PHILADELPHIA PROTESTANTISM REACTS TO SOCIAL REFORM MOVEMENTS BEFORE THE CIVIL WAR

By ELIZABETH M. GEFFEN*

WE HAVE a saying in Philadelphia that is considered highly amusing, at least by Philadelphians. We say, and we mean to be funny:

The Baptists and the Methodists convert.
The Presbyterians educate.
The Episcopalians see that you meet the right people.

Everyone in Philadelphia, of course, wants to meet the right people. Some, perhaps, even cherish dreams of one day being admitted to good standing within the sacred circle. To qualify for membership in the period 1825-1860, a certain few minimum requirements had to be observed. Certain things were simply not done. The best people did not:

Live at Sixth and Lombard Streets
Speak any language but English.
Consort with Papists or infidels.
Join a labor union.
Discuss abolitionism.
Vote for Andrew Jackson.

The trouble was, however, that more and more people were doing all of these things, and to say that the best people viewed with alarm would be to miss the point. The best people decided to do something about it. Philadelphia Protestants of every denomination were called upon to help the best people do the Lord’s work in the Lord’s way, through the churches and under the direction of the clergy.

Arguments of the chicken-or-the-egg category are as unprofit-

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while in discussing the dynamics of religion as they are in discussing the poultry business. Nothing very worthwhile would be gained by debating whether Philadelphia Protestantism determined Philadelphia's political, economic, social, and intellectual history, or whether as a contrary proposition, any one or all of these forces determined the nature of Philadelphia Protestantism. The interaction of all of these forces throughout our history is an obvious fact. Philadelphia Protestantism both acted upon and was acted upon by its total physical and cultural environment, and this went beyond the limits of Philadelphia, to Pennsylvania, to the United States, and to the whole Western European cultural stream. At the same time, while the large view is vital to understanding, of unique importance in the history of Philadelphia was its specific location, approximately halfway between the Northern and Southern extremes of the United States.

To further "explicate" the title of this paper—using a word very popular with the pre-Civil War clergy—it should be noted that included within the definition of "Protestant" have been all those Christian denominations not specifically Roman Catholic. (I hasten to add that I am well aware that any resemblance between this classification and that of the National Council of Churches is nonexistent.) In 1825 there were 12 non-Roman Catholic Christian denominations in Philadelphia, with a total of approximately 50 congregations; the number is only approximate because the Friends did not officially report their statistics in the City Directory that year, presumably because of the schism brewing. The leading denomination in number of churches was the Presbyterian, with 13. By 1860, there were at least 29 separate Protestant groups, with a total of 294 churches. Presbyterians of one sort or another (Old School, New School, Reformed, United, Colored) still led, with 72 churches. (It is an interesting coincidence that Presbyterianism, midway between Episcopalianism and Congregationalism in church polity, and appealing most strongly to the middle class, was strongest in the Middle Atlantic states.) These statistics are obviously of limited significance without a knowledge of how many active members there were in each congregation, but it is futile to try to obtain these figures for pur-

1 Philadelphia City Directory. 1825. Not including Quakers, there were 43.  
2 Philadelphia City Directory. 1860.
poses of comparison, since each church kept its own figures by rules known only to itself, and sometimes they kept no statistics at all.

I have tried to examine the reaction of Philadelphia Protestantism to social reform movements, included among which would be organized efforts to achieve peace, temperance, women's rights, the abolition of slavery, prison reform, etc., in the period 1825-1860. These dates mark off, in a general way, a period sometimes called the Age of Jackson, the Age of the Common Man, or the Age of Freedom's Ferment. The point is that everyone living both then and now seems to agree that something was going on during those years that was marvelously different from anything that had ever gone on before or since. For instance, the Rev. George B. Ide, pastor of the First Baptist Church, declared: “The aspects of the present time demonstrate that we live in a most important period of the world—a period which will send down its influence to coming ages, and shape, for good or for evil, the destinies of unborn generations.” The Rev. Cornelius C. Cuyler, pastor of the Second Presbyterian Church, believed that “A new spirit has been awakened in the church. A change, scarcely less great and marked, than that which has been wrought in the political world. . . . In such a day as this, even cowards should fight, and sluggards work.” He sounded the call to arms. “And shall that portion of the Zion of God, to which we belong, sleep on its post at such a time as this?” The sentiments of the time are reminiscent, in short, of the statement Adam is said to have made to Eve as they left the Garden of Eden: “The next few years are going to require considerable readjustment.”

