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The College Street Congregational Church, Burlington, and Its First Pastor, 1860-82

Congregationalism, considering itself the main shield of Protestantism in Vermont, had feared the inroads of "Popery" since Father Jeremiah O'Callaghan had entered his Vermont mission field in 1830.

By T. D. SEYMOUR BASSETT

The significance of the history of a provincial church is not so much its pacemaking for its denomination as its reflection of the social and cultural climate of its town, region, and denomination in that region. The pace is not necessarily dramatic either, but is gradual, made as many react to the stimuli of wars, depressions, migrations into new environments, and the spread of new ideas and ways. The division that resulted in the creation of the College Street (or Third) Congregational Church by secessionists from the First Calvinistic Congregational Church in 1860 reflected personality conflicts, a degree of urbanization, and a measure of difference over the ideas and reforms of the day.

The early history of the College Street Congregational Church corresponded in many ways to the movement of religious liberalism recounted in William R. Hutchison's *The Modernist Impulse in American Protestantism*.¹ In the twenty-two-year tenure of the Rev. George Blagden Safford, its first pastor, the church liberalized its articles of faith, but would have liked to go farther than its fellow churches would accept. Its members professed and encouraged more freedoms for blacks and women than was usual in the parent church. They believed themselves fair to im-

migrants, but feared the effects of their Roman Catholicism. Like the evangelical Christians they professed to be, they wanted to save the whole town for Christ in their generation, but would save it without unseemly shouting, and in a Congregational pattern.

The purposes for which the embryo congregation called Safford in the summer of 1860 were to fill their pulpit, mend relations with the parent church, build the membership, and do one congregation's part in leading the city in the paths of righteousness. The new church also intended to take the lead in maintaining Protestant control of Burlington at a time when the Roman Catholic population of the city was expanding. But why did forty-five members of the largest Congregational church in Vermont swarm off to form a separate church only three blocks away?² Did they think that the leadership in the old church was not sufficiently flexible and aggressive? The reasons for the division will remain unclear, but included personal, social, and ideological elements.

Personalities must have played a large part. State Supreme Court Judge Milo L. Bennett led an abortive movement within the parent church in 1842-43 to remove the pastor, John K. Converse, who resigned in the fall of 1844 to become principal of the Burlington Female Seminary.³ The Converse family continued to fill its pew, but not everyone would let bygones be bygones. Were the Hickok and Buell families, prime contributors to the new church and accustomed to having their own way in their business life, thwarted from having it in their old church?⁴ The thirty-nine-month ministry of Spencer Marsh, 1856-60, also caused divisions in the old church. Although those who left were Marsh's supporters, they did not ask him, when he was forced to resign in 1860, to be their pastor. His career after he left the First Congregational Church pastorate suggests that the ministry was not his proper calling.⁵

Beyond personal tensions, which tend to multiply as a split widens, the seceders may have felt that two churches would be more lively and influential than one larger one. Two organizations might involve more volunteers in the daily work of the church — ladies to prepare church suppers, sew for missions, serve at soup kitchens, men to repair the equipment, and all members to take their turns teaching Sunday School and helping with the every-member canvass. One definite result, according to the historian of the parent church, was that both churches met their larger budgets more easily than the original church sometimes did.⁶

The division reflected the urbanization of Burlington. In the scheme of the Puritan village, one church was the binder of outlying farms and inlying shops; of district school, town meeting, and religio-patriotic rituals. By 1805 when the First Religious Society in the Town of Burlington was organized, half a dozen denominations were competing for the souls of



George Blagdon Safford served the College Street congregation for more than twenty years. After leaving Vermont he accepted positions as secretary of the American Foreign and Christian Union in New York City, and secretary of the Brooklyn Bureau of Charities. Courtesy of Church Street Congregational Church, Burlington, Vermont.

Vermonters and the concept that one church is enough for one town could no longer be realized.

Until 1851, however, when St. Johnsbury Congregationalists colonized a South Church on the Plain (11 Main Street, from 72 Main Street), no Vermont Protestant church had felt the need for a pair of any one brand in the same village. The Roman Catholics had set off St. Joseph's parish the year before for a special reason: to provide worship where Burlington

and Winooski French Canadians could feel at home with a priest who spoke their native tongue. In the many towns with more than one center, such as Rutland, Bennington, Brattleboro, Rockingham, Hartford, Randolph, and Newbury, the organization of two or more churches of the same denomination reflected the different villages in one town, and not the idea that all Christians of the same denomination need more than one place to worship in the same center. Only as a village felt itself approaching the urban threshold was this conceivable.

The steps in the 1860 division of the orthodox Congregationalists in Burlington are easily summarized.⁷ The Third Congregational Church began by organizing as a society to handle the business side of its religious affairs on July 21, 1860, at the house of Mrs. Eliza W. Buell. It was called "Third" because when the town church divided in 1810 both parts called themselves Congregational: "the First Congregational Society" (which became Unitarian) and "the First Calvinistic Congregational Church." To have called themselves "Second" the 1860 group would have ignored the Unitarians, whom they obviously still considered in the Congregational family, and with whom they continued to maintain good relations. With the grudging approval of its parent the seceders organized as a church on November 3. On December 26 they installed as pastor George Blagden Safford, who had been preaching since September to the congregation on the hard wooden benches of what became the Fletcher Free Library room of the courthouse.

