parishioners had humiliated Belknap, they had increased the anxiety of wartime to unparadonable lengths, they had cheated and deceived, they had acted wholly according to self-interest. Clearly they had little respect for their minister. Clearly they had no love for him. Yet even after Belknap released them from their obligation in late April, the wretches refused to consider the contract broken. After all they had done, what could be their mysterious purpose now? Belknap commented to Hazard on the situation:

The etiquette of removing a minister from a parish in New England is as tedious as obtaining a divorce . . . ; and I am now in the worst part of it, viz., consulting and debating and waiting the answer of the parish to a proposal which I have made, either for their formal dismissal of me or the calling of a[n ecclesiastical] council. If I should not have my brains at liberty to frame a letter to you for a month to come, pray forgive me.¹⁶

June contrasts became the humidity of late July. During this month the parish inexplicably came alive, raised part of the money in arrears to Belknap, and agreed to dissolve the contract as a prelude to a new one. As in the dying relationship between a husband and wife there comes a time when one or both allow hope to intrude upon the seemingly inevitable, to revive, if only for a moment, lost feelings, so Belknap began to despair less, to believe in the possibility of recovering a lost dream. Hope cannot be fueled without love. Yet Belknap's love

for his parish was of a peculiar kind on July 27, 1786, when he addressed them. It was a love of duration, caused by the familiarity of twenty years. It was a love tempered by much pain. The words he spoke that day revealed his love as well as his hate: "The time has been when I preferred this Parish to many of those which I was acquainted with, as I had reason to think the people were united in their affection to me, and supported me cheerfully, and my ministry was generally useful and acceptable to them." But this affection was chimerical.

Had there been that affection for me among the people in general which I have been told so much of, I cannot imagine that the payment of this debt would have been so long neglected. . . . To make me suffer all the inconveniences and distresses which can arise from the failure of affection before your affection can shew itself, to reduce me to the last extremity before you will lend an helping hand to deliver me, is such a way of shewing love as I wish never to experience again. You cannot but think that treatment of this kind, which both you and I know to be undeserved on my part, must have altered my mind and destroyed that preference which I once had for this people. . . . At the same time, I acknowledge there are some persons among you whom I value and respect and from whom I should not wish to be seperated, if they were not by the constitution of the Parish blended with a number of others with whom I cannot have any connection. To break up the Parish is not my wish. It is my advice to you to take proper measures to provide yourselves a minister, and to make some provision for a temporary supply till you can obtain one.¹⁷

Would they discover the hidden meaning he desired his words to betray? Would they come to the realization that he was prepared to leave? Belknap had spent many hours on this letter, trying to capture the perfect balance between the explicit and the implicit. The plain words said he

was finished with them; the hidden words held out the hope for a "re-settlement if they were so disposed." Ideally, the parishioners would go beyond the visible words and allow their hearts to grasp the words' meaning of love. To his chagrin they did not, and the next day Belknap had to articulate what he had only vaguely implied: "I wish to forgive all the injurious treatment I have received" as a prelude to an "accomodation." Some of the parishioners responded affirmatively. Were they finally awaking to the reality of the crisis, the imminent divorce? It was not too late to renew the secular covenant, to join once again in harmony and love to work the will of God for His moral government.¹⁸

The next few days were filled with tense excitement. The Second Parish of Exeter, New Hampshire, invited Belknap to be their minister. However enticing, his place was in Dover--perhaps, as he had once expected, for the rest of his days. And now, what place could compare with Dover? Belknap knew the imperfections of the place, of course. The people were neglectful and ignorant--some were vicious and profane. Yet this was home. Here lay the way of his duty, if God so pleased. With reserved expectation Belknap informed the parish of his terms for a new contract. He could not change the people, nor could he make Dover a leader in culture and science. But he could make his situation less ambiguous. Yes, a minister and his congregation resembled a married couple. How

dependent he was in Dover! Belknap felt like a wife awaiting grocery money from a stingy--or worse! a besotted--husband. How many times had he waited for his salary, only to receive it late, and in some absurd form, such as lumber? A minister, more than others, has a reputation to maintain. In a sense he represents the parish. If he should be wanting in his ability to entertain, what kind of appearance does the town make? Accordingly Belknap requested the contract to specify that he was to be paid every six months in gold or silver. And how else to remove the difficulty of incompetence among the parish wardens than to be able to veto their election? Some people Belknap could not help despising; and they, he was sure, despised him. They were irreligious, forced to pay the parish rate for his support; because they disliked the tax they disliked him. He would have these people out of his church. Only those who would bear the full responsibilities of membership should belong. This was his proposal. It was a nice dream, never to be reality.¹⁹

11 September 1786. Good Dr. Green, a staunch supporter throughout, brought tidings of lost enthusiasm and quickening opposition: "I was told that it was in vain to keep myself in suspense any longer, as there was no prospect of [a resettlement] ever being heartily adopted." A candle had been lit a few months before and burned brightly. But the fire melted the wax, and time burned short. Finally the light disappeared; warmth vanished

into the dark night; all that remained was smoke. Belknap felt empty. Dr. Green inquired about the coming Sabbath. Shall Mr. Belknap attend for a final farewell? To stand before them, to look into faces known twenty years, faces whose wearers had allowed this to happen, faces of people he had loved--still loved?--no, this he could not do: "this is more than I can bear"!²⁰

* * *

He was forty-two years of age, the father of six--the youngest only seven years old--and he was a minister without a parish. "Never was I in such an unsettled state since you knew me, and now more than ever," he wrote Hazard. It was September, 1786. "I really long to be able, with a quiet mind and a free pen, to sit down and write you a serious letter. When shall I again feel settled?" Only days before the final break had come. After years of frustration, he left his Dover parish. But now what? Was it not ridiculous to be unconnected after twenty years in one place? Once he had dreamed of ending his snail of an existence in Dover, to depart from his shell and soar as an eagle into the air. Now the life of a snail appeared pleasant. Why should he want to be free as an eagle anyway? The burden of a snail was more desirable. It was indeed unpleasant to awake on a

September morning without the scheduled duties of his old routine. And how tired he felt! The life of an itinerant was detestable. Would he be called to another parish? His old dream of being the chaplain for the new "Federal town," later Washington, was a brief inclination long passed. How uncertain was the future!²¹

Time passed. Fall became winter. The necessity of supporting his large family was a constant concern. For six long months he had few prospects and much loneliness. Preaching here and there--Exeter for a time then Portsmouth, Weymouth, Jamaica Plain, finally Boston--the separations from his family were for weeks at a time. "It is very painful for me to be separated from them for so long," he confessed, "but duty and interest call me." Added to this was the constant movement. After twenty years of being a snail, such mobility was difficult.

Once I could be at home anywhere [he wrote Hazard]. From the time I went to college till my settlement at Dover [1758-1767] I had near as many removals as Mother Rowlandson [a famous New England Indian captive]. . . . I could take up my chest and march at any time, and feel as happy in one place as another; but, having been so long used to settled life, it is irksome to be obliged to be on the pad."

The insecurity and separations, however, were countered by the pleasure of action, and the certainty he had in Providence.²² Patience: he certainly needed it in December. What better way to cultivate this virtue, a necessity at such times, than to repeat a favorite psalm:

I to the Lord my ways commit,
And cheerful wait His will:

Thy hand which guides my doubtful feet
Shall my desires fulfil.²³

At least the doubt experienced a year earlier had vanished. He remembered one February night in particular. . . . The bitter cold was intensified by the lack of human warmth in Dover. Once beautiful, Dover now seemed tarnished. Likewise, the beauty of the ministry had faded. It was no longer the shadow of Belknap's self-image. Belknap wondered whether he was fit to continue in the ministry. Perhaps not, but with God's help he would continue a useful existence. Such was the purpose of the letter on this cold night. "My principal concern is to be usefully employed in such a way as shall not be a hindrance to literary improvement, and to provide a decent maintenance and proper education to my family." Perhaps his friend Hazard could help. As the pen moved along, Belknap visualized the words he wrote. Philadelphia! An editor, perhaps, or a writer for a Philadelphia scientific magazine: tasks he had hitherto not imagined himself doing, but were they so unappealing? Did he not enjoy writing? Were not such tasks useful? Was not usefulness a prime consideration? As the pen continued marking he considered other alternatives. "Suppose," he wrote without enthusiasm and in awe at the prospect, "there should happen a vacancy in the Post-office Department and no more suitable person should be recommended, would not my friend," Postmaster General Ebenezer Hazard, "bestow such a gift on me?"²⁴ He put the pen aside. Belknap did not

really want a postal job, nor was employment as a writer his wish. The future was unknown, plans must be made. Imagine a traveller caught in a forest thunderstorm. As cold rain pelts his face and thunder blasts his ears, instinctively he runs for cover--a cluster of bushes perhaps. But as the rain continues, as his clothes start to stick to his skin, the temporary nature of the bushes becomes clear. A long storm demands more efficient shelter. For such a shelter, in this particular storm, Belknap did not have to set about building; one awaited him already. The shelter was of his own making, one he had spent his life building and shaping. It was a good shelter, durable and strong. He found it rarely leaked; it could withstand the strongest storm--and the forest was a place of strong and frequent storms. He had such faith in his shelter that he was certain he would emerge dry, safe, and warm when the sun appeared again.

Patiently, he waited. Soon the sky cleared. With the sun came a renewed vigor for the ministry: "I thank God I feel perfectly willing to be continued in His service, if He will appoint me a portion of His vineyard to labour in," he wrote in October. After the prospect of an Exeter, New Hampshire, position fell through, Belknap received a call from the church at Long Lane, in Boston. The wait had been worth it. His shelter had served him well. Although he had been absent from his family for months, he adapted, all the while supported by "a

consciousness of duty and a prospect of usefulness." God again provided. As he wrote Hazard at the end of February, 1787:

It seems as if Divine Providence had laid a prohibition on a farther removal, and I believe it is best, for I have a prospect of being continued in a line of usefulness which grows more familiar and agreeable with experience, and from which I cannot think it expedient to depart on account of any lucrative views, though I have not such an idea as some gentlemen have of the indelible character annexed to the clerical profession.²⁵

The storm was over. There would be others, of course:

A Christian man is never long at ease:
When one plague's gone, another doth him seize.

But for the moment Belknap was content. The Long Lane position was appealing: it paid more than Dover, the parishioners seemed to have a "spirit of love and fidelity," and Boston was an old friend. "Nothing can exceed my attachment to this place. Here are my natural, original friends, whom I have loved from my infancy." There would be no loneliness in Boston; whenever he desired to discuss issues or simply talk he could wander over to John Eliot's house. Ruth, too, had family and friends in Boston.²⁶ A new phase of his life began as Dover faded into memory.

* * *

The minister gazed upon the congregation, and

addressed them thus: the ministry is

chiefly directed to the inculcating principles and opinions relating to the invisible world, composing literary works, reciting historical facts, and preserving them for the information of posterity, performing devotional ceremonies, educating children, studying the nature of diseases and medicines, attending the sick, and performing the rites of sepulture.

Belknap normally was not a striking man; but on this occasion, standing at the pulpit, wearing his long black gown, and speaking solemn words, he looked pious and wise, and they listened attentively. On this last day of April, 1789, Jeremy Belknap was preaching on the occasion of the installation of his friend, Jedidiah Morse, to his new parish at Charlestown, Massachusetts. Belknap continued: "That such men have an ascendancy over the people with whom they are connected" is natural. Yet ministers are mere servants; at the most they are examples, not leaders, and should avoid being "lofty, arrogant, ambitious, disdainful, and overbearing." True, some ministers become "intoxicated with the idea of their own importance, and . . . abuse the power which they have gained over their fellow-mortals." "But as vapours in the atmosphere, when they have risen to a certain height, are unable to sustain themselves in the superior regions; so it often happens that exorbitant power falls by its own weight." "Ministers of Christ are beings of the same rank with the People committed to their charge," he continued: "Neither as being Lords over God's heritage; but being ensamples to

the flock," says the Gospel. But more, ministers must give each person the chance to interpret Scripture for himself; each person must find his own Truth. "Preach what you believe to be the truth," Belknap said, "and charge your hearers to judge of it by the same infallible oracles from which you derive your information."²⁷

Individual truth: did Jedidiah Morse realize the difficulties inherent in this notion? If each person decides Scriptural truth for himself, then the minister is only a guide. But how thin is the line separating the minister as guide from the minister as oracle. How can the minister guide his parishioners without his own beliefs, his own truth, interfering? Belknap had experienced this tension at Dover. How does one restrain the Truth when it burns within, demanding release? The urge to make a personal truth a universal truth is overpowering. It is a feeling of power--spiritual power--and it is intoxicating. What is a drunkard but a man who loses self-control, whose intoxication yields a sense of power and security, who demands immediate pleasure rather than long-term satisfaction in life? The minister must wage constant war against vanity, to not make himself more significant than his due.

That preaching is generally the most successful, which is the most searching, the most spiritual, the most practical. We should aim directly at the heart; and endeavour to make men feel their concern in what we preach; and the most effectual way to do this, is to feel it ourselves. The truth, when it comes from the heart, will be likely to reach the heart. Our

hearers know that we are made of the same materials as themselves; and when they see that we are affected and influenced by what we preach, they will conclude there is something in it which ought to affect and influence them.²⁸

It took years of preaching, thinking, and suffering to learn this powerful truth. Men are naturally wary of control. But there are lax thinkers who do not think for themselves, who desire the security of another's ideas, which they do not question, which shape the believer as the mold does the clay. Twenty years ago Belknap believed in the Calvinism of his fathers--in predestination, original sin, Heaven and Hell--and he had tried to make his hearers believe it too. Now, in 1789, he believed in Universalism. But because Universalism seemed true were others, his hearers, bound to believe it as well? To thunder a message of divine terror from the pulpit in 1769, or to demand correct living in 1789: mere words, not actions--can words bring truth? Besides words are the speaker's countenance, the benevolence radiated by the telling of his truth. One who believes deeply, from the heart, cannot help but with his every gesture, his every intonation, his every eye movement, reveal this truth. Words and actions go together; one cannot be true and the other false. The listener who really listens--with his ears as well as his eyes and heart--can sense whether what the speaker says is true or not. When this happens, when speaker and listener are one, this is a true church, of brothers sharing the Truth.

He continued:

God, in the course of his providence, will train us up for farther usefulness in his church, by placing us in circumstances similar to the rest of mankind, and putting us into trials which will give occasion for the exercise of the same virtues which we recommend to others.

"It is in trials that virtue shines; and when Providence affords us these trials, then our example should be such as may instruct and edify our people. Then we preach with a silent, yet persuasive eloquence."²⁹

Perhaps as Belknap spoke these words his listeners heard his voice become more forceful, saw his eyes become more direct, his gestures more frequent. Perhaps no one noticed at all. But then pride is a very subtle emotion. Assuredness and the feeling of control over one's life overcome those feelings, always waiting in the eaves, of failure, powerlessness, and embarrassment. Belknap had experienced his share of trials, always strongly, face to face. Consider the way he responded to his treatment by the Dover parish: Look here! we might hear him declare; no matter what those scoundrels did to me, no matter that they lied and deceived, refused to support me materially or spiritually, professed false love and humiliated me, how did I react? Why, I courageously stood for my rights; yet I retained my Christian love for them. I gave them opportunity after opportunity to correct their sins, to renew our connection. And even after countless rejections, never once did I intend them any harm. Never once did I exploit their behavior and declare their wrongs

to the world. I remained silent, suffered, and like Job never wavered in my hope and faith in God. Never once did I reject my Christianity.³⁰

"To please the humours of all men is impossible, and to attempt it would be beneath the dignity of our character. Our business is to preach the truth, and to practise what we preach."³¹

CHAPTER NOTES

1. Marcou, Life of Belknap, 14, 22-23, 24-25. Marcou quotes fragments of a letter from the Greenland clergyman to Belknap's father noting Belknap's splendid services as schoolteacher and his "natural, parental care for the welfare of the children." In the letter from Peter Thatcher to Belknap, 5/22/66, CHHS, ser. 6, vol. 4, 9, Thatcher wrote:

your letter . . . puts me in mind of the times when [our] friendship commenc'd which has done me so much honour and made so many hours of my life agreeable. Do you not remember when you kept school at Milton [Massachusetts, from 1762-1764] how openly and unreservedly you treated me,--how you admitted me to your confidence although I was a child? That treatment won my soul.

2. Belknap to Joseph Belknap, Sr., 7/31/71, "Letterbook," MHS, reprinted in Marcou, Life of Belknap, 42-44; Belknap to the Portsmouth Committee of Correspondence, 6/28/74, Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society (hereafter referred to as MHS), ser. 2, vol. 2, 485; Belknap to the Town of Wakefield, 6/30/83, CHHS, ser. 6, vol. 4, 256.

3. Diary for 1763, MHS.

4. Belknap to Byles, 9/5/65, MHS, reprinted in Marcou, Life of Belknap, 15-16. Also, Belknap to Byles, 10/7/65, *Ibid.*, 18. The quote regarding missionary work is from Belknap to Samuel Haven, 1/1/66, "Common Place Book," vol. A, MHS, reprinted in Marcou, Life of Belknap, 20.

5. The poem is from Belknap's Diary for 1762, MHS, written around the end of the year. The comments on the Indian school are from Belknap to Samuel Haven, 1/1/66, MHS. I have placed this quote into his thoughts of the night before.

Although I do not explicitly deal with Belknap's decision for the ministry, clearly my account differs from that of George Kirsch, who argues in Jeremy Belknap: A Biography, (New York: Arno Press, 1982), 9, that Belknap's call to the ministry "came more from earth than from heaven. Pressures from family and friends were building to such a degree that Belknap was forced to search his

heart again for a final judgment"--by coincidence, it appears, he just happened to find grace! It is not for me--or for anyone else--to decide if Belknap experienced something divine. Family, friends, and heritage are important in anyone's life, including Belknap's. However, he was not a mere puppet on the string of Joseph Belknap or Penuel Bowen (Jeremy's friend). Belknap's conflict was with himself, the pressures upon him were of his own creation. As I discuss in "Love," it is possible for any man to desire something so much that the desire itself becomes a repelling force. Once Belknap stopped trying to force grace upon himself for the ministry, and once he accepted the idea that work and action for God's moral kingdom were of the highest importance regardless of the actual task, then he relaxed and felt the hope and faith in God that was, essentially, the saving change.

Let us allow Belknap himself to decide the argument:

It has been my constant habitual thought ever since I was capable of judging, that I should preach the Gospel; with this view my parents educated me, and to this my friends have often urged and persuaded me. But for a long time all these things were in vain. I knew myself to be destitute of the grand fundamental qualification of a true minister of the Gospel, and was determined never to undertake preaching until I had obtained a hope in Christ. A glorious discovery of the riches and freeness of divine grace, and the infinite worthiness of the Lord Jesus Christ, which I trust was made to my soul by the Holy Spirit, at once changed my views and dispositions, and from that time I devoted myself to the service of God in the Gospel of his Son, thinking it my duty to glorify God in this way.

See CHMS, ser. 6, vol. 4, 23.

An excellent discussion of the Calvinist perception of work is Michael Walzer, The Revolution of the Saints: A Study in the Origins of Radical Politics, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965). For the eighteenth century, and a more secular view, see Benjamin Franklin's Autobiography, (New York: Macmillan, 1962).

6. Belknap to Hazard, 12/2/82, 5/18/87, CHMS, ser. 5, vol. 2, 166, 481.

7. Belknap to Peter Thatcher, 2/1769, MHS, and Belknap to Penuel Bowen (no date), in Marcou, Life of Belknap, 25-26, 28-29; Kirsch, Jeremy Belknap, 27-29.

8. Belknap to John Stafford, 9/17/70, "Letterbook," MHS.

9. Belknap to Joseph Belknap, Sr., 7/3/71, "Letterbook," MHS. Belknap concluded the letter:

What must a poor individual do . . . but make known his Sentiments with the Scriptural Reasons on which they are founded to the particular Society with which he is connected, to see whether they will hear the Voice of Christ or not? This I have done."

10. Belknap to Hazard, 10/23/83, 12/21/83, CMHS, ser. 5, vol. 2, 267, 287-288; Belknap to a friend, 1778, reprinted in Marcou, Life of Belknap, 120-121; Belknap to the Parish Selectmen of Dover, 3/7/77, CMHS, ser. 6, vol. 4, 153. An excellent account of Belknap's troubles with his parish is in his own hand, written around 1787, or thereabouts. This is printed in CMHS, ser. 6, vol. 4, 342-378. The speech he gave to his congregation on 8/4/82, which concerns us here, is in *Ibid.*, 342-351.

11. Belknap to Hazard, 4/1/80, CMHS, ser. 5, vol. 2, 49; "Troubles with the Parish at Dover," CMHS, ser. 6, vol. 4, 345, 350, 357; Belknap to Capt. Waldron, 1772, in Marcou, Life of Belknap, 49; Belknap to Hazard, 12/2/82, CMHS, ser. 5, vol. 2, 166.

12. "Troubles with the Parish at Dover," CMHS, ser. 6, vol. 4, 350.

13. "Troubles with the Parish at Dover," CMHS, ser. 6, vol. 4, 351-353. Also the series of letters and documents from 1777, 1778, and 1779 on this matter in *Ibid.*, 153-160; Kirsch, Jeremy Belknap, 76-77.

14. "Troubles with the Parish at Dover," CMHS, ser. 6, vol. 4, 353.

15. *Ibid.*, 354-357.

16. Belknap to Hazard, 6/21/86, CMHS, ser. 5, vol. 2, 440. The following account of the ensuing two months comes from the comprehensive "Troubles with the Parish at Dover," CMHS, ser. 6, vol. 4, 358-375.

17. *Ibid.*, 364-365.

18. *Ibid.*, 365-367.

19. *Ibid.*, 367-370.

20. *Ibid.*, 374-375. Dr Ezra Green was a friend and supporter of Belknap during the entire trial. I think it likely he told Belknap the bad news.

21. Belknap to Hazard, 4/16/84, 9/27/86, CMHS, ser. 5, vol. 2, 330, 443. In Belknap to Hazard, 8/16/79, Ibid., 10, he lamented his inability to work on a "Biographical Dictionary," saying that "it might as well be expected that a snail should quit her shell and soar with the eagle as that I should bring to pass a thing of such magnitude and variety."

22. Belknap to Hazard, 10/25/86, 12/2/86, Ibid., 444, 447-448. Belknap wrote Hazard 5/31/86, Ibid., 436, "I am in an unsettled state, . . . but the voice of Providence must be obeyed."

23. Belknap to Hazard, 12/2/86, Ibid., 448, quoting Dr. Watts.

24. Belknap to Hazard, early 1786, Ibid., 428-430.

25. Belknap to Hazard, 10/25/86, 2/2/87, 2/27/87, Ibid., 445, 454, 463. The "lucrative views" to which Belknap referred included an offer to go to Philadelphia as editor for the Columbia Magazine at a salary of one hundred pounds annually. It is clear to me that the uncertainty of the possibilities in Philadelphia, Belknap's attachment to New England, and the security he experienced from the ministry prevented him from even considering such a proposal. For the offer see Mathew Carey to Ebenezer Hazard, 1/11/87, CMHS ser. 6, vol. 4, 324-325 and Hazard to Belknap, 1/20/87, CMHS, ser. 5, vol. 2, 450-453.

26. Belknap to Hazard, 2/2/87, 3/28/87, Ibid., 455, 468, quoting Bunyan; "Call to the Church in Long Lane," 1/30/87, and "Acceptance of the Call from the Church in Long Lane," 2/7/87, CMHS, ser. 6, vol. 4, 328-329. Belknap to Hazard, 3/28/87, CMHS, ser. 5, vol. 2, 468, quoting Bunyon.

27. A Sermon Preached at the Installation of the Rev. Jedidiah Morse, A. M., . . . On the 30th of April, 1789, (Boston: Samuel Hall, 1789), 5, 6, 8, 9, 12, 21.

28. Ibid., 21.

29. Ibid., 14-15, 17, 18.

30. "Troubles with the Parish at Dover," CMHS, ser. 6, vol. 4, 356-358.