It is easy to locate Philadelphia on the map and not especially difficult to list a reasonable number of social reform movements. Trying to discern the voice of Philadelphia Protestantism is quite another matter. In the first place, there is no one voice, but a Tower of Babel. The various denominations are officially organized at various levels. The Protestant Episcopal Church has a complete

\footnote{George B. Ide, The Ministry demanded by the Present Crisis (Philadelphia, 1845), 11.}

\footnote{Cornelius C. Cuyler, The Beauty and Excellency of the Church, the foundation of her influence on the world. Preached . . . 28th of October, 1835 . . . (N.p., n.d.), 15.}
hierarchy, with the local parish under the direction of a priest, the
Diocese under a bishop, the national organization headed by the
Presiding Bishop. At the other extreme of organization are the
Baptists, with their congregational polity in which the individual
church retains complete sovereignty, although the Baptists too
meet in larger Associations and Conventions. Midway are the
Presbyterians, organized in Sessions, Presbyteries, Synods, and
General Assembly, in a structure closely resembling that of the
American government. At every level of all denominations there
are constituted bodies, meeting regularly and adopting resolutions,
all of which the historian must read, for they are supposed to rep-
resent the consensus of their respective groups. Certainly, how-
ever, anyone who has ever attended a meeting—and what Ameri-
can has been able to avoid it—must know that resolutions often
represent the suppression of the politically inept majority by the
politically adept minority. Minutes often conceal rather than reveal
what went on at the meeting. Their most deplorable limitation is
that they are dehydrated, bloodless, and often downright dull.

Outside of the committee rooms—in “real life,” so to speak—
are both clergy and laity, working in their respective spheres, writ-
ing, talking, getting their views published, making friends and in-
fluencing people. All are part of Philadelphia Protestantism. Ob-
vously, the written record is largely clerical, for the majority of
laymen are mute, if not inglorious, Miltons. What did all these
good people do about social reform movements? Briefly, they
worked for the triumph of virtue and the defeat of sin. Why? Be-
cause they loved virtue and hated sin. This they all agreed upon,
but they disagreed about practically everything else. In fact, they
could not even agree on what virtue and sin were when it came
right down to it. Protestants are, by definition, the otherwise-
minded. Every Protestant constitutes a majority of one. So the
historian is reduced to a hopeless task. The pattern he sees will al-
most certainly turn out to resemble closely the one he had in his
head when he started. One dutifully collects all available facts and
then prays for a modicum of common sense and imagination.

Philadelphia Protestantism, like every other organism, had a
fundamental obligation to itself, namely, survival, and it inevitably
acted in response to that basic necessity. It believed, fundamen-
tally, that a house divided against itself cannot stand, so it at-
ALBERT BARNES

From an original painting by John Neagle in the Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia.

Courtesy of the Presbyterian Historical Society
tempted to prevent division by suppressing divisive factors. It correctly assessed the divisive potential of the slavery issue, and it tried to keep it down by keeping it out of the pulpit. Very few clergymen questioned the wisdom of this decision. The Rev. Albert Barnes, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, did take a stand, usually privately, in favor of gradual emancipation, but he felt that any topic "except the cross of Christ" might be too frequently introduced into the pulpit. In 1846 he wrote a book, An Inquiry into the Scriptural Views of Slavery, which thoroughly demolished the Southern pro-slavery arguments based on the Bible, and in this volume he explained his reluctance to preach about slavery. "Slavery, though a great evil, is not the only evil in the land." Besides, there was no slavery in Philadelphia, and "we should assail in preaching . . . those [evils] which are near and not those which are remote." The pastor's duty was to ask his people to forsake "their own sins" rather than "judge of others who are living in wickedness." To this sentiment most of Philadelphia Protestantism chorused "Amen."

An outstanding exception to the general silence of the Philadelphia pulpit on the subject of slavery was the Unitarian pastor, Dr. William Henry Furness. Furness preached constantly against slavery, on every possible occasion, from 1839 through the Civil War, but he had only one congregation and it was Unitarian at that, and even within that exotic fold there was an outraged minority which tried its best to oust him. Furness triumphed. Less fortunate was young Dr. Dudley A. Tyng, rector of the Episcopal Church of the Epiphany, who in 1856 was forced by his vestry to resign because he protested from his pulpit against Preston Brooks's attack on Charles Sumner.

