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Stanton Coit and the Neighborhood Guild: Ethical idealism and social reform in New York City

Staples, George Henry, Ph.D.

City University of New York, 1990

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4

STANTON COIT AND THE NEIGHBORHOOD GUILD: ETHICAL IDEALISM AND SOCIAL REFORM IN NEW YORK CITY

by

GEORGE H. STAPLES

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in History in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York.

1990

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate faculty in History in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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I call upon you, young men, be admonished, to obey your heart, and be the nobility of this land . . . Who should lead the leaders, but the young American. . . free, healthful, strong . . . It is the country of the Future . . . a country of beginnings, of projects, of designs, of expectations.

Ralph Waldo Emerson
The Young American (1844)

What are we doing to translate those great ideas of liberty and justice . . . The cause of democracy is the moral cause of the dignity and the worth of the individual . . . Every generation has to accomplish democracy over again for itself; that its very nature, its essence, is something that cannot be handed on from one person or one generation to another, but has to be worked out in terms of needs, problems and conditions of the social life.

John Dewey
Democracy and Education in the World (1938)

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INTRODUCTION

Among those who carried the banner of social reform in the waning years of the nineteenth century no one has proven as enigmatic as Stanton Coit. While recognized in his own time as "the Father of American university settlements," the chronicles of that movement which grew out of his original efforts accorded him little if any distinction.

Though he established the Neighborhood Guild in 1887, "the first social settlement in America," which, four years later, became the University Settlement Society of New York, Coit's own role in these events has so far gone unnoticed. These activities, which form the basis of his claim to any recognition at all, have long since dissolved into the larger purposes to which they gave rise.

To those drawn to the work of the settlement house movement, especially during its formative years, Coit's experience had genuine meaning, and the lack of knowledge about his activities only serves to reinforce the fact that we still do not possess a clear history of the origins of the social settlement in America.

One important aspect of that history, now almost completely forgotten, is the extent to which Coit's work at the Neighborhood Guild benefited from his association with Felix Adler's Ethical Culture Society. It was Coit who first entertained the idea of organized neighborhoods, and

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in whose institutional form he joined the tenets of ethical idealism to the practical needs of social reform, which, in time, became the guiding philosophy of the settlement house movement.

Against this background I have sought to focus attention on several basic objectives: (a) to provide an accurate account of the life and work of Stanton Coit in America and thereby establish an historical record; (b) to examine the supportive relationship between the Neighborhood Guild and the Ethical Culture Society and so reaffirm the fundamental connection between social settlement work in America and the Ethical Movement, and (c) to make full use of Coit's unpublished autobiographical fragment, together with a collection of letters, within the context of a serious interpretive biography. Directly allied to these aspects of Coit's life and work, and central to it, is his own role in the Ethical Culture Society.

The seventh of eight children, George Stanton Coit was born in Columbus, Ohio, on August 11, 1857. His father became a successful softgoods merchandiser while his mother left the traditional Episcopal church for the life of a committed Spiritualist, a decision which had a profound effect upon her son. Coit graduated from Amherst College "where strong missionary influence was fused with the new philosophy of human relations."[1]

One day in 1881 he met and heard Felix Adler, "and then

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all uninvited called on the latter to say that he had decided to be an Ethical Lecturer."[2] Counting himself a disciple of Emerson, "Coit explained it was ethics and its concrete applications that attracted him."[3] With a youthful brashness that surprised Adler, Coit announced that "preaching is not our chief means of furthering the spread of goodness; . . . rather to help change the physical and social environment of men, so that it shall be more favorable to a truly human life."[4]

Adler advised his impetuous candidate to pursue further academic work whereupon Coit enrolled at Columbia University and attended lectures on political science and constitutional history while conducting" the moral instruction classes of the children of members of the Ethical Society."[5] After an apprenticeship that lasted about eighteen months Coit went abroad to complete his formal training in Germany.