On the recommendation of George F. Edmunds, a major contributor, recent three-term Speaker of the Vermont House and soon to be U.S. Senator, John D. Towle of Boston was chosen architect for the church building. Towle had designed Boston's Indiana Street house of worship (1847), the Shawmut Congregational near West Brookline Street (1852), and had just completed the \$35,000 Berkeley Street Congregational.⁸

G. Grenville Benedict, the new group's spokesman in the *Burlington Free Press*, explained the church's actions by pointing to the doubling of Burlington's population since 1840 and the need for more seating capacity than the old church's 1842 brick building at Cherry and White (now South Winooski) Streets could provide. The facts are that the old building could seat at least five hundred (the 1870 U.S. census enumerator said one thousand) for a resident membership of under three hundred, and an estimated average attendance of three hundred before the separation. The new congregation's building at College and Union streets had a 650-seat capacity (the same census enumerator guessed one thousand in 1870) for a membership well under one hundred, with the possibility of hosting university commencements.⁹ Here was ecclesiastical rivalry and missionary zeal.

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Construction of a house of worship began in the spring of 1863, on the site of the first town poorhouse (1824-36).¹⁰ The following winter teamsters were still snaking timbers out of the woods for the church's roof, according to a story in the *Burlington Clipper*.¹¹ The deacon in charge of construction complained of the slow pace and decided to crack the whip on the teamsters himself. That day they worked long hours, with



The College Street house of worship, constructed on the site of Burlington's first poorhouse, was dedicated on February 27, 1865. Courtesy of Special Collections, University of Vermont Library.

cold beans and brown bread for dinner. The snow was deep and the oxen ornery. Cold, tired, and hungry, they were approaching the road as the winter light faded, when the off ox fell, and the sled slipped into the ditch. The teamster, who had bitten his lip all day, let loose a flood of profanity: "G...d... that red ox!" The deacon, whose Bible told him to "swear not at all," no matter what the provocation, could not restrain himself and chimed in, "Yes, and the gray one too."

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The basement "chapel" was first used January 13, 1865, and the Rev. E. N. Kirk of Boston, who had preached Safford's installation sermon, returned to preach at the dedication on February 27, 1865. Safford moved into the new parsonage on Willard Street north of College (now the north corner of Bradley) in early May 1867. Eliza Buell and her brother, Henry Hickok, were principal contributors to the parsonage and the church edifice, and Maria Buell Hickok, Henry's wife and Eliza's daughter, was a principal contributor to the organ, installed late in 1865 and used until 1886. The steeple clock and bell were added in 1878. Lyman Austin, one of the carpenters who worked on the building, was sexton for twenty-two years.¹²

The new church building reflected contemporary urban taste, not the Puritan tradition. The members had chosen not to imitate the classical revival style of the parent but to build in "collegiate Gothic." Instead of the cold white of the colonial meetinghouse, warm, golden light filtered through narrow, "leather-colored" panes.¹³ The pastor manipulated the gas lights for evening services from behind the pulpit. With wood costing a high five dollars a cord, Lehigh or Lackawanna anthracite could heat the thousands of cubic feet under the high ceiling cheaper. The architecture and art combined to make a statement that nothing was too good for the Lord.

The decision to locate on College Street, half a mile from the campus of the University of Vermont, symbolized closeness to the university community. Of the original fifty-three members of the church (including eight who had not been members of the First Congregational), more than a quarter were in the families of university officers: President Calvin Pease, Treasurer Nathan Hill, Trustee Henry Hickok, Professors Matthew H. Buckham and Edward Hungerford, and former Professor George W. Benedict, whose son Grenville in 1865 became a lifetime trustee and Secretary of the Corporation. Participants socially connected with its officers, such as George Perkins Marsh and George F. Edmunds, strengthened the connection.

Was there an Erasmian, Renaissance tolerance about these academically oriented seceders? They seemed to have had more doubts about the orthodox theology both churches professed. George F. Edmunds, whose wife was a charter member, proposed to join in 1862 if the articles on Providence and predestination were not included as essential tests for membership. The church regretfully responded that it could not act independently of the Chittenden County Conference of Congregational Churches.

Nevertheless, after discussing the articles off and on for over a year, the church adopted a resolution, framed by Matthew H. Buckham, pro-

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fessor of Greek and English literature at the university, which recognized that human understanding of doctrine is inevitably imperfect and expressed in varied language. Therefore, candidates for membership need to assent to the articles in substance but not in explicit detail. Edmunds, unable to accept the slightly liberalized articles of 1864, joined the Episcopal church with his wife in 1870, after he moved to Washington as U.S. senator. In 1872 the church adopted a new form of covenant for new members, not mentioning Providence or predestination, but asserting that it neither modified nor abandoned the old Articles of Faith.¹⁴

Scarcely a word survives, beyond these meagre references to theology, in the sources for the history of the College Street Church about basic trends in the history of ideas in the United States during the period of Civil War and Reconstruction.