Curiously, Barnes was able to publish another book, The Church...
and Slavery, the following year and get away with it, though he struck out forcefully against slavery:

Public sentiment controls our land. . . . The present is eminently a time when the views of every man on the subject of slavery should be uttered in unambiguous tones. There has never been but one thing that has perilled the existence of the American Union; that one thing is slavery.9

Barnes drove home his major point:

I believe that the religion which I profess is opposed in its whole spirit and tendency to slavery; that its fair and legitimate application would remove the last remnants of it from the world. . . . It is probable that slavery could not be sustained in this land if it were not for the countenance, direct and indirect, of the churches.10

The explanation is clear. As long as the clergy kept silent on the subject in the pulpit or restricted themselves to pious generalities, no harm was done. But Barnes had been right in 1846, when he had declared that

there is a current setting against slavery, which nothing can resist. . . . The spirit of the age, the settled principles of liberty; the advances in intelligence and in benevolent feeling, all are against the system, and it cannot survive the shock when all these are fully arrayed against it.11

Protestantism tried to resist the spirit of the age, and even as Barnes spoke the Methodists and Baptists had already split into Northern and Southern fragments, while the Presbyterians were to subdivide further on the eve of the Civil War.12

The fact is that in the slavery controversy Philadelphia was in an especially difficult spot. Lying halfway between the North and South, the city provided a meeting-place for the increasingly divergent sectional forces. By virtue of its position as a port of entry from the Atlantic Ocean, it also served as a mid-point between Europe and the American West. Many New Englanders, many

10 Ibid., 10-11, 28.
11 Barnes, An Inquiry into the Scriptural Views, 380.
12 The Methodists divided, North and South, in 1844; the Baptists in 1845; the New School Presbyterians in 1857; the Old School Presbyterians in 1861.
Southerners, many Europeans, and many boys from 'way out yonder, met each other in church in Philadelphia. Inevitably they produced an effect upon what was said and done in those churches. Many outlanders, as a matter of fact, occupied the pulpits. The Unitarian Dr. Furness, born and bred in Massachusetts and educated at Harvard, had facing him in his congregation the first time he got up to preach about slavery Pierce Butler, grandson of the South Carolinian patriot of the same name and possessor of several hundred slaves on the Georgia plantations from which he drew his considerable fortune. Not all New Englanders in the pulpits of Philadelphia were lucky enough to have parishioners as rich as Butler, but they did have many of Southern birth or ancestry, and they had even more Northern merchants who made their living by manufacturing and selling cotton textiles or supplying Southern customers with their manufactured goods.

The Baptists, with their stronghold in the South, had many Southern clergy in Philadelphia pulpits, and these pastors understandably had limited enthusiasm for the abolition cause. At least one of them, Poindexter Henson of Virginia, who came to the Broad Street Baptist Church in 1860, remained loyal to the Union and stayed in Philadelphia after the Civil War began. Many others returned south. Three such were William T. Brantly, born in North Carolina, Joseph H. Cuthbert of South Carolina, and Albert T. Spalding of Georgia. It is reported that one of their Philadelphia colleagues, the Rev. J. Hyatt Smith, shouted from the pulpit after their departure: “Spalding has gone, Cuthbert has gone, Brantly has gone! Praise God from whom all blessings flow!”

Philadelphia’s geographic position as the first large city north of the Mason and Dixon Line, together with the fact that Philadelphia had begun gradual emancipation by law in 1780, made her the refuge sought by many fugitive slaves. Most of them were des-

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stitute, illiterate, wholly untrained for urban living. As they huddled together in the already predominantly Negro area centered at Sixth and Lombard Streets, they rapidly reduced that neighborhood to slum condition. The immediate reaction of many white Philadelphia Protestants was to move out as quickly as possible, and the normal expansion of the city westward and northward was thus accelerated. When they did not or could not move away, the white Protestants had to develop some workable biracial system for the operation of their churches, for the Negroes were wholeheartedly and enthusiastically Protestant. For over a hundred years, individual Philadelphia Negroes had been permitted to attend services in white churches, but by the end of the eighteenth century the accommodation of the relatively few in Philadelphia had developed into a full scale social problem involving thousands.