During the summer of 1885, "while pursuing graduate studies in the University of Berlin, he learned about Toynbee Hall through its first American resident, Howard S. Bliss. As soon as Coit received his degree he sought . . . the privilege of residence at this, the very first settlement, living at Toynbee Hall from January, 1886, until his return to New York in March."[6] Deeply impressed with what he saw "Coit determined to undertake a similar enterprise," and throughout the spring and summer of that

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year "spent some time searching . . . a particular part of the East Side in which family life most obviously lacked the moral initiative a group of young resident educators and reformers might bring."[7]. By early fall his search ended in Forsyth Street on the Lower East Side where "Dr. Coit took up his residence," joined shortly thereafter by Charles B. Stover. "Out of this experiment grew the Neighborhood Guild."[8].

While Toynbee Hall presented Coit with "ideas and impulses" which found expression in this new American enterprise, it was Charles B. Stover who first called attention to the role of ethical culture in the organization of the Neighborhood Guild. Essaying the importance of this philosophy Stover affirmed that Coit's "prime endeavor here seems to have been not to model the Guild after Toynbee Hall, viewed as a University Settlement, but rather, in accordance with his own ethical system, so to organize the people around the family, as a unit, as to originate forces of social regeneration."[9]. In writing of his work with the youth of the Lower East Side Stover recounted how Coit "resolved to do for them what parents of wealth and leisure would do for their own children."[10].

Coit's approach to the social problems of the industrial city found its clearest expression in Neighborhood Guilds: An Instrument of Social Reform (1891). In this book Coit plainly indicated that "a true insight

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into the spirit and methods of the guild will perhaps be gained most readily by noting that it is an expansion of the family idea of cooperation."[11.] The fundamental idea of the Guild was nothing less than "the conscious organization of the intellectual and moral life of the people."[12.] Embracing a new sense of community the Guild proposed to awaken "the masses mentally and morally" and so advance the enlightenment of the people in social principles. To accomplish this Coit proposed that

> irrespective of religious belief or non-belief, all the people, men, women, and children, in any one street, or any small number of streets, in every working-class district . . . shall be organized into a set of clubs, which are by themselves, or in alliance with those of other neighbourhoods, to carry out, or induce others to carry out, all the reforms - domestic, individual, industrial, educational, provident or recreative - which the social ideal demands.[13.]

Once this step had been taken Coit believed conditions would facilitate the realization of a "just state," which would embrace trade unionism, the reduction of work hours, access to leisure and other reforms. Espousing an organic approach to the life of the city, Stanton Coit wanted "to reorganize the lower classes as guilds of approximately one hundred family units in each, "thereby destroying the slums and stimulating a civic culture that was firmly in and of the city, taking its agenda from the entire urban

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experience.[14] "Unlike many middle-class socialists and reformers of his day, he had complete faith in the ability of the workingman to run his own affairs; leadership for activities sponsored by the guild was to arise directly out of the community ."[15].

The guild idea sparked a radical spirit among many of the volunteer workers who came to reside with and share the life of the people they served. Jane Robbins, a former Smith College student and one of the first residents of the New York College Settlement on Rivington Street, was among the earliest female volunteers to work with Coit. Writing almost a quarter century later her vivid recollection of that time provides further evidence of Coit's disposition as well as the influence he exerted on those around him. "Stanton Coit . . . had been really eloquent on the subject of forming close friendships and of grappling these young people to us with hoops of steel. We caught the idea and as a result some of these twelve year-old girls have grown up to be our closest friends."[16].

In a brief article for the Ethical World, written in 1907, Coit reflected on his own role in the settlement house movement. With obvious pride he noted that "out of this effort of mine grew the now well-established and well-known University Settlement of New York City. It was the parent of all the social settlements in America."[17]. While Coit drew attention to the institutional form his own experiment

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now assumed he did so "that the connection between social settlement work in America and the Ethical Movement should not be overlooked."[18].

In a highly informative essay which served to introduce a volume of selections from Coit's writings, Harold Blackham, a close friend and associate, drew out the parallel between the two movements when he remarked that "this kind of work, it was itself an ethical movement with a Christian inspiration, appealed strongly to Coit. He had an exceptional power of attracting, stimulating, and influencing young men, and his most directly successful work was done in this field of Neighbourhood Guilds, as he called them. . . He had planted the idea in American soil and it had taken root."[19].

