THE FORCE OF ANCIENT MANNERS: FEDERALIST POLITICS AND THE UNITARIAN CONTROVERSY REVISITED

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> Some of our mutual friends say all is lost—nothing can be done. Nothing is to be done rashly, but mature counsels and united efforts are necessary in the most forlorn case. For though we may not do much to save ourselves, the vicissitudes of political fortune may do every thing—and we ought to be ready when she smiles.[1]

As 1804 drew to a close, Massachusetts Federalists could be forgiven for thinking that it had been a very bad year, the latest among many. The country again stood on the verge of war with England, while Bonapartist forces swept across Europe. Closer to home, buoyed by the immense popularity of the Louisiana Purchase, Thomas Jefferson had been elected by a wide margin to a second term as president. Even the Bay State had cast its electoral votes for the Republican ticket; of all New England, only Connecticut had remained steadfastly in the Federalist camp. In the Senate,

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[1] Fisher Ames to Timothy Pickering, Apr. 28, 1804, Pickering-Ames Correspondence, Timothy Pickering Papers (Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston).

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Massachusetts found herself represented by independent-minded John Quincy Adams. A year earlier, Adams had defeated staunch Federalist Timothy Pickering just in time to make himself the sole New England Federalist to vote in favor of implementing the acquisition of Louisiana, thereby rendering Massachusetts complicit in her own subjugation by the slaveholding Virginia interest. More dispiriting, Alexander Hamilton lay dead on the field of honor, shot by Aaron Burr, vice president of the United States, losing Federalist candidate for governor of New York—and, it was rumored, the man who would have delivered his state into the Northern Confederation when the High Federalists led New England out of an increasingly untenable union.

To heap insult on injury, as the year reached its dismal end, Harvard College, the institutional center of Massachusetts Federalist political culture, found itself under siege from within. Since the August 1803 death of Professor David Tappan, the university had faced a vacancy in the Hollis Professorship of Divinity, the oldest endowed university chair in the United States.[2] Then, in late September 1804, Harvard President Joseph Willard died as well. The year-and-a-half-long struggle to fill these vacancies exposed a fissure in New England Federalism, a rift that played itself out as theological liberals and trinitarian Calvinists struggled for control of the university. Politicians and clergy who had previously worked together to combat the twin evils of democracy and infidelity now ranged themselves on opposite sides of the religious question, with the dominant High Federalists casting their considerable weight on the side of the liberal clergy, making possible their ultimate victory. In doing so, they revealed a great deal about the peculiar social and political synthesis that distinguished the Massachusetts Federalists from other wings of the party and about the forces that led to their defeat in public life.

The conventional view of the Harvard dispute has focused on the revolutionary (albeit, to the outsider, somewhat parochial) changes that followed in its wake, treating the affair as the first skirmish in what is known to historians of American religion as the Unitarian controversy.[3] The initial phase of that ostensible revolution came with the February 1805

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[2] The Hollis Professorship of Divinity at Harvard was established in 1721 by the will of Thomas Hollis, a London merchant with Baptist affiliations. Tappan was its third incumbent.

[3] See, for example, Samuel Eliot Morison, *Three Centuries of Harvard College* (Cambridge, MA, 1936), 187; and Jedidiah Morse, *An Appeal to the Public, On the Controversy Respecting the Revolution In Harvard College, and the Events which have followed it; occasioned by the use which has been made of certain complaints and accusations of Miss Hannah Adams against the Author* (Charlestown, MA, 1814), iii.

election of Unitarian Henry Ware as Hollis Professor; it was completed a year later, in March 1806, with the election of theologically liberal Professor Samuel Webber as university president. Both Ware and Webber replaced traditional Calvinists in their respective posts. Little more than twenty-five years later, the Massachusetts Standing Order had collapsed and the state's Congregational churches had split into two separate denominations, with trinitarian Congregationalists on one side and Unitarians on the other.

Most discussions of the Harvard controversy have focused almost entirely on the appointment of Ware to the Hollis Professorship; these accounts treat the choice of the university president as an afterthought in what was primarily a theological dispute between those who believed in the orthodox Calvinist doctrine of the trinity and those who did not.[4] More than thirty years ago, Conrad Wright challenged one aspect of this dominant interpretation with an elegant reconstruction of the complex sequence of events that led up to Ware's election. Wright demonstrated that the Harvard Corporation, which bore initial responsibility for the choice of the Hollis professor, engaged in a "good deal of give-and-take" and that its fellows were willing to compromise, even offering to link the appointments of professor and president in order to secure ideological balance in the university administration.[5]

As a result Wright concluded that, although ecclesiastical and theological factors were manifested in the final decision to appoint Ware, "considerations of a very different sort played an equally crucial part in the deliberations." Chief among these additional considerations, Wright placed personal factors, primarily animus among the university fellows caused by the presidential aspirations and abrasive personality of Professor Eliphalet

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[4] See Earl Morse Wilbur, *A History of Unitarianism in Transylvania, England, and America* (Cambridge, MA, 1952), 405. In addition to disagreements about the nature of the trinity, liberals and conservatives differed about a number of theological questions including predestination and free will; on that matter, the liberals took an Arminian stance and the conservative Calvinists a more traditional view of human inability.

[5] In this and in much that follows, I am deeply indebted to Conrad Wright, "The Election of Henry Ware: Two Contemporary Accounts," *Harvard Library Bulletin*, 17 (July 1969), 245-78, which analyzes the personalities and voting patterns in Harvard's governing bodies and provides printed versions of both the Reverend John Eliot's and Professor Eliphalet Pearson's manuscript accounts of Ware's election. In addition, I have been influenced by the more extensive discussion of the setting for the elections in Wright, *The Beginnings of Unitarianism in America* (Boston, 1955), 252-80. In revisiting the events for myself, I have examined independently both the Eliot journal and the Pearson manuscript as well as records in the Harvard University Archives and other sources as noted. The quotation is from Wright, "Election of Henry Ware," 246.

Pearson, then acting president and presiding officer of the Harvard Corporation.[6] Although Wright's account broadened scholarly understanding of the reasons behind Ware's election, he maintained the prevailing focus on the Hollis Professorship. This perspective led Wright—like those before him—to emphasize the revolutionary nature of the electoral outcome because of the theological change it involved.

It is the contention of this essay that the elections of 1805 and 1806 represented not a revolutionary change in the direction of the university, but a successful assertion of power by the existing Massachusetts Federalist elite—a group that had controlled Harvard life without interruption at least since the Revolutionary War. This elite comprised a closely-knit network of conservative politicians and liberal clergymen; each ascribed to the other's intellectual principles and both shared the same cosmopolitan personal habits and outlook.[7] In the events of 1805 and beyond, this network was responding to a threat to its social and political leadership from an evangelical Federalist faction, emanating from Connecticut and led by the Reverend Jedidiah Morse, a Yale graduate. Indeed, evidence indicates that lay Federalist politicians bore the laboring oar through the electoral controversy out of concern that an evangelical victory would limit Harvard's role as the training ground for the next generation of like-minded Federalist leaders. Taking a broader perspective, it can be argued that the political and religious difficulties of the Massachusetts Standing Order were two sides of the same coin; the relatively broad coalitions that formed both Federalism and established Congregationalism before 1800 each fell victim to the rancorous party spirit that characterized the evolving democracy of the early republic.[8]

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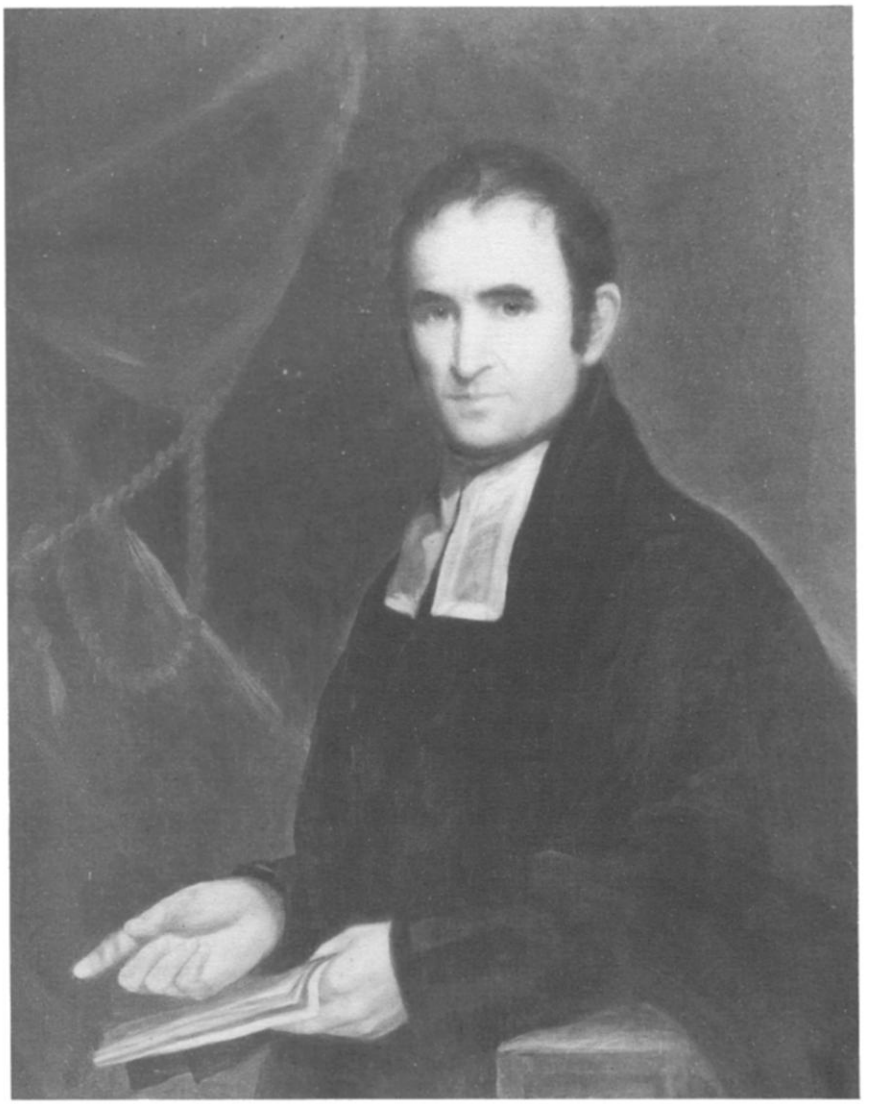
[6] Wright, "Election of Henry Ware," 246. In keeping with his emphasis on personal factors, Wright had earlier suggested that Jedidiah Morse's personal agenda—to remake Massachusetts ecclesiastical politics in the image of Connecticut where the conservatives of all denominations made common cause against the liberals, there represented by the Episcopal clergy—was a critical element in the maneuvering that resulted in the electoral controversy. Wright, *Beginnings of Unitarianism*, 269-71.

[7] Morison, *Three Centuries of Harvard College*, 185 ("Harvard in politics has always reflected the sentiments of the economic ruling class in Boston."). Wright aptly observed that, in an age of increasing secularism and democratic tendencies, the "continued prestige of the ministry depended, not only on the survival of Christianity, but also on the preservation of a social structure in which the role of the minister was a significant one." The clergy therefore "preached Federalism as well as Christianity, believing it was all the same battle." Wright, *Beginnings of Unitarianism*, 249.