When the American Colonization Society was organized in 1817, many clergymen hailed joyfully this possible way out of their difficulties. The Rev. William Henry Ruffner, pastor of the Seventh Presbyterian Church, as late as 1852 preached glowingly about the society’s furthering of God’s plan to send “her long exiled sons” back to Africa, “like Jacob coming out of Padan-Aram, all laden with riches and hope.” He noted also, in a moment of inspired candor, that the society’s program “so beautifully solves” the “perplexing problem” of securing “the desirable separation of white and coloured races” while freeing the Negro. Philadelphia’s Negroes, however, with their brethren elsewhere, had long since rejected the society’s invitation to exile from their native land.

With many variations in detail and allowing for personality differences in individual cases, the generally accepted solution of the biracial problem in Philadelphia Protestantism was segrega-
Negroes were asked to sit in special galleries and some of them did, though many more, like Absolom Jones and Richard Allen, reacted otherwise. Jones left the Methodist denomination completely, joined the Episcopalians, and organized the First African Church of St. Thomas in 1794. Allen in 1796 established the Bethel Methodist Church, from which by 1816 developed a new denomination, the African Methodist Episcopal Church, of which Allen became the first Bishop.

Philadelphia Negro Protestantism grew quickly. It was in fact, according to the Negro sociologist W. E. B. DuBois, "the peculiar and characteristic product of the transplanted African," preserving many tribal functions—religious activity, social authority, general guidance and coordination—and many family functions—the center of social life, a news bureau, intelligence center, amusement center. Restricted in other forms of normal group activity—political, economic, and social—Negroes found in religion the only sphere in which they could freely and fully develop their talents. By 1815 there were more Negro Methodists (1,371) than white (1,208). By 1838 there were sixteen Negro churches in the city, with a total membership of approximately 4,000, owning church property valued at $114,000.

Negro Protestant contacts with their white brethren have produced many anecdotes. The Rev. Thomas Brainerd, pastor of the Third Presbyterian Church, had as neighbors in a small church behind his house a colored Methodist congregation of what he called the "more demonstrative type." After a boisterous meeting one night Brainerd commented to one of the members, "You have made a great deal of noise here tonight," and the retort was, "Better make it here than in hell." On another occasion Brainerd went to get a pair of razors that a Negro barber was "setting" for him. While the barber wrapped the package, Brainerd chatted with him and said among other things that the colored people should make a lot of money and then everyone would respect them; whereupon the barber doubled his price, telling Brainerd that he

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22 Pendleton, "Slavery and the Evangelical Churches," 95.
23 DuBois, *Philadelphia Negro*, 200. Methodist, 8; Baptist, 4; Presbyterian, 2; Episcopal, 1; Lutheran, 1.
would take his advice, beginning with him.™ Although a saving sense of humour and a genuine mutual respect often sweetened the situation, white superiority was stoutly upheld by the white churches of Philadelphia. It is reported that the mother of Bishop Potter of the Episcopal Diocese of Pennsylvania once rebuked him for being unduly friendly with a Negro, saying, "Remember Alonzo, everyone in his proper position." The Negro's position was generally conceded not to be side by side with white Philadelphia Protestants.

The Negroes themselves entered into the work of social reform. In 1809, for example, the leading Negro churches formed a Society for Suppressing Vice and Immorality.™ They were also ardent abolitionists, mostly of the Garrisonian camp.™ Most of the twenty-five subscribers to the first issue of the Liberator were Negroes, and it will be remembered that they were especially active in the organization of the American Anti-Slavery Society. The committee which drew up the Declaration of Intentions of that Society in 1934 met in the Philadelphia home of the Negro Frederick A. Henton. The document bore the signatures of three Negroes, and four Negroes served on the first Board of Managers of the Society. When the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society was formed, their first presiding officer was Dr. James McCrummel, a Negro dentist of Philadelphia. Philadelphia Negroes Robert Purvis and William Still, outstanding among many, ran with tremendous effectiveness the Underground Railroad.

In its attitude toward social reform in general, white Philadelphia Protestantism was overwhelmingly conservative, relying on "that inscrutable providence of God, whose march through the centuries is apparently slow but with unerring tread and in the right direction."™ The church preferred to concentrate on the individual rather than on society as a whole, stressing the need

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™ DuBois, Philadelphia Negro, 199.
™ William Still, The Underground Rail Road (Philadelphia, 1872) is an excellent account of this organization.
for personal holiness and the search for personal salvation, from which, it believed, all else must and would inevitably flow. The Truth to be learned was the Christian Gospel; instruction was the prerogative of the clergy. As a vested interest group the clergy quite naturally suspected the virtue of what the Baptist pastor, George Ide, called "the deranging hand of innovation," for as far as Mr. Ide was concerned, "Certain we are, that no new truths remain to be discovered." Unfortunately for the peace of mind of the conservative clergy, however, the bulk of the American population seemed to disagree. The Episcopal Bishop of Pennsylvania, Alonzo Potter, put it this way in his textbook, *Political Economy*, published in 1840:

Of the disadvantages incident to a popular government, perhaps the most serious is that untiring spirit of change which is apt to possess the people. . . . Whoever pants for office finds his account here in evoking the spirit of discontent.