Gustave Spiller, who met Coit shortly after the latter's arrival in London in 1888, "when he came in succession to Moncure Conway to the South Place Ethical Society," reinforced this assessment of Coit's work in a biographical profile for The Literary Guide. "He gathered a large number of university graduates around him, and became thus, as Jane Addams phrased it, the Father of American university settlements."[20].

Stanton Coit's work in the Neighborhood Guild represents the centerpiece of what served as the experimental stage in the history of the American settlement house movement. While he exercised little direct influence

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in the development of that movement after 1888, Coit's experience impacted in significant ways on the future course it assumed.

In the Neighborhood Guild one finds the principal ingredients which comprised the settlement idea, a new approach to community organization together with residency in the neighborhood, the most distinctive feature of settlement life. In less than two years, Coit's simple yet extraordinary decision, to live among the poor, gave new emphasis to the neighborhood as an organic force in urban life and shifted the attention of philanthropy away from general relief to specific causes originating within its borders.

The effort directed at neighborhood organization became the operational format which later settlements used to attack the problems of the industrial city. The emphasis given to cross-class relationships, the use of college-educated middle class men and women who interacted with working-class youths, formed the social backbone of settlement house activities well into the twentieth century. Together with the high visibility and established relationships which were the fruits of residency, Coit's approach developed a sense of civic awareness among people unaccustomed to the politics of municipal government. His faith in the abilities of the working-class to manage their own affairs renewed the traditional belief in the dignity

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and self-worth of the individual.

The balanced program of activities Coit introduced in the Neighborhood Guild, with its emphasis on group solidarity, education, recreation, and cultural pursuits, established the basic agenda pursued by the settlement houses. And, in adhering to "his own ethical system," Coit fostered ideals, which, free of denominational teachings, nevertheless recognized the place of religious values in the moral and civic life of the community. The secular humanism adopted by most settlement houses became, in essence, a powerful expression of the role of religious liberty in American nationalism.

Given the importance of Coit's activities and their influence on the future course of the American settlement house movement, it is unfortunate that the early literature accorded him so little attention. There is no mention of Coit's work at the Neighborhood Guild in either Arthur C. Holden's The Settlement Idea (1992) or Robert A. Woods' The Neighborhood in Nation-Building (1923). While The Settlement Horizon (1922) by Robert A. Woods and Albert J. Kennedy recognized his pioneer claim, the authors failed to provide an adequate assessment of Coit's historical importance to the movement, satisfied merely to identify certain influences which informed his decision to settle in a notorious slum.

In addition to his exposure to the new ideas then

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floating through Amherst, the early writers on the settlement house also mentioned the opportunity presented by Coit's work as "an assistant to Dr. Adler" at the Ethical Culture Society of New York. This was the position Coit held at the time he moved to the Lower East Side, one of the responsibilities of which was his activity at the Guild, Regrettably, there has been no attempt to pursue this opportunity beyond the simple detail to the far more important historical connection between the values implicit in Coit's ethical idealism and the secular humanism which became the guiding philosophy of the settlement house movement. If Toynbee Hall was the inspiration for the Neighborhood Guild, which it certainly was, Coit endowed his experiment with the ethical philosophy nurtured in the soil of America.

The consequence of these omissions has been to detach Coit's formative contributions from the early history of the institution he established while denying him any recognition as a seminal figure in the movement as well as an important reformer of the period. With respect to the latter point, Coit's role as headworker of the University Settlement Society during a critical moment in the 1890's has received virtually no attention at all.

Hopefully, this study, which brings to light much new information, will force a re-examination of these questions and help to establish Coit's rightful place in the early

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history of the American settlement house movement.

Stanton Coit left New York in the summer of 1888 to become minister at South Place Chapel in London, which he insisted be rechristened an ethical society. In his own description of this event Coit became the Ethical Movement's "first missionary to a foreign land."

During his tenure at South Place, which lasted slightly more than three years, Coit established the Neighborhood Guild at Leighton Hall, Kentish Town. Imbued with the same ethical content as the guild in New York, Leighton Hall represented one more example of the cross-cultural exchange of ideas which characterized social reform on both sides of the Atlantic. Here the reverse flow of the same influence proved truly unique. In the brief span of a few years Stanton Coit carried the settlement idea to the United States, seasoned it with a particular American purpose, and now brought this renovated institution to flourish in an impoverished suburb of London.