31. Sermon, 19.

CHAPTER 3

NATURE

Belknap to Hazard, 4/23/1781:

If you and I should not think in one channel, we need only propose our thoughts one to the other; and, as I am persuaded we both aim at the truth, if our enquiry be conducted with that openness of mind which the importance of the object demands, we shall be in the ready way to come at it.¹

* * *

It was a humid June evening. Belknap felt a general fatigue that surpassed mere weariness. Up before daybreak, he had been on the road all day. The past few days in New York had been eventful and pleasing. Four days before, Belknap had departed New-Stockbridge, in the Oneida country of western New York, accompanied by his friend Jedidiah Morse. The two friends had investigated the condition of the Oneida and Mohekunuh Indian tribes. The Scots Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge, which had requested the investigation, wanted the two ministers to report on the state of missionary activities as well. Since their departure the preceding Thursday Belknap had made scientific researches; in the town of Pompey he had found "petrifications of sea shells" no less!

He had observed the customs of the country, such as "two Dutch girls walking barefoot, and carrying their shoes" in a summer shower--"an eminent instance of Dutch economy." He had observed the beauties of the countryside and had experienced the bounty of Nature as well: the "very fine" delicious "salmon taken in the Oneida Creek," the "salt springs of Onondago," the curious hop hornbeam tree found in the region. Yet Nature reserved her most pleasing spectacle for this night, a Tuesday. The humidity suggested rain. Belknap had supped and was stretching his weary body in the evening air. The blackness of the night sky outside of his lodging was recurrently interrupted by the brilliant "flash of lightning." He scarcely would have known there were such angry clouds without their sudden illumination by a hidden bolt of light. Fascinating in itself, on this night Nature unleashed her full power to arouse Belknap's sensations. From his perch, which overlooked the surrounding meadow, Belknap stood attentively watching the heavens. Soon his gaze was unpleasantly detracted by the "incessant glimmering" of a competing phenomenon. Looking out upon the meadow Belknap saw "ten thousand" small, twinkling lights, blinking in unison with the great lights above. Fireflies were dancing in the wake of a thunderstorm, competing for the attention of a solitary audience. Belknap suddenly forgot his fatigue in the pleasure of witnessing two parts of Creation, each singularly fascinating, now combined

together to furnish a delighted man with a memory he would cherish until death.²

Nature fascinated Belknap. The beauty and mystery of the light show he witnessed in New York was a single example of the perfection of God's Creation. How could any man not be drawn to it? For years Belknap tracked Nature's course, noting the daily weather. A journal of Nature's changes was a journal of life and existence.

Monday, 1 December 1783--December arrived with a flurry of snow and hail. It was not the first snow of winter--November had its share as well. The whistling of "a heavy gale, with much hail," awoke Belknap during the night. By morning, whiteness covered the earth as far as he could see. The trees appeared suddenly older, enfeebled by the weight of their ice-covered branches. As the day progressed, Nature had mercy upon the trees, as if by plan, and the snow and ice became rain. By evening all was clear. Belknap stepped out, hoping to see Nature revelling in her days work--the aurora borealis. This night he was disappointed--indeed, all autumn he had been. Later, at his desk with pen and ink, he related the day's events to Hazard, warning him that the storm doubtless would delay the letter: "This may probably be the case often during the reign of winter, by reason of which my letters may be intermitted; and you will sometimes have two instead of one, at other times none."³

13 May 1783. "The evening serene, with only a gentle

zephyr from the S.W., but no flaws." Belknap strolled outside his Dover home. It was mild, peaceful. In the distance he heard the gentle rushing of water--the falls of the Cocheco River. Somewhere in the dark frogs sang songs of spring. Yet on this night these natural wonders--sufficient in themselves to stimulate pleasure--accompanied a larger display: the aurora borealis. The beauty and variety of this phenomenon were not the only inducements for Belknap's attention. There was its mystery as well. Imagine the scene: a few rolling clouds suddenly illuminated by a wave of blue light shuddering across the sky, forming a "luminous arch." Belknap recalled the first time he had seen these lights. He had felt as if he were the first and only man on earth to experience the phenomenon. The combination of its beauty and mystery and his own astonishment and concern had made him shiver in the warm night. Even when he had realized what it was, the mystery and force of the spectacle had continued tingling his spine. The aurora resembled the supernatural, the force of Time and Creation that man does not understand, but can only stand back in awe at its power and glory. ³

On this May evening, although Belknap had seen many auroras, the feelings of the first time remained. The pleasure he received on each occasion was due to what the aurora engendered within him--awe, astonishment, even humility. Few other works spawned by the hand of God

illustrate the true state of mankind. Perhaps this was why he enjoyed the aurora, why he was ever eager to see it, to study it, to communicate his experiences of it. The aurora brought life into perspective. A day spent squabbling with parishioners, or arguing with family, or worrying about an ache in his breast, or talking about the scarcity of paper, lost importance. The great Design became the object of concern. The comradeship with those he had earlier cursed became apparent; the love for his son--even if he was stubborn--overruled earlier thoughts and feelings; and paper became a trivial issue. The aurora borealis, rather than a mundane phenomenon, represented the great mystery and beauty of the universe, of which a simple eighteenth-century New Hampshire parson was a small part.

Who can experience pleasure and not yearn to know its source? Who can have a lover and not wish to know her name? Who can observe Nature and not wonder "why"? Likewise Belknap joined pleasure with learning whenever he chanced to see an aurora. And New Hampshire provided ample opportunities for this lover of Nature to indulge his every desire. There was the sea, which matched the aurora in mystery and power. What goes on beneath the endless blue-green of the sea? What hidden force does the sea hide? All Belknap could see, as he walked the beach, were the waves, ever-coming, unceasing. Yet what is each wave? Whence has it come? Where does it go when it beats

the shore? What is hidden under each wave in the darkness of the sea? The mystery of each wave compounds the mystery of the sea. Man is like the sea; each man like a solitary wave.

Inland, at Dover, Belknap enjoyed the forest with frequent strolls or rides on horseback. The forest is unlike the sea; its power is more subtle, its majesty less dramatic. The forest, however, surpasses the sea in diversity. For Belknap, the forest's potential for entertainment and learning was greater even than the sea. The earmark of the forest is silence. Walking, relaxing, thinking, Belknap was alone from man, but not from Creation. Listen. "In a calm day, no sound is heard but that of running water, or perhaps the chirping of a squirrel, or the squalling of a jay." Tall pines creak softly in the breeze. "Singing birds do not frequent the thick woods; but in every opening, made by the hand of cultivation, their melody is delightful."⁵

While strolling and listening in the cool forest air, a glimmer of sunshine intermittently disturbing the pleasant shade, Belknap observed "the luxuriant sportings of nature." The forest mocked the man who would ignore the whole of Creation to confine his attention to himself. So might the solitary rock appear eternally independent in its immovable location. Yet after many years the wind brings a visitor, a seed, and deposits it next to the rock. The seed takes root and grows, steadily, while the

rock continues in apparent sameness. Yet soon the tree matures and its roots spread outward, first conquering the underlying soil, then the rock itself. As the years pass the tree's "roots either penetrate" the rock's crevices "or run over its surface." The rock is now indistinguishable from its earlier form. Time passes. Moss forms on the tree, and "assumes a grotesque appearance, hanging in tufts, like long hair, from the branches"; as it grows it soon touches, then covers, the rock "like a carpet." The rock exists, to be sure, but only as the tree and the moss exist. None is singular; each shares the other.⁶

Of the many works of Nature--the aurora, the sea, the forest, the tall pines, the thunderstorm--the most fascinating and entertaining for Belknap were the White Mountains of central New Hampshire. "Nature has, indeed, in that region, formed her works on a large scale, and presented to view, many objects which do not ordinarily occur." In July, 1784, Belknap and some gentlemen friends toured the White Mountains on horseback. The trip took eleven days; they travelled more than two hundred miles.⁷ Belknap kept a journal of the daily events, which served him well when later, after his return, he set to the task of describing the trip and, particularly, the mountains. Returning home at the end of July, Belknap spent the next few days trying to relax in the August humidity. He reviewed his journal, reflected upon the trip, and at one

point thought to pen a short passage that went beyond mere description, that expressed his feelings toward the mountains.

Belknap believed himself to be a rational thinker. He was precise in his historical and scientific researches, analytical in his approach to a problem, and logical in rendering a problem. His chief tools were, besides reason, experience (he sometimes called it experiment), observation, and objectivity. Belknap brought these tools on his journey to the White Mountains to learn about Creation; but he could not observe dispassionately. This lover of Nature, who was so pleased and awed by the sea, the aurora, and the forest, was spellbound by the beauty and majesty of the mountains. He had never seen Nature clothed in such apparel. Was there anything that could surpass the sublimity of the Western Notch? Imagine entering a meadow surrounded by great walls of rising earth, a veritable room of immense proportion, with the sky and clouds for a roof. How an ant feels in a small ditch is how a man feels in this natural enclosure. Here the sublime power of the mountains forces itself upon the imagination. The greatness of the mountains emphasizes the smallness of oneself. Yet the mountains are themselves small and insignificant compared to the whole of Creation.

How beautiful, how perfect, is the Flume, a rushing torrent of water that has chiseled the surrounding rock so exquisitely no human sculptor could imitate it. The power

of the rushing stream becomes the beauty of the cascade. Crystal water leaps into the air only to fall into the waiting pool below. Some drops try to escape, to leave the rest, but Nature pulls them back; their escape is foiled, their independence momentary, their destination the same as the rest. The air is cool, all is peaceful--but not silent, as the water roars into a dark blue pool endlessly bubbling. The shining wet stones and the glistening moss add to the beauty of the spectacle.

Awe, fascination, delight, rapture. Yet Belknap felt peace here as well. Strange that he was roused and soothed at the same time. For surrounding the torrent, the cascade, and the hanging rocks and cliffs, was the silent forest with countless trees, pure air, and refreshing breeze. Nature, indeed, could stimulate all of his emotions. Was this not a wondrous accomplishment? As the aurora performs in the silent darkness of the night, as the sea roars with power yet soothes with its flowing beauty and sameness, as the silent forest holds towering pines of inestimable majesty, so the mountains simultaneously stimulate and pacify. The mountains excite the senses and arouse the mind to reflection and, consequently, awareness. How great is the structure of Creation; how great is the Builder. How beautiful is the canvas of colors and movement; how beautiful is the Artist. How benevolent is the purpose behind Nature; how benevolent is the Cause. Belknap so loved Nature because

Nature is the shadow of God.

The most romantic imagination here finds itself surprized and stagnated! Every thing which it had formed an idea of as sublime and beautiful is here realized. Stupendous mountains, hanging rocks, chrystal streams, verdant woods, the cascade above the torrent below, all conspire to amaze, to delight, to soothe, to enrapture: in short, to fill the mind with such ideas as every lover of Nature, and every devout worshipper of its Author, would wish to have.⁸

* * *

Belknap was a man of letters and a scientist, who with countless others cultivated knowledge from ignorance: "Tis like taking a piece of wilderness to convert into a field." Belknap was at times the axe-man, who worked hard days to make a clearing in the forest. Roll up the sleeves and blister the hands! The air was sweet in the forest, but the wind seldom blew. Stagnant air was not as refreshing as the cool breeze of the clearing. The breeze cleared Belknap's mind and readied him to think. "The more Trees are cut down, the more free is the circulation of air, and consequently the country more fit for the habitation of the Muses, who cannot live confin'd in Stagnant air, any more than in stagnant Water." It freed the Muses so they could stimulate him and others as well. The work was hard. Felling trees was just the first task. Many a "hard knock" was endured in the process. Soon crops grew; the wilderness yielded to the cultivator.

What had been dark and fierce became light, benevolent, and gay.⁹

Other times the excitement that Belknap felt was that of an explorer penetrating unknown lands. The New World was in so many ways unknown. Were the inhabitants of New Hampshire familiar with the variety of the land's vegetation, with the animal life wandering the wilds, with the minerals and soils, with the curious and unique productions of Nature? "Few persons in this country, have studied natural history as a science, and of those who have a taste for inquiries of this kind, none have had leisure to persue them, to the extent which is desireable." Explorers were thus needed, men who in their leisure searched to know what made this land new. Belknap was excited with the potential stored within the soil, forests, and mountains. He was sure "that America contains 'a treasure yet untouched"; "the treasures which Nature has deposited in America come daily into view, and I doubt not we shall find the New World as well stored with all useful materials as the Old." These treasures were not buried or hidden. Travelling through the forest, the explorer merely had to keep his senses ready and his mind alert. Nature was on display. Search, stop, examine, and learn. America's treasures were not locked up, hidden in the bowels of great hills or covered under leagues of water. To the ignorant, of course, they might as well have been. But to self-trained observers such as

Belknap the newness of the New World was never more apparent. It was new because it was unexplored.¹⁰

Mineralogy, "a branch of science which is but little cultivated," was a special interest. This science was still newborn in New Hampshire in 1780; Belknap tried to bring it into infancy. His favorite study was a type of talc, the lapis specularis, "vulgarly called ising-glass." Imagine a spring day--the end of May, 1780. Belknap had ridden from Dover to a spot in a neighboring town. Entering a grove of white oak, Belknap spotted scattered stones shining in the spotted sunlight. Dismounting, he found flakes of the shiny lapis specularis. The exploration began. As a prospector looks for riches, Belknap searched the grove and, to his excitement, discovered large "pieces of the bigness of the palm of my hand" "under the roots of some trees, which the wind had blown up." He examined them. He had heard of its quality, but these were the best he had yet seen. No wonder this curious substance was used by the Russians "for window lights" and by the English "to cover pictures." Even the "ancient Romans" knew of it!

Returning to Dover, Belknap must have considered his find. He knew of its "elasticity, which enables it to stand the explosion of a cannon, and it is therefore preferred for ships' windows and lanterns, particularly for the powder room." What a "singular blessing," to find it during wartime! What a useful substitute for glass!

Such discoveries showed how reason could better the lot of man. It was gratifying to contemplate the future. Belknap was obviously a small increment in a great cumulative process that would continue long after his death. Years from now New Hampshire would still be relinquishing her secrets and treasures to other inquiring scientists. Creation is bountiful indeed!¹¹

Later that week Belknap informed Hazard of his discovery. For some time the two men had discussed the issue. Belknap had sent specimens, and earlier had written Hazard of an experiment he had performed: "One property of it I have . . . discovered," he wrote in April, "is that it will bear a considerable degree of heat, even the being laid on glowing coals for some time without the least injury." Hazard had agreed on the substance's importance. Hence Belknap took the opportunity to inform his fellow inquirer of the topography of his discovery; perhaps Hazard would find a similar vein in his region.

The soil is a whitish gravel, the loose stones white flint, some of them containing small laminae of the specularis fixed at one end, and open like leaves of a book at the other. The large rocks are of a common grey stone, with veins of the white flint intermixed with the same substance; the growth [in these parts is] white oak. Possibly it may be found in other soils.¹²

It was enjoyable to spend his leisure in search of Nature's secrets, yet it was time spent at inconstant intervals. It was solitary work as well. He could not repress these feelings to his friend:

You see, my dear sir, that I have some inclination to look into the works of Nature; I wish I had it in my power to gratify that inclination. You are sensible that without proper books and instruments, but especially without much leisure from other business, the study of Nature cannot be carried on to any great advantage. I want a friend near me too, who would join in the search; for Solomon was not mistaken when he said, 'Two are better than one.'¹³

Knowledge and the sharing of ideas were inseparable for Belknap; they were the essence of science. How happy he was, for example, when he toured the White Mountains in 1784 with men of science like himself. They observed, measured, analyzed, discussed, recorded, and collected. Like any adventure, not everything went according to plan. When they tried to scale Mount Washington the portly Belknap grew so tired he was obliged to forego the journey to the top. Moreover, some of their scientific instruments broke, and they had a very difficult time obtaining an accurate measure of the height of the mountains. On the whole, however, the trip was a success. They were "sons of science," in many ways, entering a region of myth, deception, and superstition. Belknap was shocked--and slightly amused--when he encountered vulgar mountain people who, upon hearing he was a clergyman, asked if he "should 'lay the spirits'" of the mountain. "So, my good friend," he joked later, "you see I have arrived at the reputation of a conjuror." What was worse, upon his return to Dover people of supposed tolerable sense asked "whether I did not hear terrible noises among

the mountains. O the power of nonsense, superstition, and folly! When will mankind make use of their senses and be wise!" Reason is the only way. Thus the sons of science effectively reduced to "fiction" the story of jewel-encrusted mountains. Moonlight shining upon stones "incrusted with ice" caused the phenomenon--nothing more. And why were the White Mountains white? Was it because of white moss, or white flint, or white rocks? Something more simple was at work here, Belknap informed Hazard: "I would tell you in one word,--snow, which lies on them, commonly, from September or October till July."¹⁴

How Nature plays tricks on man! Even sons of science can be fooled by her tricks and dazzled "by the grandeur and sublimity of the scenes presented to view." Helplessly, they encountered the sublime works of Nature with "amazement" and awe, which served to stir up their imagination and hide reality. Thus when first entering the mountain region the explorers' sense of height and distance were blurred. "The appearances in those mountainous regions are extremely deceptive, and it will take a person several days to get used to them, so as to know how to form any tolerable judgment of heights and distances"; "he will imagine every thing to be nearer and less than it really is, until, by experience, he learns to correct his apprehensions, and accommodate his eye to the magnitude and situation of the objects around him." Belknap remembered one particular instance, when the

distance between two mountains seemed a mere stone's toss. Later, "I found, to my amazement," that the width separating the two mountains was that of an entire township. Imagination had indicated that the distance was in rods; sense-perception, controlled by judgment, revealed it to be miles.¹⁵

Belknap would never forget the pleasing sensations stimulated by the mountains. But pleasure was not his sole purpose in going there. Knowledge followed close behind pleasure. Was this not consistent with his humanity? Does not love follow upon desire? Does not tempered resolution follow upon impulse? Likewise youthful ardor and pleasure vanish in the face of mature discipline and control.

However, as love cannot exist without desire, as impulse is a human instinct that necessitates tempered resolution, and as disciplined self-control is a learned reaction to the romps of youth, so Belknap could not experience the mountains without the occurrence of both pleasure and precise analysis. Even a son of science can love the object for which he seeks knowledge. Thus, when Belknap gazed upon the greatness of Mount Washington he experienced simultaneously the desire to climb and the desire to know the height of that which he would climb. When he was awed by the beauty and majesty of the Western Notch, he wondered at its latitude and narrowness. He did not desire knowledge merely for the sake of knowledge.

Rather, he wanted to know about the thing that stimulated so many feelings within him.

Everything Belknap saw, heard, smelled, touched, and tasted registered on his heart as well as his brain. There were some things Nature taught Belknap about himself and about the Creator that no one else would ever learn-- for no one else was, or ever would be, Jeremy Belknap.

Yet Nature, like Scripture, is open to inquiry from all men. Although each man who accompanied Belknap to the White Mountains experienced Nature in a singular way, they all realized their duty to each other and to society to report objectively their discoveries and observations so that others could learn. "We were all very communicative, and what one knew we all knew." When Belknap's breath failed on the ascent of Mount Washington his disappointment was for what he would not see with his own eyes; he knew that his friends would tell him about the summit. It "is composed," he heard from them, "of stones covered with moss mixed with . . . winter grass; the moss [is] a light grey colour . . . , and so spread over the stones and their interstices as to look like the surface of a dry pasture or common." "When the moss is broken, you see gravel at the bottom between the stones, and in some places springs of water." On Belknap's descent after leaving his brethren, he spied something none of the rest would see:

I came to one precipice, over which I looked, and

found it completely perpendicular. I went to one side, and, by stepping on some loose rocks, got down to the face of it, which was about five feet high, and twelve or fifteen feet long, composed of square-faced stones, laid as fair and regular as a piece of masonry, the water trickling out from beneath them.¹⁶

Although Belknap could not express his full enjoyment of the spectacle, he nevertheless shared the facts of his encounter with the others.

In the White Mountains Belknap was acting out on a reduced scale his vision of science in America. It was a vision of men acting in concert to acquire and communicate knowledge throughout the new United States. In every state men of tolerable sense and ability with sufficient leisure time--men such as Jeremy Belknap--would be joined in the open-ended search of natural and human history. The principles of the American Revolution would be their guide. They might be men of differing wealth or ability, but as all men are equal before God, so all men are equal before Creation, including when they try to learn her secrets. Free and independent they would be, but united in their work as well. No one man can understand the whole of Creation. The solitary man must rely on information that others provide; then he can make their knowledge his own. They were a group, these Americans, fighting the British, settling a rough land, and acquiring knowledge of man and Nature in a New World. For their society they chose a government conducive to their interests. Belknap thought: why not in their scientific

pursuits as well?

Why may not a Republic of Letters be realized in America as well as a Republican Government? Why may there not be a Congress of Philosophers as well as of Statesmen? And why may there not be subordinate philosophical bodies connected with a principal one, as well as separate legislatures, acting in concert by a common assembly? I am so far an enthusiast in the cause of America [Jeremy Belknap wrote in 1780] as to wish she may shine Mistress of the Sciences, as well as the Asylum of Liberty.¹⁷

* * *

How absurd! Disgust and anger overwhelmed Belknap, though the hands that held the book he was reading betrayed no such emotions. He had to steady the book to read the passage again; he wanted to feast his eyes on an example of the stupidity of the great. How often had he seen men of supposed wisdom show their ignorance? Dr. Johnson's comments were no different from those of the countless thinkers who pompously declare their knowledge upon subjects of which they know nothing. His eyes followed the words a third time, then a fourth:

No writer has a more easy task than the historian. The philosopher has the works of Omniscience to examine, and is therefore engaged in disquisitions to which finite intellects are utterly unequal. The poet trusts to his invention, and is not only in danger of inconsistencies to which every one is exposed by departure from truth, but may be censured as well for deficiencies of matter as for irregularity of disposition or impropriety of ornament. But the happy historian has no other labour than of gathering what tradition pours down before him.¹⁸

The historian is not an oyster awaiting the tide to

brisk him away from the hot sand of the shore, Belknap thought. Dr. Johnson, no doubt, does his history from a quiet armchair; his sources are imagination and his library. "One may venture any bet that, at the time when this . . . was composed, Dr. J. had not undertaken an History . . . of a country, and to search for his materials wheresoever they were likely or not likely to be found." Rather than tradition coming to him, the historian must go out and find it. He must exhaust the potential (as well as himself) to locate sources. If necessary, he must enter "the garrets and rat-holes of old houses" and emerge covered with grimy hands and dusty clothes. He must write letter after letter to gentlemen scholars requesting information, records, and assistance. He must spend days on horseback to collect a record that will gain significance only when it is combined with others. He must spend hours copying sources for himself, or for fellow sons of science. He must sit, think, and digest stacks and stacks of official letters, personal correspondence, laws, charters, and other sources of the past. Dr. Johnson, indeed, has no idea what true historical, scientific research entails: "If he had to go through the drudgery," he complained to Hazard, "which you and I are pretty tolerably acquainted with . . . he would be fully sensible that to write an History as it should be is not so easy a work." He should read Lawrence Eckard on history: "There are required so many qualifications and

accomplishments in an Historian, and so much care and niceness in writing history, that some have reckoned it one of the most difficult labours human nature is capable of."¹⁹

Dr. Johnson, it appeared to Belknap, thought of the historian as nothing more than a passive ninny. Yet Belknap knew that the scientist engaged in historical research is active: "There is nothing like . . . keeping a good look-out, not waiting at home for things to fall into the lap, but prowling about like a wolf for the prey."²⁰ Belknap was also convinced of the utility of the cumulative vision of science, which requires the group. This vision was in Belknap's mind when in 1790 he drafted a plan for an antiquarian society to be located in Boston. In such a society,

Each Member on his admission shall engage to use his utmost endeavours to collect and communicate to the Society, Manuscripts, printed books and pamphlets, historical facts, biographical anecdotes, observations in natural history, specimens of natural and artificial Curiosities, and any other matters which may elucidate the natural, and political history of America from the earliest times to the present day.²¹

The next year the society, now "Historical" rather than "Antiquarian," began. Belknap summed its purpose, and his own view of science, when he wrote Hazard: "We intend to be an active, not a passive, literary body; not to lie waiting, like a bed of oysters, for the tide (of communication) to flow in upon us, but to seek and find, to preserve and communicate literary intelligence,

especially in the historical way."²²

* * *

It was a cold February morning, 1780, and Belknap was enjoying himself immensely. Normally, writing a letter to Hazard was sufficient cause for enjoyment. On this morning, however, Belknap was doing more. He was traipsing through Martha's Vineyard, noting the beautiful cliffs enlivened by "the reflection of the sun-beams on its various coloured cliffs." It was a pleasant memory. He "was there once when very young," and could still remember the beauty of that place. And what a repository for Nature's curiosities it was! He remembered. It had been a warm day. The breeze blowing from the sea had a fresh, salty scent that made his nose perk up and take deep whiffs. The cliffs upon which the sea air bounced and the sunlight glistened were brightly colored like a rainbow: "red, blue, and white marble." Belknap could not resist, as he walked this place, picking up random stones, especially the sulphuric ones. Other things captured his attention as well: a great tree stump petrified into stone and other fragments of aged wood turned to stone and coal. So fascinating were they that the youthful Belknap gathered some specimens.²³

Here the pleasure of the rumination vanished, and Belknap realized suddenly how different he was now, in

1780. Imagine collecting such useful curiosities and giving them to someone else! In his youth and ignorance he had viewed Creation through a narrow perspective. Its beauty captured his heart and made him forget all else. At least he had sense enough to recognize the importance of the island's curiosities: "There were . . . specimens of petrification; one of which, being perfect stone on one side and perfect coal on the other, I brought away, and (like a fool) gave it to a person who was making a collection of curiosities, which is now scattered and lost by his death."²⁴ How impetuous is youth! Youth. When impulse and feeling are hardly tempered by the discipline of experience; love captures the heart before reason has time to recover and balance. In youth, the future is a dim vision hidden by the concern for present reality. Maturity allowed Belknap to recognize the importance of discipline, reason, and time. If all scientists acted as he did in his youth, science would yet be a faint glimmer amid the darkness of superstition. Science makes no progress when pleasure and fascination reign over reason and awareness. He could still delight in his memories of the beauty of Martha's Vineyard. But he must also use his memory to analyze what he had only casually observed as a youth. Memory is a powerful tool indeed. It is the handmaiden of experience, the cousin of reason. Using memory with experience and reason, Belknap could correct the errors of his past. He knew now, for example, that

science is dependent upon time. The man who thinks that knowledge comes in a flash of insight is a fool. Knowledge must build with time. One must endeavor to correct the mistakes and erase the ignorance of the past--and so it goes year after year. The wise man is wise only because of experience; wisdom and youth do not mix. Science cannot be science without men, generation after generation, searching for knowledge, analyzing their discoveries, collecting curiosities, and preserving the natural and human past for the future.²⁵

CHAPTER NOTES

1. CHMS, ser. 5, vol. 2, 97.

2. This account is based on Belknap's Journal of his Oneida Tour, published in the MHSP, vol. 19, 1882, 396-423; the quotes are from pp. 416-418. See also the report to the Scots Society by Belknap and Morse in CMHS, ser. 1, vol. 5, 12-32.

