

1978

## *Octavius Brooks Frothingham, Gentle Radical* by J. Wade Caruthers (Review)

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### Repository Citation

Dorn, J. (1978). *Octavius Brooks Frothingham, Gentle Radical* by J. Wade Caruthers (Review). *New England Quarterly: A Historical Review of New England Life and Letters*, 51 (1), 124-127.  
<https://corescholar.libraries.wright.edu/history/12>

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the drudgery of house labor and field labor as their rightful lot. Fascinating bits of information abound. Some Indians displayed facial tattooing in the shape of animals and birds (possibly totemic emblems). Indian wigwams were weather tight and actually warmer than English-style dwellings. When swimming, Englishmen habitually propelled themselves by a kind of breaststroke, but Indians preferred what seems to have been a form of sidestroke, "their arms before them cutting through the liquids with their right shoulder." From personal experience while lost in the forest, Wood was able to testify concerning the friendliness, generosity, and hospitality of the Indians, qualities which others such as Roger Williams also were to remark. The section on Indians closes with an Algonkian vocabulary which tells us, among other things, that "Mawcus sinnus" means a pair of shoes.

Vaughan's editing is thoroughly professional. Even at that, however, he has not entirely escaped the hazards of typographical errors. Fortunately, the few found are relatively minor, except for the lapse on page 79 where three words have been inadvertently omitted. Students of the American Indian, Puritanism, and early New England history in general will be grateful for this attractive and convenient new edition. Casual browsers may find themselves drawn in and held to the very end.

DOUGLAS EDWARD LEACH.

*Octavius Brooks Frothingham, Gentle Radical.* By J. Wade Caruthers. (University, Alabama: The University of Alabama Press. 1977. Pp. ix, 279. \$15.00.)

Because Frothingham's personal papers were not preserved, Caruthers has endeavored to write an "intellectual biography" rather than "a study of a man's personal life." His central contention is that Frothingham was "the major figure in the development of radical religious ideas in the post-Parker era of nineteenth century America." Although no comparison is made, either for originality or influence, between Frothingham and other radical religious thinkers, the author's recounting of Frothingham's illustrious pulpit and platform career, his literary contributions, and the testimony of contemporaries makes the case well enough.

The detailed reconstruction of Frothingham's career is an im-

portant contribution of the book. Reared in an atmosphere of social conservatism and cautious—one might even say “orthodox”—Unitarianism, he trod the familiar path of Boston’s well-born through the Latin School, Harvard College, and Harvard Divinity School. Though there is little evidence of the impact that the conflict then being waged between Unitarian rationalism and transcendentalism had upon Frothingham, that conflict, according to Caruthers, laid the groundwork for his subsequent radicalism.

Frothingham’s pastorates in Salem, Jersey City, and New York are examined in several dimensions. Caruthers’ overriding interest, however, is in Frothingham’s gradual estrangement from Unitarianism and his espousal of radicalism. Caruthers finds evidence of serious discontent as early as the pastorate in Salem, where, in the mid-1850’s, he became frustrated over his inability to keep his congregation in step with him theologically and on the slavery issue. But Frothingham’s actual revolt did not occur until 1867, when, in response to Henry Bellows’ efforts to create a national Unitarian organization, he participated in the founding of the Free Religious Association. Caruthers suggests that several related issues prompted Frothingham to bolt: deteriorating personal relations with Bellows and the other Unitarian ministers in New York; his fear that Bellows’ organizational plans represented a move toward conformity and sectarianism; and distaste for some of the Christian language in the preamble to Bellows’ constitution.

Frothingham’s leadership of the FRA from 1867 to 1878 brought him to the pinnacle of his national influence as the spokesman for a “religion of humanity.” Viewing the FRA as neither a new sect nor a vehicle for social reform, he attempted to keep it open to the expression of diverse viewpoints, both theistic and non-theistic, hoping that there might emerge a universal religion that exalted the individual and embodied the methods of free inquiry and rationalism of science. Caruthers adeptly treats the course taken by the FRA, tracing the controversies between Frothingham and Francis E. Abbot, who preferred tighter organization, an unequivocal rejection of Christianity, and support of particular social causes. If the FRA did not contribute to the displacement of existing sects by a new, undogmatic religion of reason and experimentalism, it did, Caruthers contends, point the direction in which the Unitarianism from which it drew many of its participants would eventually go. Frothingham’s ability to soften his criticism of Uni-

tarianism before his death indicates that such an influence was already being felt.