The political victories of Jacksonian Democrats greatly depressed the spirits of the clergy.

There were other viewpoints, however, even among the clergy, for try though they would and did, they were not only in the Jacksonian world but also of it. Thus the Rev. Albert Barnes, one of the greatest of Philadelphia's pre-Civil War clergymen, believed that "new truths would be stricken out from age to age by the conflict of mind with mind; and that the world would be thus kept from the evils of stagnation and inaction," just as "the waters of the ocean, restlessly heaved, are kept pure by the unceasing agitation." Specifically, Barnes declared:

It is not enough that principles in regard to [great questions] are once settled and determined. . . . In each succeeding generation, and almost in each year, these subjects will be re-examined, and these grave questions come again for decision before the people.

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31 Ibid., 51.
In 1838, speaking at Amherst College, Barnes anticipated the Social Gospel movement, for to him it was “an elementary and a leading principle . . . that all the miseries of men should be alleviated and will be alleviated by the prevalence of the Gospel of Christ.” All men should devote themselves to “augmenting human happiness; in removing the evils of cruel laws, and degrading rites, and bloody institutions; of ignorance, and superstition, and pollution throughout the entire world.” Barnes enthusiastically welcomed modern science, for it “had a tendency to elevate the mass of men. . . . True religion prompts to investigation; invites and encourages us to prove all things.” Many of the clergy, including many alumni of Princeton Theological Seminary, proved only too well that Professor Charles Hodge of that institution was right when he proudly boasted, “I am not afraid to say a new idea never originated in this seminary.” At the same time it should be remembered that Barnes was also one of Princeton’s alumni.

The itch for power is an old disease, and the clergy suffered extensively from it. Some had political ambitions. According to the Rev. Mr. Ide, “The eager and intractable spirit that is now abroad, disdaining all beaten paths, seeks for itself new systems of belief, and new modes of operation.” Chaos would result unless someone took control. Mr. Ide’s remedy was a simple one. “The peculiar excitability of the times requires a very firm and powerful ministry.” As Barnes put it, “Religion is the most powerful principle that governs man, and he who has control of the conscience has the control of the state.” Barnes reminded his flock, quoting Romans XIII, 1-7, that Government is instituted by God, submission to the government and to law is duty to God, while resistance to laws, except for conscience, is resistance against God, and a sin against Him.

Though church and state cannot be legally married in the United

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Albert Barnes, _The Choice of a Profession_ . . . (Amherst, 1838), 29.

Albert Barnes, _The Progress and Tenderness of Science_ . . . (Philadelphia, 1840), 21, 23.

Edward Bradford Davis, _Albert Barnes—1798-1870_ . . . (University Microfilms, Xerox, 1962), 64.

Ide, _The Ministry demanded_, 44.

Albert Barnes, _The Casting Down of Thrones_ . . . (Philadelphia, [1848]), 19.

States, the Protestant churches and the American government have certainly from the beginning of our history been living together in what has been described as "a less complicated arrangement." The church was prepared to do its job. As the Executive Committee of the Home Mission Society stated quite frankly, "The Gospel is the most economical police on earth." On the other hand, the government was expected to lend a helping hand to the church by favorable legislation. The clergy were skillful lobbyists. Petitions flooded the government at all levels, demanding temperance laws, laws to protect the Sabbath, laws to outlaw profanity, dancing, the theatre. The clergy were masters of mob psychology and used the techniques of revivalism with stunning force, threatening the tortures of Hell for those who did not yield to clerical guidance. Many of the clergy were talented actors and relished tearing a passion to tatters. They worked on a highly excitable people, who, as one foreign observer noted, ran rapidly to extremes, like their climate. It might be hot or cold, but when it was hot it burned and when it was cold it froze. Thus, for Barnes, all alcoholic beverages were "liquid fire and distilled damnation." If the government did not pass Sabbath laws, Barnes warned that Sunday would turn into "a day of riot and disorder, a Saturnalia, occurring more than fifty times in the year, when Rome, in the most vigorous days of her virtue could scarcely survive the effects of one."