The name of Darwin did not enter the recorded discussion of members. George Henry Perkins, the professor of natural history at the University of Vermont and member of the College Street Church from his arrival in 1869, must have discussed Darwinism with his colleagues if not in his classes; he did not discuss it directly in his voluminous publications until 1895, although his "The Antiquity of Man," published in the student paper in May 1876, makes evolutionary assumptions.¹⁵ He seems to have taken Darwinian theory for granted from 1864, when he chose science over the ministry,¹⁶ or at least by 1869 when he completed his Ph.D. work at Yale. Perkins, lecturing "to a large and sympathetic crowd" before the Unity Club in January, 1895, on "the relation of theories of evolution to religious belief," started by guessing that "none of the existing theories will be finally accepted," embraced the evolutionary model, and concluded with a paean of praise for progress.¹⁷ Perkins agreed with Vermont Congregational ministers John B. Perry (in Swanton, 1855-65) and George F. Wright (in Bakersfield, 1862-72), who, as Christian Darwinists, had no trouble reconciling evolution with "Genesis." Perry probably attended the College Street Church in the spring of 1869 while he lectured on natural science at the university.¹⁸ Other church members left no known record of their reactions, although from their behavior one would suspect a belief in Christian Darwinism and a Social Darwinism tempered by moralism, rather than in special creation, predestination, and atonement.

In an increasingly pluralistic and secular society, members compartmentalized their religion, intending to maintain moral standards in civic affairs when they went to their business offices or to meetings of the dominant Republican Party. They won laws favoring their businesses while sure that in the new urban-industrial society free enterprise needed no laws in its favor. They were bulls during the economic boom to 1873, and in the next decade, shocked by the worst depression yet. While they

believed with Dwight L. Moody, shoe salesman turned evangelist, and steel magnate Andrew Carnegie that God gives money to those who earn it righteously, they felt constrained to spend at least part of it for civic improvements and benevolences.¹⁹

Members were also receptive to feminist and anti-slavery issues. The church provided for three deaconesses in 1874 and voiced no objections to the University of Vermont's admitting women in 1871. The Benedict family, owners of the *Burlington Free Press*, did not denounce John Brown's 1859 raid on Harper's Ferry. They devoted much space in the *Free Press* to the affair and concluded that Brown deserved respect.

If there were Democrats among church members, they were very quiet. Daniel Roberts had been a Democrat before the Free Soil movement, but joined the Republicans soon after their organization. Congregationalists identified Democrats with some of the backwoods poor, attracted by Andrew Jackson's coarse, militaristic, and Western stereotypes; traditional Episcopalians, "soft on slavocracy" like Bishop John Henry Hopkins; and Irish Roman Catholics.

In 1867, the church began a project to investigate "the moral and religious condition" of the Burlington community. In fact, it was part of a thinly veiled effort by Burlington evangelical Protestants to gather information needed to assert control over the city's growing Catholic population. As the evangelicals put it, their aim was "to bring a larger portion of our citizens under the influence of religious truth."²⁰ Edward A. Hungerford, superintendent of the Sunday school at College Street and from 1857 to 1862 a brilliant and difficult science professor at the university, was a prime mover in the project.²¹ Wealthy enough not to require employment, he had probably spent his leisure since leaving the university advising on the construction of the new church building. That completed, he turned his attention to other church concerns. He saw that Burlington's population was rapidly increasing. Many of the newcomers were unchurched Protestants. Many more were French Canadians, pouring in from rural Vermont and nearby Quebec, and finding work in Henry Hickok's and other lumber companies and other Protestant-run businesses. He believed that these newcomers could be persuaded through a concerted effort of evangelical Protestants to come to Protestant churches. The normal desire of immigrants to learn the ways of the people who run things, in order to get ahead, would win many to Protestantism. But if Protestants did not try to win these new arrivals, control of Burlington would soon pass to the Catholics.

Hungerford's project sought to find out where Burlingtonians went to church and who were the residents who did not go at all. He organized a Union Committee with teams from the Baptist, Congregational, and



Edward A. Hungerford, the College Street Church's Sunday school superintendent, led an effort by Burlington "evangelical" Protestants in 1867 to gather information needed to assert control over the city's growing Catholic population. Courtesy of Special Collections, University of Vermont Library.

Methodist churches and the Young Men's Christian Union²² to count attenders on a given Sunday, and then make a house-to-house canvass to list those who were not there. This list would be available to participating churches, to call on the stay-at-homes and welcome them to their services.²³ Hungerford probably paid the expenses of the undertaking. In 1859 he had married Maria, daughter of Eliza Hickok Buell, Henry Hickok's niece, and apparently acquired control of substantial Hickok and Buell money.