3. Belknap to Hazard, 12/1/83, CMHS, ser. 5, vol. 2, 280.

4. Belknap to Hazard, 5/19/83, Ibid., 208. For another description of the aurora see Belknap to Hazard, 3/31/83, CMHS, ser. 5, vol. 3, 373³⁻⁴. In volume two of his History of New Hampshire (p. 24), Belknap wrote: "If any person would have a precise idea of the sound, caused by the flashing of the aurora borealis, let him hold a silk handkerchief by the corner, in one hand, and with the thumb and finger of the other hand, make a quick stroke along its edge."

5. The History of New Hampshire, 2 vols, (Dover N.H.: 1812, 1831; reprint ed., New York: Johnson Reprint Corp., 1970), 2:56. The History of New Hampshire was originally published in three volumes, in 1784, 1791, and 1792, in Philadelphia and Boston. The edition cited above combined the original volumes one and two into a single volume; the original volume three became volume two.

6. Ibid., 2:56-57.

7. Ibid., 2:32. The precise distance travelled, according to Belknap, was 223 miles.

8. The two sources I use for this section are Belknap's journal of the trip, reprinted in CMHS, ser. 5, vol. 2, 386-401, and two detailed letters describing the trip that he wrote Hazard, 8/16/84 and 8/19/84, CMHS, ser. 5, vol. 3, 170-189. The quote appears to have been an afterthought to his journal. Belknap wrote the manuscript on the right-hand pages of the journal, reserving the left side for comments; here is where the above quote is found (CMHS, ser. 5, vol. 2, 395). Perhaps he wrote it while reviewing the journal, as I portray him. This, I think, is most likely. At any rate it was a favorite quote with

him--he used it no less than three times. Besides the journal passage, he copied it word for word in his letter to Hazard (CMHS, ser. 5, vol. 3, 183), and he used a shortened version in the History of New Hampshire, 2:39. Clearly, he was proud of his description. But it was more than pride. In a short space Belknap penned a concise expression of all the feelings--and there were many--engendered by the White Mountains. I doubt if it was easy to write; most likely it was the product of reflection and inspiration.

9. Belknap to Ruth, 9/20/64, Belknap to Paine Wingate, 1/20/85, NHMSS.

10. History of New Hampshire, 2:73; Belknap to Hazard, 3/13/80, CMHS, ser. 5, vol. 2, 40, where Belknap also declared "I wish I had some good system of Natural History. I can command nothing of this kind but 'Nature Displayed,' which is an entertaining epitome, and gives a relish to an inquisitive mind for further enquiries." Belknap to Hazard, 12/18/80, CMHS, ser. 5, vol. 2, 83.

11. History of New Hampshire, 2:143-144, Belknap continued:

Men of genius and science have not leisure to pursue objects from which present advantages cannot be drawn. The disappointments which have attended some expensive attempts; the air of mystery thrown over the subject by ignorant pretenders; and the facility with which every mineral may be imported from abroad, have discouraged inquiries. But from the specimens which have appeared, there can be no doubt of the existence of mineral and fossil treasures, in the search of which, future generations will find employment.

On the Lapis specularis, see Belknap to Hazard, 2/4/80, 3/13/80, 4/1/80, 6/5/80, 10/25/80, 12/18/80, CMHS, ser. 5, vol. 2, 39, 48-49, 55-56, 79, 82-83, 254-255. The correspondence regarding this one subject between these two sons of science lasted almost a year. The spot Belknap visited was six miles from Dover, next to a "stream" called the "Ising-glass River."

12. Belknap to Hazard, 4/1/80, 6/5/80, *Ibid.*, 49, 56.

13. *Ibid.*, 56.

14. Belknap to Hazard, 8/19/84, CMHS, ser. 5, vol. 3, 184, 187, 188-189.

15. History of New Hampshire, 2:32; Belknap to Hazard,

8/19/84, CMHS, ser. 5, vol. 3, 186-187.

16. Ibid., 174, 175-176, 187; Belknap's journal of his trip to the White Mountains, CMHS, ser. 5, vol. 2, 390.

17. Belknap to Hazard, 2/4/80, Ibid., 255.

18. The quote is from Belknap to Hazard, 1/13/84, Ibid., 294.

19. Ibid., 294-295. Belknap discussed his view of history in: Belknap to Hazard, 3/10/90, CMHS, ser. 5, vol. 3, 216, where he noted his belief that the historian's research must be exhaustive; Belknap to Nathaniel Peabody, 3/23/91, Ibid., 485, where he stressed four components of his inquiry: "collecting, compiling, digesting, and copying." An enlightening letter is Belknap's response to a proposal by Mathew Carey that Belknap write "the historical part of an annual Register" for "20 guineas per annum." Carey must have been shocked at the honesty and depth of Belknap's response. Belknap perceived that Carey had no awareness of the tremendous work involved in writing the history of one state, much less the United States. Carey's mind must have been boggled by the immensity of such a project, as Belknap considered it:

that collection be made of all the public newspapers, journals, pamphlets, plans, and drawings that may be published from time to time in each State, or in foreign countries relative to America, and your compiler furnished with them; that he should select such facts and observations as are worth preserving from them, and enter them in a memorandum with references. . . . To solve doubts and difficulties which may . . . arise, and pursue enquiries into matters but superficially known, it would be proper that he should have some intelligent and faithful correspondent in each of the States to whom he may apply. . . . It might be an easy matter with writers of a certain sort to dish up a fricasee of newspaper intelligence and dignify it with the pompous title of The History of the United States. But a person who values his reputation as a writer would chuse to have the best materials, and even then would hesitate about many things which an inconsiderate scribler would venture to throw out at random. To write the history of one's own time, and to write it at or very near the time when the events come into existence, is in some cases impossible, in others improper. Facts and transactions are often viewed thro' the medium of prejudice at first, but in a course of time those prejudices may

subside, and the same person may view them in another light, and draw observations and conclusions of a very different complexion. Besides, the views and designs of the actors on the public theatre are often concealed, and a writer of the most honest intentions may very innocently give a wrong colouring to things, whereas time and accident may develop secrets and strip off disguises which it is impossible at first enquiry to discover. . . . From these and other considerations I consider your proposal with diffidence. Zealous as I am to serve the cause of science, I consider my reputation as at stake the moment I consent to undertake the work.

Belknap to Carey, 5/18/87, *Ibid.*, 335-337. The Eckard quote is in Marcou, Life of Belknap, 12.

20. Belknap to Hazard, 8/21/95, CMHS, ser. 5, vol. 3, 356-357.

21. The copy of Belknap's draft of the plan is inserted between pages 230 and 231 in *Ibid.* It is dated August, 1790.

22. Belknap to Hazard, 2/19/91, *Ibid.*, 245. Generally Belknap's views on science appear not to have been far different from most of his contemporaries. Modern scholarship has shown what Jeremy Belknap knew: that American science was concerned not with the speculative but with practical, utilitarian knowledge. For discussions of this matter, and American science in general, see Raymond P. Stearns, Science in the British Colonies of America, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1970) and George H. Daniels, Science in American Society: A Social History, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1971). Daniels' argument that "the great hope of American scientists seemed to lie in the [philosophical and scientific] societies rather than in more formal educational institutions" reflects Belknap's view precisely. Brook Hindle, The Pursuit of Science in Revolutionary America (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1956), argues that a scientific perspective was an essential ingredient in the coming of the American Revolution. The best introduction to the American Enlightenment in my mind continues to be Daniel Boorstin, The Americans: The Colonial Experience, (New York: Vintage Books, 1958). In Book Two Boorstin portrays early American science as guided by simple observation and collection by amateur elite intellectuals; this beautifully describes Jeremy Belknap himself. Other good introductions are Boorstin, The Lost World of Thomas Jefferson, (Chicago: University Press, 1958) and Stow Persons, American Minds: A History of Ideas, (New York:

Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1958). Finally, see the provocative study by Gary Wills, Inventing America: Jefferson's Declaration of Independence, (New York: Random House, 1978), particular Part Two. Wills sees Jefferson as being influenced more by thinkers of the Scottish Enlightenment than by philosophers such as John Locke. The Scottish Enlightenment stressed the "heart" over the "head", the intuitive moral center of the human rather than reason. Belknap was not strongly influenced by the Scottish Enlightenment. As I show, however, Belknap did have the heart-head dualism, and generally the heart, or his Romantic side, won out over the head, his Enlightenment side.

23. Belknap to Hazard, 2/4/80, CMHS, ser. 5, vol. 2, 253-254.

24. Ibid., 25.

25. There are a number of characteristics about Belknap that make him interesting to scientists and historians of the 1980s. Historians must be wary, however. For they have a tendency to trap themselves in their own categories and to commit the sin of anachronism. It is very easy, for example, for the historian searching the past for the history of historical writing to land upon Belknap as a symbol of a break toward "modern" historiography. Was the historian and scientist Jeremy Belknap "modern"? To be sure, like the modern historian Belknap was secular and analytical. He strived for definitiveness and matched the modern ideal of exhausting the sources. He was aware of potential biases and tried for objectivity in the understanding of his sources. Of course, Belknap's history was still didactic. As he wrote a friend in July, 1772, "if I did not think [a history] might be so managed as not only to be a detail of facts, but also a conveyance of reflections tending to the advancement of religion and mortality, I would entirely lay it aside as unbecoming my profession [as a clergyman]" (Harcou, Life of Belknap, 49). As he had planned, his History of New Hampshire is a moral story: the struggle of virtue versus vice, of order against disorder, dominates the first two volumes.

But if we look for modernity, there is more to be found. Let us take the sociological perspective for a moment. Modern science (and history), it can be argued, is characterized by a group-orientation. The professional group is esoteric and internalized: it is a closed system in many ways. The group trains acolytes--future members--in a specific, group-accepted methodology. There are specific communication devices (i.e., journals) that are the exclusive domain of the group in terms of both contribution and understanding. Moreover, in a discipline such as history, where the truth of the past is recognized

as elusive, the group determines, according to the canons of methodology, technique, and definitiveness, whether the production of a single group member is acceptable or not. In the sciences, according to one acute observer, this group decision-making centers around the paradigm, the "universally recognized scientific achievements that for a time provide model problems and solutions to a community of practitioners" (Thomas Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, 2nd ed., (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), viii). The paradigm is, in essence, a stable, secure idea that guides scientists. It is a form of tradition that, Kuhn argues, is replaced only by revolution. (See also David A Hollinger, "T. S. Kuhn's Theory of Science and its Implications for History," American Historical Review 78(1973): 370-393).

To be sure, Belknap was a member of a group of scientists--"sons of science" he called them. Communication was paramount among these scientists. Belknap was enthusiastic about the Massachusetts Historical Society because it represented his ideal of science: group communication, preservation, and diffusion. However, Belknap was not a modern scientist according to the above sociological standards. He was not a member of an exclusive profession, but an amateur who was part of a group that was extensive and open to any comers of intelligence and learning. Group communication existed then as today, but Belknap's "journal," the Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society, was anything but esoteric and exclusive. "If we cannot erect an elegant building," Belknap said referring to the lack of systematization of the Collections, "we will plant a forest, into which every inquirer may enter at his pleasure, and find something adapted to his purpose." (Collections, vol. 4, 1795, p. 5.) If the communication and discussion among a broad group at least resembles the science of today, such resemblance fades when we consider that there was no decision-making by this eighteenth-century group. Knowledge was to be had with time and the accumulation of data. There was a Truth that could be found, perhaps not in Belknap's day but in the near future. Modern scientists are skeptical of a broad-ranging Truth. Nevertheless, if the Truth cannot be discovered truths can be, say modern scientists. How? If the professional elite agree that such and such approaches reality, then a decision is made to accept it as real--for the time being at least. Finally, if Kuhn's vision of modern science is accurate, the implication of the paradigm--the tradition--is a reluctance to change. The past in many ways is regarded more than the future. Belknap, however, assumed and expected change; he was constantly aware that his opinion was "current," meaning for the present only. As Belknap explained to Hazard in 1784,

Creeds, either in philosophy or divinity, should never be imposed, because they tend to fetter the mind and stop its genuine excursions into the field of truth. For this reason I have long since utterly discarded all confessions or standards of human authority. I never subscribed but one, and that was of my own drawing [his 1767 statement of Confession], and I subscribed it in no other view than as exhibiting my th r present thoughts on some of the points in divinity; but I have since enquired farther, and now could not subscribe the whole even of that.

(Belknap to Hazard, 4/11/84, CMHS, ser. 5, vol. 2, 325.)
And earlier, in 1781: "For my part, I find it a thing extremely difficult to disengage myself from early prejudices and the force of human authority. I have been labouring to do it for many years, but dare not say I have wholly overcome, though it is my sincere desire to do it."
(Belknap to Hazard, 4/23/81, Ibid., 97.)

CHAPTER 4

LIBERTY

Jeremy Belknap, The Foresters:

'Friend John (said Roger) dost not thou remember when thou and I lived together in friend Bull's family, how hard thou didst think it to be compelled to look on thy book all the time that the hooded chaplain was reading the prayers, and how many knocks and thumps thou and I had for offering to use our liberty, which we thought we had a right to? Didst thou not come hitherunto for the sake of enjoying thy liberty, and did not I come to enjoy mine? Wherefore then dost thou assume to deprive me of the right which thou claimest for thyself?'

'Don't tell me (answered John) of right and of liberty--you have as much liberty as any man ought to have. You have liberty to do right, and no man ought to have liberty to do wrong.'

'Who is to be judge (replied Roger) what is right or what is wrong? Ought not I to judge for myself? or, Thinkest thou it is thy place to judge for me?'

'Who is to be judge (said John) why the book is to be judge--and I have proved by the book over and over again that you are wrong, and therefore you are wrong, you have no liberty to do any thing but what is right.'

'But friend John (said Roger) who is to judge whether thou hast proved my opinions or conduct to be wrong--thou or I?'

'Come, come, (said John) not so close neither--none of your idle distinctions: I say you are in the wrong, I have proved it, and you know it; you have sinned against your own conscience, and therefore you deserve to be cut off as an incorrigible heretic.'

'How dost thou know (said Roger) that I have sinned against my own conscience? Canst

thou search the heart?'

At this John was so enraged that he gave him a smart kick on the posteriors, and bade him be gone out of his house, and off his lands, and called after him to tell him, that if ever he should catch him there again he would knock his brains out.¹

* * *

1774: We the Subscribers, . . . Do in the presence of GOD solemnly and in good faith, covenant and engage with each other That from hence forth we will suspend all commercial Intercourse with the said Island of Great Brittain, until the Parliament shall cease to enact Laws imposing Taxes upon the Colonies, without their Consent, or, until the pretended Right of taxing is dropped.²

The odious Covenant, a product of minds engrossed with power, reminded Belknap of John Winthrop. Belknap deeply respected the Puritan leader, who led the flock from England, then great with corruption and tyranny, to America, a land of native freedom. Whenever Belknap thought of the Puritan exodus to the New World he was filled with admiration for their courage and perseverance. Winthrop himself was a man of stability, humility, and bravery. Usually he was a man of wisdom as well. But all great men have weaknesses: human nature relentlessly hammers at characteristics that would otherwise free man from depravity. The paradox of John Winthrop was that he led the Puritans from persecution to persecution, from being victims to being oppressors. His words would forever be despised by lovers of freedom:

There is a liberty of corrupt nature, which is affected both by men and beasts, to do what they list; and this liberty is inconsistent with authority, impatient of all restraint; by this liberty, Sumus Omnes Deteriores [We are all the worse for it]; 'tis the grand enemy of truth and peace, and all the ordinances of God are bent against it. But there is a civil, a moral, a federal liberty, which is the proper end and object of authority; it is liberty for that only which is just and good; for this liberty you are to stand with the hazard of your very lives; and whatsoever crosses it is not authority, but a distemper whereof. This liberty is maintained in a way of subjection to authority; and the authority set over you will in all administrations for your good be quietly submitted unto, by all but such as have a disposition to shake off the yoke, and lose their true liberty, by their murmuring at the honour and power of authority.³

Liberty, thought Belknap, is not the freedom to submit to authority. Nor is liberty the "right" to believe what others declare is truth. Liberty is the freedom to stroll in a summer meadow: gazing at the blue sky, feeling the warmth of the sun, listening to Nature. Liberty is the right to choose folly over sense, indolence rather than duty. Liberty means to act on the authority of oneself. Liberty means to believe what feels right to believe; to express this belief or to remain silent; to act for a truth that may perhaps be true for no one else.

At least John Winthrop had the freedom to err when he twisted and turned "liberty" to masquerade for "tyranny." America was wide-open and raw, a fit place for diversity, toleration, and error. Liberty was welcome in America. But unlike former hosts America was a wilderness; consequently liberty dressed differently, acted in strange

new ways. An American, Jeremy Belknap knew her ways and enjoyed satirizing them. He imagined Peregrine Pickle, the representative Plymouth immigrant of the 1620s:

Here I am alone, no creatures but bears, and wolves, and such vermin around me! . . . I have nobody here to curse me, or kick me, or cheat me. If I only have clams to eat, I can cook them my own way, and say as long a grace over them as I please. I can sit or stand, or kneel, or use any other posture at my devotions, without any . . . hectoring bully to cuff me for it. So that if I have lost in one way I have gained in another.

He decided to write his friends in England, to "tell them how much happiness I enjoy here in my solitude. I'll point out to them the charms of liberty, and coax them to follow me into the wilderness; and by and by, when we get all together, we shall make a brave hand of it." He related "the extreme happiness he enjoyed in having liberty to eat his scanty meals in his own way, and to lay his swelled ankles and stiff knee in whatever posture was most easy to him."⁴

Belknap knew liberty firsthand; he knew tyranny as well. The difference between liberty and tyranny is narrow, ill-defined. The clergyman, more than other men, knows this tension. Jeremy Belknap believed in liberty of conscience: the right to believe a personal truth. Yet does not the clergyman know the truth of Scripture better than the layman? How can the clergyman refrain from preaching a truth he knows so clearly, so deeply? How can his parishioners be blind to this truth? Who can see Creation without knowing there is a Creator? "It is an

undoubted truth of natural religion," Belknap once declared, "that there is a God, and he ought to be worshipped and served." Who can feel the wonder of Creation and not yearn to praise the Creator? To live in a land of liberty, America, and yet deny the Gospel and ignore God's ministers? Absurd! As he told a straying parishioner in 1771:

Other great nations, who are called Christian, have the truths of the gospel wretchedly corrupted, and mixed with error; and but few, comparatively, of the inhabitants of the earth have the privilege of a pure, uncorrupt gospel: But of this few you are one. . . . You may examine what is preached by the unerring standard, without fear of incurring any human censure or temporal inconvenience, by rejecting what you cannot approve, and by openly declaring against what you think erroneous. In short, you have all the religious liberty which a reasonable creature can desire; and therefore your neglect of the glorious gospel is a base ingratitude to that God who placed you in a land of liberty; it looks as if you despised and undervalued that great blessing, which many people in the world are destitute of, and would gladly purchase at the dearest rate.⁵

It was a difficult problem: each man has the liberty of personal belief, yet what to believe is so clear. Belknap could not understand those who reject Scripture, who reject Jesus.

So Belknap knew liberty because he knew tyranny. And he knew that the Covenant represented tyranny. Had the Boston Committee of Correspondence, which drafted the Covenant in June, 1774, obtained proper "legal authority from their Constituents" to prepare a document outlawing trade with the British? What constituents had voted power

to the Committee, which, like other groups throughout the colonies, had assumed responsibility to link the towns and provinces of America in response to the British threat? What right did the Committee have to decide arbitrarily that each colonist discontinue trade with Britain? "This method of imposing Covenants by private men," he thought, "is a most dangerous precedent and their presuming to add . . . a penalty"--that those refusing to sign the Covenant be considered "inimical to and criminally negligent of the common safety"--"is a daring usurpation of power which was never delegated to them." Belknap knew that "many Merchants have already wrote to England for Goods for their Fall Supply which Goods cannot be countermanded in Season, and if this agreement takes place must lay on their hands to their great Loss and Damage." Were these merchants to suffer ruin because of the opinions of others? Belknap, of course, lamented the afflictions of "our poor oppressed brethren in Boston." He lamented the Boston Port Bill, which closed Boston harbor. He disliked British troops in Boston and the cessation of provincial government, both of which represented "the rigor of a cruel and unjust act of parliament." How he hated these things! His father and mother, his dear friends--all suffered! But the proper response to tyranny is by legal authority--a Congress perhaps--not by the private citizens of the Boston Committee of Correspondence. They were blind: tyranny cannot be met with tyranny. Their

"oppressive" Covenant, which tended to repress individual beliefs, equalled the worst British tyranny. Belknap scanned the Covenant again, halting briefly at each hateful phrase:

That there may be less Temptation to others to continue in the said now dangerous Commerce . . . we do . . . solemnly covenant that we will not buy, purchase or consume, or suffer any Person, by, for, or under us, to purchase, nor will we use in our Families, . . . any Good Wares or Merchandise . . . from Great Brittain. . . . We agree to break off all Trade and Commerce with all persons, who preferring their private Interest to the Salvation of their now almost perishing Country, who shall still continue to import Goods from Great Brittain.