[8] Conrad Wright, "Institutional Reconstruction in the Unitarian Controversy," in *American Unitarianism 1805-1865*, ed. Conrad E. Wright (Boston, 1989), 3-31, places Morse at the center of the first phase of the Unitarian controversy, from 1805 to 1815, in which the dispute centered on what William Ellery Channing later called "the system of



Henry Ware Sr. (1764-1845)
By George Fuller after an original attributed to Frothingham. Courtesy of the Harvard University Portrait Collection, Gift of Dr. Charles E. Ware to Harvard College, 1879.

The political aspect of this dynamic informed Ware's election to a degree previously unrecognized, but is most apparent in the events surrounding the subsequent selection of university president. The Corporation's initial and unanimous choice for the office was Fisher Ames—native of Dedham, graduate of Harvard, attorney, four-term congressman for Boston, political controversialist, leader of the so-called Essex Junto,[9] and the personal embodiment of Hamiltonian High Federalism. Despite his frequent paeans to the importance of religion in forming the habits of republican virtue, Ames's own religious views, if any, were obscure. Ames was, as one scholar has delicately put it, "not the most ardent of believers."[10] When Ames declined the presidency on account of ill-health, the struggle for ascendancy within the college resumed. It lasted through the ensuing election of Samuel Webber and was only resolved in 1810, with the accession of Webber's successor, the Reverend John T. Kirkland, a theological liberal with extensive High Federalist political connections.

When both professorial and presidential elections are treated as part of a single campaign for control of the university, it becomes clear that, although personal animosities and theological allegiances figured into the maneuvering, political factors were an overarching element in the dispute—specifically, the effort of Massachusetts Federalist politicians to retain primary influence in college affairs for themselves and their longstanding clerical allies. From their perspective, it may be argued that the election of theologically orthodox candidates—and the victory of the orthodox group—would have worked a more significant break with the college's existing cultural and institutional identity than did the supposedly revolutionary selection of theological liberals to occupy key university offices.

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exclusion and denunciation." *Ibid.*, 3. Wright suggests that the orthodox faction was already distancing itself from the more cosmopolitan social practices of the liberals during this period. *Ibid.*, 9-10.

[9] David Hackett Fischer, "The Myth of the Essex Junto," *William & Mary Quarterly*, 21 (Apr. 1964), 191-235, argued that the Junto, as an organized political entity, existed only in the minds of its enemies. However, contemporaries used the term—whether seriously or in jest—and understood broadly to whom the term applied. See John Adams to Benjamin Rush, Sept. 30, 1805, "it was indeed my unchangeable adherence to this principle [refusal to enter treaties with European powers] that turned those whom you call tories and which the Bostonians call the Essex Junto against me in the election of 1800," in John R. Schutz and Douglass Adair, eds., *The Spur of Fame: Dialogues of John Adams and Benjamin Rush 1805-1813* (San Marino, CA, 1966), 40.

[10] James M. Banner Jr., *To The Hartford Convention: The Federalists and the Origins of Party Politics in Massachusetts, 1789-1815* (New York, 1970), 35.

Much has been written about the gruesome demise of Federalism and, from the vantagepoint of history, it may seem obvious that after the election of 1800, the party's days of influence on the national scene were numbered. But, in 1804, Massachusetts Federalists did not have the advantage of that historical perspective; they believed themselves to be part of a still viable, although embattled, political culture. As proof, they could point to the fact that the Federalist party still dominated the Commonwealth's government and would continue to do so until Harrison Gray Otis lost the 1823 gubernatorial election; not until Andrew Jackson's 1824 election did they lose all realistic hope of a Federalist revival.

Thus, Federalist political leaders joined issue in the Harvard controversy in order to preserve the institution that was a critical part of both their past—forming the "ancient manners" that made New England "to excel every other people that existed in the world"—and their future—readying a new Federalist generation for the moment when "political Fortune" might smile once again.[11] Their conduct provides an opportunity to study the often neglected complexities of High Federalist culture at home, at a time when it stood in surly opposition elsewhere. What emerges is further support for a developing scholarly reconsideration of High Federalism, viewing it not as a coterie of recalcitrant crypto-monarchists but as a movement that embodied an Enlightenment brand of elitism—*noblesse oblige*.[12] Thus, the High Federalists consistently rejected the emotional turmoil of democracy, whether in the form of the French Revolution or the Second Great Awakening, in favor of an urbane Augustan vision in which the wise, the good, and the well-to-do united to govern an orderly and virtuous people for the common weal. As a result of this temperamental distaste for disorder, High Federalists embraced what might seem to be the unlikely combination of reactionary social philosophy and avant-garde theology. Faced with a universe in flux, theirs was a world in which the personal often merged with the political. Although the Federalists did not always rise to the level of their own principles, they understood only too well the value of personal tolerance and the perils of fanaticism, esteeming

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[11] Fisher Ames, "Dangers of American Liberty" (written in the beginning of 1805), in *Works of Fisher Ames*, ed. Seth Ames (2 vols., Boston, 1854), 2:355; "Warren," *Columbian Centinel* (Boston), Feb. 2, 1814, in Banner, *To the Hartford Convention*, 85; Ames to Pickering, Apr. 28, 1804, Pickering-Ames Correspondence, Pickering Papers.

[12] As evidence of this developing scholarly perspective, see, for example, Rosemarie Zagarri, "Gender and the First Party System," in Doron Ben-Atar and Barbara B. Oberg, eds., *Federalists Reconsidered* (Charlottesville, VA, 1998), 118-34; and Paul Finkelman, "The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Federalism," *ibid.*, 135-56.

rational inquiry and moral behavior over abstract creeds, and, as the Harvard controversy demonstrated, personal character over all.

In the years between the Revolutionary War and the election of 1800, both Federalism and Congregationalism in Massachusetts united a wide range of views and interests in pursuit of a single goal: the defeat of irreligion and the maintenance of a virtuous and stable community based on a social hierarchy that reflected the natural distinctions among men. It was a tightly-knit world in which "everyone who was anyone" knew everyone else, and all were bound together by ties of blood, friendship, marriage, and a Harvard education. Nevertheless, by the turn of the century, this shared background and objective concealed growing differences. In a few years, ministers would look back to the halcyon days when men of all theological opinions exchanged pulpits with one another as a matter of course, just as politicians would lament the spirit of party that caused men who had worked together for years to cross the street in order to avoid one another.

In those more harmonious times, clerical and political elites enjoyed a remarkable uniformity of political and social views; on most subjects, they spoke with one voice. If politician Fisher Ames could sum up an entire world view by announcing that "liberty depends upon our education, our laws and habits, to which even prejudices yield, on the dispersion of our people on farms, and on the almost equal diffusion of property; . . . on morals and religion, whose authority reigns in the heart; and on the influence all these produce on public opinion, before that opinion governs rulers," Timothy Pickering might toast, "Religion and Morality, essential supports [of] a free government," and the Reverend John T. Kirkland could define American equality as "an equality which secures the rich from rapacity, no less than the poor from oppression; the high from envy no less than the low from contempt."[13]

If David Tappan warned his congregation that "the most celebrated states and kingdoms of the earth have arisen by virtue and fallen by "vice," then Fisher Ames could draw the lesson by proclaiming that Jefferson's first election was a "great moral revolution proceeding from the vices and passions of men," and the gloomy Reverend Nathaniel Emmons could provide the rhetorical flourish, describing the outcome as a victory "of the

[13] Fisher Ames, "Eulogy on Washington, Delivered at the Request of the Legislature of Massachusetts, (February 8, 1800)," in Ames, ed., *Works of Fisher Ames*, 2:82; Timothy Pickering, *Repertory* (Boston), Mar. 9, 1804, in Banner, *To the Hartford Convention*, 27n; John T. Kirkland, *An Oration, Delivered, at the Request of the Society of Phi Beta Kappa* (Boston, 1798), 9.

worthless, the dishonest, the rapacious, the vile, the merciless and the ungodly." After Jefferson's reelection, both Ames and Morse lamented—in almost identical words—that hopes of a Federalist revival were small when money-making remained the chief objective of the electorate. Thus, Morse confided to a friend that "It is no easy matter to rouse men who are devoted to the acquisition or the enjoyment of wealth, to act vigorously in any cause," and Ames asked pointedly, "when all who are not devoted to pleasure, are eager in the pursuit of wealth, how will it be possible to rouse such a spirit of liberty as alone can secure or prolong its possession?"[14]

At the same time, all Federalists—laity and clergy alike—knew that the continued stability of republican New England rested on what Fisher Ames called the "old habits and sober reasons of the people." But, faced with Jefferson's second term, Ames was moved to wonder whether even "the force of ancient manners" was now sufficient to protect New England from the "wild destroying rage of the southern Jacobins." On the eve of the Harvard controversy, the same thought issued from Jedidiah Morse, who admonished his congregation that a true Federalist and patriot must be willing "to venerate and by all means preserve uncorrupted, those institutions, which our fathers planted in their wisdom and piety, watered and cherished with their tears and their prayers, and defended with their blood," concluding, "We cannot leave to our posterity a richer inheritance than these institutions in their primitive purity."[15]

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[14] David Tappan, "A discourse, delivered to the Religious Society in Boston Street, Boston, and to the Christian Congregation in Charlestown, on April 5, 1798, being the day of the annual fast in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts" (Boston, 1798), in Banner, *To the Hartford Convention*, 26; Fisher Ames, "Falkland I," first printed in *The Palladium* (New England), Feb. 3, 1801, in Ames, ed., *Works of Fisher Ames*, 2:129; Nathaniel Emmons, in Paul A. Varg, *New England and Foreign Relations: 1789-1850* (Hanover, NH, 1983), 42; Jedidiah Morse to Joseph Lyman, Dec. 27, 1804, Morse Family Papers (Manuscripts and Archives, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University); Fisher Ames, "Dangers of American Liberty," in Ames, ed., *Works of Fisher Ames*, 2:369.

[15] Fisher Ames, "Republican, No. II," first printed in the *Gazette* (Boston), July 26, 1804, in Ames, ed., *Works of Fisher Ames*, 2:254; Ames, "Dangers of American Liberty," *ibid.*, 2:355; Ames to Christopher Gore, Dec. 13, 1802, *ibid.*, 1:310; Jedidiah Morse, *A Sermon, delivered before the Ancient & Honourable Artillery Company, in Boston, June 6, 1803* (Charlestown, MA, 1803), 27. Compare Morse's further admonition: "Let us guard against the insidious encroachment of *innovation*, that evil and beguiling spirit which is now stalking to and fro through the earth, seeking whom he may destroy . . . His path . . . leads through the noisy, and bloody abodes of anarchy and wild misrule to the dreary cheerless regions of despotism," *ibid.*, with Ames, "Laocoon I," in Ames., ed., *Works of Fisher Ames*, 2:111-12; Ames, "Dangers of American Liberty," *ibid.*, 2:355 (warning against the "two evil spirits of License and innovation").