With Hungerford's enthusiasm and funds, the project was swiftly completed. His published report revealed that on March 3, 1867, 52.65 percent of the people going to church attended mass at St. Joseph's and St. Mary's. The rest were scattered among eight Protestant houses of worship, including 121 Methodists and Congregationalists in Winooski. In a canvassed Burlington city population, which they counted as just under

six thousand, 73.32 percent went to church sometimes; only 32.6 percent attended on the Sunday of the canvass, when it was fair and cold. Estimating the other variables — sick and infirm, out of town, preschool, aged, out-of-towners coming to city churches, those necessarily working, or attending another service that day — Hungerford concluded there were only 1,094 active, earnest Protestants in Burlington.

Having stated the figures, he proceeded to describe the adversary, Romanism. Roman Catholics themselves say that Protestantism is the enemy, he declared. They had banned Protestant worship in Vatican City; they were still the sixteenth century church that launched the Counter-Reformation. Don't think, he warned, that our "advancing civilization" or "the influence of our free institutions" has modified or weakened the Catholics' faith. Canvassers found little evidence to that effect. ". . . a vital Christianity [has] no power to assault and wound a body of dead forms," he stated²⁴ because it has been inactive, disorganized, while the Romans patiently organize and advance. "The long war of truth with error must . . . go on," he concluded (subscribing to the familiar fallacy that every conflict must end in the annihilation of one side), until either the Protestants or the Papists triumph. "We owe it to the thousands whom Providence has brought to our doors" to sow seed "in the heart of the Roman church, whose . . . growth shall burst the narrow confinements of hierarchal dogmatism, and open the way . . . to a purer and warmer gospel light."²⁵

The Union Committee, which had charge of the canvass, recommended establishing neighborhood prayer meetings and parish home mission committees to organize regular visiting. But from the outset it had disclaimed proselyting. They hoped the ladies would visit and that the Sunday Schools would attract.

Nevertheless, the progressive philosophy — if they know, they will care, and act to correct what they know is wrong — did not work to church Burlington's unchurched. On March 17, 1867, George Safford, who was chairman of the Union Committee, "preached earnestly in the morning on the visiting proposed through the parish," according to the diary of Katharine Pease Benedict; "in the afternoon, on Christian charity." Two weeks later, "Some trouble in the society. Mr. Safford preached on Christian unity, and the duty of suffering wrong."²⁶

Congregationalism, considering itself the main shield of Protestantism in Vermont, had feared the inroads of "Popery" since Father Jeremiah O'Callaghan had entered his Vermont mission field in 1830. Its stance was many-faceted and consistent. Congregationalists believed and affirmed that immigrants of any faith or none were welcome; they gave them jobs; helped them buy a lot or house for worship; provided a pest-

house if they arrived with cholera or smallpox; doled out poor relief, distributed free Bibles if they would accept them and could read them; taught literacy and other skills at night and Sunday afternoon schools; generally preached democracy while behaving paternalistically toward them. Some felt that the Irish and French should not be too quickly naturalized. Confidence that Puritan culture and especially congregational polity would ultimately prevail appeared in varying strengths. Although Congregationalists frequently quoted Pastor Robinson's confident farewell sermon, when the Pilgrims left Holland in 1620, that more Light would break forth in America from God's Holy Word, they could not conceive of its coming through Catholics, because Catholics belittled "the Word" of Scripture.²⁷

George Safford's Fast Day sermon in 1869 on "The Irrepressible Conflict" embodied these views. Safford started by pointing out the contrasting passages in Matthew 10:31 ("not peace but a sword") and 26:52 (they who take the sword will perish by it). Then he concentrated on the irrepressible conflict between Catholics (self-excluded, he said, from the Church Universal) and Protestants or, as he called them, "catholic christians." He warned that Romanism was powerful, in press and property, raiding the public treasury and disturbing Protestant worship with noisy parades. He recognized Catholic saints, distinguished between Catholics and their theology, explained away some errors improperly ascribed to Catholics as belonging to the age, and exhorted his hearers to be as faithful to their principles as the Catholics were to theirs.²⁸

We do not have copies of some 450 other sermons Safford must have preached at the College Street Church or elsewhere in Vermont before this Fast Day, from which we might determine the focus of his ministry. But for Safford to spend half his time on the Catholic menace, in a sermon intended as a public observance of what was wrong with contemporary life in Burlington is suggestive of that focus.

Safford not only went on public record for his congregation against the Catholics; members of his congregation took positive public action for the social welfare of the city to earn its continued support of Protestant organizations. During this generation, women, including some from the College Street Church, were prominent in the leadership of several private, Protestant-managed, welfare institutions: the Home for Destitute Children (1865), the Howard Relief Society, incorporating an earlier ladies' poor relief organization (1884), the Home for Aged Women (1866), the Burlington Cancer Relief Association (1886), the Adams Mission Home (1886), and the Home for Friendless Women (1890).²⁹

With the freshness of their calling, the members of the new College Street church worked hard, both in the good times of 1860-73 and the

subsequent depression. Their numbers tripled under Safford's pastorate but filled only a quarter of the seats, unless he was giving his popular series of talks to young men, or on other special occasions.³⁰