How, Belknap wondered, can normal men from Boston--not Olympus--determine "the secret thoughts of mens hearts and the motives of their Conduct"? Such a "supposition" is "utterly void of any Foundation in Reason and Truth and breathes a spirit of imposition and Cruelty equal to any Species of Tyranny temporal or spiritual that ever disgraced mankind." Truly, the investigation into such thoughts is reserved for the "supreme Tribunal." Why should merchants suffer who "have in times past freely sacrificed their private Interest to the public good and deserve better of their Country than to be abused in this manner"? He read on:

As a Refusal to come into any agreement which promises Deliverance of our Country from the Calamities it now feels and which like a Torrent are rushing upon it with increasing Violence, must in our Opinion, evidence a Disposition enimical to or criminally negligent of the common safety. It is agreed that all such ought to be considered and shall by us be esteemed as encouragers of contumacious Importers.

In other words, Belknap thought with horror, "no persons can refuse to join in the measure." If a citizen like Jeremy Belknap rejected the Covenant, he could be labeled a traitor, and, worse, become the object of violence.⁶

It was an awful mistake, made by men who had been united for a decade, along with Jeremy Belknap, in opposition to British tyranny. Belknap remembered when George III succeeded George II in 1760. The lenient reign of the latter appeared to be the goal of the heir. Indeed, the new king's first speech to Parliament had evoked Belknap's comment in his diary: "Born and educated in this Country, I glory in the Name of BRITON."⁷ But soon the true character of George III emerged. As he unleashed his despotism toward America, beginning with the Stamp Act, the colonies united, resisted. Belknap laughed to himself. Dr Franklin had declared twenty-four years before that unity among the colonies was doubtful without a common enemy. George III became the object. Belknap recalled earlier comments that continued relevant:

If the present Despotic System [he declared to a Londoner] formed on your side [of] the Water is continued, we expect to see our Seaport Towns diminished, but our inland Territories will be vastly improved, and a Foundation laid for a considerable Empire in Time to come. . . . Had the lenient Spirit of Geo 2d's Reign continued to this Time, Our Pockets would have been emptied, and our Lands mortgaged to the British Merchants which we should have had nothing to show for . . . but idle Superfluities. But . . . the jealous Prerogative has awakned our native Spirit of Freedom and taught us the Wisdom of saving our Money and improving our own Country.⁸

The colonies thrived under neglect; loyal if not wholly subservient, they supplied bullion for imperial wars. The King's interference threatened this lucrative arrangement. He should not have listened to his councillors--rather, to his heart. Humans are "naturally averse to control." What parent does not know this simple truth? The child is content when he thinks he makes his own decisions--even when he does not. The parents set the general guidelines; the child happily sets restricted rules. But after years of the same, no child will accept an arbitrary change in the rules. Perhaps it would be impossible for a king to search his heart and find this truth. The Bostonians, however, had enjoyed years of tacit independence under British neglect. Did experience teach them nothing? Were their memories so short? What does liberty mean? Imposition? Coercion? Control? Belknap remembered the meaning of liberty. He refused to give up the right of self-control, of personal truth, of freedom to do and to think, to anyone, whether British or Bostonian.

It was evening when Belknap sat down at his desk to respond to the Covenant. "I think I have a right to speak my mind upon the Subject," he said in justification, "and these are the Reasons why I shall not subscribe it." First, "because Tyranny in one shape is as odious to me as Tyranny in another." The Covenant allows "no Liberty of Conscience nor right of private judgment."

This is a species of Tyranny springing up among ourselves unworthy the Descendants of those Men

who fled into this Country from impositions of a similiar nature in England, it is as dangerous in its tendency as any acts of the British Parliament which it is intended to oppose and the very first beginnings of such a spirit of lawless Imposition and Restraint ought to be checked and discountenanced by every consistent Son of Liberty and every true friend to his Country.

As the evening wore on, as quill dipped in ink and fingers became stained, Belknap listed other reasons. He lamented the injustice to merchants; he pointed out that other colonies appeared not to support it; he discussed the Covenant's ambiguity. When he came to his fourth point, he sat long, thought hard, for this point struck deep within Belknap himself. It bothered his feelings, it troubled his conscience, it challenged his principles.⁹

Man thinks: he theorizes, develops principles, and contemplates life, all in the security of passivity. But there comes a time for action, when beliefs must be advocated, sustained, or defended. When thoughts and feelings agree, theory and action work wonderfully together. But at this moment Belknap's feelings rebelled against his principles. Fear. How he wished to confront danger with steady fortitude. John Smith had been such a man. He held strong and true principles--public-spirit, self-sacrifice, the glory of England, piety to God; and he had bravery to match. Facing death over and over, Smith did not allow fear to control him; rather, he conquered his fear, acted, and triumphed.¹⁰ The moral of Smith's example was that courage does not exist without fear. He who lacks fear when death threatens is a god not a man.

Courage is nothing more than an active confrontation with the inevitable impulse to run and hide from danger.

Belknap feared the future. When others rioted against British authority in the aftermath of the Stamp Act, Belknap looked to the future, aware that both the act and the response omened ill for America. "This direct and violent attack on our dearest privileges at first threw us into a silent gloom," he recalled twenty years later. "To submit, was to rivet the shackles of slavery on ourselves and our posterity. To revolt, was to rend asunder the most endearing connexion." The "spirit of the populace was kept up" by riotous behavior, "though the minds of the most thoughtful persons were filled with anxiety."¹¹

During the next few years the dread hovered like a fog over a New Hampshire pond, never dissipating, never opening to sunlight. Day after day a constant, unseen pressure burdened him. Belknap did not feel a sudden shock, a gripping, tightening of the stomach; nor did he feel the quickening heart or the tingling spine. He felt fear all the same. The power of the fear stemmed from its alliance with the imagination. What did the future hold? Prosperity? Happiness? Peace of mind? Independence and order? It is pleasant to think of sunshine on a rainy day. But soon the dream pops. The future was so pregnant! The war brimmed with possibilities. What would happen? Would Boston lie in ruins a few years hence? Would the British place a new, comprehensive, debilitating yoke upon the

colonies? Or would independence be tried? Could Americans construct a government consistent with the "virtuous liberty" of "the British Constitution"?¹² Or would anarchy issue from the ruins of government? So many questions, all without answers: now more than other times, Belknap felt the burden of the future.

On this June evening, the dread of the preceding months raged within Belknap, like a spreading fire, demanding action. His first impulse was to run, to hide; perhaps in a cool dark place of quiet anonymity the fire would die. The Covenant suddenly seemed less important than its object, the British threat. Images of violence, defeat, and terror raged through his mind, images of "instruments of oppression" in red coats sent by "base employers" for the purpose of "enslaving their fellow subjects" and "to terrify the wretched . . . inhabitants."¹³ Domestic politics be damned! The external threat is more severe! As in times of dread, when the man who moments before was quite content with his company--his pen, ink, paper, and self--becomes disquieted and visited by a horrible loneliness, and turns away from himself, seeking help, so Belknap bowed his head and prayed:

Bless O Lord the British Nation and all its Dependencies. Establish the Throne in Peace and Mercy. And bless . . . the king. Give wisdom to his Ministry and Parliament and may they seek and pursue the true Interest of the whole Empire. . . . May they be led to wisdom and to act with moderation and peace toward all their Interests

that they may not bring the guilt of innocent blood upon their heads. Mercifully regard this American Continent in our present Distress and Difficulty and pity thy people in the Capital of a neighbouring Province who are suffering oppression and affliction. May they be inclined to comply with what is reasonably required of them and may they be preserved from every act of violence. Pity their numerous poor and provide for them and may the hearts and hands of thy people every where be open to their Relief. May we remember those who are in bonds and . . . grant them Deliverance.
Bless the civil Government under which we live.¹⁴

How times had changed. The presence of British soldiers had once inspired awe and admiration for Britain's military prowess. Belknap recalled his own words of imagination and patriotism written when he was a boy stirred by the British capture of the French fort of Louisbourg:

At once the Camp and _ _ are fill'd
With Britain's Loyal sons,
Whose hearts were big with generous strife,
T' avenge their Country's wrongs.

With Liberty their Breasts are fill'd
Fair Liberty's their Shields
Tis Liberty their Banner wayes;
And hovers o'er the field.¹⁵

Liberty. The word returned Belknap from the world of dreams, imagination, and prayer. He looked at the paper, saw words written minutes before.

The imposing a Covenant equal in Solemnity to an Oath upon all persons . . . is a most fatal Snare to honest minds and will tend to disturb the peace and good order of Society . . . , it will disunite and divide us and create animosities hatred and ill-will, as people are hereby taught to break off all dealings with others and look upon them as Enemies merely for not being of their Opinion in a point of a political nature.¹⁶

Although the threat of British violence was more immediate, provoking a passionate response, Belknap realized that misdirected passion could result in domestic violence and tyranny of equal moment. Both situations demanded courage, not so much the impulsive response that occurs instinctively, instantly, in the face of sudden danger, nor the active, immediate opposition displayed by the Boston Committee of Correspondence.

Courage is more than action in the face of danger, action to conquer fear. Courage involves pain, complexity and involvement, a refusal to escape or to ignore, acceptance. Courage means being knocked to the ground, shouting and screaming, crying, but returning to the fray for more. Courage requires belligerence, looking dread in the face and laughing as it hurts you. Courage is not a single fight for victory, but random nicks at a foe; wildly running into battle in an all or nothing effort takes no courage. Courage demands patience. It demands a willingness to accept defeat, stalemate, the absence of victory. The allies of courage are time, self-control, and reflection.

Clearly, courage is antithetical to disorder, passion, and impulse. Belknap believed in resistance to tyranny, in action for the sake of liberty. But action does not necessarily imply immediacy. Belknap favored action subsequent to slow and careful deliberation, action directed by the mind, not the passions. Most colonists,

however, lacked the learning and character to exercise such self-control. Belknap feared the man who encounters a forest stream and, rather than halt, reflect for a moment, use senses and judgment to determine the water's depth and swiftness, immediately wades into the water. Such a man shows audacity; but he is a fool. Moments later either he is shaking off water on the other side, gloating over his accomplishment and his luck, or he is imprisoned by the cool water, sucked under, slowly feeling his strength fail, his lungs burn, the icy touch of death. If the man had a family, they will suffer for his folly. Likewise, Belknap believed that posterity would suffer if the men of his generation did not properly and sensibly cross the stream on the American path. The responsibility was too important for men of passion. Men of cultivation and sense must direct the cause, or America would sink in the stream of folly. Will we then, he wondered, "prove ourselves unworthy our relation to those noble adventurers who first planted" America?

Natural fortitude . . . distinguishes the inhabitants of British America [he declared] and of New-England in particular, the descendants of an hardy race, who, animated by the noblest principles, encountered every adversity with unremitting ardour to leave this land a sacred legacy to their posterity."¹⁷

This was the challenge.

* * *

War. Belknap saw it while visiting Roxbury, outside of British occupied Boston, in the fall of 1775. Once a "busy crowded street" of people working, raising children, playing, buying and selling, living, now a war zone, "occupied only by a picquet Guard." Buildings destroyed, "houses . . . deserted," "windows taken out," "Shot holes," "fortifications," and worse, silence: all of these, he recorded, "struck me with . . . horror."¹⁸ Why had war come to America? Why must the citizens of Boston--Belknap's own father and mother, his friend John Eliot, Ruth's uncle Andrew Eliot--endure such suffering, such want, such fear? Belknap believed that war was inevitable: human "jealousies" and "self-interest" become inflamed with lust for power and wealth, "hatred" for others, "pride" and "vain glory." Notwithstanding the desires of the antagonists, God uses war to reprimand sinners, "making each party instrumental of punishing the other, often bringing about revolutions quite different from the intention of the combatants, making the wrath of man to praise him and accomplish the just and wise designs of his holy providence." The Americans desired independence; the British to punish their colonies and to restrain "public liberty" by means of an "exorbitant prerogative." But what, Belknap asked himself, does God desire? How does the war agree with God's plan? Belknap recalled his forebears, the Puritans, and their terrible war with the Indians--King Phillip's War. The great

divines of that day blamed the war not upon the Indians, who were in fact the agents of divine wrath; rather, the war was punishment for sin, a call to reform, a demand for renewal of the covenant between man and God. Likewise, were the British God's agents of chastisement?

When God in his Providence is threatening us with Calamities of a like sort when he is suffering a bloody war to be carried on against us and a mortal sickness to spread and prevail among us . . . [,] should we not enquire into the cause of the Lord's Controversy with us. . . [?] Has not selfishness and oppression taken place of true Patriotism . . . have not pride and vainglory been nourished instead of humility and trust in God?¹⁹

14 January 1777. This day, as every day, Belknap thought of war. He considered "the present State of America and its future prospects" with "anxiety" and "gloom." He imagined "new Difficulties arising in every Stage of [America's] Progress toward that complete Plan of liberty which we all wish to see realized." Was there no hope? The conflict had raged for nearly two years, and America seemed only to hang on. Who could help the young country? The French or Spanish? Belknap was skeptical of the potential aid from such countries. He shuddered to think of French aid--would it not become French despotism, worse than anything George III had yet planned? Belknap knew too much early New England history to forget the terrifying raids upon frontier settlements by the French allies, the Indians. There appeared "no friend or ally but Heaven, to shield us from the vengeance of Britain." But what of God? Had the Americans reformed sufficiently to

merit God's aid in the struggle? Hopeless as it is for a mere human to inquire into God's plan, Belknap continued to wonder, contemplate, hypothesize--but an answer eluded him.²⁰

Later in the day, feeling no better, he opened, instinctively, the Bible, the "pure original fount" of "divine truth." The Bible's spiritual guidance might console his troubled mind, his anxious thoughts. As always, the harmony of the two great books of Scripture fascinated him; over and over the Book showed signs of New Testament fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy--Prophecy!--The key! The awaited bolt of light on a dismal, rain-swept night! Hurriedly, hungrily, he flipped through the Book--Amos, no too far! Ezekiel, no, go back! Daniel. He read the words to himself:

Daniel said, 'I saw in my vision by night and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the great sea. And four great beasts came up out of the sea. . . . The first was like a lion and had eagles wings. . . . And behold another beast, a second one, like a bear. . . . And lo, another, like a leopard, with four wings of a bird on its back; and the beast had four heads. . . . After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, terrible and dreadful and exceedingly strong; and it had great iron teeth; it devoured and broke in pieces, and stamped the residue with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns.'

Each beast represented kingdoms: the first was Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon, the second Persia, the third the Alexandrian empire, the fourth Rome. But what were the ten horns of the fourth beast? Ten horns, like ten toes?

Yes, perhaps--pages flipped, Belknap read again:

This was the dream; now we will tell the king [Nebuchadnezzar] its interpretation. You, O king . . . to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, and the might, and the glory . . .--you are the head of gold. After you shall arise another kingdom inferior to you, and yet a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth. And there shall be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron, because iron breaks to pieces and shatters all things; and like iron, which crushes, it shall break and crush all these. And as you saw the feet and toes partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, it shall be a divided kingdom; but some of the firmness of iron shall be in it, just as you saw iron mixed with the miry clay. And as the toes of the feet were partly iron and partly clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly brittle.

Yes, true, late Republican Rome was of iron and clay, partly virtuous but racked by corruption. He read on: "As you saw the iron mixed with miry clay, so they will mix with one another . . . , but they will not hold together, just as iron does not mix with clay." The toes of the feet--ten toes, ten horns: ten kingdoms! And each toe containing both iron and clay. England was one of these ten kingdoms, all of which were remnants of Rome. And, like Rome, England was "nothing but a mixture of iron and clay." Iron: young, vigorous, virtuous, filled with the "spirit of improvement" and "cultivation." Iron represents liberty. Clay: old, depraved, and corrupt, succumbing to luxury, "effeminacy," and "venality," distinguished by an "unbounded appetite for pleasure which erodes all ranks and orders of the people." Clay represents tyranny. England was predominantly clay.

England, as Rome before her, had grown "intoxicated with success and degenerated from . . . manly fortitude into luxury and pleasure." Was not England a kingdom that, "under a pretence of republican liberty," has exercised "the most boundless licentiousness and wanton despotism"? The iron of England had sailed to America. America, although needing some reform, was the land of liberty. Her liberty was a reaction to, a product of, Britain's tyranny:

Our taskmasters, it seems, are . . . shutting up our ports and ruining our trade, thereby stopping the sources of wealth, and consequently of luxury and effeminacy, and driving us into measures of frugality, economy, industry, and invention . . . all this with a view of enslaving us."

"The spirit of liberty and the spirit of despotism can never unite." Belknap put the Bible aside. Much remained to fear; much could still happen. But this he knew, this he felt: Prophecy foretold the struggle between England and America. "However the war should end, we, once disunited, should never be again restored to our connexion with her." Independence was "forseen and foretold"; it was "the decree of Heaven."²¹

CHAPTER NOTES

1. The Foresters, An American Tale, (Boston: Thomas and Andrews, 1792; reprint ed., Gainesville, Florida: Scholar's Facsimiles & Reprints, 1969, 33-35.

2. A copy of the Covenant and Belknap's response to it in June of 1774, is printed in MHSP, ser. 2, vol. 2, 481-486. The Covenant appears to have been drawn up in Portsmouth, yet Belknap charged that "this Covenant or one similar to it originated with a Corresponding Committee of the town of Boston" and he directed his comments to them. For these comments, see pp. 484-486. The Covenant is on pp. 482-483.

3. The Winthrop quote comes from Cotton Mather, Magnalia Christi Americana, (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1970), 51 (the translation is by the editor). Commenting on this statement, Belknap said (American Biography: Or, An Historical Account of Those Persons Who Have Been Distinguished in America, As Adventurers, Divines, Statesmen, Warriors, Philosophers, Authors, and Other Remarkable Characters, 2 vols. (Boston: Thomas and Andrews, 1794, 1798, 2:355-356)) that Winthrop believed

all men had liberty to do right, but no liberty to do wrong. However true this principle may be in point of morality, yet in matters of opinion, in modes of faith, worship, and ecclesiastical order, the question is, who shall be the judge of right and wrong? and, it is too evident from their conduct, that [the Puritans] supposed the power of judging to be in those who were vested with authority; a principle destructive of liberty of conscience, and the right of private judgment, and big with the horrors of persecution. The exercise of such authority they condemned in the high church party, who had oppressed them in England; and yet, such is the frailty of human nature, they held the same principles, and practised the same oppressions, on those who dissented from them.

4. Foresters, 19-21.

5. A Plain and Earnest Address from a Minister to a Parishioner, on the Neglect of the Publick Worship, and

Preaching of the Gospel, (Salem: 1771), 4, 8.

6. MHSP, ser. 2, vol. 2, 482-486; Marcou, Life of Belknap, 78.

7. Diary for 1762, MHS.

8. Belknap to John Strafford, 9/17/70, in "Letterbook", MHS. In his History of New Hampshire (1:328-329) Belknap called the Stamp Act an assumption of power to destroy American liberties, and blamed Parliament and British corruption in part for the Act. George III was not blameless in his mind. As he wrote Hazard at the end of the war (4/30/83, CMHS, ser. 5, vol. 2, 205),

Is not George III. the connecting link between the glory and disgrace of Brittain? . . . Intoxicated with former successes, he has ventured an experiment which none of his predecessors dared to make; and, after throwing away thousands of lives and millions of treasure, he lost the brightest jewel from his crown.

9. MHSP, ser. 2, vol. 2, 484-486.

10. American Biography, 1:chapter 12.

11. History of New Hampshire, 1:329, 331.

12. "To the Gentlemen of the Army, now encamped on Boston Common," September, 1774, in Marcou, Life of Belknap, 82 (original at MHS.)

13. Ibid., 82, 84.

14. Belknap to Andrew Eliot, 6/26/74, MHS.

15. Poem at MHS (possible date 1758).

16. MHSP, ser. 2, vol. 2, 485.

17. A Sermon on Military Duty, Preached at Dover, Nov. 10, 1772 . . . , (Salem: Samuel Hall, 1773), 18, 21. This sermon is a good source for Belknap's beliefs on social and political order during the pre-war years. Also Belknap to John Wentworth, 10/10/74 ("Letterbook," MHS), where Belknap commented on the degeneracy of the times, and hoped that "Dignitas imperii [dignity of authority] . . . is perfectly consistent with Salus populi [welfare of the people]." In other words, authority and order are not necessarily symbiotic. Indeed, Belknap believed (apparently all of his life) that ultimately, inevitably, temporal governments degenerate into tyranny (Belknap to Hazard, 2/19/83, CMHS, ser. 5, vol. 2, 192).

18. Belknap to Hazard, 4/16/85, *Ibid.*, 330; Belknap to Ruth, 4/75 (NHMS); Belknap's "Journal of My Tour to the Camp" in Cambridge, October 20, MHS, reprinted in Marcou, Life of Belknap, 92.

19. SERMON on Military Duty, 5, 7; Marcou, Life of Belknap, 86; Sermon, May 17, 1776, quoted in Kirsch, Jeremy Belknap, 62.

20. Belknap to Dr. Cooper, 1/14/77 ("Letterbook," MHS); Belknap, A Sermon, Delivered on the 9th of May, 1798, The Day of the National Fast, . . . (Boston: Samuel Hall, 1798), 17.

21. Marcou, Life of Belknap, 39, 86-87; Sermon Delivered on the Day of the National Fast, 12, 16, 17, 19. Here Belknap preached from Daniel 2, 42-43 and described the theory of iron and clay. During the sermon Belknap reminisced:

This subject has been familiar to me above twenty years. It was in the beginning of the third year of our revolutionary war [spring, 1777], when we had no friend or ally but Heaven, to shield us from the vengeance of Britain . . . that my thoughts were directed to this prophecy; and upon an attentive contemplation of it . . . I found in it, sufficient encouragement to rest my hope, that the formidable power, then at war with us, would not prevail." This realization gave him "sufficient ground for consolation in the height of our distress" (see pp. 17-18).

Belknap to Hazard, 4/25/83, CMHS, ser. 5, vol. 3, 373⁹. Also Belknap to John Eliot, 5/1/81, CMHS, ser. 6, vol. 4, 633c, where Belknap called England "that poor old rotten toe of Nebuchadnezzar's image, that wretched worm-eaten horn of John's seven-headed beast."

The reader will note that I forebear dealing with the concept or phenomenon of revolution. Mostly this is because Belknap himself used the word vaguely, to mean something like a war of liberation. Indeed, as late as 1781 he distinguished between the "present war" and the "revolution," meaning the Glorious Revolution of 1688. Revolution is generally a vague and imprecise word anyway, and can mean anything from unique, novel change (Hannah Arendt, On Revolution, (New York: Viking Press, 1963)) to a conservative restoration (H. Trevor Colbourn, The Lamp of Experience: Whig History and the Intellectual Origins of the American Revolution, (Chapel Hill: W. W. Norton & Co., 1965)), or simply to a colonial power throwing off its imperialist rulers. On the problem of revolution see R.R. Palmer, "The Revolution," in The Comparative Approach

to American History, ed. C. Vann Woodward (New York: Basic Books, 1968), 47-61; Cecelia M. Kenyon, "Republicanism and Radicalism in the American Revolution: An Old-Fashioned Interpretation," William and Mary Quarterly 19(1962): 153-182; William H. Nelson, "The Revolutionary Character of the American Revolution," American Historical Review 70(1965): 998-1014; and Bernard Bailyn, "Political Experience and Enlightenment Ideas in Eighteenth-Century America," American Historical Review 67(1962): 339-351. This latter essay, and subsequent work by Bailyn such as The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967) and The Origins of American Politics, (New York: Random House, 1967), have been the most interesting interpretations of the American Revolution in recent years. Belknap appears to fit into Bailyn's model, for he was a Whig who believed in public virtue, republicanism, and the venerable British Constitution. He feared corruption and power-abuse in England as well.

I have eschewed entering the interpretive fray and have nothing new to offer on the causes of the American Revolution. Indeed, I have simply portrayed what many other historians have quietly offered as the basis for the revolt: principle. Principle here means "liberty"--primarily, the desire for freedom of conscience and action. Sixty years ago Carl Becker wrote a delightful essay ("The Spirit of '76," in The Spirit of '76 and Other Essays, (New York: A. M. Kelley, 1927)) and introduced Jeremiah Wynkoop, a fictional character who battles his conscience for eleven long years, from 1765 to 1776. Finally principle wins out over loyalty to the king, and Wynkoop joins the Patriots. Becker's Wynkoop, as well as Catherine Drinker Bowen's John Adams and the American Revolution (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1950) were two important stimuli to my portrayal of Belknap.