Even while such agreement reigned, there were signs that the unity of the Standing Order was not perfect. In 1796, a celebration of George Washington's birthday merited upwards of 3,700 lights on the Harvard campus; three years later, the Corporation felt impelled to maintain an increasingly delicate ideological parity by recommending both Timothy Pickering and Elbridge Gerry for honorary degrees.[16] By 1800, Federalist politicians regularly grumbled to one another about the Republican fondness for "speculative principles"; particularly to the High Federalists, politics was an empirical art, a "business."[17] From this perspective, it was but a short step to view private morality and religion as one thing and public politics as quite another. Thus, when southern congressmen suggested that a duty on molasses would promote temperance among the poor of the rum-drinking North, Representative Ames tartly responded, "I treat as idle the visionary notion of reforming the morals of the people by a duty on molasses. . . . We are not to consider ourselves, while here, as at church or school, to listen to the harangues of speculative piety; we are to talk of political interests committed to our charge."[18] As evangelical mores advanced throughout the country, successively placing liquor, theater-going, and novel-reading outside the bounds of middle-class life, such views would sound increasingly out of date.

Nevertheless, after the 1800 election, clergy and politicians once again joined forces, brought together by the challenge of the Jeffersonians' superior party organization. When Fisher Ames proposed launching a Federalist newspaper modeled after the Republican press, one of his first plans was to give free subscriptions to the New England clergy, in the expectation that they would make use of them to mold a Federalist local opinion from their pulpits. As it was, when *The New England Palladium* first went to press in time for the 1801 state elections, its contributors read like a roster of the Massachusetts elite. The list included many of the key actors in the brewing Harvard controversy—among them Ames himself, as

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[16] Morison, *Three Centuries of Harvard College*, 185-86. The result of this clumsy attempt at balance was that the college chose to award a degree to neither man.

[17] Fisher Ames, in Banner, *To the Hartford Convention*, 129; Ames to George Richards Minot, May 29, 1789, in Ames, ed., *Works of Fisher Ames*, 2:49.

[18] Annals of Congress, 1st Cong., 1st sess., 231-32. Ames drew a similar distinction with regard to Madison's July 1794 "Resolutions," observing that the matter concerns "not our feelings but our interest, yet the debate has often soared high above the smoke of business into the epic region." *Ibid.*, 3d Cong., 1st sess., 340. See also Fisher Ames to William Tudor, Nov. 24, 1791, in "Memoir of the Hon. William Tudor," *Massachusetts Historical Society Collections*, 2d ser., 8 (1819), 325-26 (taking a laissez faire view of the effect of establishing a theater on the morals of Boston).

well as ministers Jedidiah Morse, Eliphalet Pearson, John T. Kirkland, and David Tappan, whose death triggered the dispute. As this roster indicates, in 1801, clergy of all shades of theological opinion could still labor as one in the interests of Federalism;[19] in three years, the same men would be bitterly ranged against one another in a dispute that had reverberations in the political arena.

To start with the conventional story, the Harvard controversy began in August 1803 with the death of Hollis Professor David Tappan, who had held the chair since 1792. Tappan was a moderate Calvinist of irenic temperament, well-liked by both theological liberals and conservatives, supportive of High Federalist activities. University President Joseph Willard, himself a moderate Calvinist, apparently wanted another moderate to succeed Tappan. Unfortunately for Willard, far and away the leading candidate for the position was the Reverend Henry Ware, minister of Hingham's First Parish, an unabashed theological liberal, and the co-author of a catechism with an openly Unitarian Christology.

For a year, Willard delayed the choice, evidently hoping that a moderate Calvinist would emerge to carry the field. Then, in late September 1804, Willard himself died and the college faced a second key vacancy. To be absolutely precise, Harvard faced three important vacancies in the fall of 1804, since one of the fellows, Dr. Simeon Howard, had died at the end of August, a few weeks before Willard. As events unfolded, this third vacancy proved critical in filling the first two.

In response to the openings in the university administration, the Board of Overseers met and advised the Corporation to hold an election for a new fellow before proceeding to the other offices. At the same time, the overseers recommended that the Corporation fill the professorship before the presidency. By the end of October, the Corporation had implemented the first suggestion. Dr. John Eliot, minister of the New North Church in Boston, was formally selected a fellow of the Corporation; with his liberal theology and extremely close personal ties to the High Federalists, Eliot became the *eminence grise* of the electoral maneuvering that followed.

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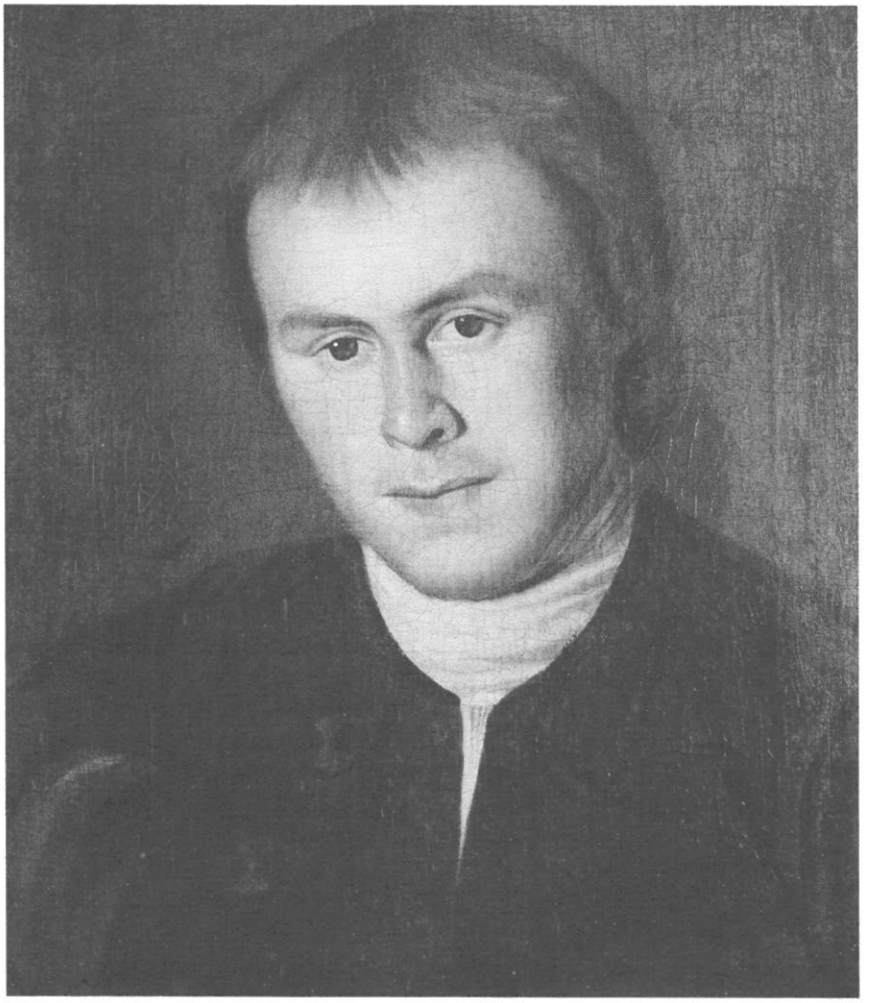
[19] Jedidiah Morse, *Appeal to the Public*, 2, for example, described his relationship with the theological liberals during the period between 1793 and 1804 in the following terms, "So long as measures of common concern were pursued . . . so long I received their support and their civil and respectful treatment." Indeed, he stated that "the series of great political events, which commenced about this time (1793), connected as they were with the alarming spread of infidelity in our country, swallowed up many important differences on other points, and combined all good patriots and professed Christians, in one grand effort to save their country, and to defend the great *outworks* of their common Christianity."



Dr. John Eliot (1754-1813)
By Samuel King. Courtesy of the Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston.

There were now six members of the Corporation, the university's executive governing body. Since the presidency remained unfilled, the Reverend Eliphalet Pearson, Hancock Professor of Hebrew and Oriental Languages and senior member of the faculty, assumed the position of acting president and chaired the meetings of the Corporation, of which he had been a member since 1800. Aside from Eliot and Pearson, the remaining members of the Corporation were Ebenezer Storer, a merchant who also served as college treasurer,[20] the Reverend John Lathrop, minister of Second Church, and judges John Davis and Oliver Wendell of Boston. With regard to theological allegiances, Eliot, Storer, Lathrop, and Davis all were liberals while Pearson and Wendell both were orthodox. Wendell, in particular, had personal ties to the orthodox party through the marriage of his daughter to the Reverend Abiel Holmes, a Yale College classmate and ally of Jedidiah Morse. In addition, Wendell had been a trustee of Phillips Academy in Andover when Eliphalet Pearson was preceptor there. All were Federalist in politics; several had played an active role in the developing Federalist party structure.

As deliberations were about to begin in late fall, the fellows found themselves under public pressure from a spate of letters appearing in the Boston press. For example, "Amicus" (probably Jedidiah Morse) warned Massachusetts parents that Harvard's leadership was "*rather inclined to elect Unitarians or those styled rational Christians, who even deny the proper divinity of the Savior*" to both the professorship and the presidency, leaving the education of their sons to "loose and erroneous hands."[21] On the other side, Ware's supporters suggested that the university was delaying the appointment in order to divert the Hollis Professor's endowed salary to improper uses.

In late December, this war of correspondence provided the first overt signs that Federalist political forces were mobilizing against the orthodox. The editor of the strongly Federalist *Centinel*, which until then had been affording an active platform for both sides, refused to print a letter from "Calvinus," an orthodox correspondent. At the same time, the *Centinel* announced that it would not publish any more letters relating to the Harvard elections. In response, "Fair Play" claimed censorship, accusing the *Centinel* of attempting to persuade other newspapers not to publish

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[20] Illustrating this tightly-knit world, Storer's wife Hannah Quincy was Josiah Quincy's great aunt. John Adams had nearly proposed to Hannah Quincy before he met Abigail. David McCullough, *John Adams* (New York, 2001), 641.

[21] *Columbian Centinel*, Nov. 24, 1804. I follow Wright in attributing the letter to Morse. Wright, *Beginnings of Unitarianism*, 275.

Calvinus's letter and asserting that the only reason for the cut-off was that letters were no longer running one-sidedly in favor of Ware.

As if to demonstrate the plausibility of Fair Play's charge, several weeks later, the *Centinel* permitted "Constant Reader," a Ware supporter, to offer a last word. While applauding the decision to end the newspaper debate, Constant Reader used the opportunity to summarize the establishment Federalist position for the public: "whether the candidates for the Presidential and Theological Chairs, be Calvinists, Arians, Socinians, or Latitudinarians, is not of so much importance, as whether they are learned, pious, moral men."[22] It was a formula that would sound over and over again in Federalist writings—both public and private—about the controversy.