In this Romantic age, nothing was enjoyed more than a good cry, and with no motion pictures or television, the church supplied a great emotional need. Many observers noted with astonishment the extraordinary tendency of staid Philadelphia Protestants to burst into tears in church, a propensity interpreted as a sign of particular virtuousness. Of one particularly successful General Assembly of the Presbyterians it was said:

There was over the meeting a very subdued and tender spirit. All unused to tears, I never saw so many men

41 Andrew Reed and James Matheson, A Narrative of the Visit to the American Churches, by the Deputation from the Congregational Union of England and Wales (London, 1835), 11, 281.
43 Davis, Albert Barnes, 362.
weeping before. We enjoyed much; and it was an evidence of what might have been enjoyed in more auspicious circumstances.44

One wonders, of course, how much more auspicious any circumstances could be than those provided by a General Assembly of the Presbyterians.

The Episcopal Bishop William White regarded "'with no favor stimulating methods' and always spoke of the devil as 'that personage,'"45 but this, according to the historian Addison, was admittedly "a cool type of Christianity."46 More typical was the Rev. James Patterson, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in the Northern Liberties, who "abhorrered, probably more than he did anything else, except sin, a ministry where the aim was cold argumentation" and "made it his primary object to produce excitement, and to save the souls of men from death."47 The road to salvation was bathed in tears, and small wonder, with preachers like Barnes mournfully warning: "You will die—all, all die. You will die soon. You have but a few more plans to form and execute, or more probably, to leave half-executed or but just commenced—before you will die—inevitably die."48 And then Barnes complained about "the difficulty of blending religion with cheerfulness . . . the difficulty, when religion is the great purpose of life, of conveying to others . . . the impression that religion makes a man happy."49

While many of the clergy stormed about what Brantly called "that nauseating temperature in the religion of Christ, styled lukewarmness,"50 in the 1840's the pot boiled over. A growing flood of European immigrants was pouring through the port of Philadelphia. Many of the newcomers were non-English-speaking, which was bad enough. But worse yet, in Protestant opinion, was the

44 Reed and Matheson, Narrative, I, 74.
EZRA STILES ELY

Copy of an engraving by J. B. Sartain.

Courtesy of the Presbyterian Historical Society
fact that increasing thousands of them were Roman Catholic. Anti-Catholicism was an old tradition in Philadelphia, and the Protestant clergy felt that this was certainly no time to advocate change. In 1842 the militant American Protestant Association was formed, and ninety-four clergymen, representing twelve denominations, signed its constitution, pledged to bring unceasingly before their congregations the awful dangers of Popery. Philadelphia pulpits took up the cause with wild enthusiasm, and the Native American political party happily accepted their assistance. The city rushed toward the inevitable, and by 1844 Philadelphia mobs were burning down Catholic churches as similarly incited mobs were doing elsewhere.

The Rev. Ezra Stiles Ely, while pastor of the Third Presbyterian Church in 1827, had offered a different suggestion for the preservation of Protestant control of the nation, when he called for a Christian party in politics. By “Christian” he of course meant “Protestant.” If only the five major denominations would unite, said Ely, they could between them control all elections and see that none but Christians (Protestants) got into office. Unfortunately for his purpose, however, he had openly contravened an American shibboleth, separation of church and state. His sermon provoked an uproar of protest, though he was only suggesting an organized, business-like approach to what was already being sought less effectively, more or less unofficially. Perhaps Ely’s real offense was that he was a Jacksonian.

The relationship between Protestantism and capitalism has been thoroughly examined by experts, and a remarkably high degree of correlation and cooperation between the two has been established. Because of the politically enforced separation of

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church and state, Philadelphia churches had to depend upon voluntary contributions and thus were forced to come to terms with the wealthy members of their congregations. The nature of this bondage was kept a gentleman's agreement, which neither party mentioned unless forced to. At the same time, both clergy and laity absorbed as a part of their American heritage a healthy respect and a sometimes violent love for money. The only question ever seriously asked about the accumulation of wealth was how to do it. Young gentlemen of the upper classes learned this in colleges, where, in their senior year, they took a capstone course variously called moral philosophy, moral science, political economy, or a variety of other names. This course was usually taught by the president of the college, and of 288 pre-Civil War college presidents, 262 were ordained ministers, 156 of them Calvinists. Textbooks were also commonly supplied by clergymen, the most popular being the *Elements of Political Economy*, written by the Rev. Dr. Francis Wayland, Baptist clergyman and president of Brown University. The word given the young on “How to Succeed in Business” has been aptly summed up by May as “clerical laissez faire.”