CHAPTER 5

HARMONY

Jeremy Belknap, History of New Hampshire, 2:251:

Were I to form a picture of happy society, it would be a town consisting of a due mixture of hills, valleys and steams of water: The land well fenced and cultivated; the roads and bridges in good repair; a decent inn for the refreshment of travellers, and for public entertainments: The inhabitants mostly husbandmen; their wives and daughters domestic manufacturers; a suitable proportion of handicraft workmen, and two or three traders; a physician and lawyer, each of whom should have a farm for his support. A clergyman of any denomination, which should be agreeable to the majority, a man of good understanding, of a candid disposition and exemplary morals, not a metaphysical, nor a polemic, but a serious and practical preacher. A school master who should understand his business and teach his pupils to govern themselves. A social library, annually increasing, and under good regulation. A club of sensible men, seeking mutual improvement. A decent musical society. No intriguing politician, horse jockey, gambler or sot; but all such characters treated with contempt. Such a situation may be considered as the most favorable to social happiness of any which this world can afford.

* * *

It was late spring in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, a good day for a sermon, when Jeremy Belknap could, "with the freedom of an American, offer some thoughts on what I conceive to be the true interest, and the best means of

the prosperity of this State." How badly she needed the advice! New Hampshire, like all temporal states, had a rabid dog of wickedness within her borders. Belknap knew that the cur was unstoppable; but perhaps she could be delayed, even tamed a bit, so that men could enjoy prosperity and improvements for a change. But these were rabid times as well, bitten by war and revolution, spread by "persons whose aims and designs were unfriendly to the public interest, and whose tongues were employed in propagating bad principles, and prejudicing the minds of the people against the means of improvement." Beyond doubt, "the lusts of men will produce wars and tumults, . . . revolutions and conquests." Belknap wondered aloud: "Why is all this misery permitted in a world that is governed by infinite wisdom and goodness?" Few answers were forthcoming, only hints, rays of light in an otherwise dense forest. One bright ray was America, "an asylum for the oppressed and distressed in other parts of the world." "We must believe that God . . . not only [has] a kind intention toward us, but toward mankind in general, opening a place for them to flee to from the poverty, oppression and distress which are so prevalent in other countries." Clearly America had a destiny--Belknap could sense that the Revolution was not accidental, but providential. This land was new, different, special, potential. But as wood must be touched by fire before it will burn, so America must act to achieve her destiny.

There was much to do. "The improvement of those advantages which the God of nature and providence hath put into our hands, is a proper tribute of gratitude which he demands, and the only effectual one which we can render to him."¹

Regardless of the external and internal evils that America faced, Nature offered alternatives to the Americans; the endless possibilities, the endless goodness, of Nature's bounty would follow a correct decision. The choices were simple. Perhaps Americans could choose to rely upon Nature's order, to be as savages living naked in the wilderness. Would such an existence be so bad? Imagine the dark forest, endlessly stimulating, of such beauty and peace no man can resist her whispers, her caresses, her love. In such diversity and sameness there is plenty to eat--berries, nuts, roots, eggs--and plenty to drink--the sweet water of a mountain cascade, the cool rain of spring. There is the natural shelter of the cave, and natural weapons for defense and provisions. Here is beautiful sunlight, calm darkness, cool breezes and warm sunshine, skins for the cold, fire for warmth.

But even the happiest man enjoying Nature's bounty feels a tension in her presence. Nature is a distant mother, refusing to nurse her children, thrusting them from her breast; they are alone within her presence. Such separation leads to tension, the sudden feeling during a

meal that none will follow tomorrow, the slight twinge in the mind, as the spark becomes the flame among the twigs and leaves, that tomorrow or the next day dry tinder will be nothing but a rainy-day dream. The shelter of today may be gone tomorrow. Living day to day, fearing the future so ignoring it, knowing that one's only task is to survive: Nature's order becomes disorder, Nature's bounty becomes man's nemesis.

Who can bear the tension of Nature's paradoxical ways? Scared and confused, man seeks to transcend Nature by cultivating Nature, to gain something from life beyond survival, to overcome the fear of cold and hunger, to feel sure in life beyond a day, to know something about the future besides inevitable death. Hence rises civilization, and great cities. Thirsting for improvement, man forsakes the land for manufacturing and trade. Life becomes luxurious; but luxury leads to evil, to relaxing control, to allowing lusts and passions to dominate. "Luxury has been the ruin of [many] republican States," Belknap declared. And what are cities but centers of vice and progenitors of disease?²

In this sermon Belknap wanted to steer between Scylla and Charybdis, between the two extremes of savagery and civilization, to a third and final alternative granted by Nature. The text from which Belknap preached was Psalm 144, where King David said:³

Rid me and deliver me from the hand of
strange children; whose mouth speaketh vanity,

and their right hand is a right hand of falshood.

That our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth; that our daughters may be as corner-stones, polished after the similitude of a palace.

That our garners may be full, affording all manner of store; that our sheep may bring forth thousands, and ten thousands in our streets.

That our oxen may be strong to labour; that there be no breaking in nor going out, that there be no complaining in our streets.

Happy is that people that is in such a case; yea, happy is that people whose GOD is the LORD.

Commenting upon this passage, Belknap praised David for knowing that plant and animal husbandry are "the most natural and profitable productions, the true sources of wealth and independence." Truly Belknap enjoyed the sight of a New Hampshire landscape touched by man. Corn stalks blowing in the wind; wheat golden in the sun; elaborately designed stone fences, mosaics of labor; men working in the fields plowing or planting or cutting hay; cows resting, lazy and plump; sheep dotting the green landscape; orchards weighed down with apples: improvements everywhere--how happy this made him feel!

Heaven has blessed us with a variety of soils. Mountains, vallies, plains and meadows appear in succession to the eye of the traveller; and these are capable of producing every sort of necessary for the support of man and beast. We need be at no loss for staple commodities, if we will but attend to the hints which nature hath given us, and improve the advantages which she hath put into our hands.⁴

Only a blind man would fail to see that the forests of pine, oak, spruce, hemlock, beech, maple, and birch awaited the axe and sweat of man to turn them into houses and barns, stakes and posts, charcoal and fuel. And how

grand it was when a ship sailed from Portsmouth harbor with its tall, strong mast of New Hampshire white pine. The pine has no use until man defines it. Under the trees lay a soil that reaped a fair bounty, of seeds, berries, and roots. At places the soil was hard and stoney, but with pride and labor it produced excellent crops--wheat, rye, and corn. Rich valleys with sweet streams filled of salmon and trout cut through the highland. New land on the frontier awaited the strength and desire of a young man and his family. Only if they learned the lesson that Nature's plenty demands "art and labor," would they thrive. Too often, Belknap had noticed, the men of New Hampshire failed to render their land more productive; it yearly remained the same, with no improvement to show for labor. Nevertheless, these people of New Hampshire "are an hardy robust race, patient of fatigue, inured to hardships, and able to look an enemy in the face without terror." The late war had shown their valor and heroism, products of the hardship of struggling against Nature while reaping her bounty. Perhaps they had inherited the Puritan strength of will, for the Puritans, Belknap had recently written,

after traversing a wide ocean, . . . found themselves in a country full of woods, to subdue which required immense labor and patience; at a vast distance from any civilized people; in the neighborhood of none but ignorant and barbarous savages; and in a climate, where a winter much more severe than they had been accustomed to, reigns for a third part of the year.⁵

Harmony comes from conflict, as human "labor vies with nature to render [a] productive" society. But more, Nature enjoys an order that can, potentially, provide man with the basis for his own orderly society. The Republic conforms best to Nature's order. Land for everyone, who cultivate from Nature the bases for independence and equality: such men recognize that the best government keeps and promotes their independence; such men are sufficiently secure to work for the common good, for they know that what is good for all is good for one.

It is past doubt [Belknap preached] that the greater part of the people inhabiting this State must be employed in husbandry, the original business of man, and the natural source of that equality and independence, which are essential to a republican government.⁶

As the artisan molds clay to form a pot, so the republican must mold the harmonious society from the raw order of Nature. To acquire such "social happiness," however, requires more than well-ordered fields. It requires man working with his own raw nature, to fashion a republican citizen. It seemed to Belknap on this June day in Portsmouth that people of the land, people whose daily task is to nourish and care for their growing crops, should know that humans are no different. "Do you think it your duty to clear the woods and cultivate the wilderness?" he asked them; "and will you not think it your duty to cultivate that nobler soil, the human mind?"

Plants which grow up when they are young that is, which attain their form and size while the growing season continues, are more useful as well

as pleasant than those which are neglected or stunted in their growth. So children, who have the proper means of education during the season of improvement, are in general better fitted for usefulness than those who are neglected.

To men of authority, the men who were entrusted with the prosperity and future of the state, Belknap declared: "Children are the hope and strength of a nation, and it is too late to correct them when they are spoiled; it is infinitely better to prevent the evil than to punish it. It is not laws and ordinances, but good morals that regulate the State." As Lycurgus believed, "children belong to the State more than to their parents." Such a principle "ought to be deeply engraved on the heart of every person who is concerned in making or executing laws." "The loss which this State suffers by the want of proper methods of education, is inconceivable." "What will become of your republican governments, if they are not nurtured by public education, and strengthened by public virtue?" He chided them again, regarding the children of the state: "If good principles are not early implanted in their minds, bad ones will assume their place like noxious weeds in a neglected garden."⁷

The good society, the republican society, cannot be based upon ignorance any more than liberty can survive in an atmosphere of complete independence.

Our notions of liberty, if they are not guided and limited by good education, degenerate into savage independence. Uninformed and unprincipled as the rising generation in many places are, they will not readily submit to the restraints of law, nor have an idea of obedience. . . . Too many

already go by no other rule than their own wills.

"Those who have had a bad education make no scruple to violate the best constitutions in the world, whereas they who have been properly trained up, cheerfully conform to all good institutions." Nonetheless, a society of liberty and republicanism must not teach students "what to think" but "how to think".

Having no foundation laid in their minds by regular instruction, they will not be likely to think soberly or rationally on any article of faith or moral duty. They will not candidly enquire and impartially determine what is truth and what is duty; but will either take their religion upon trust from human authority, or be subject to frights and fits, and delusions.

Moreover, "is it not equally useful to be taught how to act?" he inquired. "Is it not an object of as great importance that youth should be led to admire and approve what is noble, generous and worthy, and to abhor what is vicious, mean and detestable, as that they should learn the rudiments of grammar"? The republic that fails to base its foundation in public virtue cannot survive.⁸

The harmonious society requires citizens who know how to act and how to think. This makes the relationship between the state and the student, more specifically between the teacher and student, critical. The teacher must implant in his young charges the rudiments of action and virtue, but softly. He must cultivate them as he would a weak plant, and instruct them partly by his own actions, his own behavior. He must allow them independent thinking within a framework of supervision.⁹ They must

learn how to think as a soldier learns how to fight: the commander can teach them the proper way to march, to handle a gun and bayonet, and how to charge and retreat; but only when they experience battle will they truly learn to fight; only when the commander orders them to the front will they experience the fear that must be overcome; only when the battlefield is overrun with blood, terror, and destruction will they learn to impose order upon a disorderly situation.

Likewise, education is the means of learning self-control. The student must learn to corral his passions and redirect them toward new, proper directions. Education satisfies the hunger for power with the rich fare of the common good. Education channels avarice directly to the coffers of the state. Education bars lust from the path of immorality, and guides it to marriage and fatherhood. Similarly, education reduces the quest for happiness from the dreamy world of rainbows and sunshine to the dreary reality of trials, suffering, and pain. Education teaches that republican harmony demands public virtue and self-control.

But Belknap knew that for most humans, self-control is merely a dream, a nice idea never realized, rarely approached. Had he not lived in Dover for eighteen years? As Belknap preached his message of reform before the men of New Hampshire, thoughts must have entered his mind as a mouse does a room, through a crack, then in a flash gone

who knows where. Images, thoughts, and words from years past were now clear for a brief moment: "I find men worse than I before suspected," he remembered thinking during the war; most men "care little about Religion or the support of its preaching--any farther than Custom or Pride or perhaps a sense of decency urge them." The war increased the natural disposition among some men to ignore religion and education:

I have long thought [he had told Hazard], and do still think it one of the greatest misfortunes of my life to be obliged to rear a family of children in a place and among a people where insensibility to the interests of the rising generation, and an inveterate antipathy to literature, are to be reckoned among the prevailing vices. . . . The scenes we have passed through have extinguished every sentiment that was favourable to education in the minds of the people at large, and all the attempts which a poor lonely individual or two in a town can do to revive or rekindle the flame are totally ineffectual. I have preached, talked, convened special meetings for the purpose, offered my services in person, all to no purpose.

Hazard had responded that he and other Philadelphians "were astonished and . . . hurt . . . at the thought that a man of your genius and education should be doomed to drag out a miserable existence among such savages." But, alas, such was Belknap's fate. Here he was destined to live in "obscurity"; he had repeatedly asked Hazard, who was "revelling in the full luxury of scientific entertainment" in Philadelphia, to think of his "poor friend starving in these forlorn regions, and let him have now and then a crum from your table." This was a place

and these were the people whose "vices" included "not so much public spirit as to build a school-house; where men of the first rank let their children grow up uncultivated as weeds in the highway." This was a place where learned discourses on human error were "disregarded"; but Belknap was "too much used to this to be mortified about it." These were people who would cheat and deceive their minister; they would as soon let him starve than pay his due! And these people, Christians?! True, Dover occupied only a small piece of the earth. but the small town stood for a large truth: men are fundamentally evil. They may not inherit the sin of Adam, as Belknap had once thought, but they are like his sons in their common lust, jealousy, passion--and lack of self-control.¹⁰

* * *

If only men could imitate the beavers. Belknap had a special affection for this "sagacious" animal. Every pond that he chanced upon in the New Hampshire forest had to be checked for beaver communities; a lucky find meant an afternoon spent in observation. Belknap would wander along the shore, inspecting "trees and bushes of the softest wood, white maple, white birch, alder, poplar and willow" for evidence of the "sharp and curved" beaver teeth that resembled a "carpenter's gouge." If the pond was natural, Belknap searched for a hole lined "with sticks" "in the

earth, near the edge of the pond"--a sign of the beaver's "subterranean passage from the water," where its home lay, to the shore. More exciting was to find a beaver dam:

In the choice of a spot for a dam, they have sagacity to judge whether it will confine and raise the water to answer their purpose. They take advantage of wind fallen trees, of long points of land, of small islands, rocks and shoals; and they vary the shape of their dam according to these circumstances, making it either circular, direct or angular; and the best human artist could neither mend its position or figure, nor add to its stability.¹¹

Life appeared happy, almost idyllic, at the beaver pond. The beaver republic was one of the countless acts of a benevolent providence. Here was food: the birch, poplar, and willow; and building materials: the tall pine; and protection: the ring of trees. Ample work kept them industrious for life. Food, shelter, and work: the elements of happiness. The only conflict was predatory. As Belknap watched them work, as one after another brought mud and sticks in their trowel-like tails from a nearby work-area where four or five beavers worked in unison, their teeth gouging a mid-sized pine, he appreciated the harmony of their lives. Neither jealousy, nor conflict, nor bickering over possessions existed. Greed was banished from this land of plenty. Content to rely on the perfect order of Nature for their own orderly existence, the beavers enjoyed peace and happiness. As Belknap expressed it once:

Here is a perfect republic, a complete equality, a striking example of order without subordination, of liberty without jealousy, of

industry without coercion, of economy without parsimony, of sagacity without overbearing influence. Every one knows his own business and does it, their labour goes on with regularity and decency; their united efforts serve the common cause, and the interest of every one is involved in that of the whole.¹²

* * *

The sermon waned. Belknap had outlined goals toward which his listeners should strive, goals that pointed to a society of happiness and order, goals that comprised his own experiences, feelings, self. He told his listeners, the leaders of New Hampshire, what he daily told himself: "Every man acting in a public capacity" should review his actions at day's end review his actions

with such self-enquiries as these, 'what have I done this day, to serve the true interest of my country? what motives and considerations have I been governed by, whether of interest or policy? and how have they corresponded with the unchangeable rules of reason, truth and justice?'¹³

The best answer? 'I have worked for the common good of my country,' he might hope they would say, 'sacrificing my own interest, my desire for power and fame, wealth and glory; I have worked unselfishly for Truth, for God's moral government on earth, for the Republic; I have pursued a detached course, leaving my passions behind.' But how could the answer be such? Belknap knew that man is engaged inwardly in a losing battle with himself. Some few pursue the war with vigor; most resign themselves to

failure, and allow the passions of the temporal self to dominate reason and virtue. The questions that Belknap asked this day, every day, the questions his listeners should ask themselves, were: can the ideal form of society, the society of the beavers, the perfect republic of order and truth, be established? Is man capable of cultivating the order inherent in Nature? Can he base the order of human society on the order of Nature? Or is man working for an ideal, the achievement of which can be realized only in a timeless place separate from this world? "Every species of human government contains the seeds of dissolution, which will some time or other work its ruin; but the kingdom of Jesus Christ . . . must answer the end of government, and therefore must end in perfection."¹⁴ God challenges man: can you overcome yourself to approach the goal of a perfect government? Can you overcome your bodily passions and lusts to penetrate the realm of the spirit? If only man could experience within himself the apparent internal order of the beavers. But there is no inner harmony for man to cultivate. There is no delicate mixture of distinct parts that produce a united whole. Rather, man feels compelled to go outside of himself, to detach from the body and, like an observer of a contest, sit apart from the fray. Man tries to use himself to control himself, to will himself, to repress himself, to elevate one part over the other, to make one the enemy and the other the friend. But he never achieves

victory; he never succeeds in dividing himself.

Something always calls him back. The call is inexorable and loud, like the sirens heard by Odysseus, beckoning, irresistible. The call tantalizes with promises of happiness and pleasure, of oneness and unity, of a harmonious whole. The call is an inner force demanding fulfillment, like a man searching for a lost lover: his loneliness is so great, his emptiness so full, that he lives only half a life, and what he eats tastes sour, what he breathes is stale, and sleep is not rest but troublesome images of tossing and turning memories. Imagine the force of a moving wave sucking the water in its path and you will know the call: such is the power within that tugs at the mind and pulls it back. Man cannot control himself because he cannot detach himself. He cannot become no-man; he cannot deny his existence, his humanity. We humans are a whole, and try as we might, we cannot become a part.

Belknap felt a daily challenge: overcome yourself to experience the order you inherently lack. He accepted the challenge; urged others to do so as well. But deep inside something predicted failure.¹⁵

CHAPTER NOTES

1. An Election Sermon, Preached Before the General Court of New Hampshire at Portsmouth, June 2, 1785, (Portsmouth: Melcher and Osborne, 1785), 3, 7, 28, 42, 43, 47.

2. *Ibid.*, 27. Belknap's view of cities was expressed to Ebenezer Hazard 20 November 1793 (CHMS, ser. 5, vol. 3, 343). He declared that an epidemic of yellow fever in Philadelphia, which Hazard was suffering through, would perhaps

operate as a check upon the prevailing taste for enlarging Philadelphia, and crowding so many human beings together on so small a spot of earth. I wish, also, that Baltimore may take the hint; and, in short, that none of us may be so fond of following the fashions of the Old World in building great cities.

Jefferson, whose pastoral thought resembled Belknap's in many ways, said the same thing about a similar Philadelphia epidemic. See Daniel Boorstin, The Lost World of Thomas Jefferson, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), 51.

On the difference between the savage and civilized ways of life Belknap wrote ("The Report of a Committee of the Board of Correspondents of the Scots Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge, who visited the Oneida and Hohekunuh Indians in 1796," CHMS, ser. 1, vol. 5, 29):

The difference between the savage and civilized modes of life is so great, that it is impossible for either the body or the mind to accommodate itself to the change with any degree of rapidity. . . . Several causes may be considered as having an influence in producing the disappointment of sanguine expectations relative to the civilization of the savages. Their national pride, indolence, and improvidence. . . . Let it also be considered, that the human mind is naturally averse to control.

3. Election Sermon, 4.

4. *Ibid.*, 9, 25. For example, Belknap wrote of one

Massachusetts region, "It is pleasing to see the fields and meadows and trees in the most luxuriant growth, promising fine crops of grass, grain, and fruit, the roads mended or mending, and good improvements in the mode of making roads." (Journal of Belknap's Oneida Tour, published in MHSP, vol. 19, 1882, 397.)

5. Election Sermon, 18, 26; History of New Hampshire, 1:37-38. He also wrote, in the History of New Hampshire (2:196-197),

A good husbandman, with the savings of a few years, can purchase new land enough to give his elder sons a settlement, and assist them in clearing a lot and building a hut; after which they soon learn to support themselves. . . . An unmarried man of thirty years old is rarely to be found in our country towns. The women are grandmothers at forty, and it is not uncommon for a mother and daughter to have each a child at the breast, at the same time; nor for a father, son and grandson, to be at work together in the same field. Thus population and cultivation proceed together, and a vigorous race of inhabitants grows up, on a soil, which labor vies with nature to render productive. . . . Those persons, who attend chiefly to husbandry, are the most thriving and substantial.

6. Ibid., 2:197; Election Sermon, 24-25.

7. Ibid., 8, 14, 16, 19, 22, 23; 12, quoting Burlamagui.

8. Ibid., 18-19, 20, 23; 13, quoting Burlamagui.

9. Belknap outlined his ideas on education in "Education, Literature, Religion," in chapter 17 of the History of New Hampshire. In the "Conclusion" he told the inhabitants of New Hampshire (pp. 246-247),

it is . . . your duty and your interest to cultivate [your children's] capacities and render them serviceable to themselves and the community. . . . If the bud be blasted the tree will yield no fruit. If the springing corn be cut down, there will be no harvest. . . . Great care ought to be taken, not only to provide a support for instructors of children and youth; but to be attentive in the choice of instructors; to see that they be men of good understanding, learning and morals; that they teach by their example as well as by their precepts; that they govern themselves, and teach their pupils the art of

self-government.

Moreover, in his "Address to the Children of the North Schools, Boston, July, 1790," (CMHS, ser. 6, vol. 4, 466-467) Belknap added,

Another thing which I would recommend to you is, to govern yourselves; that is, to take such care of your own conduct as that your schoolmaster may be relieved of the trouble of governing you. It is the duty of every person to govern himself; and we cannot begin too early in life to practise this necessary duty. You should therefore learn to restrain your passions, to curb your tongue, to avoid all occasions of quarrelling, and to preserve a decent, sober, and attentive behaviour at school. This will gain the love of your master and enable him the more easily to carry on the work which is committed to him.

10. Belknap to John Eliot, 5/10/78, quoted in Kirsch, Jeremy Belknap, 73; Belknap to Hazard, 8/20/80, 12/21/83, 7/4/84, Hazard to Belknap, 1/16/84, CMHS, ser. 5, vol. 2, 74, 287-288, 298, 375.

11. History of New Hampshire, 2:113-114.

12. Foresters, 174.

13. Election Sermon, 37.

14. *Ibid.*, 47-48.

15. My ideas on the pastoral, and the relationship between man and nature, have been stimulated by: Henry Adams, The Education of Henry Adams, (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1918); Lewis Mumford, Technics and Civilization, (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1934); J. Hector St. John de Crevecoeur, Letters from an American Farmer, (1782; reprint ed., Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1981); William Bradford, Of Plymouth Plantation, (New York: 1962); Thomas Jefferson, Notes on the State of Virginia, (Paris: 1789; reprint ed., New York: Random House, 1944); Henry David Thoreau, Walden, (1854; reprint ed., Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1983); John F. Kasson, Civilizing the Machine: Technology and Republican Values in America, 1776-1800, (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1977); Carolyn Merchant, The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology and the Scientific Revolution, (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1980); Howard Mumford Jones, O Strange New World: American Culture: The Formative Years, (New York: Viking Press, 1962); Conrad Cherry, "Nature and the Republic: The New

Haven Theology," New England Quarterly 50(1978): 509-526;
Cecelia Tichi, "The American Revolution and the New
Earth," Early American Literature 11(1976): 202-210.

One scholar has recently written that

Belknap shares the view, especially popular in the decade following the Peace of 1763, that Anglo-American culture was blossoming after nearly a century in the shadow of international war. But he takes the notion further, linking cultural achievement with mastery of the environment, and so foreshadows the mature environmentalism of his later years. (Charles Wetherell, "New England's 'Pumpkin Poetry': A Jeremy Belknap Letter of 1764," Historical New Hampshire 39(1984): 64-68.)