Because Protestants emphasized preaching, we can assume that parishioners compared the occupants of the Burlington Congregational pulpits. Preachers could not be credited, however, with membership increases, which flowed close to the rate of population growth among the city's Protestants. Even under Spencer Marsh, whose preaching did not satisfy the less literary among his hearers, an average of eight per year joined the First Congregational Church. His predecessor, John H. Worcester, whose rhetoric the historian of the church found wanting, harvested close to ten a year. Eldridge Mix, serving five years during the Civil War and postwar prosperity, logged a record of twelve a year, while Lewis O. Brastow, who arrived in 1873 and outlasted the depression and Safford, presided over the same rate of growth. These were additions only, not net figures after deducting deaths and dismissals to other churches in town or elsewhere. Their friendly rival across the ravine on College Street had a *net* gain of almost five a year (from fifty-three charter members to 160 in 1882) through good times and bad. Safford satisfied his congregation while the parent church had three pastors, all of whom left for broader service. One incident in the experience of young Edward Griffin, pastor of the First Church, shows a difference between the congregations. Griffin joined the Shakespeare Club soon after it was founded, but withdrew when two old women in his congregation protested against his thus sanctioning immoral stage plays. Members of the College Street Church voiced no such objection.³¹

Similarities between the congregations were much greater than their differences, however. The meeting to announce the results of the Union canvass of 1867 was held at the parent church, which contributed its quota to the steering committee and the volunteers. The choice of George Safford as presiding officer of the Union Committee's effort suggests that the spirit of the drive came from College Street. Both churches cooperated in the Moody mission of October 1877, jointly hosted the General Convention of the Congregational Ministers and Churches in Vermont in 1879, meeting at College Street, and sometimes held union services. After the high tension of the abnormal Civil War years, social relations between members of the two congregations seem to have been cordial. The habit of patronizing the tradesmen in one's own church, however, and the circle of parish activities, weakened the bonds of cooperation.

The life of a congregation is in its laity, but most churches do not accumulate or save records that reveal this life. The diary of Katherine Pease Benedict, wife of the *Free Press* editor and daughter of Calvin Pease

(1812-63), president of the University of Vermont (1855-61), gives us a glimpse. She went to church, week in, week out, rain or shine, unless she or someone else in the family was sick, or she was out of town. That meant preparing her Sunday School lesson Saturday evening, reading Bible commentaries, attending morning and afternoon services, teaching her Sunday School class in between, filling in at the organ or piano as needed, and going to special evening programs. She must have brought something to eat before or after Sunday School; she does not mention going home or elsewhere for a noon meal. There was communion the first Sunday afternoon of every other month, replacing the usual afternoon sermon. (The second service was shifted to evening in 1874, a decade after the old church shifted.) General attendance fluctuated with the weather and the sleighing. In pleasant weather the Benedict family walked down the hill from their campus home and back, but if the family sleighed down, and the snow thawed too much during the day, Katherine's husband would bring a carriage for the ride home.³² The horse sheds were south of the church building until taken down in the early 1900s.

Thanksgiving vied with Christmas as the principal family rite of the year. The Benedicts often attended the College Street church services or a union service in the morning, occasionally with relatives or guests from near or far. Mrs. Benedict did not mention anything special about Easter, April 21, 1867, except "Went to the Unitarian Easter celebration for the Sunday School in the evening." She freely attended union or special meetings in other Protestant churches, and treated the steady sprinkling of non-Congregational supply or exchange preachers evenhandedly. The family went to church after rising late on Christmas Day, a Wednesday in 1867, followed by dinner at George W. Benedict's, parties, trips to the train station with guests, and a visit to the Home for Destitute Children in the evening. Between the full devotion of Katherine Benedict and the indifference of the nominal Protestants Hungerford sought to redeem was the whole range of Laodicean partial observance.³³

The central importance of preaching is clear from Katherine Benedict's regularly mentioning and "grading" the minister of the day.³⁴ There was always variety. The pastor preached about half the time in 1867; twenty-two other ministers filled the pulpit, including four from "the old [parent] church" and four from among the eight ministers in the congregation. Because the Bible was the central authority to these Protestants, they needed trained seminarians to explain Scripture in terms of a critical study of the text.³⁵

Except for Safford's support of temperance and the private charitable institutions mentioned above, he was not an active social reformer. Instead he supported the October 1877 revival campaign of Dwight L. Moody

and singer Ira D. Sankey. Moody aimed to "point men [and women] . . . to Him who is mighty to save, and so fill up our churches, of all denominations." Continuing the union effort of 1867, Safford sat on the platform with Moody, along with the Methodist, Baptist, and First Congregational pastors, and participated in the four weeks of "the most remarkable series of meetings ever known in these parts," according to the *Burlington Free Press*. At a noonday prayer meeting at the Methodist house of worship, one participant after another got up to thank God for the assurance that he was a saved Christian. Finally Safford arose and with bowed head stated that he had never been able with any degree of assurance to say that. This did not please the meeting, and several went down to the Hotel Van Ness afterwards to protest to Moody. But Moody quietly replied, "He is the only honest man among you."³⁶