At Philadelphia’s University of Pennsylvania, which had been the only non-sectarian colonial college, eight of the nine pre-Civil War provosts were clergymen. The single layman, Henry Vethake, wrote a textbook called *Principles of Political Economy* in 1838, which summed up the ideas given in his lectures on political economy since 1822. The scientific quality of Vethake’s theories can be illustrated by a few quotations:

... a people who are so extravagant in their expectations of the benefits to be derived from mere political change, as to expect from it any sudden and extraordinary elevation in the condition of the labouring and poorer classes of society, or who conceive that the only reason why many are poor is that a few are rich, are but ill prepared for performing the function of self-government.

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60 Ibid., 118.
Shew me a people who estimate highly the advantages of religion, of morals, and of education, and . . . I will shew you a people among whom wages are high.61

No one will deny that the existence of all combinations of the nature of trades' union is an evil, of no little magnitude. . . .62

Bishop Potter also supplied a textbook, Political Economy, written in 1840 in response to the labor disturbances during the Panic of 1837. Not surprisingly, Potter attacked the trade unions, which he believed were bound to hurt their members because they disregarded the laws of nature, "which are nothing less than laws of God."63

No body of men is more dangerous than one raised above the mass of those engaged in similar pursuits, and constantly busied in inspiring jealousy and promoting agitation. . . . It is worthy of notice, that their leaders are generally from abroad.64

The one sour note in the Philadelphia Protestant harmony with capitalism was that struck by Stephen Colwell, who published in 1852 a treatise whose title is self-explanatory: New Themes for the Protestant Clergy: Creeds without Charity, Theology without Humanity, and Protestantism without Christianity.65 Philadelphia Protestantism was stunned, pained, outraged, and infuriated. Colwell had published anonymously, and the faithful immediately assumed that he was a Unitarian (he was definitely soft on socialism), but to the majority's dismay he turned out to be a pillar of Presbyterianism. It is somewhat disenchanting to know that he was also a wealthy iron manufacturer and that what he really wanted was a protective tariff.

Philadelphia Protestant clergymen knew why they were gen-

61 Ibid., 310.
62 Ibid., 326.
63 Potter, Political Economy, 282.
64 Ibid., 263.
65 Stephen Colwell, New Themes for the Protestant Clergy . . . (Philadelphia, 1852). Outstanding in the controversy which followed were S. A. Allbone, New Themes Condemned . . . (Philadelphia, 1853), and W. H. Ruffer, Charity and the Clergy . . . (Philadelphia, 1853), the latter a friendly work. The controversy also raged in the denominational newspapers and periodicals.
crally disturbed by the social reform movements of the pre-Civil War period. As the Rev. Mr. Ide saw it:

A busy and enterprising age, like our own, is naturally given to strong excitement. . . . Men feel rather than think, and act rather than reason. They evince a morbid restlessness, an impatience of calm investigation, and of all tranquil movements. . . . There is nothing settled, stable, and abiding. All is bustle, fluctuation, and feverish inquietude.\(^6^6\)

In summary, however, what really upset Mr. Ide was that “the rampant spirit of Infidelity . . . is careering over the length and breadth of the land.”\(^6^7\) The Rev. Dr. Stephen H. Tyng, rector of St. Paul’s Protestant Episcopal Church, spoke for Philadelphia Protestantism when he declared that “the main restraint upon the depravity of man, . . . the chief guardian of the peace of society,” is religion, for “it is the selfish fear of man, which allows men to live in mutual security and peace,” not only fear of human law but fear of the wrath of God.\(^6^8\)

Philadelphia Protestants had no objections to social reform movements as such. In fact, they rather enjoyed the excitement. What they insisted upon was that they be controlled by the right people, that is, persons confirmed in the Protestant faith, operating under the control of the clergy, as it was in the beginning and always had been, in Philadelphia.

\(^{66}\) Ide, The Ministry demanded, 44-45.
\(^{67}\) Ibid., 57.