"Mastery of the environment": to be sure Belknap did not believe civilization mixed with wilderness. He was a moderate in this matter, desiring neither the extreme of savagery nor the extreme of an urban, manufacturing-oriented civilization. His vision was of well-constructed roads and well-cultivated fields amid rolling hills and crystal streams. Belknap enjoyed Nature supremely, yet as I have noted he felt the tension of man versus Nature that all humans do. This man, who could glory in the wilds of the White Mountains and the forest, could also glory in the exertion of man's will against Nature to fashion a human vision of society. This vision was pastoral. Man and Nature live in harmony. Nature does not totally control man because of man's technology and his labor. Yet man cannot totally control Nature. I have no doubt that Belknap would have agreed with Henry Adams' sentiments of a century later that men who try to control and dominate Nature are fools, for man does not understand Nature, and understanding is a prerequisite for control. Belknap, of course, believed that a true understanding of Creation would come only after death, when the question of whether or not man controls Nature becomes mute.

Different from the notion of harmony with the environment is "mastery of the environment." This latter notion is Baconian not Belknapian. As Bacon said in New Atlantis, "the end of our foundation is the knowledge of causes, and secret notions of things; and the enlarging of the bounds of human empire, to the effecting of all things possible." Man must stress "art" rather than "nature"; he must manufacture, invent, create artificial metals and materials, insulate, refrigerate, generate, dissect, and so on.

CHAPTER 6

ORDER

Jeremy Belknap to Ebenezer Hazard, 3 March 1784:

All men are by nature equally free and independent, and therefore there should be no power but what is derived from the people and exercised by their consent and for their benefit. Granted. It is a good principle, and ought to stand at the head of every constitution of government and every code of laws in the world. It may serve to check the advances of tyranny and usurpation, and be a foundation for bringing tyrants and usurpers to account; but what is the natural tendency of things? All beasts are equally free and independent; so are birds and fishes: and yet do we not see in fact that the wolf devours the lamb, the vulture the dove, and the whale will swallow a whole shoal of mackerel? And is there not as much inequality among men? Will there not be a superiority and an inferiority, in spite of all the systems of metaphysics and bills of rights in the world? How can you prevent one man from being stronger, or wiser, or richer than another? And will not the strong always subdue the weak, the wise circumvent the ignorant, and the 'borrower be servant to the lender'? Is not this noble creature, man, necessarily subject to lords of his own species in almost every stage of his existence? When a child, he is necessarily under the dominion of his parents; send him to school, place him out as an apprentice, put him on board a ship or into a military company, and he must be subject to the commands of his superiors, and to laws which he had no hand in framing. Consider him as a member of public society, and what chance have the greater part of the species of having any voice, or share, or concern in any department of government, or what do they care about it? If once in a year they can put in a vote (perhaps handed to them ready written), or once in three years are put on the jury, 'tis all they can expect, and more than most of them wish for; and, if they had never been used to these privileges, they might be as happy without them

as they now are by the abuse of them. In short, take man as he is, if there be not some government framed and provided for him, and kept up over him, he will be a miserable creature. This is not an airy speculation. I have seen it realized. I have seen men so inattentive to their acknowledged rights that, when they have been called upon for their votes for a form of government for themselves and their posterity, not one of them in ten cared so much about it as to give their vote pro or con: a few busy men did all that was or could be done, and the rest acquiesced.¹

* * *

Boston, 6 February 1788

This p.m. the great question is decided by a majority of 19, in favour of the Constitution; the whole House being 355. I congratulate you on this auspicious event, and am, with ardent praise to Heaven, and the most sincere affection to you and yours,

Your joyful and happy friend,

Jere. Belknap²

7 February 1788. How strange is the sound of a ringing bell. "Fire, death, joy, dinner, public worship, town-meetings, and what not, all set it a-going, and we are often puzzled to know what it is for."³ Bells toll men to great decisions. They toll for war, they toll for peace. Bells toll men through life; they chronicle existence. How logical that bells and clocks carry on their unique relationships of ticking, tocking, and ringing. How appropriate that bells tolled for each state that ratified the Constitution, marking time, measuring with loud efficiency the death throes of the Confederation

and the birth of the Constitution.

On this day the constant "bell-ringing" that shattered the normal sounds of a morning in Boston kept Belknap's spirits as high as Mount Washington. But how could he not feel joy on this day? How could there not be "Federal frolicking"?⁴ Massachusetts had ratified the Constitution! Only three states remained for the Document to become the new government of America. And so, over and over, the sound pierced the air. Each ring huzzahed for independence! for liberty! for order!

The struggle for ratification in Massachusetts had been long and bitter. Belknap had been privileged to watch the entire debates; the conventioners had decided to meet, as Belknap told Hazard, at "the meeting-house where your friend officiates, in Long Lane, which is light, siseable, and convenient for spectators." Here he saw the Constitution "ably defended" by "the best advocates"--Dana, King, Parsons, Dalton, Strong, Sedgwick, and Ames.⁵ Yet why should the Constitution require defense? How can one defend anarchy against order? A government was needed; the Confederation was little more than a pretense for government.

Belknap had foreseen the death of the Confederation long before; it was a government that defied Nature, growing old while it was still young. It had been formed during war, in 1777, "drawn up on principles of the purest equality," each state "retaining the entire control of its

own domestic concerns, without any interference of the others, and agreeing to contribute voluntarily its proportion of labour and money to support the common interest." The Confederation had been "formed by a sense of common danger," where unity had derived from a common enemy. But with the enemy vanquished, there was no external object around which the sovereign states could unite. "Is it likely that such an union will hold when that pressure is removed?" "Thirteen equally free, independent, sovereign States are confederated for their mutual defence and security, each one retaining its own sovereignty." Sovereignty! How Belknap had grown to despise that word! Sovereignty is to independence what the brawl is to the drunkard. "Independence had so intoxicated their minds"! In each state petty men played petty games called Jealousy, Aggression, Disunity, Disorder.

The plain English of all this is that our present form of federal government appears to be inadequate to the purpose for which it was instituted. A combined sovereignty, subject to be checked, controuled, and negatived by thirteen individual sovereignties, must ever move so heavily and awkwardly that no business can be done to good purpose.⁶

Nevertheless, as Belknap listened to the opposition, the Antifederalists, he heard men advocate anarchy over order. "The anti-federal speakers," he informed Hazard, "are very clamorous, petulant, tedious, and provoking." On another occasion Hazard read that "their objections

appear to arise more from an enmity to all or any government, than from any defects in the proposed form. They will not be convinced, they will not be silenced."⁷

One cold January day, when the convention had sat for two weeks and little had been decided, Belknap had the pleasure of hearing "a Mr. Smith, of Lanesborough, in Berkshire." Smith was one of the "honest, sensible, independent yeomanry." Belknap found his "natural language" and "similies" "highly entertaining." This Smith was from western Massachusetts, where less than a year earlier Shays' Rebellion had erupted.

I know [said Smith] the worth of good government by the want of it. I live in a part of the country where anarchy has prevailed, and that leads to tyranny. We were so distressed last winter that we should have been glad to submit to anybody who would have set up his standard, even to a monarch; and this monarchy might have led to tyranny; but better have one tyrant than many at once."⁸

Belknap was pleased to hear a man voice sentiments similar to his own. "Was there ever a scheme so romantic" as Shays' plan? Daniel Shays had led a group of angry Massachusetts farmers in early 1787 to protest debt and taxes. "These insurgents appear to be governed by an enthusiastic frenzy. They intended to arm and equip themselves out of the Continental magazine" and "to subsist by plundering the country."

Is not their attack on the Arsenal a declaration of war against the United States? and ought not Congress to take them in hand, if this Government [Massachusetts] should fail of their duty? They appear to be far more dangerous enemies than the Ohio Indians, against whom the

United States are sending a force. Let us have peace at home before we engage in war abroad!⁹

What fools were Shays and his men! They fought an anarchic situation with a worse form of anarchy. Fortunately the representatives of order and clear-thinking had overcome Shays and his rabble. But Belknap had been frightened by such disorder. Frequently he had wondered out loud to Hazard, "What are we coming to? Republicanism must give way, and what will succeed?" "If we do not adopt some better mode" of government, "what will become of us?"¹⁰

All the years of fear of disorder and anarchy now came to a point where it seemed that Providence called men to act or to suffer grave consequences. Belknap's heart tingled and his feelings of hope went out in silent concord with this man, Smith, when he told the convention:

Take things when they are ripe. There is a time to sow, and a time to reap: we have sowed our seed by sending men to the Federal Convention. Now the fruit is ripe, let us gather it. This is the harvest; and, if we don't improve this opportunity, I am afraid we shall never have another.¹¹

"Is not this true natural eloquence and forcible reasoning?"¹² Another of Smith's comments particularly charmed Belknap. It went like this: Suppose three men agree to farm a piece of land; they plow it, sow it, and together watch the first sprouts emerge, auguring a meet bounty for their labor. But they need a fence to protect the field from wandering livestock, and to fix the boundaries of the plot. The first man says: "Let us make a

fence of stone. Our labor plowing the land has produced a great pile of stones, both large and small. Let us use our backs to lift these stones, to arrange them, and to make a fence from the materials provided." The second man responds: "There are many stones, indeed. But don't you remember that when we cleared the land for plowing we cut down a great many trees? Let us hew the wood to form a fence that will be as strong as a fence of stone; it will require less labor than hauling the stones, and it can be made higher, more extensive." The first man, who has already decided that his idea is the best idea, the only idea since it came from his brain, reacts violently, accusing his antagonist of trying to disrupt their partnership. The second man, not violent by nature, considers himself a man of intellect; his idea has been clearly thought out, and though he can see virtue in the first man's idea, it is too rough and craggy, like the stones themselves. He has never enjoyed the first man's company anyway, so he proposes that they separate, and begins to figure the division. The first man guffaws loudly at the other's idea, declaring that a man's way of settling such a disagreement is by fists. He attacks, the other defends, and the scuffle begins. After the two have received countless knocks and scrapes, but too few blows to the head to change their minds, the third man steps in and separates the combatants. "There is another alternative," he says. The two look at him, confused;

"what other alternative could there be?" "It's very simple," he responds. "We shall build no fence at all." The other men argue that this is no solution, that they are back where they started, that their field needs a fence--doesn't he realize that without a fence they are in danger of losing their crop?--that any fence is better than no fence at all. "Precisely," comments the third, and as he proceeds to the pile of stones and begins carting them back and forth, the other two men look at each other, scratch their heads, and join in.

Likewise, thought Belknap, in the present state of anarchy there is no choice. Fortunately the Constitution is not just a shallow government; it is "a strong fence about a rich field of wheat."

We have never yet suffered our best men to do all the good they would do, but we have suffered our worst men to do a great deal of mischief, and when the mischief has risen to an extravagant pitch we have then been obliged to call for our best men to restrain it: witness the insurrection here last winter. Now, is it not better to let good men prevent evil than to do thus? The present Constitution strikes at the root of such evils as we have suffered by the madness of Sovereign State Assemblies, and, if the Congress themselves will not adopt the same sort of madness, I wish they may have the power to restrain and controul all the 13 Sub-Sovereignties, and exercise such a government over the whole as 'that we may lead quiet and peaceable lives, in all godliness and honesty.'¹³

The Constitution established a centralized government with a powerful executive; under the Confederation, however, neither existed. The Constitution gave Congress the power to tax--an independent source of income--whereas before

Congress had beggared itself begging the states for money. True, at times under the Confederation the states glimpsed the error of having a poor national treasury, and alternative sources of income for the government were infrequently proposed. But inevitably, irrevocably, at least one state would, jealously, deny the passage of the proposal: "Majestically slow and solemn [the proposal] stalks along, receives a sweet smile from one, a soft kiss from another, and a friendly shake by the hand from a third; but surly Connecticut gives it a kick, and down it falls again."¹⁴ The Constitution called for uniformity in both commerce and coinage. The ridiculous clamoring for paper money by the inferior classes would cease; bullion would hasten back to America from the pockets of European creditors; debts would be paid, national credit restored. The Constitution provided what men such as Belknap had long desired, a stable, orderly government.

Belknap also approved of Smith's response to those who questioned the propriety of leadership by men of sense and wealth. Such doubters asked why America should be a republic rather than a democracy. Smith replied:

Suppose you had a farm of fifty acres, and your title was disputed, and there was a farm of 5000 acres joined to you that belonged to a man of learning, and his title was involved in the same difficulty; would you not be glad to have him for your friend, rather than to stand alone in the dispute? Well, the case is the same--these lawyers[,] these monied men, these men of learning, are all embarked in the same cause with us, and we must all swim or sink together; and shall we throw the constitution overboard,

because it does not please us alike?¹⁵

Smith was an exceptional man compared to other New England yeomen, who lacked his apparent quality--"public virtue". "They are as mean and selfish as any other people," Belknap had said of these New Englanders, "and have as strong a lurch for territory as merchants have for cash." Smith appeared to believe with Belknap regarding democracy: "Let it stand as a principle that government originates from the people; but let the people be taught . . . that they are not able to govern themselves." Belknap had seen democracy in action, and he knew its character.¹⁶

Belknap recalled his visit to Boston in June of 1784: simply by attending a Boston town meeting he had experienced democracy in all of its horror. . . . The problems in Boston's town government were apparent to "every person of the least reflexion," those who were disconnected from the mob. "Evils and mischief . . . arise from the present state of police and internal government." "The power of the selectmen" also needed to be "enlarged". Yet changes could not occur without a town vote. On the scheduled day of the vote, the leaders of the "tradesmen and other inferior orders" of the mob incited their comrades to oppose any change. Belknap could barely find room to stand in the "spacious" but now "crowded" hall, which resembled a "pavement of faces". When "the question" was put, "whether there shall be any alteration made in the mode of governing the town," some

disengaged gentlemen attempted to speak in support of the question, but "were interrupted with a confused cry of No! No! No!" "No debate was allowed"; there was no room for independent voting. Indeed, the "fifty or sixty hands" who supported the necessary changes were answered by

so great [a] clamour . . . that it was some minutes before it was possible to put the question in the negative, which being done, the shew of hands [resembled] Milton's description of the flaming swords drawn and flourished in Pandemonium; for with the hands up went the hats, and three loud cheers, succeeded by shouts and whistlings.

When other town business was up for consideration, the mob dissolved the meeting; their power was inexorable. Later, as Belknap discussed the incident with other gentlemen, someone pointed out that "the persons who composed this majority . . . do not pay one fiftieth part of the taxes laid on the town."¹⁷

Belknap remembered that two days later the incident still weighed heavily on his mind:

It diverts me to hear some gentlemen talk of the order and decency always preserved in town-meetings here, and that nothing like this was ever known. I tell them in answer that I have seen similar things before, though not in so great a degree. The truth is that, when they are all of one mind, they can talk and vote and act with tolerable order sometimes . . . ; but when there is a difference of opinion, and their passions are touched, they are as disorderly as any people on earth; and, if I wanted to see an orderly meeting, I would look for it in the council hut of any tribe of Indians on this continent, rather than in the town-hall of my native place.¹⁸

Belknap was sorry to see Smith step down from the rostrum. Belknap enjoyed listening to analogies derived

from the experiences of life just as much as he enjoyed creating them himself. He had a favorite analogy, for example, that captured the essence of the Confederation: "Our federal government is a huge, complicated, unwieldy machine, like--what?" he had questioned Hazard one day.

Comparisons sometimes illustrate subjects; but where can one be found to illustrate this? Imagine, my friend, thirteen independent clocks, going all together, by the force of their own weights, and carrying thirteen independent hammers fitted to strike on one bell. If you can so nicely wind and adjust all these clocks as to make them move exactly alike, and strike at the same instant, you will have, indeed, a most curious and regular beating of time; but, if there be ever so small a deviation from the point of identity, who will be able to know the hour by the sound of such an automaton?¹⁹

The Constitution, on the other hand, was like a master clock that imposes order upon thirteen independent clocks. Life cannot be lived properly without order and regularity. Thirteen haphazard clocks represent jumbled time. Why have any clocks at all? Would it not be better to allow the sun to regulate existence? Nature, like the ticking of a master clock, is inexorable; yet she is a simple mistress. The confusion of thirteen clocks scotches the order of night and day, fall and winter, spring and summer. Any man can conform his life to such regular beatings, to eat when hungry, sleep when tired, awake with the sun, retire by moonlight. Why even a simple time keeper, such as a sundial, beats the disorder of the thirteen. Barring cloudy days, the sundial allows for more precision, more control over daily life. A man can

plan better, live according to schedule. And how great does this control of time become with the master clock! A man can order his life to fit his needs, to accomplish his tasks. By experience, the precise amount of sleep can be discerned, so that when dusk falls and the hour approaches for rest, the man can relax, become drowsy, and sleep. Yet if he is so lucky as to need only seven hours of sleep, then perhaps he will beat the sun, up with a candle, at work, when others are languishing in bed. If by 6:30 he is dressed, then by 7:00 he will have breakfasted, and by 7:30 he will be working. So much can be accomplished with such control over time! The master clock allows man to be the master of himself, to guide his life according to a precise and regulated duty. What is more, the master clock is his creation. He can start and stop it, wind and oil it, shut it off when he desires. Unlike Nature, the clock is a machine: built, operated, and controlled by man.

* * *

30 April, 1789--George Washington's Inaugural Address:

No people can be bound to acknowledge and adore the Invisible Hand which conducts the affairs of men more than those of the United States. Every step by which they have advanced to the character of an independent nation seems to have been distinguished by some token of providential agency. . . . These reflections . . . have forced themselves too strongly on my mind to be suppressed. . . . There is no truth more

thoroughly established than that there exists in the economy and course of nature an indissoluble union between virtue and happiness; between duty and advantage; between the genuine maxims of an honest and magnanimous policy and the solid rewards of public prosperity and felicity; since we ought to be no less persuaded that the propitious smiles of Heaven can never be expected on a nation that disregards the eternal rules of order and right which Heaven itself has ordained; and since the preservation of the sacred fire of liberty and the destiny of the republican model of government are justly considered, perhaps, as deeply, as finally, staked on the experiment intrusted to the hands of the American people.²⁰

When Belknap read Washington's speech he cried out,

General Washington is the greatest and best man that ever appeared at the head of any nation since the days of Moses and Joshua. His speech, his answers to the various addresses, shew such a spirit of devotion, modesty, patriotism, firmness, and integrity, that his country may well expect honour and safety under his administration.

He also declared, "Nothing can add a deeper lustre to General Washington than the deep sense of religion which seems to fill his soul. O my friend," he told Hazard, "it is the best of omens."²¹

Six months later, in October, Belknap reached a pitch of enthusiasm rarely equaled during his life: George Washington was touring the Northern states, and he was coming to Boston. "A family of children cannot receive a long absent parent with more real joy than will be felt by the citizens of [Boston] on his coming."²²

Belknap had never met Washington, though he had sent him a letter once, in 1784. He had just completed the first volume of his History of New Hampshire and desired to make the General a present:

Great and Good Sir

After the multitude of addresses which have been presented to you in the course and at the conclusion of the late War it would be needless for an obscure individual to repeat the Voice of admiration and gratitude which has resounded from every part of America for the eminent Services which you have rendered to this Country. It shall be my part, Sir, to ask your acceptance of the first Volume of a work in which you will see the early struggles and sufferings of one of those States which now claims the honor of being defended by your sword, and which though in the late arduous Contest it has not been so much exposed as in former Wars yet having long been a nursery of stern heroism has bred an hardy race of men whose merits as soldiers are well known to their beloved General and who will always glory in having assisted to plant the Laurel which adorns his brow.

I am, Sir, with a degree of respect approaching to Veneration,

Your Excellency's most obedient Servant,
Jeremy Belknap²³

Now, Belknap was biting his fingernails in hope of an interview with his hero. Days passed quickly, the anticipated time drew nearer and nearer. At last it was the morning of October 27. Belknap found himself lined up with other "brethren" dressed in religious regalia, soldiers of Christ awaiting inspection from the General. Belknap looked at the men in his company. He was only one of many, all dressed in black, none distinctive. Would the General even speak to him? Belknap hoped that Washington would recall the name "Belknap," recall that a few years ago he had received a book from an author by that name, to whom the General had written a note of thanks. But so many men had written this great man! How many books he must have received! Belknap was not General

Sullivan, a fighter, a man-at-arms whom Washington would easily remember. Belknap was only a minor clergyman, whose claim to fame was a history that, he dejectedly remembered, had sold so poorly that he remained in debt for its publication costs. How could . . . thoughts broke off as his eyes instinctively sought, amid the group of men that entered the room, the General. Washington was formally dressed, tall and distinctive; he walked stiffly but deliberately. As the line moved quickly his hand darted out, a hand, Belknap thought, that wielded sabre and pistol expertly, ruthlessly. A glimmer at his waist betrayed a hidden dress sword. Belknap thought dreamily of war and glory, of white stallions and thundering cannon, when, abruptly, he was face to face with the stern General who, learning that this was Jeremy Belknap, responded: "I am indebted to you, sir, for the History of New Hampshire; and it gave me great pleasure." Belknap looked up into gray-blue eyes that were staring, awaiting the historian's response. Quickly, imperceptibly, his mind activated, recalling experiences, letters, words, conversations. Suaviter in modo, fortiter in re: the words darted into his mind. Good Mr. Hazard! If he were present his hand would immediately clasp the General's hand, his smile would put the grave man at ease, his words would flow from his lips like sweet wine: "Good day, General Washington, it is truly an honor for you to grace our city with a visit." He would speak with respect, but

not humility. Then, with a graceful bow, Hazard would depart. Suaviter in modo, fortiter in re: grace and vigor, characteristics in which Belknap felt wanting, at least in formal society.²⁴

If only Belknap was at his desk with pen and ink! Writing is much easier than conversing. "It was always my unhappiness not to be able to express myself so well in conversation as in writing; at least not so much to my own satisfaction," he once lamented. In conversation there is no time to arrange and to form thoughts, to think through ideas, to discover within oneself beliefs and feelings. The spontaneity of conversation made Belknap feel unsure, afraid of gaffs, of saying something he might later regret. When Hazard and Belknap first met during the war, the former had immediately sensed in Belknap this difficulty. As they became fast friends, Belknap realized that Hazard had the sympathy, benevolence, and candor with which to help. Hazard told his friend, "acting suaviter in modo, sed fortiter in re, . . . a man may do almost any thing. Remember that." His advice: charm your listener with words that reveal your natural kindness and courtesy; make him feel at ease in your presence. Yet remember, you are both men, equal and independent--do not humble yourself.²⁵

As Belknap's mind rapidly sorted these implicit impressions in this split second of doubt, inner contemplation, and resolution, he determined to act as

Hazard advised. But as he began to speak to the great man, he thought: this is Washington! the great savior of our country, "that illustrious chief whom Providence . . . raised up and supported to add a peculiar dignity to the noble struggle in which America [had] been obliged to engage in support of her rights and liberties." The General waited. "I am so obliged to you, your excellency, for your letter acknowledging me, or, my history; and I am so grateful to see you." Immediately he felt like a fool; his red face turned redder. But by that time the General was along to the next petty, insignificant clergyman. A few days later Belknap unburdened himself to his friend; after Washington's comment, he told Hazard, "I answered, or meant to answer, for it came upon me quite unexpected, 'I am obliged to your Excellency for a very polite letter of acknowledgment, and am extremely glad to see you.'" There was no need to be more explicit; Hazard understood.²⁶

George Washington awed Jeremy Belknap. Once Belknap had declared defiantly that he was humble to no man. Jeremy Belknap in the fall of '89 was humble to George Washington. It was not Washington's appearance, reputation, or office that awed Belknap so much as what Washington represented. George Washington was a symbol for the Republic. He was "a singular instance of that heroic virtue so much boasted of among the old Greeks and Romans."²⁷ He was Scipio Africanus, the First Citizen, who repelled the Invader, the Carthaginian. He was

Cincinnatus, who left the farm to fight the foe, who humbly accepted command, and with victory replaced the sword with the plow. Washington had the bravery of Hector, the resolution and patience of Odysseus: his will, and nothing else, had made the army a stable force during the Revolution. Great in battle like Caesar, yet he refused to extend his power beyond war to endanger the Republic. When discord and rebellion had gripped the army toward the end of the war, Washington had exerted his reputation and dignity for Order, had saved the Republic. He was no Cromwell, "who, placed in the same circumstances, made use of his vast ascendancy over the army to overturn the constitution which they had taken up arms to preserve!"²⁸ He had the piety of Constantine, the wisdom of Augustus, the gravity of Pericles, the discipline of Julian. There was no counterpart, however, among the great men of the past, who equalled Washington's sense of order, his tremendous self-control.