During late fall, events were also beginning to move within the university. From the very first, as Wright observed, personal factors affected the deliberations. On December 4, the Corporation's first meeting after Eliot's election, the college treasurer, Ebenezer Storer, already a strong supporter of Ware, urged immediate action on the professorship, presumably reflecting discomfort at the public charges of financial impropriety. Pearson resisted, preferring to temporize rather than submit to the likely election of a liberal.[23] At the Corporation's next meeting four days later, Pearson made, according to Eliot, "a most solemn speech in which he told us how much he had prayed and thought upon this matter—that we were under a necessity of Electing a Calvinist—from the Records of the College, the public mind, the character of former professors &c." Pearson's abrasive behavior upset Eliot: he thereafter referred to the professor as "Megalonyx" in his diary. Not only did Pearson subject Eliot to personal abuse—"the foam of Billingsgate"—but he gave Eliot the

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[22] *Columbian Centinel*, Dec. 22, 1804; *ibid.*, Jan. 16, 1805. See also Eliphalet Pearson, "Intended Publication Relative to Choice of Professor of Divinity," in Wright, "Election of Henry Ware," 276.

[23] Entry for Corporation Meeting of Dec. 3, 1804, Journal of Dr. John Eliot, in Wright, "Election of Henry Ware," 261. Although Eliot's actual journal does not survive, extracts of his diary were copied into the commonplace book of his brother, Ephraim Eliot. Wright relied on this source, now in the Boston Atheneum. Another transcription of the same journal entries, with minor variations, was made by the Reverend John Pierce of Brookline, Memoirs, vol. VII, 303-08 (between the entries for July 4 and July 7, 1838), Pierce Family Papers (Massachusetts Historical Society). I have compared the two texts and found the differences to be slight; therefore all further references to Eliot's Journal will be to the more accessible published version in Wright's article.

impression that his defense of orthodoxy was motivated by his own ambition to be elected president.[24]

The precise date is unclear, but at one of its next two meetings the Corporation took a preliminary vote on the professorship. Each fellow jotted down the names of two possible candidates for the Hollis chair. The fellows' initial choices did not follow a rigid pattern of theological affiliation. Pearson and Wendell both named Jesse Appleton and Joshua Bates. Although Appleton was an orthodox Calvinist and Bates later aligned himself with the orthodox, at the time Bates's views were less clear-cut. Two years earlier, when Bates had assumed the pulpit of Dedham's First Congregational Church, the parish believed he was a theological liberal or moderate, although he was known to be involved with the developing orthodox faction in Andover.

Fisher Ames had been the moving force behind Bates's selection for the Dedham pulpit, further evidence of the underlying political interests involved in the Harvard election. Ames threw his support behind Bates as the result of a recommendation from some unnamed Federalist gentlemen regarding Bates's sound principles, presumably referring to his politics. In fact, Bates's personal ties to the Federalists were unusually sound: he had studied theology at Andover with Jonathan French, then a moderate Calvinist, in whose home George Washington's nephews, Bushrod and Augustus, had boarded while attending Phillips Academy. As unofficial first citizen of Dedham, Ames maneuvered the Dedham congregation into offering Bates a lifetime settlement, an increasingly rare arrangement by 1800 and one aimed at ensuring that the minister could discipline his flock without fear of ouster. Once installed, Bates soon alienated his Republican

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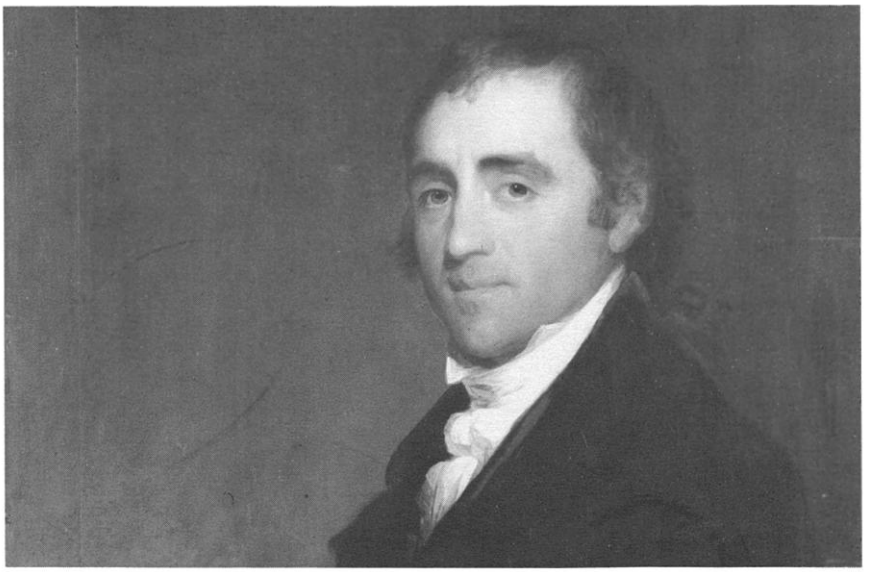
[24] Entry for Corporation Meeting of Dec. 7, 1804, Journal of Dr. John Eliot, in Wright, "Election of Henry Ware," 261-62. Eliot described Pearson's performance in the following terms: "He pleaded argued, scolded—discovered himself so much of the Jesuit as to bring about a wonderful revolution in my own mind.—Not that a Calvinist should be chosen!—but that this sage professor had a part to act, & was destitute of that moral sentiment wh[ich] I had always supposed had an influence on his mind. He is ill humoured he is ever ill mannered. Upon this occasion he threw the foam of Billingsgate upon me, thinking he had the right to abuse me as I was a new member. He had two or three hours talk to no purpose but to pour out his own opinion, which had not the weight of a straw on our minds—nor had they much more solidity than a bubble." "Megalonyx" was a reference to Thomas Jefferson's name for a large prehistoric animal, the bones of which had recently been discovered in Virginia. I am indebted for this explanation to Conrad E. Wright, "Eliphalet Pearson," 18, *Sibley's Harvard Graduates* (Class of 1773) (Boston, 2000), 295.



Fisher Ames (1758-1808)
By Gilbert Stuart. Courtesy of the National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution.
Gift of George Cabot Lodge.

congregation with his extremely conservative political views.[25] Bates's amorphous theological views and High Federalist politics probably explain Eliot's later rueful comment that he would have made a good Hollis Professor.

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[25] Entry of Feb. 1, 1805, Journal of Dr. John Eliot, in Wright, "Election of Henry Ware," 264; William B. Sprague, *Annals of the American Pulpit; or Commemorative Notices of Distinguished American Clergymen of Various Denominations, from the Early Settlement of the Country to the Close of the Year Eighteen Hundred and Fifty-Five* (9 vols., New York, 1857), 2:465-71. Although Bates studied theology with Dr. Jonathan French in Andover and acted as a tutor at Phillips Academy, a number of sources have suggested that at the time of his ordination in Dedham, Bates was a theological liberal and only later joined the conservatives. Alvin Lamson, "A History of the First Church and Parish at Dedham," in *Three Discourses, delivered on the occasion of the completion, November 18, 1838 of the Second Century Since the Gathering of Said Church* (Dedham, 1839), 68 (Lamson was the Unitarian minister who succeeded Bates in the Dedham pulpit); Robert B. Hanson, *Dedham, Massachusetts: 1635-1890* (Dedham, 1976), 191 (suggesting that Bates appeared liberal at the time of his settlement, relying on the fact that the parish was overwhelmingly liberal and had heard him preach before his settlement without generating opposition). See also Marc M. Arkin, "Regionalism and the Religion Clauses: The Contribution of Fisher Ames," *Buffalo Law Review*, 47 (Spring 1999), 811-15.

Among the theological liberals in the Corporation, there was an even greater range of candidates. Davis and Eliot suggested Henry Ware and Reverend John Pierce of Brookline, both extreme liberals. But, Lathrop named Ware and Bates and, based on earlier inquiries, was willing to consider Appleton. Storer named Ware and Seth Payson, a conservative minister with intellectual leanings toward Morse's group. Despite these early signs of theological flexibility, however, a stalemate developed as the fellows continued their deliberations. Three fellows supported Ware, while three backed an orthodox candidate, probably Appleton. Pearson, for his part, bridled at the suggestion that the Corporation seek further advice from the Board of Overseers, apparently fearing that the overseers would favor Ware.

Reflecting the commonwealth's deeply intertwined political and religious arrangements, the Massachusetts constitution then in effect provided that Harvard's Board of Overseers be composed of the state's governor, lieutenant governor, the governor's council, the commonwealth senate, and the ministers of the Congregational churches of the six original Massachusetts Bay towns. In 1805, these offices—political as well as clerical—all were in Federalist hands.[26] The overseers met in full session only in February and June, when the Massachusetts General Court met for a legislative session. Otherwise, business was transacted at sparsely attended meetings composed mainly of the clerical members, who were overwhelmingly theological liberals.

In deference to Pearson, the Corporation did not formally vote to seek the advice of the overseers. Instead, the fellows requested that the board meet to deal with other business, apparently assured that someone would raise the matter of the Hollis Professorship. This expectation was amply justified by the fact that three of the fellows were also members of the Board of Overseers; Lathrop and Eliot were Boston ministers and Judge Wendell was a member of the governor's council. In addition, as we shall see, Lathrop and Eliot enjoyed close ties to other overseers likely to be present and supportive of the liberal agenda.

Fifteen overseers attended the meeting on January 3, 1805. As Wright observed, it doubtless was one of the liberals who suggested that the deadlock could be broken if the presidency were filled at the same time as the Hollis chair; indeed, there is some evidence that the suggestion came

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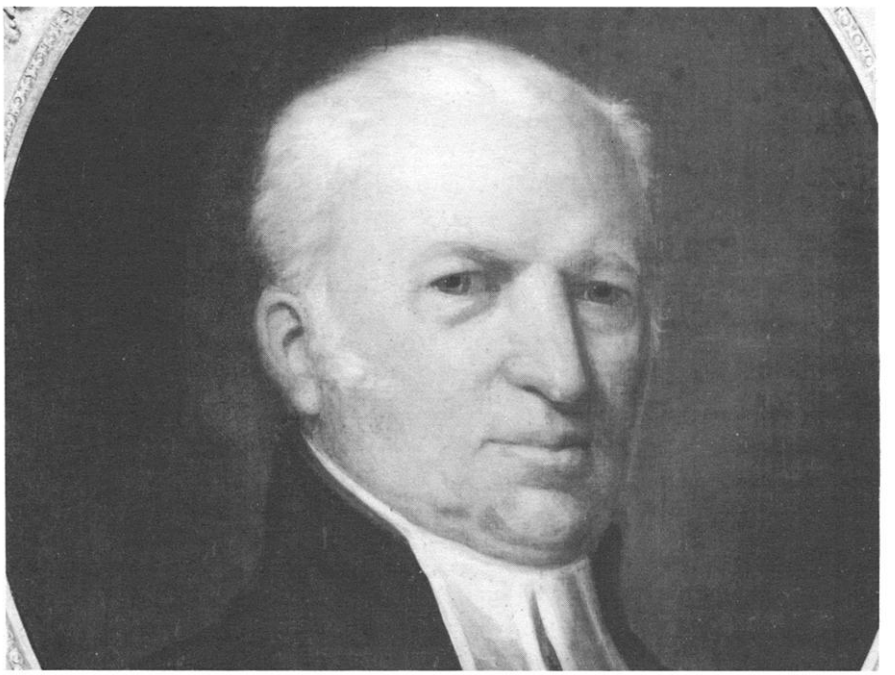
[26] 1780 Mass. Const., Ch. V, sec. i, art. 3 (the towns were Cambridge, Watertown, Charlestown, Boston, Roxbury, and Dorchester); Manning J. Dauer, *Adams Federalists* (Baltimore, 1953), 275-331; Banner, *To the Hartford Convention*, 357-67.