The momentum of the Moody meetings lasted until February 1878. A union committee of the pastor and two laymen from each participating church supervised weekday prayer meetings hosted by the Methodist Church, first three times a day, then daily at noon in the Concert Hall, and finally, before abandonment, a Sunday evening session. Safford chaired the committee meetings, with H. O. Wheeler from the College Street Church as secretary. In the face of dwindling support, Baptist pastor Wilcox proposed that the meetings continue as long as "indicated by the Providence of God." M. R. Tyler from the College Street Church successfully substituted the phrase, "until otherwise ordered."³⁷

The union mood of Moody, and before him Hungerford, broke down in an eruption of theological and political tension in 1879. "This is a time of active theological discussion," wrote Safford and nine other Congregational ministers in a "Protest" against the action of the Vermont Congregational Convention that year. They were protesting against the right of that convention to excommunicate ministers, or refuse their ordination or installation, if they repudiated "any substantial part" of the evangelical doctrines declared at Boston in 1865 and confirmed later at Oberlin, Ohio. The Protesters wanted to leave approval of ministers' beliefs to the regional associations, in which they, coming mainly from strong village churches in the Champlain Valley, had much influence. They did not want the state organization to decide who could be ministers in Vermont according to a rigid verbal creed, but wanted "the liberty of qualified assent."³⁸

Fifteen years later the hostility of rural Vermont Congregationalism against the modernism of the College Street Church, inherent in the Protest of 1879, emerged in the report on the state of religion to the convention by John M. Comstock of Chelsea. He wrote that he had asked "some brethren of wide experience" whether there were superfluous or un-

necessary Congregational churches in Vermont. After stating that three were "moribund," and two would do better as part of larger Methodist churches in the same towns, he came to Burlington's College Street Church. "Let its representatives present defend [its] . . . right to exist! . . . It requires more grace for a church to die than to have a name to live. . . ." While Comstock's remark probably veiled a feeling that after the resignation of Charles F. Carter as College Street pastor in the fall of 1893 the Church should have reunited with its parent, it carried an animus dating back at least to 1879.³⁹

Three years after the 1879 uproar, George Safford's resignation was read to an amazed congregation by the minister of the day, Lewis Brastow of the partner church. Most of the members were not prepared for it. The church sought to keep him; he explained that he had slowly become convinced that he ought to move on. The church council, called a month later, found "no adequate reasons other than personal ones" for his leaving.

The good order of the early American Puritan churches did not allow the dissolution of the bond with its minister, except for a breach of the covenant made at his installation, or because of the minister's moral turpitude. But for a long time the minister had been a professional, who made his moves for his own reasons, and not what the colonial church called an officer of the community, bound to it with responsibilities. Perhaps Safford's son Henry was going to Yale, and his daughter Mary to Smith College, giving him personal reasons for wanting to move southward. At least Henry transferred his membership to the Church of Christ in Yale University, and Mary to the First Congregational Church of Northampton, Massachusetts. Perhaps Safford felt that his liberal theology did not satisfy the whole congregation, or that the cause of church unity was weakening in Burlington.

His subsequent career may suggest why and where he wanted to go. After two years without charge in Andover, Massachusetts, where he had earlier studied at Phillips Andover Academy and Andover Theological Seminary, he became secretary of the American Foreign and Christian Union in New York City for a year, preached in Elkhart, Indiana, for two, and died after serving five years as secretary of the Brooklyn Bureau of Charities. Samuel Huntington, the Methodist bookseller, who worked with Safford for temperance and against "the prevailing immorality," told Daniel Roberts that he considered the departed pastor "the best man he ever knew."⁴⁰

The swarming of a colony from the First Congregational Church in 1860 was a selective process. The relatively homogeneous seceding congregation was therefore freer than one torn by tension to proceed with its agenda. With the passage of time, new leaders, new members, and

new issues clouded that unity of purpose. But behind the clouds the sun still shone with the old purposes of not merely providing parochial ordinances and services, but also of making Burlington the kind of city which, in their Congregational wisdom, they knew it ought to be.

NOTES

¹ (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976.)

² The statistics of the Vermont Congregational churches, in the tables of the *Minutes of the General Convention of Vermont* (Windsor: Vermont Chronicle, 1860), 25-39, show Burlington with 414 members, Middlebury with 409, Montpelier with 402, and Rutland with 383. Then came five churches with between 250 and 266. Those who first moved to separate in 1859 proposed to build a sister church on the Pearl Street corner of the same lot, as close as the two Congregational churches on the green in New Haven, Connecticut.

³ First Calvinistic Congregational Church *Records*, 2:208-213, 238-244; *Records of the Society*, 155-160.

⁴ See James A. Dailey, "The Hickok-Buell Complex," (June 25, 1965), mimeographed, Special Collections, Bailey/Howe Library, University of Vermont.

⁵ See James A. Dailey, "Spencer Marsh, 1830-1899," n.d., mimeographed, Special Collections, Bailey/Howe Library, University of Vermont.

⁶ John E. Goodrich, "Historical Discourse," in *The Hundredth Anniversary of the Founding of the First Church, Burlington, Vt. . . . 1905* ([Burlington]: the Church, 1905), 34. The late Levi Pease Smith, a lifelong member of the First Congregational Church, expounded this point of view to me, and his son Levi, Jr., confirms that he had this general outlook.