Who knows how it happened. Perhaps the many years of soldiering, of commanding troops and giving orders, of responsibility for all decisions, all actions, formed his character. Or perhaps it was the years of public service motivated by devotion to the Cause, a self-imposed duty, a personal command to serve America. Yet should we forget Washington's humility, his realization that he was a mere instrument of a greater power, subordinate, as all men are, to God? Nevertheless this humble man had a special

firmness, as if he were the hardened steel of the sword that hung from his waist. His tremendous size and tough muscles hinted at his immovable resolution, his unbendable courage. As the army is the core of the State in wartime, so Washington's integrity ordered the rest of his character. He was, simply, an honest public servant. His virtue was deep, a product of years cultivating the soil, years of self-denial, years of action, years of liberty. Washington, it seemed, had the ability to guide his own destiny within God's pervasive plan. His success was not due to luck or fortune; he had not bathed in the river Styx as a youth. Washington made his fortune by action, determination, and will. He fought many battles, both as a soldier and as a man, against enemies firing bullets, and enemies of the heart. He lost some but he won more; such success against all foes, including himself, raised him above all men.

"How happy to be born and live in an age which has produced so excellent a man!"²⁹ Belknap had only praise for the act of Providence that made Washington the first president of a government based upon order. The Constitution institutionalized the qualities that made Washington the First Citizen of the American Republic. Reasonable men who had experienced the disorder and anarchy of the Confederation had created the Constitution. They had seen in the Confederation a government that encouraged a form of liberty antagonistic to virtue,

public-spirit, humility, devotion, firmness, and order. The liberty of the Confederation elevated self-interest, passion, and vanity. Intoxicated with the rhetoric of the times, men had foolishly thought of liberty as a child thinks of dinner. Liberty is not free, however. Liberty must be created, ordered, controlled. Uncultivated, liberty sways between the extremes of democracy and tyranny. The Republic balances these extremes: it is centralized but not despotic; a united sovereignty composed of independent parts; committed to truth yet allows individual beliefs; controlled without repression. Like George Washington, the Constitution epitomized the Republic. Order as well as liberty: Jeremy Belknap considered the Constitution to conclude the American Revolution.

O that the time would come, when men would govern themselves! Then we should need no other government. But, while the world continues as it is, there must be a restraint laid on the lusts and passions of mankind; and such a government as will do this in the most effectual manner is the most salutary.³⁰

CHAPTER NOTES

1. Belknap to Hazard, 3/3/84, CMHS, ser. 5, vol. 2, 313-315.

2. Belknap to Hazard, 2/6/88, CMHS, ser. 5, vol. 3, 16.

3. Belknap to Hazard, 5/15/88, Ibid., 39.

4. Belknap to Hazard, 2/10/88, Ibid., 17.

5. Belknap to Hazard, 1/20/88, Ibid., 6.

6. Belknap, The Foresters, 174, 175; Belknap to Hazard, 3/3/84, CMHS, ser. 5, vol. 2, 310, 312.

7. Belknap to Hazard, 1/20/88, 1/25/88, CMHS, ser. 5, vol. 3, 6, 9.

8. Belknap to Hazard, 1/25/88, Ibid., 10. Smith's speech is preserved in The Debates in the Several States Conventions on the Adoption of the Federal Constitution, 2nd ed., ed. Jonathan Elliott (Washington: By the author, 1836), 2:118-120. I have used Smith's statements as recorded by Belknap.

9. Belknap to Hazard, 2/2/87, CMHS, ser. 5, vol. 2, 456. Other sources include: Belknap to Hazard, 12/2/86, 2/2/87, 2/7/87, 2/27/87, 2/28/87, Ibid., 447, 448, 455-456, 460, 464-465; Belknap to Ruth Belknap, 1/14/87, CMHS, ser. 6, vol. 4, 325-326.

10. Belknap to Hazard, 10/25/86, 4/23/87, CMHS, ser. 5, vol. 2, 446, 472.

11. Belknap to Hazard, 1/25/88, CMHS, ser. 5, vol. 3, 10.

12. Ibid., 10-11. The following story is drawn from Smith's comment,

Suppose you were to join with two or three neighbours in clearing up a rough piece of ground, and sowing it with wheat: would you let it lie unfenced because you could not all agree what sort of fence to make? Is it not better to have a fence, though it does not please all your

fancies, than to have none?

13. Foresters, 188; Belknap to Hazard, 12/8/87, CMHS, ser. 5, vol. 2, 498.

14. Belknap to Hazard, 3/3/84, Ibid., 311. Also, Belknap to John Wentworth, 3/21/91, CMHS, ser. 6, vol. 4, 484):

Our government appears at last to be happily settled, and every friend to virtue and good order must wish it permanency. I hope that 25 years of controversy and revolution will be sufficient for the space of time which I have to exist on this globe. Were I to live to the age of Methuselah I should not wish to see another such period.

Also Belknap to Hazard, 12/8/87, CMHS, ser. 5, vol. 2, 498; and volume 1, chapter 27 of the History of New Hampshire.

15. The Debates in the Several States Conventions, 2:119; Belknap's abbreviated version is in CMHS, ser. 5, vol. 3, 10.

16. Belknap to Hazard, 3/3/84, CMHS, ser. 5, vol. 2, 313, 315.

17. Belknap to Hazard, 6/19/84, Ibid., 358-360.

18. Ibid., 360-361.

19. Belknap to Hazard, 3/3/84, Ibid., 312.

20. Inaugural Addresses of the Presidents of the United States, (Washington, D.C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1965), 2-3.

21. Belknap to Hazard, 5/2/89, 5/8/89, CMHS, ser. 5, vol. 3, 123-124.

22. Belknap to Hazard, 10/22/89, Ibid., 198.

23. Belknap to Washington, 7/19/84, "Letterbook," CMHS, reprinted in Marcou, Life of Belknap, 137.

24. I recreate the interview from two sources: Belknap to Hazard, 11/11/89, ser. 5, vol. 3, 203, where he also informed Hazard,

Each one said what he pleased, and we staid with him about five or six minutes. We did not trouble him with an address; nor did any of us

preach to him, as did some of our brethren elsewhere. I believe he is heartily tired of adulatory and fulsome compliments, whether in the shape of addresses, sermons, or odes.

Also, Belknap's Diary for 1789 (MHS); Washington met with the brethren at 10:00 am, 27 October.

25. Hazard to Belknap, 5/14/81, Belknap to Hazard, 5/24/84, CHMS ser. 5, vol. 2, 98, 345. The "infirmity" was what Belknap denoted on another occasion (Belknap to Hazard, 1/24/89, CHMS, ser. 5, vol. 3, 97), awkwardness "in the art of Chesterfield," the art of polite discourse and behavior.

26. The inadequate response Belknap fumbled to Washington is my creation, based on the hint in Belknap to Hazard, 11/11/89, *Ibid.*, 203. The quote on Washington is from Belknap to Hazard, 4/25/83, *Ibid.*, 373⁷.

27. *Ibid.*

28. *Ibid.*

29. *Ibid.*

30. Belknap to Hazard, 12/8/87, CHMS, ser. 5, vol. 2, 498-499. In The Foresters Belknap wrote (p. 186):

Place [man] in any kind of society whatever, and he has wants to be supplied, and passions to be subdued; his active powers need to be directed, and his extravagances controled, and if he will not do it himself, some body must do it for him. Self government is indeed the most perfect form of government in the world; but if men will not govern themselves, they must have some governors appointed over them, who will keep them in order and make them do their duty.

Belknap, like many of his contemporaries, was steeped in the ideas of classical republicanism: public virtue, private interest subordinated to the common good, mistrust of power, reliance on militia. The reader interested in recent work on republicanism in early America should consult Robert E. Shalhope, "Republicanism and Early American Historiography," William and Mary Quarterly 39(1982): 334-356; J.G.A. Pocock, The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), and Gordon Wood, The Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1787, (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1972). This latter work expands upon the work of Bailyn to provide an interesting interpretation of the

revolutionary character of the Revolution. Wood argues that the Constitution was a radical document, the culmination of ten years of ideological and political ferment in the new nation. The Constitution departed, however, from the classical republican ideal of ordered society and mixed government, to base its sovereignty upon only one source: the people. Belknap was definitely a republican as Wood defines it, and believed as other men in the moral and reformist character of both republicanism and the Revolution. But ultimately he was like his friend John Adams in not fully understanding the significance of the Constitution--at least this would be Wood's argument. The Federalist Adams continued to believe in inequality, an ordered society, the necessity of mixed government, and the necessity of government coercion of the people. Notions of equality and the sovereignty of the people, represented in the Constitution, disgusted Adams--and Belknap as well. Belknap mistrusted the people, and democracy, and felt that order could not be achieved from within, but had to be imposed externally. This artificial control over men is what attracted Belknap to the Constitution.

CHAPTER 7

DEATH

When faith and patience, hope and love,
Have made us meet for heav'n above;
How blest the privilege to rise,
Snatch'd in a moment to the skies!
Unconscious to resign our breath,
Nor taste the bitterness of death.
Such be my lot, Lord, if thou please,
To die in silence and at ease;
When thou dost know that I'm prepared,
O seize me quick to my reward.
But if thy wisdom sees it best,
To turn thine ear from this request;
If sickness be the appointed way
To waste this frame of human clay;
If, worn with grief and rack'd with pain,
This earth must turn to earth again;
Then let thine angels round me stand;
Support me by thy powerful hand;
Let not my faith or patience move,
Nor aught abate my hope or love;
But brighter may my graces shine,
Till they're absorb'd in light divine.
(Jeremy Belknap, 1791)¹

10 May 1795. The candle grew short, though the flame still darted, lifelike, back and forth. Belknap reclined on his bed; he had known these quilts for many days. The flannel nightshirt had been his daily companion as well. Sickness had left him weak and fatigued, but his mind continued on, thinking . . .

How great is the mercy of God! Belknap could contemplate God's great plan for a lifetime and never grow tired. He

took peculiar satisfaction in reflecting upon the wisdom and benevolence of the Deity, who having first secured our eternal salvation by the most astonishing of all means, which, being entirely out of our power to accomplish, was never required of us, but was the work of His own Son, has so established the order of his moral kingdom as to make our personal improvement in virtue absolutely necessary to our enjoying the blessedness thus provided for us, and has even made our enduring suffering one of the intermediate steps to our arrival at supreme happiness.

Belknap had once thought that man's fate remains static regardless of his actions. Yet are the good punished and the evil rewarded? Belknap could no longer believe that the apparent absurdity of such a scheme is due to man's ignorance and God's incomprehensibility. God is not an angry punisher; God is not unjust. The Good, it seemed, saves all men rather than a select few. But what is the evidence? Belknap had long "wished it might be true," particularly during the war; but was there "any just reason to conclude it was so"? At one point he had decided to oppose the idea of universalism "in a sermon." But he "was brought to a stand by that text where Paul says, 'I have hope towards God that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both just and unjust.'" "Why should the resurrection of the unjust be an object of hope to a benevolent mind, if that resurrection should be the beginning of not only a never ending, but perpetually increasing, state of misery?" How can Benevolence fail to decree universal salvation?

Thus, salvation is a gift: Jesus the Divine Mediator

suffered to ensure man's eventual happiness. Nevertheless, God makes happiness contingent upon man's earthly conduct. The Gospel "does not require him to be abstracted from himself, and to pursue virtue for virtue's sake only, but because it is conducive to his own happiness." God punishes disbelief, rewards piety and goodness. The sinner who thinks he will receive God's grace is only half right: he first must endure horrible punishment. After death the sinner will live again and suffer as he would eternal Hell; rather than forever, he will experience death again--a second death. This second life ending in death will atone for his sins and purify him for the blessedness of Heaven. God desires men to challenge themselves, to battle themselves. Belknap thought:

Surely no one who considers the dreadful nature, the unknown degree and duration of the punishment of the future state, with its horrid end, the second death, the terror of which will . . . exceed that of the first . . .--no one, I say, can reconcile himself to the thought of passing through it . . . for the sake of a little paltry gratification here.²

Although his body lay in pain, his mind was clear, intense. He knew from experience that "the natural tendency of pain and confinement is to concentrate the thoughts," to fix upon first one subject, then another. Indeed, in the past he "never was capable of more clear, strong, and intense application of mind upon some of the most sublime subjects" than during sickness.³ It was a gentle reminder of his mortality. Sometime, he knew, as

the body sank into death his spirit would leap to Heaven, a flame into darkness. Death. It was coming, but when? Again Belknap's concentration stiffened. For days he had felt something inexplicable, something different from earlier bouts with sickness. As always he was aware of each singular ache that invaded his comfort. Now the eyes, now the legs, from top to bottom and side to side aches marched like toy soldiers in battle. Above the heat of battle hovered dark and dreadful clouds that quickened his pulse and heightened his senses. The clouds were Death. Belknap felt it close by; but when would it come? Likewise the threatening hurricane dances offshore, plays a waiting game, challenges man to guess its coming, and laughs at the vain preparations for defense. Death, similarly, stayed just out of reach. Belknap's aches and pains seemed to suggest a visit, yet no knock was heard as yet.

"How uncertain is human Life!" Other times he had felt close to death, but he had enjoyed "the pleasure of recovery"--rising from the lair of sickness to breathe spring air and ramble on horseback through cheerful meadows. Health is the "most valuable blessing"; the "sweetner" of life. Is sickness therefore a curse? Belknap thought not: who can enjoy the good without the bad? A world free from suffering lacks virtue and happiness. Trials test moral worthiness. Even God suffered in this life, upon the Cross; is it not symbolic

that He rose again? Life is full of "contrasts"; "happiness is comparative"; "we know the value of health" and happiness only by experiencing the opposite. There is no pleasure without pain: there is no life without the pain of birth; there is no salvation without the pain of death.⁴

Thinking. The spirit entices but the body denies. How symbolic of life was his journey to the White Mountains in July of 1784. The memory was still clear. It was "a fine morning," crisp, clouds encircling the mountain tops.⁵ Belknap's spirits were as bright as the clearest summer day. He and his companions had risen early to climb Mount Washington. Belknap felt a nervous excitement as they prepared for the ascent. There, before him, was the Mountain. To scale this majestic giant was to scan the earth, to see what few men see, to breathe air few men breathe. To stand at the peak of the world; to touch the marrow of the clouds; to experience the beginning of time. Surely night never falls to dull such a vision. There is a timelessness at the peak: one becomes an Olympian scoffing at the time-world of below. The view from the Mountain--of the forests, the sea, and the mountains and valleys--is changeless, lasting.

The Mountain seemed to invite. But, sly mountain, the invitation was mixed with a challenge: Can you overcome yourself to scale me? Can you resist the urge to look down rather than up at me? To conquer such a

mountain is to contend with man's humility. Belknap had no illusion that to stand at its summit was to stand closer to Heaven. Yet how the spirit soars when one can gaze upon the earth, to dominate it with one's eyes, to feel what the Mountain feels.

The ascent began "from the eastern side, our course about N.W." The way was slow, the path winding. Belknap trod slowly to avoid stumbling upon the loose rocks or hump-back tree roots. Yet "being the heaviest person in the company, you may depend on it that I was not the nimblest," he later recalled.⁶ Time passed quickly at first; soon once towering trees appeared smaller, less imposing. As the morning hours passed the slope steepened. Belknap's muscles became sore and tired, his body grew weaker, but the trail demanded more concentration and energy. Time slowed; ten minutes seemed ten times longer. With each minute, each step, Belknap felt the hidden power of the Mountain. The challenge--to scale the Mountain--was slowly reduced: could he reach the next clump of bushes, the next boulder, the next rest-break? Pleasure vanished. The pain of his churning lungs dominated. Soon,

I found my breath fail, and needed so many pauses that I considered whether it were best for me to proceed any farther. The summit, though in sight, appeared much higher than the distance we had come. The ascent higher up was steeper. . . . My exercise had so heated me already, that I was persuaded if I got to the top I should be fit for nothing but to lie down and sleep.

The desire to indulge the spirit at the peak disappeared under the weight of mortality. As Belknap got nearer the top the spirit seemed to fly in the wind: the body took over. Belknap's two hundred pounds of flesh rebuked the brain for allowing such folly, and demanded a reconsideration. Ultimately he "consented to come down" and descended to camp, repeating "that old adage, In magnis voluisse sat est [To be willing is noble enough]."⁸ His spirits low, his humility alone soaring, the Mountain was victorious.

Memory furnished no pleasure. How often must he remind himself of his folly? Ten years had passed and still he yearned to climb the Mountain, to overcome the pain, the weight, of the body and soar upward. But he knew he must wait.

Thinking. How would he experience death? How would it feel? When would death come? These questions had nagged Belknap for much of his life. The mystery of death tugged at him. Not content to wait in ignorance, he sought to discover something, anything, about death. He contemplated life to learn about death. He contemplated Nature, Scripture, the experiences of dying men, and himself.

The terrible imminence of death had vexed Belknap throughout his life, but the way he prepared for its coming had altered. He remembered a time in 1763. A recent Harvard graduate, Jeremy Belknap strolled in a

spring meadow. Birds singing, new leaves rustling, early morning dew vanishing, the sky cloudless: nothing disturbed the harmony of the morning. So beautiful! Belknap burst out in rhyme:

How Nature smiles! This is the lovely Time
For Contemplation, and sublime Delights.
See how the Clouds disperse, the orient Blush
Proclaims th' Approach of the bright Lamp of Day.
What beauteous Verdure covers all the Ground!
How pleasing to behold those Flocks, that graze
On yonder Lawn! to see the rip'ning Fruits
Expand their ruddy Bosoms to the South,
Adorn the Trees, and load their bending Boughs!⁹

The landscape surpassed the clatter and smells of "smoakey Towns." Even the finest buildings seemed primitive in comparison with the "stately Oak." But what was this? At the top of the rise, what had once towered above man now lay low, the toppled remnant of an aged tree. Belknap stared in surprise; the charred trunk was cut deep, scarred by "a fiery Shaft . . . from the warring Clouds" of a recent thunderstorm. The tree's fate mirrored human experience. Tall and stately one day, with "lofty Pride," ruling the hill with grandeur and assuredness, by tomorrow, in a flash, man falls to "Dust," a meet companion for worms. Worms burrow in clay; man is nothing but soil given life to grow and flourish. God breathes life into "mortal clay," but inhales without warning. "The King of Terrors" visits indiscriminately; even the newborn babe lacks protection. Death is greater than the armies the world. Death is more dreadful than the strongest king.

Besides terror, death provokes obedience and suppliance to the "holy Will" of God. The acorn expects to fall to the ground; the majestic oak, however, expects to stand forever. When its trunk breaks and the tree crashes to the ground, the impact causes a great noise. The noise echoes, then vanishes. Is it worth the terror of the crashing blow, just to make a brief noise?

Standing in this meadow, feeling and thinking, Belknap recalled the sudden death of a friend, an eminent clergyman. When Belknap had heard the "Amazing News" his insides had knotted and his spine had tingled, as if he had heard his own death foretold. His friend had been a good man, "with inward Fervour and Devotion" to God; his sermons, his "glorious, evangelic Truths," had reflected the divine Word itself. Surely God had elected this man for Heaven. Surely God had not denied His blessing, condemning the man to Hell. How could such a man suffer God's wrath? These had been comforting thoughts. Then, suddenly, doubt had appeared, slowly slithering its slimy way into Belknap's assurance, bringing uncertainty, not certainty, terror rather than joy. Truly, man's fate is unknown to man. God alone decides; man must "humbly acquiesce in God's Decree."¹⁰

How strange, Belknap thought, that no matter how a man lives his life, nothing he says or does, grants or denies, alters his fate. Life is different: one's actions affect the future within the watchful guidance of

Providence. Thus Belknap had indications of his life's course. He knew the sort of girl he wanted to marry-- someone like Ruth Eliot. And although his life's work was yet undetermined, he already had a desire and the qualifications to become a minister. Belknap used life to prepare for life. But the future was blank regarding death. How could life prepare him for death? To the man who knows only life, death is a dark unknown. Belknap did not believe that death is nonexistence. Death is not a loneliness more empty than ever a loneliness experienced on earth, nor a coldness colder by far than the worst New England winter. Death is not dismemberment, dissolution, and chaos; parts without a whole; the absence of thirst; complete and absolute disunity. Death is not nonexistence. But what is it? Death is a door--to what does it open? When Belknap thought of death he felt no confidence, not an inkling of certainty. He felt helpless and scared. Imagine hanging by a frayed rope over a dark pit. How long will the rope hold? What is in the pit? Will there be soft cushions or hungry vipers? Or, will the pit have no end?

Thirty years passed; Belknap experienced life. He experienced marriage and love, pleasure and pain, health and sickness, the beauties of Nature. He experienced the passing of the seasons: birth and death. He experienced days and nights, activity and rest, work and contemplation. The past grew larger, but the future

loomed the same. Yet as Belknap learned more of life, the future appeared less ominous. The darkness behind the door of death grew lighter, like an approaching dawn. The images behind the door were dim and unclear, but in the shadows Belknap saw faint glimmers of the future. Ruth beckoned him to spend their lives together. He saw the births of his daughters and sons, felt the joy of loving them, and watched with pride their growth to maturity. He saw Ebenezer Hazard, and felt the unique bonds that they shared. He saw Nature's perfection and benevolence. He saw evil, but with wonder he saw that good always resulted. He saw suffering, but above it happiness. He saw the Word of the Creator. He saw the shadow of God; rather than awe, fear, or humility, he felt Love. He loved God because God is the Creator of all the experiences of life. These experiences taught Belknap that God is benevolent and good, "a God of boundless Love."¹¹ In one shining moment--not of time but of awareness--Belknap resolved the dilemma of his early years: how can the Creator--the Good--prevent some people from enjoying eternal happiness? Can God and eternal torment coexist? How can God be a source of evil? In Belknap's youth, such thoughts would be checked by others springing from long ago school lessons--'God is inscrutable and incomprehensible and we must accept His will with humility.' To be sure, responded a more mature Belknap, God is beyond human comprehension. But

everything in Belknap's experience told him that God is Love. Could he reject these feelings? Could he hold an infant babe, and declare without paradox that the child could be reprobate, destined to suffer eternal torment? Could he lay with Ruth at night and kiss eyes and cheeks that would shortly burn in fire forever? Belknap believed that he could feel some of the Truth in his heart; if his heart told him Love, he could not reject it, or he would reject himself. He thought:

In this general thought my mind rests, that He who is perfectly holy, wise, and good, would never have permitted sin nor misery to have entered into this world, if He had not designed to bring good out of these evils; and I cannot think He will leave his work so imperfect as, in the final result of all, to suffer any evil, natural or moral, to remain in his system; but every thing that He has made capable of holiness and happiness shall reflect the image of the Author, and shine in glory and immortality.¹²

During thirty years of change Belknap pondered Creation, his experiences, and himself, and grew to love God. Still he hung by a rope over a pit; now he knew the pit to be emersed in "light and blessedness" where "the most perfect Peace, Unity and Love reign."¹³ Death remained a vast unknown; but he had a peaceful, joyous feeling in his heart that death is not dreadful. In 1763 young Jeremy Belknap had viewed death with fear; in 1795 an older Belknap viewed death with hope.

Thinking. Death is a door to eternal happiness, a passageway, a brief passing moment between two lives. How would he die? How did he wish to die? He wished that

death would come quickly--"snatch'd in a moment to the skies!" Perhaps he would be asleep in bed, sweetly dreaming of God and Heaven, then awake from his dream world to the reality of eternal happiness. Sleep is peaceful, the best way to die. How he wished this would be his "lot," to die "unconscious" "nor taste the bitterness of death."¹⁴

"But what signifies wishing, 'tis the most ineffectual work a man can do, and often an excuse for the omission of work and neglect of duty?"¹⁵ Death in dreamy sleep was the work of the imagination; reality was doubtless much different. Wishing takes man from the real, the present, and entices him into a dream future of golden-rimmed shadows and vague happiness that never ends. Relentlessly the imagination hammered at his concentration, luring Belknap into the world of pleasure. Belknap tried to fight back, "to subdue his appetites and passions," but found his strength fail, his forces routed.¹⁶ Why did the door of death frighten him? He had hope in the everlasting future to which death opened, but the moment of death, the act of dying, horrified him. The body and mind struggled.