Eliphalet Pearson (1752-1826)
Copy after (?) James Frothingham. Courtesy of the Harvard University Portrait Collection, Gift of the Massachusetts Historical Society, 1940.

from Lathrop himself.[27] The opposition replied that this decision was so significant that it deserved the attention of "all the Overseers and Society" as the college charter required in momentous matters.

Once put to a vote, however, a motion to refer the matter to the whole board failed, and the Corporation was instead advised to choose a president "with all convenient speed." The orthodox were infuriated by this maneuver, since Lathrop and Eliot had not disqualified themselves as overseers from giving advice to themselves in their capacity as fellows of the Corporation. As Eliphalet Pearson observed, had they refrained from

[27] The meeting was attended by nine clerical and six lay members, but Lieutenant Governor Robbins presided and did not vote. Aside from Lathrop, Eliot, and Wendell, Josiah Quincy was among those in attendance. Wright, "Election of Henry Ware," 255, 259n; for Lathrop's role, see Pearson, "Intended Publication," *ibid.*, 271; *ibid.*, 255n.

participating, the vote would have tied and the motion counseling the prompt choice of a president would have failed.[28]

When the Corporation next met, on February 1, 1805, Judge Wendell, one of the orthodox, presented a compromise plan to elect Ware as president and Appleton as professor. Wendell's suggestion received a mixed reaction, but the fellows agreed to another straw vote. By painstaking analysis of the trial ballots, Wright discovered that the compromise fell short by a single vote. Lathrop, Wendell, Davis, and Eliot voted for Ware as president, but Eliot did not vote for Appleton as professor. Instead, to his lasting regret, Eliot cast his ballot for his close personal friend, John Pierce of Brookline, believing that Appleton's voice was "dissonant & unpleasant, especially in prayer" and worrying that "the immediate government of the College were all against him, both professors & Tutors."[29]

Pearson, for his part, stubbornly proposed a "Dr. Smith" for president and Joshua Bates for Hollis Professor. Storer voted for Ware as professor and, as president, presciently chose John T. Kirkland, the well-connected liberal minister of New South Church. Once the compromise collapsed, the fellows took a formal ballot for the Hollis chair only. Ware received four votes—now including Lathrop's—while Appleton received only two, those of Wendell and Pearson.[30]

When the Board of Overseers met on February 14 to ratify the election, the parties had marshaled their forces. Attendance was unusually full, particularly among the overseers drawn from state government. Ordinarily fewer than thirty of the lay overseers would turn out for such a meeting; this time forty-five of the forty-seven were present, joined by twelve of the seventeen clerical overseers. Indeed, such was the anticipated import of the meeting that Governor Strong himself presided.[31]

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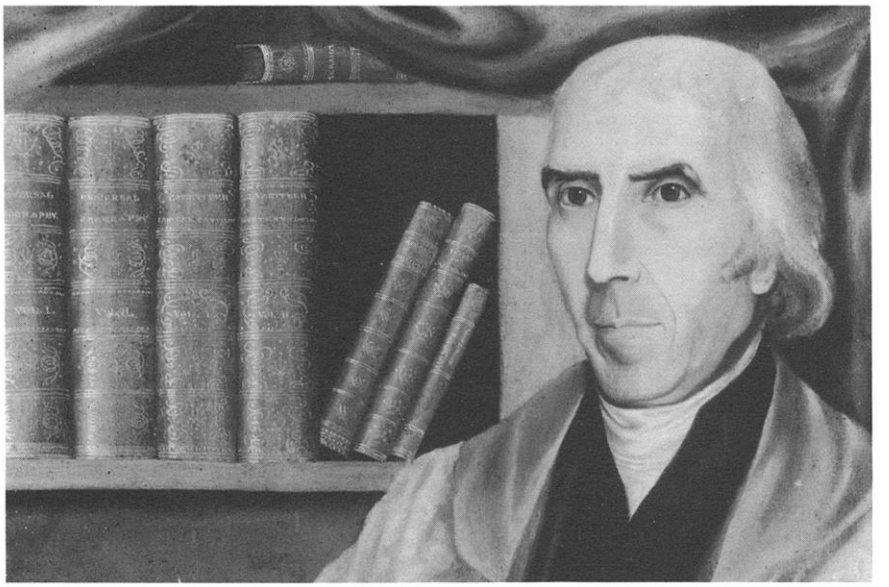
[28] Records of the Overseers of Harvard College, vol. 5, Oct. 29, 1805 to Oct. 8, 1822, Harvard University Archives (Pusey Library, Cambridge, MA); Pearson, Intended Publication, in Wright, "Election of Henry Ware," 271. Pearson underscored the unfairness of the process by pointing out that, although unable to vote, the lieutenant governor favored the reference to the full board. The overseers' records for the period are terse at best and are usually in Lathrop's handwriting. Based on Pearson's reaction, Wright believed that Wendell may have voted against the motion. *Ibid.*, 255.

[29] Entry of Feb. 1, 1805, Journal of Dr. John Eliot, in Wright, "Election of Henry Ware," 263.

[30] *Ibid.*, 263-64; for Wright's own description of the attempted compromise, see *ibid.*, 255-56.

[31] For Morse's efforts to rally the orthodox in opposition to Ware at the meeting, see Morse to Lyman, Feb. 9, 1805, Morse Family Papers (original in the Houghton Library, Harvard); for attendance at the meeting, see Wright, "Election of Henry Ware," 257.



Jedidiah Morse (1761-1826)
By Samuel F. B. Morse. Courtesy of Yale University Art Gallery.
Gift of Miss Helen E. Carpenter.

Jedidiah Morse—an overseer in virtue of his position as pastor of the Charlestown Congregational Church—led the orthodox attack on Ware's appointment. Focusing on the theological issue, he argued that the electors should prefer a man of "solid learning in divinity, of sound and orthodox principles," a man who was "orthodox" by the standards of the original donor, Thomas Hollis. Of those who answered Morse, only Samuel Dexter can be positively identified. Dexter was a prominent moderate Federalist lawyer and politician who had variously served as a congressman, senator, secretary of the war, and secretary of the treasury. In 1805, Dexter was a member of the shadowy but important Boston-based central committee that directed the affairs of the Massachusetts Federalist party.[32] According to

[32] The quotations are from Josiah Quincy, *The History of Harvard University* (2 vols., Cambridge, MA, 1840), 1: 248. Senator Enoch Titcomb of Newburyport, a Presbyterian prepared by either Morse or Pearson, actually opened the discussion. Morse, *True Reasons*, 19. Samuel Dexter (1761-1816), known as a political opportunist among the Federalists, served as Massachusetts representative from 1793 to 1795, senator from 1799 to 1800, secretary of war in 1800, and secretary of the treasury in 1801 in the Jefferson Administration. A rising star among the younger Federalists, Dexter was chosen by the party to give the eulogy at the funeral of Fisher Ames in 1808. Pierce, Entry of July 6, 1808,

John Pierce's diary, "by an appeal to Hollis's statutes, and a convincing address to the reason and understanding of the Board, he turned the counsels of this busy heresiarch into foolishness."[33]

The official minutes of the meeting, in Lathrop's hand, tersely recorded only that "after a long and patient discussion, the question for concurrence was called and the vote being taken by ballot, it appeared that the Election of the Revd Henry Ware, Hollis Professor of Divinity, by the Corporation, was concurred by the overseers." In his account of the affair published shortly after the election, Morse revealed that the vote was thirty-three in favor of Ware and twenty-three against.[34] On May 14, Pearson had the unhappy duty of presiding over the elaborate ceremony that marked Ware's induction into office.

In his pamphlet, *The True Reasons on Which the Election of a Hollis Professor of Divinity Was Opposed*, Jedidiah Morse warned of the dire

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Memoirs, vol. I, 194-95 (complaining that Dexter's speech was not moving enough). In 1805, Dexter was a member of the Governor's Council and, hence, an overseer. Although Dexter himself was primarily a secular actor, his father, the merchant Samuel Dexter Jr. (1726-1810) endowed the Dexter Lectureship (later Professorship) of Sacred Literature at Harvard with a $5,000 bequest in his will. In 1811, the younger Dexter represented the liberal Second Parish of Dorchester in a dispute with its orthodox minister, John Codman, a Morse protégé. Curiously, Dexter was also one of the referees chosen by Morse in the plagiarism dispute between Morse and Hannah Adams, by which Morse's reputation was basically destroyed. For Dexter's membership in the central committee, see Banner, *To the Hartford Convention*, 240n. Other members of the 1805 committee were Harrison Gray Otis, Daniel Sargent, Thomas Handasyd Perkins, Christopher Gore, Charles Jackson, and Josiah Quincy. As members of the Massachusetts Senate, both Perkins and Quincy were overseers in 1805.

[33] Pierce, Entry of Sept. 1820, Memoirs, vol. III, 224. See also Josiah Quincy, *History of Harvard University*, 1:538. According to Quincy, who was present at the meeting, Ware's defenders asserted that, as a Baptist, Hollis himself had departed from Morse's standard of orthodoxy, the Westminster Confession. In any event, they contended that Hollis had deliberately eschewed creedal tests; the specific terms of the endowment simply required that the Hollis professor believe "the Bible is the only and most perfect rule of faith and practice," a statement that was effectively a summary of the liberal position. A similar account, obtained second-hand, appears in William Bentley, *Diary of William Bentley* (4 vols., Salem, MA, 1905-14), entry for Feb. 17, 1805, 3:141.

[34] Minutes of the Board of Overseers, Feb. 14, 1805; Jedidiah Morse, *The True Reasons on Which the Election of a Hollis Professor of Divinity in Harvard College was Opposed at the Board of Overseers, February 14, 1805* (Charlestown, MA, 1805), 27. For a fuller statement of the liberal opposition to Morse, see, "Review of The True Reasons on Which the Election of a Hollis Professor of Divinity in Harvard College was Opposed at the Board of Overseers, February 14, 1805," in *Monthly Anthology*, II (Mar. 1805), 152-58; "Letter to the Editor," *ibid.*, (Feb. 1805), 78-79.

consequences that would follow from placing a Unitarian in Harvard's official pulpit:

> What effect this change in the religious character of the Professorship, and of the University will gradually and ultimately produce in the state of our Churches, and on the religious and moral character of our citizens, cannot with so much certainty be foreseen. In respect to New England, it is an untried experiment. GOD forbid, that this change should be injurious and ruinous; that in consequence, the faith of our churches should become less pure, their discipline less strict, the standard of christian morality lowered, the difference lessened between those, who professedly serve God, and those who avowedly serve him not; till at length the spirit and power of our religion shall have evaporated, and its very forms be abolished.[35]

To Morse, the election was not simply a choice between differing theological creeds, it was a struggle to preserve intact the institutions that had created the New England character, itself the only bulwark against Republicanism. Ware's appointment threatened the "spirit and power" of Massachusetts Congregationalism and, as Morse saw it, was the first step down the road to the abolition of "its very forms," the end of the state-supported establishment. Without a commitment to true religion—that is to say, orthodox Calvinism—morality would be weakened and the very social order of the New England imperilled. In his private correspondence, Morse stated his position bluntly, "I consider Unitarianism as the democracy of Christianity."[36]

In response to Morse, a writer in the *Monthly Anthology*, the house organ of the Federalist literary community, calmly explained:

> Feeling as I do, most seriously interested in the prosperity of our Alma Mater, I shall lament as deeply injurious to her usefulness and reputation, that hour when her present liberal principles shall be exchanged for subscriptions to Articles of Faith; or, what is the same thing, when the

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[35] Morse, "True Reasons," 28.