⁷ On the College Street Church in the 1860s I have relied on the many short essays by James A. Dailey during its centennial decade, filed in Special Collections, Bailey/Howe Library, University of Vermont. He summarized these in "The Beginnings of the College Street Church," *Chittenden County Historical Society Bulletin* 3 (August 1967):1-4.

⁸ Information from the Boston Public Library's index of Boston architects, supplied by Norma Mosby of the library's Fine Arts Department.

⁹ David J. Blow found in the George Perkins Marsh Papers, Special Collections, Bailey/Howe Library, University of Vermont, a letter from Mrs. A. G. Peirce to Mrs. G. P. Marsh, March 11, 1867: "It is certainly true that if more church accommodation was not needed at the time of the *separation*, it is needed now, and might not have been furnished under other circumstances." During the early years of President Buckham's administration, University of Vermont commencements were held at the College Street Church. The calendar of events at the Howard Opera House, which is in the unedited typescript of George B. Bryan, "The Howard Opera House in Burlington," *Vermont History* 45 (Fall 1977):197, in Bryan's possession, shows that its seating capacity of 1300-1400 was preferred for commencements for a quarter century after it was built in 1879.

¹⁰ A. M. Hemenway, ed. *Vermont Historical Gazetteer* (Burlington: A. M. Hemenway, 1867-1892), 1:506-507.

¹¹ *Burlington Clipper*, 7 December, 1876. Reference found by David J. Blow.

¹² Austin's obituary is in the *Burlington Free Press*, 19 February, 1886.

¹³ A. G. Peirce to George Perkins Marsh, 6 February, 1866, George Perkins Marsh Papers, Special Collections, Bailey/Howe Library, University of Vermont. Found by David J. Blow.

¹⁴ See James A. Dailey, "Christmas in the Third Congregational Church—1862," mimeographed, n.d., Special Collections, Bailey/Howe Library, University of Vermont.

¹⁵ Perkins' equally voluminous correspondence has been lost. "The Antiquity of Man" is pasted into a volume in the University of Vermont Archives, with the typewritten title page, "Various Articles Published by George H. Perkins, 1870-1890," and a note, "published in *Winnowings*, May 1876." *Winnowings from the Mill* was an occasional student publication preceding the university's *Cynic*. The University of Vermont does not have the May 1876 issue.

¹⁶ See letter from his father, Frederick T. Perkins, to him, 13 November, 1864, in the Perkins Family Papers, University of Vermont Archives.

¹⁷ *Burlington Free Press*, 14 December, 1895, p. 6. In the same year, according to the university library circulation record in the University of Vermont Archives, President Buckham took out Darwin's *The Descent of Man* (1871).

¹⁸ See Kevin T. Dann, "John Bulkley Perry and the Taconic Question," *Earth Sciences History* 3 (1984):153, based on the Perry Papers in Special Collections, Bailey/Howe Library, University of Ver-

mont, and Dann's forthcoming chapter, "The Natural Sciences at the University of Vermont, 1870-1944," in the university's bicentennial history; Trustees, *Minutes*, 4:45 (August 3, 1869).

¹⁹ Henry F. May, *Protestant Churches and Industrial America* (New York: Harper, 1949) describes the attitudes of the five major Protestant denominations toward the social upheavals of 1865-95.

²⁰ Edward Hungerford, *A Report on the Moral and Religious Condition of the Community, Being an Address before a Union of Evangelical Churches, in the City of Burlington, Vt., Delivered in the White St. Cong. Church, March 10, 1867* (Burlington: Free Press Steam Print, 1867), 2.

²¹ No corpus of Hungerford papers has been found. For brief references, see his obituary in the *Burlington Free Press*, August 7, 1911; an appreciation, probably by J. E. Goodrich, in the University of Vermont *Cynic* (November 3, 1911), 2, 7; another in the Vermont Congregational Conference *Minutes* (1912), 48; Hiram Carleton, ed., *Genealogical and Family History of the State of Vermont* (New York: Lewis Publishing, 1903), 1:141-143, and Julian I. Lindsay, *Tradition Looks Forward: the University of Vermont: a History, 1791-1904* (Burlington: The University, 1954), 221, 224.

²² Presumably the fledgling YMCA founded in Burlington in 1865; the YMCA's two members were George E. Davis and Louis Pollens. The Swiss-born Pollens (1838-95) had served as director of the Grand Ligne Institute, a Baptist mission to French Canadians in Lower Canada, 1864-65, then as a teacher of French at the Worcester's Young Ladies' School in Burlington, briefly described in A. M. Hemenway, ed., *Vermont Historical Gazetteer*, 1:536. Pollens is identified with the school in the 1867 *Burlington City Directory and Business Advertiser* . . . (Burlington: Hiram S. Hart, 1867), 10. See also Charles E. Allen, "Burlington Academy and High School," *Vermont Antiquarian* 1:60; and the general catalogs of Dartmouth (1940), 63, and University of Vermont (1901), 19, for Pollens's career. I have not identified Davis.