Belknap knew that the experience of death, if painful and prolonged, was a test. "Let not my faith or patience move," he had written a few years earlier, "Nor aught abate my hope or love." His son Sam's death had been such a test. Sam. A beautiful young boy whom Death had

treated unmercifully: his dying body had rotted like a corpse. Belknap had never seen such suffering. Perhaps he, too, would lie bedridden for weeks or months as his frame slowly decayed, "worn with grief and racked with pain," life ending horribly, wishing for death.¹⁷

Belknap forced himself to remember: the open wound oozing with pus; Sam's cries of pain and despair; boiling water; nursing rags; physicians. He remembered Ruth, who had "not been out of [Sam's] chamber, more than a quarter of an hour at a time" for months, collapsing into a chair, exhausted by the constant attention, catching a few moments of rest as Sam slept.¹⁸ Belknap had never seen her so strong and energetic. He remembered her tears. He remembered how he and Ruth comforted each other.

He remembered the final moments of Sam's life: As if by design to enhance prayer, Sam was "calm" and "placid," and felt little pain. He had suffered so much, and had confronted death for so long, that in these final moments of life he gazed forward rather than backward, high rather than low. "The nearer he approached toward his end, the more did his patience shine." Father, mother, and son prayed and hoped as one. The father asked "whether he could commit himself into the hands of Christ . . . , if he had a good hope of the mercy of God in Christ." To both questions Sam responded, "Yes." Belknap peered at him: Sam's face was gaunt, "much emaciated," yet it appeared happy and peaceful.¹⁹ Sam returned the gaze:

their eyes met, they said nothing, but each knew the other's thoughts. They thought of rainy days spent by the fire, of horse-rides, of afternoon dinners; they thought of books and lessons, of Sunday sermons, of quiet conversations; they thought of arguments and punishments, of hugs and kisses, of long separations. For a few brief seconds they thought of how their lives had been connected for seventeen years, how they had shared everything, how they did not want to say good-bye. Then they joined hands, they prayed, and Sam died.

Belknap remembered the following day: It was a Sunday. Belknap rose early, reached instinctively for pen and paper, and sat at his desk. Writing to Hazard of Sam's death was not difficult; Hazard would want to know Sam's fate. Strangely, this was one of the few times that he did not wish Hazard were present. Belknap's note was brief. There was no need to describe everything. Indeed, information was only one purpose of the letter. Quite naturally, Belknap intensely desired to express his friendship for Hazard, to tell his friend that he was thinking of him, and that although Death had visited the Belknap family, he hoped that the Hazard family was well, peaceful, and happy. "Our love to you and yours," he said. Belknap also wanted to express his wonderful feelings of love and peace. When Sam had been in the deepest despair of life, Belknap had felt only anger at his son's cruel fate. But now that Sam was dead, Belknap felt . . . why,

he felt Love. Although Sam had suffered terribly, his sufferings had reinforced his faith and hope. "With his last rational breath [Sam expressed] a strong hope in the mercy of God . . . , committing his Love to Jesus Christ." After he died, Belknap felt a wonderful "consolation . . . in his death." He was certain that Sam was smothered in God's love, in a place of no "sickness sorrow or death," experiencing joy so great that Sam could have suffered ten times the pain of his disease for the outcome. God decreed that Sam suffer, but as the boy's body ached his spirit soared in "faith and patience, hope and love".²⁰ How meet was the preparation for eternal life that God had decreed for Sam! How wonderful that the sorrows of life become the joys of eternal felicity!

Truly, Sam's death was a remarkable example of God's benevolence. Death is the great unknown; more than anything, death strikes men with terror. Yet death is horrible only when accompanied by fear. Without fear and uncertainty, however, death would lose force as a great instrument of Love. Death, with its pain, horror, and fear, brings people together, closer. Death stimulates reflection, and helps people discover life's truths: love, faith, hope, patience. Death brings people to God, makes them realize that God means death to be an act of love, of reunity. Strange that mortality is the key to discovering the immortal. Death is only one instance in life where actions of a certain time and place represent truths of no

time, no place.

"The hour of death is an honest, undeceiving hour; things appear then in a true light, free from that false glare which our corrupt passions and inclinations deceive our understandings."²¹

CHAPTER NOTES

1. CMHS, ser. 1, vol. 6, xiii; the original is at MHS.

2. I base the setting of this chapter upon Belknap to Hazard, 5/11/95, CMHS, ser. 5, vol. 3, 352-353, where Belknap told his friend; "I feel an admonition within myself to get my affairs in order, and not to leave any thing which may prove a perplexity to my family after I am gone." After Hazard wrote back (Hazard to Belknap, 7/4/95, Ibid., 353-354) expressing his concern, Belknap replied (8/21/95, Ibid., 356-358), "Since I wrote you last, my health is considerably mended, by means of what the physicians call tonic medicine and diet, but especially the trotting-horse and the cold bath." Yet still, he wrote, "I have just the same impression" as before. It is impossible to say what Belknap actually experienced, whether his "impression" occurred all at once or gradually. I have assumed that the "impression" was in some way a sense of impending doom, and that perhaps it occurred during an illness accompanying the obvious ill-health he experienced during the spring of 1795. An interesting parallel, which Belknap wrote about in American Biography (volume 2, published in 1798, pp. 356-357), was John Winthrop. This account, probably written after Belknap's own "impression", is reflective of Belknap's experience: Debt, family deaths, opposition from Massachusetts Bay, and ill-treatment, said Belknap of Winthrop,

so preyed upon his nature, already much worn by the toils and hardships of planting a colony in a wilderness, that he perceived a decay of his faculties seven years before he reached his grand climacterie, and often spoke of his approaching dissolution, with a calm resignation to the will of Heaven.

I have also relied heavily on an earlier incident, which Belknap described to Hazard in a letter from 3/8/81 (CMHS, ser. 5, vol. 2, 85-86). Belknap had been ill and bedridden, but though the body was sick, his mind was pensive and he gained new insights into a number of "sublime subjects." To Belknap this was "plain proof that spiritual and heavenly things are properly the soul's element, and the more she is abstracted from the material world the more exalted and congenial are her enjoyments."

Hazard gently reprimanded his friend for jumping to conclusions, and convinced Belknap that the "natural tendency of pain and confinement is to concentrate the thoughts." (Hazard to Belknap, 4/17/81 and Belknap to Hazard, 4/23/81, *Ibid.*, 89-90, 95.)

This series of correspondence in April, 1781, is also a key source for my portrayal of Belknap's analysis of salvation, as well as for some of the quotes. Other important sources are: Belknap to Hazard, 12/19/82, *Ibid.*, 172-173. Here Belknap confided to Hazard that "as to the doctrine [of universalism] itself, . . . I frankly own to you that I have for several years been growing in my acquaintance with it and my regard to it." Also Belknap to Hazard, 4/23/81, 2/19/83, *Ibid.*, 97, 194; John Eliot to Belknap, 3/29/80, CMHS, ser. 6, vol. 4, 179; and Marcou, Life of Belknap, 142-146.

3. The quote is from Belknap to Hazard, 4/23/81, CMHS, ser. 5, vol. 2, 95, commenting on Hazard to Belknap, 4/17/81, *Ibid.*, 90.

4. Belknap to John Wentworth, 7/6/1774, in "Letterbook", MHS; Belknap to Hazard, 6/14/89, CMHS, ser. 5, vol. 3, 140; Belknap to Joseph Belknap, Jr., 5/31/90, NHMSS; Belknap to Hazard, 2/18/92, CMHS, ser. 5, vol. 3, 283. In another letter to Hazard (11/1/84, *Ibid.*, 373²⁰), Belknap sympathized with sickness in his friend's family: "To have so much sickness at your first setting out in a family way is a severe tryal; but tryals are always accompanied with some alleviating and consoling circumstances." He also wrote in 1785, "It is one of the weaknesses of human nature, that we never enjoy ourselves so well as when we have some kind of misery before our eyes"--An Election Sermon, Preached Before the General Court of New Hampshire, 44.

5. The metaphor of the mountain comes from Petrarch, "The Ascent of Mt. Venoux". I chose to use this metaphor because it fit Belknap so well. The trip to the White Mountains was a major event in his life, and he showed obvious disappointment in failing to scale Mount Washington. The best account of the ascent is in a letter to Hazard 8/16/84, CMHS, ser. 5, vol. 3, 173-174, from which some of the quotes in the text come. Also, Belknap's journal to the White Mountains, CMHS, ser. 5, vol. 2, 388-389.

6. *Ibid.*, 389; Belknap to Hazard, 8/16/84, CMHS, ser. 5, vol. 3, 173-174.

7. *Ibid.*, 174. In a revealing letter soon after his return (and before he wrote the above account--Belknap to Hazard, 8/6/84, *Ibid.*, 373¹²)--Belknap told Hazard, "I have not such an opinion of long life in this world as

some people are fond of entertaining, and I know enough of the pains you have experienced [Hazard had gout]. . . . Patience and flannel, my good friend, will do more than anything."

8. Belknap to Hazard, 8/16/84, CMHS, ser. 5, vol. 3, 174.

9. An Eclogue Occasioned by the Death of the Reverend Alexander Cumming, A. M., On the 25th of August, A. D. 1763, (Boston: B & J Kneeland, 1763), 3. This poem portrays two friends, Albinus and Florio, who take a stroll in a spring meadow, come upon a fallen oak, and then lament the loss of their mutual friend Cumming.

10. *Ibid.*, 3, 4, 6, 8. The "Friend", of course, is Cumming. I base Belknap's feelings on the Eclogue. In it, Cumming's death shocks Florio, who laments it terribly. But Albinus counsels humility and resignation:

Repine not, O my Florio, but submit;
'Tis Heav'n that gives, and Heav'n that takes away.

Again:

'Tis our's in Duty to Submit to Heav'n,
And humbly acquiesce in God's Decree.

To be sure Albinus also says,

His disembodied Spirit still survives,
Releas'd from the frail Prison of his Flesh . . .
We only Part, till the great rising Day . . .
Why mourn we then? why would we wish him back
Into this gloomy Vale of Tears again?
He's far remov'd from Pain, and Sorrow now,
Where Anguish, Grief and Death can never wound.

Finally, they both praise God in unison:

With Rev'rence, and religious Fear
Permit they Suppliants to draw near,
And at thy Feet to bow.

Thy sov'reign Fiat form'd us first;
Thy Breath can blow us into Dust,
Frail, sinful, mortal Clay:
'Tis thine undoubted Right to give
Those earthly Blessings we receive,
And thine to take away . . .

Submissive, therefore, we resign;
Our Wills are swallow'd up in thine,
In thy most holy Will.

Belknap could believe, as he wrote above (pp. 5, 7, 8), that Cumming (and himself) would end up in Heaven; nevertheless Calvinist theology was built upon uncertainty, as the last few stanzas portray. Was Jeremy Belknap an Elect in 1763? He certainly did not know; not for two or three years would he experience "a hope in Christ" that would at least make his uncertainty more bearable. The Eclogue shows fear more than anything else.

11. Belknap to M. MacClintock, 9/23/79, in "Letterbook," MHS:

Thanks [be] to our divine Savior[;] he has shewn us a way in which we may not barely sustain afflictions with firmness and patience but even rejoice in them, as the discipline of our heavenly father to reduce us from our wanderings and make us partakers of his holiness--his Gospel sets before us an increase of happiness arising out of our troubles and a glorious reward for enduring them--so that though they are not for the present joyous but grievous yet afterward when our Course of discipline is finished they shall yield us the peaceable fruit of Righteousness. . . . It is . . . certain that the manner, measure, time, and the precise nature of our tryals are altogether under the controul of God. . . . God will neither suffer us to be tryed beyond what we are able nor will he withhold that corrective discipline which he sees best adapted to prove us and do us good." "The Correction indeed is severe but were not severe correction needed it could not be inflicted by a God of boundless Love.

12. Belknap to Hazard, 7/2/84, CMHS, ser. 5, vol. 2, 368. Also Belknap to Hazard, 2/17/88, CMHS, ser. 5, vol. 3, 20: "It often happens that good comes out of evil"; Belknap to Hazard, 3/8/81, CHMS, ser. 5, vol. 2, 86; Belknap to Sally Belknap, 7/6/81, NHMSS.

13. Belknap to Hazard, 8/2/88, CHMS, ser. 5, vol. 3, 56; Belknap to John Sparhawk, 11/10/68, MHS.

14. Belknap's dream of a peaceful death comes from his 1791 poem quoted at the outset (CMHS, ser. 1, vol. 6, xiii).

15. Belknap to Hazard, 8/19/84, CMHS, ser. 5, vol. 3, 179.

16. A Sermon Preached at the Installation of the Rev. Jedidiah Morse, April 30, 1789, 21.

17. CMHS, ser. 1, vol. 6, xiii.

18. Belknap to Hazard, 1/3/89, 1/24/89, CHMS, ser. 5, vol. 3, 90, 100.

19. Belknap to Joseph Belknap, Sr., 3/29/89, NHMSS; Belknap to Hazard, 3/29/89, CMHS, ser. 5, vol. 3, 373³⁰; Diary for 1789, MHS; Belknap to Hazard, 1/24/89, CMHS, ser. 5, vol. 3, 100.

20. Belknap to Hazard, 3/29/89, Ibid., 373³⁰; Belknap to Joseph Belknap, Sr., 3/29/89, Diary for 1789, MHS. Strangely, the same evening that Sam died, Hazard wrote Belknap a letter (Hazard to Belknap, 3/28/89, CMHS, ser. 5, vol. 3, 113) where he echoed precisely the feelings of his friend: "Afflictions, we know, spring not out of the dust; and, though they may be severe, they are proofs of a Father's love. They should lead us nearer to him; and, if they do, the time will come when even the remembrance of them will be sweet."

21. Belknap, A Plain and Earnest Address from a Minister to a Parishioner, on the Neglect of the Publick Worship, and Preaching of the Gospel, (Salem: 1771), 23. Belknap wrote of his mother's death (Belknap to Hazard, 10/17/84, CMHS, ser. 5, vol. 3, 373¹⁹), she "is at length released from her confinement by the hand of Death, having patiently and quietly resigned her spirit." Belknap wrote of Hazard's mother's approaching death (8/2/88, Ibid., 56): "I wish her, from my heart, an easy passage through the dark valley, and an open entrance to the regions of light and blessedness." Belknap's portrayal of the death of Dr. Isaac Watts is in Memoirs of the Lives, Characters, and Writings of Those Two Eminently Pious and Useful Ministers of Jesus Christ, Dr Isaac Watts and Dr Phillip Doddridge, (Boston: Edes & West, 1793), 15.

Death, as a topic of scholarly inquiry, has generally not received much attention from historians. David Stannard, The Puritan Way of Death, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 78, explains: "few historians have had anything to say about the Puritan encounter with death, but this should not be surprising: neither has there been, until very recently, much psychoanalytic work on the subject of death in any sense." Stannard's comment reveals his own scholarly assumptions; indeed The Puritan Way of Death is based in part upon the work of twentieth-century social scientists. Stannard assumes that twentieth-century perceptions toward death can help us understand seventeenth-century perceptions--death is, after all, not bound by culture. What is bound by culture are perceptions--not, however, feelings. One person might perceive death from an agnostic's point of view and differ from the Puritan's Christian beliefs. What transcends

these cultural perceptions are our common uncertainties and fears. Stannard provides a persuasive argument based upon literary sources and social theories, but it is an argument restricted to perceptions, nothing more.

Equally persuasive is Philippe Aries, Western Attitudes Toward Death from the Middle Ages to the Present, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1974). Aries is less dependent upon social science, more upon literary sources and his own impressions. Nevertheless he, too, presents the historical experience of death from a cultural point of view. What both of these works lack is the scholar himself making his own feelings toward death an important source in understanding how humans confront death, not in a specific century or culture, but in general terms, across time.

CHAPTER 8

EULOGY

"Let Passion be restrain'd within thy Soul"¹

Jeremy Belknap died June 20, 1798. Throughout his life Belknap served his fellow man and his god. A minister for thirty years, he sought to lead his flock in moral living according to the dictates of the Bible. His sermons were "plain" and "practical," "directed to the heart."² If during the years at Dover his enthusiasm sometimes stirred theological controversy, he mellowed with age, and avoided controversy during his final years. He involved himself in many humanitarian causes, such as the abolition of the slave trade in Massachusetts. He sought to improve relations between whites and Indians. Education was also a constant concern: he preached and talked incessantly about the value of learning, particularly for children. In later years he involved himself in the affairs of Harvard College. He spent a lifetime educating himself, and worked to educate the public in subjects ranging from Nature to politics to history. He was a skilled writer of history, and produced respected volumes: The History of New Hampshire and American Biography. A staunch patriot, he supported the

American cause but refused to allow Order to suffer in the process. He was an open critic of New Hampshire state government; nationally, he supported the Federalist party. He was, in short, a good friend, valued husband, loving father, generous humanitarian, concerned citizen, firm patriot, established writer, and able scientist. He lived a full life.

But more, Belknap spent a lifetime in conflict with himself, trying "to subdue his appetites and passions." He never shirked from "the inward labor of [his] mind," battling his "corruptions" by "self-denial," "close application, and intense stretch of the mental powers," "thoughtfulness," "watchfulness," and self-induced "anxiety."³ It was a lifelong war, fought but never won. Regardless of victory, Jeremy Belknap determined to strive for his self-imposed ideal. The propensity for battle came naturally to a dualist such as Belknap, who inherited the Protestant, Platonic tradition of the body versus the mind or soul. As Plato sought detachment from the temporal, so Belknap sought escape from his corruption, his inherent evil, his body. An artist could not paint a better caricature of the silliness of man. Belknap was Sisyphus of Greek legend, eternally pushing a boulder uphill only for it to roll back down: Belknap daily awoke to a contest of will and nightly retired no closer to his goal.

But there were so many temptations to withstand and

barriers to cross. Culture continually entices us with promises of immediate pleasure, of the gratification of our sense of time, of fulfilling our yearning to know--to see, hear, feel, touch. At times Belknap tried to emerge from the mud of cultural concerns to something more lasting, more universally human, but the time in which he lived pulled him back. Culture keeps us from the past and future, forces us to accept the here and now as our source of experience and knowledge, and refuses to allow us to see things as they really are. Culture tries to convince us of things that we know are not true. Belknap, for example, knew that man has dignity, that Jeremy Belknap was singular, important, and deserving of liberty and happiness: "All men are by nature equally free and independent." But culture told him differently; he observed "inequality among men" and levels in society of better and worse.⁴ Notwithstanding his feelings, equality hid from inequality, so it was easy to forget.

Thus Belknap was a dualist, as are we all, feeling one thing but seeing another, unable to know what is real and what is false, confused in contradiction. Belknap changed with the wind and the rain, and formed his judgments by observing other humans who were similarly changing. He rarely stopped to feel what might be true in one and all. Truth lay within himself, hiding, waiting, but seldom glimpsed.

He looked at man and saw unrestrained passion, sin,

selfishness, and disorder. He concluded from his observations that man is irreparably sinful, lacking the means of bringing harmony to his disordered self. Culture must step in and provide order where it does not exist naturally. But did Belknap ever seek, within himself, a natural basis for harmony? Rather, he viewed himself, as he viewed all men, as a setting for the battle between natural passions and artificial control. On his own wanton liberty he practiced internal tyranny.

Liberty and tyranny: how strange that men should be allowed liberty of conscience when too often they misuse their freedom and believe the wrong things. As a young clergyman Belknap allowed his parishioners freedom to believe the Gospel as he interpreted it. With time he mellowed, and began to realize that tyranny and liberty do not mix. Nevertheless, he was a minister whose duty was "to preach the truth."⁵ By the time he moved to Boston Belknap no longer relied on mere words to relate the truth: his whole manner and demeanor must declare truth: he must touch his listeners' feelings as well as their senses. He matured into a minister with more subtle means of imposing truth and restricting liberty.

As a youth Belknap allowed himself unrestrained liberty to enjoy Nature. But with time he disliked having knowledge so dependent upon pleasure. Although Nature stimulated wonderful feelings, he desired control over his information; he desired experimentation, observation, and

precision. He explained: "When amazement is excited by the grandeur and sublimity of the scenes presented to view, it is necessary to curb the imagination, and exercise judgment with mathematical precision; or the temptation to romance will be invincible."⁶

Belknap was a scientist of the Enlightenment with a cultural perception of truth, founded in the idea of cumulative knowledge; but here and there he let slip bits and pieces of what is more real:

stupendous mountains, hanging rocks, chrystal streams, verdant woods, the cascade above the torrent below, all conspire to amaze, to delight, to soothe, to enrapture: in short, to fill the mind with such ideas as every lover of nature, and every devout worshipper of its Author would wish to have.

Belknap's confusion also showed in his relationship with his children. At one point he expressed his feelings about children to Hazard saying, "Let Nature have vent." "It is natural to love them, it is necessary we should." Hazard was understandably taken aback: "Your advice about loving children is natural, but not prudent."⁸ He must have wondered: is this the Jeremy Belknap I know? It was and was not. The Belknap he knew, the Belknap who ordinarily refrained from such outbursts of feeling, also believed that his children should live according to moral and cultural standards. It was a funny love that made Belknap tell his son Jo, the summer of 1789, that his "affection" for Jo "will increase in proportion to your advancement in virtue and goodness."⁹

Love is the hardest thing to eulogize in Belknap's life because it is at once evident and subtle. He seldom declared his love for his wife and children, but here and there words and actions betray the obvious. Suppose he had tried to describe his love, to conjure up an image of his love, to know for certain that he loved; he would have found the task quite difficult--words and images do not suffice for a truth that includes, but spans, life's particulars. Love is strongly felt but, consciously, rarely explicit. Only now and then might the full realization of such truth penetrate our immediate perceptions. Usually it accumulates, like sand in an hourglass, and we know each grain; only God sees the whole.

Death is easier to eulogize because its contradictions are more apparent. Death is a single act in time that opens to endlessness. Death induces the greatest fear among humans, yet this very fear brings humans together, briefly, into the unity of love. Belknap feared death, and thus hoped to be asleep or otherwise unconscious at death. Yet Sam's death was an experience of love for Belknap--sure evidence that death is an instrument of love, one of those few temporal agencies of truth that span culture and the immediate.

Jeremy Belknap lived a full life. He formed images of society that could never be real. He battled his body for impossible victory. He felt truth in Nature that

required confirmation by the senses. He told people to have personal knowledge then told them what to believe. He believed in a liberty where freedom is subordinate to order. He lived as a part of eighteenth-century culture, but ever so often Belknap the human peeks through the tones and shades of time. There, in black and white, are Hope, Faith, Fear, Death, and Love. In love Belknap entered the world, in love he left it. Love created and killed him. Love gave meaning to his existence. Love is the key to unraveling his past. Love alone reveals Jeremy Belknap, helps us understand him, makes sense out of his life, so that we may know him, and hence, ourselves.

CHAPTER NOTES

1. "Motto for My Family Arms," 1791, in MHS.
2. Belknap to Hazard, 4/1/80, CMHS, ser. 5, vol. 3, 49.
3. A Sermon Preached at the Installation of the Rev. Jedidiah Morse, April 30, 1789, 21; A Sermon Delivered Before the Convention of the Clergy of Massachusetts, In Boston, May 26, 1796, (Boston: Samuel Hall, 1796), 25-26.
4. Belknap to Hazard, 3/3/84, CMHS, ser. 5, vol. 2, 313-314.
5. A Sermon Preached at the Installation of the Rev. Jedidiah Morse, 19.
6. History of New Hampshire, 2:32.
7. CMHS, ser. 5, vol. 2, 395.
8. Belknap to Hazard, 11/27/84, Hazard to Belknap, 12/18/84, CMHS, ser. 5, vol. 2, 409, 411.
9. Belknap to Joseph Belknap, Jr., 8/18/89, NHMSS.

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