In commenting on Frothingham's final literary efforts, Caruthers observes that "his contradiction, his second thoughts, his skepticism at his own beliefs, confounded those who attempted to see a consistent pattern of thought." These mental traits might well be attributed to Frothingham's entire career. One can sympathize with Caruthers in attempting the tortuous task of writing an "intellectual biography" of a man who considered himself both liberal and radical in religion, espoused both transcendentalism and rationalism, alternately viewed Christianity as defunct and as having surprising capacity for self-correction, and often stated strong opinions only to back off and admit the partiality of his own insights. Excuse the author though we might, his tracing of the continuities and changes in Frothingham's theological and philosophical positions leaves something to be desired. One wonders, for example, whether the incongruity between affirmations of both transcendentalism and rationalism is resolved by the explanation that he would "employ rational processes guided by transcendental goals." His method of exploring Frothingham's writings in chronological order diffuses rather than synthesizes complex ideas; even the close reader is left hard put to generalize about broad patterns. A thematic framework might have yielded clearer results.

Caruthers' development of several bodies of thought that affected Frothingham is thin at points. A more thorough presentation of the pertinent ideas of F. C. Baur and the Tübingen school of New Testament criticism would be in order, as would a fuller explanation of the specific impact of Darwin and Spencer.

Finally, the author's position on Frothingham's relations to social reform is inconclusive. He demonstrates that, except for antislavery, Frothingham never committed himself to reform causes and that, in making observations about post-Civil War social ills, he was "on less sure footing than when reviewing a work of literature or philosophy." In fact, one gets an impression of elitism, nativism, and general indifference. Yet Caruthers seems to suggest that Frothingham deserves recognition as a "prophet of the Social Gospel" because the FRA provided a forum for "some of the best thoughts of the age" and thereby contributed to a spirit of reform.

Overall, the work fills many gaps in our knowledge of Frothing-

ham. If its analysis of the subject's thought is not brilliant, it has the virtues of recognition of complexity and restraint in generalization.

JOSEPH H. DORN.

*The Middle Way: Puritanism and Ideology in American Romantic Fiction.* By Michael T. Gilmore. (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press. 1977. Pp. x, 220. \$12.00.)

Ever since Melville noted how the dark power of Hawthorne's fiction seemed to derive from "its appeals to that Calvinistic sense of Innate Depravity and Original Sin" possessed by Hawthorne's New England ancestors, literary historians have been intent on demonstrating the connection between American Puritanism and the principal works of the American Renaissance. Critics like Henry James and Van Wyck Brooks (and later, Yvor Winters) sent out important probes to that end; and in 1957, when Richard Chase delineated the parameters of the American "romance" as a prose style and attributed its rise in part to the "Manichaeic quality of New England Puritanism" still felt by writers like Hawthorne, Melville, and James, Melville's suggestion became part of our critical canon. The difficulty was that one always had trouble demonstrating any direct and pervasive doctrinal influence; rather, it seemed that the tenets of Puritanism were present in nineteenth-century American fiction most often as an *ambience*. One knew that *Moby-Dick* and *The Scarlet Letter* had Puritan overtones; but specifically which ones, and were they visible in other nineteenth-century novels?

Michael Gilmore, in his highly suggestive reading of American Romantic fiction, argues not only that the romancers were heirs to Puritan tradition, but that many of their works can best be understood as extending into the nineteenth century the seventeenth-century doctrine of the "Middle Way," the belief that the true saint should "be in the world but not of it." The main thesis, that "the Puritan ideal of inner-worldly sainthood . . . decisively influenced the formal and thematic concerns of the prose romance," is tested against selected works by Hawthorne, Melville, and James; and by the end of his study Gilmore would have us believe that we all have erred in not better considering our John Perkins