[36] Morse to Joseph Lyman, June 15, 1805, Morse Family Papers (original in Houghton Library, Harvard). In his *Appeal to the Public*, iv, written a decade after Ware's election, Morse elaborated on the same point, "I am the friend of that ancient and venerable Institution [Harvard] as it *was* in the days of President WILLARD, and during the long line of his predecessors from the beginning as I am the friend of the present Constitution of the United States, as it was administered by the immortal WASHINGTON. But the changes which have taken place in the administration of both the one and of the other, I can never approve; because in both cases, I consider these changes radically wrong, and destructive of the best interests of the church and the country. The cases are parallel, and the effects ultimately the same."

> belief of a certain speculative system shall be esteemed necessary in him, who aspires to the honorable station of an instructor of her sons.[37]

The *Anthology* notably treated Ware's selection as continuing the college's "present liberal principles," an existing tradition of free inquiry (as opposed to creedalism) that was central to her "usefulness" to the Massachusetts community and its Federalist leadership. Indeed, echoing the Federalist attack on Jefferson and Madison, the *Anthology* dismissed the entirety of orthodox Calvinism as "belief of a certain speculative system." For his part, Morse placed orthodoxy ahead of political concerns, withholding his support from Federalist politicians rather than compromise his position in the college dispute.[38]

Even allowing for rhetorical posturing, the gulf between Morse and his opponents was enormous. The orthodox party voiced a faith-based view of New England society, while the Federalist camp espoused a moralistic and pragmatic ethic that reflected their fundamentally elitist vision of the social order. Each group believed itself to be representing the true heritage of the Bay State; how great was their divergence would appear in the upcoming election for Harvard president.

One reason that most historical accounts focus on the Hollis Professorship is a practical concern; after Ware's election, the primary sources falter and contemporaneous secondary accounts become sketchy. The college records themselves reveal little about the presidential deliberations once the Hollis Chair was filled. The surviving excerpts from Eliot's journal are limited to Ware's election. Eliphalet Pearson composed his January 1805 manuscript in an effort to influence public opinion about the Hollis Chair; when events moved too fast for him, he left the piece in draft. Given Pearson's ambition to become college president himself, he could not write about that election without accusations of impropriety. Morse's version of events was published within weeks of the overseers' February 14 meeting; it too lacked an account of the presidential contest.

Yet this silence does not mean that the impending presidential choice was not on the minds of all involved. Private speculation abounded, much

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[37] "Letter to the Editor," *The Monthly Anthology*, II (Feb. 1805), 78. Among the supporters of *The Monthly Anthology* and its attendant Anthology Society were John T. Kirkland, Joseph Stevens Buckminster, and other members of the liberal clergy; Fisher Ames was an early contributor. According to Banner, *To the Hartford Convention*, 148-52, "Despite their drift away from religious conservatism, their literary and political orthodoxy was unqualified, their social ideas almost reactionary."

[38] Morse to Lyman, Feb. 9, 1805, Morse Family Papers, (original in the Houghton Library, Harvard).

of it centering on liberal minister John T. Kirkland.[39] Nevertheless, it is clear that the participants did not consider control of the college fully settled by Ware's election; in particular, the theological liberals did not believe their power to be secure. Taken in this light, the polemics rushed into print after the overseers' vote reflect the parties' jockeying for public support in the upcoming presidential election.[40] Indeed, sources indicate that the High Federalists were working actively behind the scenes to install one of their own in the post; although, by its nature, the Hollis Professorship had to go to a clergyman, there was precedent for a layman to serve as president of the university.

Pearson remained the leading orthodox candidate for the presidency; defeat in the matter of the divinity chair had done nothing to blunt his personal ambitions. To the contrary, his service as acting president seems to have enhanced Pearson's desire to assume the office permanently. Nevertheless—theology apart—Pearson had made himself thoroughly obnoxious to all those around him. Looking back to his own college days, one admittedly hostile insider, the liberal John Pierce, recalled Pearson as "austere, conceited, & pedantic, to a high degree," while remarking that "[a]t College he was considered exceedingly partial, having favorites for whom nothing was too good, & butts whom he delighted to torment." Among his enemies it was even said that Pearson had been "ultra-liberal" until Willard's death, when he "suddenly claimed to be orthodox in theology: & the change was so sudden & thorough, without the appearance of better motives, that a large proportion of his old friends considered him as merely acting a part."[41]

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[39] *Ibid.* (If Ware is confirmed, "Dr. Kirkland of Boston will be pushed for President . . . then the revolution will be complete; this ancient fountain will be poisoned and its streams henceforth be the bane of evangelical religion.); cf., Bentley, *Diary*, Entry for Mar. 16, 1806, 3:219-220. Later, Bentley reported a far more suggestive scenario: the orthodox plan was for Pearson to be president and Morse to be offered the Hollis Chair, which he would resign in favor of Rev. Joshua Bates. *Ibid.*, Entry for Aug. 30, 1807, 3:317. James King Morse, *Jedidiah Morse, A Champion of New England Orthodoxy* (New York, 1939), 89, also suggests that Morse had a personal interest in the Hollis Chair.

[40] In addition to Morse's "True Reasons," see, for example, the liberal coverage in *The Monthly Anthology*, 2 (Jan. 1805), 37-42; *ibid.* (Feb. 1805), 78-79; *ibid.* (Oct. 1805), 541-49. For the importance of *The Monthly Anthology* as a voice for theological liberals, see Morse, *Jedidiah Morse*, 85.

[41] Pierce, Memoirs, vol. VII, 308-09 (entry appears in the volume for 1838); similar sentiments appear in Bentley, *Diary*, Entry for Jan. 27, 1805, 3:138; Mar. 16, 1806, 3:219. Pearson's papers contain the notes for a few sermons that appear to contain liberal views, although it is impossible to tell whether these were sermons he delivered or attended. For a more sympathetic view of Pearson that finds him consistent in his orthodoxy until the end

Whatever his theological leanings, in politics Pearson had always been an ardent Federalist, just like the rest of the college. For example, he kept a list of the members of the Massachusetts state government—Pearson compulsively chronicled almost every aspect of his life in a minute spidery hand—with notations as to how each voted on issues of import to the Federalist cause, such as the Virginia Resolutions. Above certain names, he entered an approving asterisk to denote "a good Federalist."[42] But by 1805, as the controversy unfolded, Pearson expressed a different opinion of the same Federalists. He had no doubt that, during the uproar over the Hollis chair, Federalist politicians had exercised their influence over the Boston press to close the newspapers to the orthodox. Complaining that the Federalists had manipulated the press in their own interest, he wrote:

> This is precisely that base policy, so often charged on those writers & presses, which have subverted the federal government. Can Federalists then adopt a policy and make use of weapons in the cause of religion, which they so justly brand with infamy in the cause of politics? O tempora! O mores![43]

Pearson's complaint was more than a simple accusation of hypocrisy, that Federalists had embraced the very Republican newspaper tactics of which they had complained during the national election. With a well-placed eye, Pearson pinned the blame squarely on Federalist politicians for leaguing with the liberal clergy to defeat the orthodox. Indeed, Morse himself was of the same mind. In early February 1805, shortly after Ware's election by the Corporation but before its confirmation by the Board of Overseers, he confided to a fellow conservative, Joseph Lyman, "It is unfortunate that a number of the ablest federalists are engaged (with truly

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of his life when, in fact, he did turn liberal, see Conrad E. Wright, "Eliphalet Pearson," *Sibley's Harvard Graduates* (Class of 1773), 18:283-304.

[42] Pearson recorded his social life, expenditures, and the uses of his time in his Journal. In 1799 and 1800, for example, he regularly recorded events that involved Morse, including attending several of Morse's sermons, traveling to Andover with Morse, and dining with Morse on a number of occasions. Pearson's contact with Fisher Ames's circle at this time was more limited, although he did call on Ames while visiting Dedham in early August 1799. Eliphalet Pearson, Journal, Jan. 1799-Oct. 1801, Eliphalet Pearson Papers (Massachusetts Historical Society); List of the Members of the Massachusetts State Government, Eliphalet Pearson Papers (Harvard University Archives, Pusey Library, Cambridge, MA).

[43] Pearson, Intended Publication, in Wright, "Election of Henry Ware," 276.

Jacobinic arts) in revolutionizing [Harvard] college, in which I am bound to oppose them."[44]

As discussed earlier, it appears that Pearson and Morse were right. A remarkable number of those opposing the orthodox—and playing pivotal roles in the meetings of the Corporation and the Board of Overseers—were connected through a single organization that enjoyed extremely strong ties to the High Federalists, namely, the Wednesday Evening Club. And, Dr. John Eliot—the man who endured the "foam of Billingsgate" at Pearson's hands—stood at the center of these overlapping constituencies. After the Revolutionary War, Boston had developed a network of literary, scientific, and social organizations that supported the close relationship between the region's lay and clerical elites to the benefit of both. The primary actors in these organizations were the liberal clergy. The Wednesday Evening Club stood at the pinnacle of these associations; its "membership list . . . [was] a roll of the social elite of Boston."[45]

Founded in 1777 for the purpose of "a large amount of social pleasure" and "that intellectual improvement which comes from intercourse with intelligent and cultivated minds," the Wednesday Evening Club assembled after tea for an evening of cards and conversation capped by a supper at which "good wine . . . [was] not spared." In 1803, the Club had twelve members; among them were Eliot, John Davis, John T. Kirkland, Josiah Quincy, and Fisher Ames. Eliot actually kept the club's membership roster between 1786 and 1813.[46] All of these men—leaving aside Ames for the moment—were theological liberals or attended churches with liberal ministers; without exception, they were enmeshed in High Federalist politics. As we have already seen, Eliot and Davis served as fellows of the Harvard Corporation; Kirkland, Quincy, and Eliot were all members of the Board of Overseers. Indeed, as a member of the Massachusetts Governor's Council, Ames himself had been an overseer from 1799 to 1803. What is more, Kirkland, Quincy, and Ames would each be elected to the presidency of Harvard. To add to the web, in 1809 John Pierce—Eliot's close friend,

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[44] Morse to Joseph Lyman, Feb. 9, 1805, Morse Family Papers. See also, Bentley, *Diary*, entry for Mar. 16, 1806, 3:219.

[45] Wright, *Beginnings of Unitarianism*, 261-62. The Wednesday Evening Club was hardly the sole venue where the Federalists involved in the Harvard controversy met. In 1804, Eliot, Quincy, Kirkland, and Davis were members of the Massachusetts Historical Society; Lathrop, Davis, Kirkland, Lowell, and Quincy were members of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. Other members of the Corporation and Board of Overseers were similarly involved in the organizations that comprised the Federalist social world.