²³ The detailed data on which this report was based was copied into a bound volume now in Special Collections, Bailey/Howe Library, University of Vermont. Lewis S. Feuer and Mervyn W. Perrine, "Religion in a Northern Vermont Town," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 5 (Fall 1966):367, compared Hungerford's figures with attendance a century later.

²⁴ Edward Hungerford, *Report*, 20.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 21.

²⁶ Her diary for March 17 and 31, 1867, excerpted by David J. Blow and reproduced by James A. Dailey. I have checked the excerpts with the original diary. During the next month, Mrs. G. G. Benedict attended two evening services, on April 7 to hear J. E. Goodrich at "the old church," and on Easter Sunday evening, April 21, the Unitarian Sunday School celebration.

²⁷ I have expanded and documented this summary of the Vermont Congregational attitude toward Roman Catholics in my unpublished Harvard dissertation, "Urban Penetration of Rural Vermont, 1840-80," in the sections on religion. For general background see Ray A. Billington, *The Protestant Crusade, 1800-1860* (New York: Macmillan, 1938).

²⁸ *Burlington Free Press*, 10 April, 1869.

²⁹ See Marshall True, "Middle-Class Women and Civic Improvement in Burlington, 1865-1890," *Vermont History* 65 (Spring 1988):112.

³⁰ *The By-laws, Articles of Faith, and Roll of Members . . . Covenant and Form of Reception of the Third Congregational Church in Burlington, Vermont. With the Roll of Members, 1867.* (Burlington: Free Press Steam Print, 1867); *Minutes of the General Convention of Vermont . . . 1882*, Table IV, Chittenden Conference, after p. 51.

³¹ See J. E. Goodrich, "Historical Discourse," in *The Hundredth Anniversary of the Founding of the First Church*, 27-41.

³² See her entry for March 12, 1882.

³³ Much of this summary is based on excerpts from Mrs. Benedict's 1867 diary made by David J. Blow and James A. Dailey.

³⁴ I call her comment "poor" a D; "good," "instructive," "interesting," B; "fine," "excellent," "beautiful," or her stating the subject, A; and if she did not comment, C.

³⁵ I have included the lay Professor M. H. Buckham among the ministerial members because he lacked nothing but the formality of ordination, except perhaps the ability to affirm his belief as expressed in the language of some of the more ancient of the articles of faith.

³⁶ The story of Safford's doubt was told by Samuel Huntington, the Methodist bookseller, at Safford's memorial service in 1895, and remembered by Mary Roberts. A copy of her 1929 reminiscences is in the church files. My articles in the *Burlington Free Press*, February 4, 11, 18, 1979, describe the Moody-Sanke meetings.

³⁷ A small half-leather notebook of the "Records of Union Committee of Methodist Episcopal, Baptist, First and Third Congregational Churches," Nov. 1877-Feb. 5, 1878, pp. 1-20, in the hand of H. O. Wheeler, is at the College Street Church. Appended are the proceedings of the Burlington Evangelical Alliance, pp. 48-63, covering its activities from April through November 1890. The Episcopal Rev. J. Isham Bliss was president, and among the College Street Church representatives were Charles P. Smith, vice president, H. O. Wheeler, one of three supervisors, and F. S. Pease and Mrs. C. F. Carter, the

pastor's wife, among ten visitors. They visited the sick and needy, those requiring "special spiritual visitation," and newcomers and nonattenders generally.

³⁸ See George Safford and others, *A Protest Addressed to the Congregational Churches and Ministers of Vermont* (Burlington, 1879); [J. E. Goodrich], *The Bible and the Creeds; an 'Historical Consensus'* [Burlington, July 15, 1879]; Alfred Stevens, *A Review of the Protest Lately Sent Out By Ten Members of the General Convention of Congregational Ministers and Churches of Vermont* (Montpelier: Vermont Chronical Office, 1880). I have summarized the controversy in the *Burlington Free Press*, 14, 21 January, 1979.

³⁹ *Minutes* (1894), 47. David J. Blow called this passage to my attention.

⁴⁰ The quotation is from the reminiscences of Mary Roberts. See James Buckham's diary for July 9, 1882, in the University of Vermont Archives; the Church Record, 1:140-142 (July 9-September 22, 1882); *General Catalogue of the Theological Seminary, Andover, Massachusetts, 1808-1908* ([C. C. Carpenter, ed.; Andover: The Seminary, 1909], 279; and George B. Safford, *The Duty of Christian Men With Regard to the Prevailing Immorality. A Sermon . . . February 12, 1882*. (n.p., n.d.), against prostitution.

ERRATA IN LAST ISSUE

Please note that in the Winter 1989 issue the positions of the photographs on pages 32 and 33 of Bryant Tolles's article, "The 'Old Mill' (1825-29) at the University of Vermont," were inadvertently reversed. The photo on p. 33 belongs on p. 32, and vice versa.

On p. 34 footnote 21 should read "west or front facade" instead of "east or rear wall surface."

Vermont History regrets these errors.