[46] *Centennial Celebration of the Wednesday Evening Club* (Boston, 1876), 3, 38 (quoting Chastellux's *Travels in North America* for the description of the club's meetings).

first choice for Hollis Professor, and Harvard insider—would be added to the club. These ties go far to explain the assurance the liberals felt in going before the overseers on January 5, 1805.

The connections between the Wednesday Evening Club and High Federalist politics ran especially deep; almost from its inception, the club had enjoyed the role of political king-maker. Among its members, both Fisher Ames and Josiah Quincy held the Boston seat in the House of Representatives; both owed much of their political support to the circle of conservatives led by the Wednesday Evening Club. In particular, Ames's early political successes—the publication of a series of letters condemning Shays's Rebellion, election to the Massachusetts ratifying convention for the federal constitution, and his narrow victory over Sam Adams for Boston's seat in the House—followed closely on his election to the Club in 1786. By 1805, as the Harvard controversy unfolded, Ames stood at the very heart of that group of unreconstructed conservatives known to their enemies as the Essex Junto; he was the grand old man of Hamiltonian Federalism in New England. Quincy, for his part, had just embarked on his public career: he was a member of the Massachusetts Senate in 1804 and 1805, holding his seat in Congress from 1805 to 1813. In 1805, Quincy, along with Samuel Dexter, was also a member of the central committee of the Massachusetts Federalist party.

While serving in the House, both Ames and Quincy remained in close contact with the club, transmitting political gossip, soliciting and receiving political advice. Some of the liveliest and most astute accounts of Congress between 1789 and 1796 appear in Ames's regular letters to his "constituents" in the Wednesday Evening Club. The letters were addressed to Ames's friend, attorney George Richards Minot, and read aloud to the assembled membership. An index of both the club's intensely political atmosphere and the close ongoing ties of its clerical and political members throughout this period appears in an 1809 letter from John Eliot to Josiah Quincy in which Eliot playfully relayed the following message from John Kirkland: "He told me to tell you, however, this club was a dull scene since you left B*. While J. Q. A. was here we could not talk politics." The "J. Q. A." was, of course, John Quincy Adams, also a member of the club. The closing paragraph demonstrates the insular nature of this world: Eliot cheerfully reported the probable increase of Federalism in New England even while the party was struggling on the national scene.[47]

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[47] John Eliot to Josiah Quincy, Feb. 6, 1809, *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, 17 (1879-80), 17-18. Presumably, Eliot's prediction reflected New England's hardships under Jefferson's embargo.

As 1805 wore on and Harvard's presidency remained vacant, Pearson continued to block every other plausible nominee. According to Josiah Quincy, writing long after the fact, "To the candidates for the president's chair, proposed by the other members of the Corporation, his opposition was uniform; a decision was postponed until more than a year had elapsed after the death of President Willard."[48] In fact, the decision was postponed until December 11, 1805, almost fifteen months after Willard's death. On that day, the fellows of the Harvard Corporation met and "After considerable discussion, written votes were brought in for a President of Harvard College, from which it appeared that the Hon. Fisher Ames, Esq. was unanimously elected."[49] The nature of that "considerable discussion" is unclear as are the identities of the other nominees under consideration. Presumably the names that had already been floated in the February 1, 1805, trial ballot remained under consideration. These included John T. Kirkland, who, at thirty-five, was probably too young to be elected, but whose name repeatedly had surfaced in the early running. Wright states that, under Morse's influence, Pearson proposed "Dr. Smith," probably Samuel Stanhope Smith, then president of Princeton, "Dr. Green," likely Ashbel Green who became president of Princeton in 1812 when Smith resigned, "Dr. Cutler," the Reverend Manasseh Cutler of Beverly who was prominent in Federalist politics, and "Mr. Mellen," the Reverend John Mellen, a former Harvard Tutor, Dudleian lecturer and a member of both the Historical Society and the American Academy. The first two were middle Atlantic Presbyterians, and, therefore, men whose commitment to creedal orthodoxy would be unacceptable to the other fellows and to a majority of the overseers as well.[50]

The Corporation seized on Fisher Ames as a compromise candidate, but with little hope that Ames, whose declining health had been common knowledge since he retired from Congress in 1796, would accept the post. As reported by Sidney Willard, son of President Willard and college librarian in 1805, based on his "conversation with the Fellows," the choice of Ames "probably, was made with little expectation that the office would be accepted by him, and might seem to indicate a *wish* on the part of the

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[48] Quincy, *History of Harvard University*, 2:286.

[49] Entry of Dec. 11, 1805, Records of the Harvard Corporation, 77.

[50] Wright, "Election of Henry Ware," 256n; Bentley, *Diary*, Entry for Mar. 16, 1806, 3:219, supports the view that age as well as theology worked against Kirkland although he "was the best qualified man that could be found."

majority of the Corporation to escape from the alternative of choosing between two academical Professors."[51]

Ames was an apt choice to avoid theological controversy while cementing High Federalist control of the college administration. Although his political connections were a given, Ames's religious views were unusually obscure. Educated by a moderate Calvinist before he entered Harvard with the class of 1774, Ames's own religious life was largely a matter of social convention.[52] In fact, it seems that he was temperamentally uninterested in the subject; his personal writings are almost entirely devoid of religious references. However, evidence suggests that he privately tended to the moralism and biblicism typical of the liberals. Although tolerant of other religious groups—so long as their beliefs made them "better men"—Ames himself held a personal distaste bordering on horror for religious enthusiasm and for the more exotic efflorescences of New England theology.[53]

Indeed, Ames had a horror of all forms of "innovation." Thus, the orthodox could draw comfort from the fact that, in his hometown of Dedham, he had preferred traditional expressions of religious observance, such as the Westminster Confession. Liberals, on the other hand, understood that Ames supported these traditions as part of the web of customary associations that engendered social stability and protected public order from "republican license." In Congress, during the debate on the Bill of Rights, Ames had introduced the final version of the religion amendment to pass the House; his draft was aimed at permitting New England's religious establishments to remain in place. In 1801, he obliquely explained his action by writing that New England owed its unique "national" character and stability to its longstanding compelled public support for a learned

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[51] Sidney Willard, *Memories of Youth and Manhood* (2 vols., Cambridge, MA, 1855), 2:174.

[52] At about this time, Ames remarked to Timothy Pickering, "It is ever a misfortune for a man to differ from the political or religious creed of his fellow countrymen." Ames to Pickering, Feb. 14, 1806, Timothy Pickering Papers (Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston). The description of Ames's religious views is largely drawn from Arkin, "Regionalism and the Religion Clauses," 798-821.

[53] Fisher Ames to John Worthington Ames, Apr. 9, 1808, Fisher Ames Papers (Dedham Historical Society, Dedham, MA). Ames's son John had written disparagingly of the Baptists spreading through the Connecticut River Valley with the Second Great Awakening; to this Ames replied, "I make no doubt the Baptists are ignorant enthusiasts, but they are no doubt sincere. Their ignorance I suppose they could not help, but God will accept sincerity. Their forms make them no better perhaps no worse, and if their religion makes them better men, it does much good."

ministry in every town.[54] But, most important for the interests of Harvard in 1805, Ames had never openly denied the Trinity. In Ames the orthodox would get the outward form of orthodox observance, the liberals would get the assurance of inward agreement, and, most important, the Federalists would get a man of their own tastes and political philosophy. Morse shrewdly saw through the compromise. He complained to an intimate that "the revolutionists" had chosen wisely; "If he accepts, which remains doubtful," Morse observed, "I shall consider the revolution complete."[55]

As anticipated, Ames refused the post. On January 6, 1806, Ames wrote to Pearson from his retirement in Dedham that after "bestow[ing his] . . . most careful thoughts upon the subject," he declined the office. With characteristic elegance, he thanked the Corporation for its offer:

> However I may have been accustomed to rate my claim to reputation, I could not fail to perceive the influence of this event to extend and confirm it. I can say with gratitude, as well as with unfeigned sincerity, and on due reflection, that, situated as I am in life, and with my habits of thinking, there is no testimonial of public approbation that could be more soothing to my self-love, or in my conception, more substantially honorable to me, than the suffrages of the learned and truly respectable members of the Corporation.

Since the interests of the university, Ames drily suggested, were committed to those "whose zeal for their advancement are no less ardent than pure," he was "warranted to act on the supposition" that a candidate would be chosen "at least as well qualified for this important office as I can pretend, or even imagine I am thought, to be." Ames concluded, possibly with some irony, "may the great Source of wisdom enlighten you in the future election of a President."[56]

In private Ames alluded to a more complicated course. To his brother-in-law, former Federalist Congressman Thomas Dwight, Ames wrote:

> Sir, I was elected President—not of the United States; and do you know why I did not accept? I had no inclination for it. The health I have,

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[54] Fisher Ames, "Phocion VII," in *The Palladium* (New England), May 26, 1801.

[55] Morse to Rev. Dr. Green, Dec. 24, 1805, Morse Family Papers (duplicate). To those more likely to be sympathetic to Ames, Morse played his hand a little closer to the chest. See John Codman to Morse, Mar. 5, 1806, *ibid.*

[56] Fisher Ames to Eliphalet Pearson, Jan. 5, 1806, College Papers, vol. 5, Harvard University Archives (Pusey Library, Cambridge, MA). Pearson read the letter to the other fellows of the Corporation a week later. Entry of Jan.13, 1806, Records of the Harvard University Corporation, 80; Quincy, *History of Harvard*, 2:286.

> would have been used up at Cambridge in a year. My old habits are my dear comforts, and these must have been violently changed. How much I was in a scrape in consequence of the offer, and with what three weeks' mystery and address I extricated myself, are themes for conversation when we meet. I have extricated myself and feel like a truck or stage horse, who is once more allowed to roll in the dirt without his harness. Everybody had heard of Mrs. A's proposing that I take H.A. [Hannah Adams] if I went to Cambridge, as she would neither go nor learn Greek.[57]

The intriguing question is what was the nature of the "scrape" that Ames found himself in because of the offer. Certainly, in his letter to the Corporation, Ames alluded to "a friendly and authentic, though unofficial, channel" telling him the results of the December 11 meeting—information that permitted him to cut short the process before the Corporation sent his name to the overseers. It is tempting to speculate that this "channel" was his fellow Wednesday Evening Club member, John Eliot, who may have hoped to avoid the embarrassment of a refusal after a formal offer while still pressing Ames to accept the appointment.

A further clue to the nature of the "scrape" may be found in Ames's correspondence with a friend and fellow High Federalist, Senator Timothy Pickering. From Washington, Pickering was following the Harvard controversy with concern. On February 19, after Pickering learned of Ames's decision, he wrote Ames a letter that reflected the Federalist mobilization against the Morse-Pearson alliance and the political pressure on Ames to accept the presidency. At the same time, Pickering described how he had learned that Morse openly expected that, with Ames out of the way, the Corporation would have no choice but to elect Pearson:

> I have anxiously wished to hear that you accepted the Presidency of Harvard College. That is otherwise determined and I now learn from a letter received here, by a fellow lodger, from Dr. Morse, that Professor Pearson is to fill that office. I have never heard one gentleman, who has

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[57] Fisher Ames to Thomas Dwight, Feb. 1, 1806, in Ames, ed., *Works of Fisher Ames*, 1:355. Dwight was a member of the state senate (1796-1803), a member of Congress (1803-1805), and of the Governor's Council (1808-1809). "H. A." refers to Hannah Adams who had written a history of New England that was abridged for use as a school text. Jedidiah Morse was accused of plagiarizing Adams's work for his *Compendious History of New England*. The liberals, especially the *Monthly Anthology*, supported Adams. Morse himself believed that the liberals were seeking revenge for his part in the college controversy: "Had there been no such revolution in the College, or no opposition to it—no publication concerning it, on my part; the public would never have heard of any of these complaints and accusations of Miss ADAMS." Morse, *An Appeal to the Public*, iii.

graduated there since Mr. Pearson was a professor, who has not spoken unfavorably of him. Not of his learning, but of his temper and character. The general expression was, that he was universally hated. If this be so, can it be expedient to elect him. But he is an Orthodox Christian: and the greater utility of the institution is to be sacrificed to theoretical principles of theology. Can no fitter man be found? and if there can, is it not possible to have him elected?[58]

Timothy Pickering (1745-1829)
By de Saint-Mémin. Courtesy of the National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution.
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon.

Pearson's character weighed heavily against him even with Pickering, a man not himself known for charm or levity. But, it is also virtually impossible to envision Jedidiah Morse describing the doctrine of original sin or the Trinity as a mere "theoretical principle of theology," much less

[58] Pickering to Ames, Feb. 19, 1808, Pickering-Ames Correspondence, Timothy Pickering Papers. The fellow lodger was apparently New Hampshire Senator William Plumer. See Plumer to Morse, Feb. 24, 1806, Morse Family Papers. Morse had written to others suggesting that the University would now have no choice but to elect Pearson. Morse to Lyman, Feb. 19, 1806, Morse Family Papers.

contending that these principles should be sacrificed to the "greater utility" of Harvard. In fact, Pickering was an extreme theological liberal—apparently verging on rationalism—and actually refused to teach his children about either the Trinity or divine revelation.[59] In the Harvard electoral controversy, Pickering embodied the Federalist worry that the election of an abrasive, albeit religiously orthodox, candidate would disrupt the role of the college in the social structure of seacoast Massachusetts. If anything, it was a combination of character and theology that destroyed Pearson's candidacy; it is difficult to say what would have happened had the orthodox been able to deploy a more personally attractive candidate whose presence would have assured political continuity within the college.

Pearson read Ames's letter declining the appointment to the fellows at the Corporation meeting of January 13. Without Ames, Josiah Quincy recalled, "The difficulties which ensued in relation to the choice of a President were exciting and peculiar," particularly since the outcome of the upcoming state election was very much in doubt.[60] As government officials constituted a majority of the overseers, under the circumstances, further delay raised the dread possibility of a Republican voice in the choice of Harvard's president. This left the Corporation no alternative but to choose between the "two academical Professors," who at least were both Federalists. The race thus came down to Pearson and Samuel Webber, Hollis Professor of Mathematics and Natural Philosophy, a dark horse candidate with liberal theological views. Webber won.[61]

Little more needs be said of the election itself than Josiah Quincy's laconic remark "At a meeting of the Corporation on the 28th of February [1806], a decided opinion favorable to the election of Mr. Webber was manifested by the members of the Board, and Dr. Pearson immediately gave notice of his intention to resign his Professorship and his seat in the Corporation."[62] The Corporation formally elected Webber on March 3, 1806; the Board of Overseers ratified the decision eight days later. Once the overseers finished voting, the lieutenant governor read Pearson's letter

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[59] Banner, *To the Hartford Convention*, 164n.3. Banner notes that "Pickering detailed some of his attitudes, if one dare believe it, to Jefferson himself in a letter of Feb. 12, 1821, Pickering MSS, MHS." *Ibid.*

[60] Quincy, *History of Harvard*, 2:286.

[61] The political element of the timing appears in Bentley, *Diary*, Entry of Mar. 16, 1806, 3:219-20; the uncertainty of outcome in Morse's letters, *e.g.*, Morse to Lyman, Feb. 9, 1805; Morse to Lyman Apr. 22, 1806, Morse Family Papers. Although Webber is conventionally treated as a dark horse, there are hints in the *Monthly Anthology*, II (Jan. 1805), 43, that he was being groomed as a possible candidate.

[62] Quincy, *History of Harvard*, 2:286.

of resignation from the faculty to the meeting.[63] From his vantagepoint in Salem, William Bentley confirmed the common view that Federalist maneuvering lay behind Pearson's defeat: during the election of Ware, he wrote in his diary, Pearson "was betrayed into the indiscretions of his party & the Federalists determined that he should never fill the President's chair."[64]

According to John Pierce, Webber accepted the presidency with reluctance, first because "he had a diffident sense of his qualifications for the trust" and, second, because "from the previous election of Mr. Ames he felt, that he was not the first in the minds of the government."[65] In any event, Webber's tenure in office was brief; he died in July 1810.

The next president was John T. Kirkland. Once again, the observations of John Pierce—intimate of John Eliot, a Federalist stalwart, religious liberal, secretary of the Board of Overseers from 1816 to 1849, and now himself a member of the Wednesday Evening Club—are worth noting since he was close to the victorious circle of theological liberals throughout the extended Harvard controversy. It appears that, as an insider, Pierce did not believe the liberals firmly in control of the college until Kirkland's election. This perception finds corroboration in the almost unseemly series of dueling eulogies that followed Ames's death in 1808. Both the orthodox and the liberals tried to rewrite the history of the last presidential election to demonstrate that Ames (by then a member of the Episcopal communion) espoused their theological views, presumably in order to bolster their positions for the next presidential opening.[66] In fact, what had made Ames

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[63] Entry of Mar. 11, 1806, Records of the Overseers of Harvard College, vol. 5, 13. Pearson's elaborate letter of resignation appears *ibid.*, 21-39. For an uncharitable description of Pearson's descent into obscurity after leaving Harvard, see Pierce, Memoirs, vol. VII, 308 (in the volume for 1838).

[64] Bentley, *Diary*, entry of Mar. 16, 1806, 3:219.

[65] Pierce, entry of July 1810, Memoirs, vol. I, 289.

[66] After Ames died in 1808, the various factions returned to the controversy with a set of competing eulogies. *The Panoplist and Missionary Magazine United*, July 1808, a periodical edited by Jedidiah Morse, ran a "Tribute to the Hon. Fisher Ames, L.L.D." in which Ames was presented as an "exemplary Christian" and "generally Calvinistic." The anonymous writer explained that Ames was "[a]n enemy to metaphysical and controversial divinity. . . [who] . . . disliked the use of technical and sectarian phrases. The term *Trinity*, however, he frequently used with reverence, and in a manner, which implied his belief of the doctrine. His persuasion of the *divinity of Christ*, he often declared." *Ibid.*, 92-94.

The liberal rebuttal fell to future Harvard President, John T. Kirkland in his "Memoir," published as the preface to the 1808 edition of the *Works of Fisher Ames* (as well as to the 1854 edition). Kirkland described Ames as placing a "full reliance on the divine origin of

so attractive a candidate was that he stood above religion; he worshipped as a Federalist.

Pierce's account cast substantial light on what the old guard had looked for five years earlier, when it elected Ames and settled for Webber:

> Indeed, though Dr. Kirkland is a high federalist, and has the entire confidence of that class of politicians stigmatized with the opprobrious epithet of the Essex Junto, and though he decidedly belongs to the liberal sect in religion, yet he maintains & expresses his opinions with so much discretion and moderation, and with such complete control over his passions that he almost wholly disarms opposition of its hatred and its virulence.[67]

In the privacy of his own journal, from the vantagepoint of 1810 and the deepening rift between the theological camps, however, Pierce freely gloated over the defeat of the Calvinists from New Haven:

> The Connecticut clergy, & those who united with them in religious sentiments, appear wounded at this appointment for they consider it hostile to the prevalence of their religious doctrines. No doubt, it is one of the completest triumphs of free inquiry in matters of religion over Calvinian usurpation ever known in the annals of the University.[68]

Christianity" although his convictions were limited to "those leading principles, about which Christians have little diversity of opinion." According to Kirkland, Ames measured the "genuineness and value of [religious] impressions by their moral tendency"; "in estimating a sect, he regarded more its temper than its tenets." Ames was "the last to countenance exclusive claims to purity of faith, founded on a zeal for particular dogmas which multitudes of good men . . . utterly reject." Instead, the orthodox had "misconstrued" Ames's "prudence and moderation" with regard to sacred subjects into an "assent to propositions, which here merely meant not to deny" or into "an adoption of opinions or language which he merely meant not to condemn." Kirkland, "Memoir," in Ames, ed., *Works of Fisher Ames*, 1:24-26.

Ames joined the Episcopal Church late in life as a result of a dispute with Dedham's First Congregational Church over pew allocations. The minister of Dedham's Episcopal church, the Reverend William Montague, thus had standing to enter the field with a "Memoir of Fisher Ames," *Diocesan Register and the New England Calendar for 1812*, (Dedham, 1811), 238-47. He portrayed Ames as a moderate Calvinist of the old school in the model of "the late Dr. Doddridge of (old) England, and the present Dr. Joseph Lathrop, of New-England, and all the best writers of the Episcopal Church." At the same time, Montague stressed that Ames was temperamentally a traditionalist and favored formality in worship. Montague's account is closer in tone to Kirkland than to the *Panoplist*.

[67] Pierce, Entry of July 1810, Memoirs, vol. I, 289.

[68] *Ibid.*

Notwithstanding his own primarily religious interests, Pierce thought retaining the confidence of the High Federalist power structure stood at the forefront of the college government's concerns in selecting a new president. Any other result would have been "usurpation." Pierce simply took for granted that ultra-Federalist politics went hand-in-glove with "decidedly" liberal theology; in this "completest triumph," all that was left to the orthodox was the cold comfort of Kirkland's discretion in maintaining his otherwise unpalatable opinions. The Corporation's initial selection of Ames supports reading a similar substantially political agenda into the earlier presidential election of 1805. Pearson and the orthodox may have been disenchanted with the Federalists for their politicking on behalf of Ware, but they still shared much in political outlook. In 1805, while the sides were still on speaking terms, it was to everyone's advantage to choose a college president who would retain the support of Massachusetts's economic and political elite without unduly alienating the orthodox.

The preservation of Harvard's role in the political life of the commonwealth rested at the heart of both elections, although this aim was more clearly articulated after Ware was installed in the Hollis Chair. In this, the Harvard controversy was not a bouleversement of the established order—intellectual, political, religious, or social—but its continuation. It was a reassertion of control by the same close circle of friends and acquaintances that had dominated Massachusetts Federalism since independence, whose style of politics and intellectual elitism marked them as visitors from the Enlightenment in the new Age of Romanticism. That these events ultimately led to the dissolution of the Standing Order they were intended to uphold is an irony foreseen only by outsider Jedidiah Morse. To the participants, the victory of the orthodox interlopers from New Haven would have been the true college revolution, unseating *veritas* for the dubious solace of *lux*.