Coit's activities during this period set him apart from both the pioneers of the American settlement house and the leadership of the Ethical Movement in the United States. Yet, the same activities placed him at the crossroads of these two influential ideas and suggest that, at this juncture, Stanton Coit was an important transatlantic personality.

His contribution to English society, in which he spent

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more than half his life, led Gustave Spiller to identify Coit as "the founder and chief exponent of the British Ethical Movement."[21] Beginning in the last decade of the nineteenth century Coit took an active role in "the work of organizing and addressing Ethical Societies which during this period, 1891-1914, were formed in various parts of London."[22] Upon leaving South Place Coit established the West London Ethical Society, where, "from 1894, he drew large audiences, first in Prince's Hall, Piccadilly, then in Town Hall, Kensington, and finally in the place where he most fully developed his mind and purpose, the Ethical Church, Bayswater,"[23] It was here that he advanced the idea that Ethical Culture was the vanguard of a new reformation within the Anglican Church.

During this time Coit "was at the height of his powers and these were productive and expansive years." He worked tirelessly on behalf of the Ethical Movement and was instrumental in the formation of the Union of Ethical Societies as well as the Moral Instruction League," which sought to make ethical instruction more temporal in private educational institutions."[24] He established the International Foundation for Moral and Religious Leadership, "which enlisted and prepared men to come to the United States to serve as leaders of the Ethical Culture Society."[25] In addition, Coit became the editor of the Ethical World, "at first a weekly and later a monthly

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journal serving an active and growing movement."[26] Following its inauguration in 1890 Coit was a regular contributor to the International Journal of Ethics.

In 1898 Coit married Mrs. Fanny Adela Wetzler, "a liberal l'emigre from Germany who abetted his interest in women's rights and bore him three daughters, . . . Gwendolen, Adela, and Virginia."[27] Public affairs held a certain attraction for Coit who identified himself particularly with socialism and women's rights, "worked with the Fabians, and stood, unsuccessfully, as Labour Party candidate to Parliament for Wakefield in 1906.

In the year following Coit's departure from South Place, and before his activities on behalf of the British Ethical Movement reached critical proportions, circumstances arose which led him to return to America as headworker of the University Settlement. Arriving in New York in December of 1892, Coit assumed this position at a time when the incorporation of the Neighborhood Guild into the newly organized University Settlement Society and the consequent infusion of financial resources sought to test the extent of the Guild's influence without evoking the radicalism of recent years. Coit's experience and familiarity with the work of the Guild appealed to the Society and generated considerable optimism for such developments "as can come only under the direction of the mind that conceived the idea."[28]

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While Coit responded to these expectations with an integrated plan of action undertaken by the Tenth Ward Social Reform Club, his most highly publicized work came in response to the financial panic of 1893 and the subsequent depression, one of the most severe in American history. As an active member of the East Side Relief Work Committee Coit took the position that only the city had the resources to provide work for the great mass of unemployed. Against the charges he advocated state socialism Coit sought to expose the inherent weaknesses of a system which relied on voluntary organizations, private philanthropy, and preventive charity in the face of massive suffering and unemployment.

Having set himself against the political establishment Coit now endured increasing criticism which began to undermine his effectiveness. When the West London Ethical Society fell upon hard times, Coit, assessing his own position, seized the moment and returned to London in April of 1894. His departure marked the end of Coit's life and work in America, and it is at this point that he all but disappears from public view.

While his continued involvement with the Ethical Movement led Coit to make periodic visits to the United States during the ensuing years, such trips did little to enhance public awareness of his earlier contributions to social reform . On one such excursion, made in December of

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1900, Coit arrived here to renew acquaintances with members of the Ethical Culture Society and to deliver a series of lectures. While in this country he created "a state of amusing excitement" by a speech delivered to the Philadelphia Society, in the course of which "Dr. Coit said many harsh things about America and Americans."[29] Reacting to "his opinion about us and our ways," The New York Times asked, in rather sardonic fashion, "who is he anyway, and what difference does it make to anybody what he thinks?"[30]

No stranger to controversy, such occasional publicity ill-served Coit's reputation while it may have convinced some that he was unworthy of recognition. Yet, this incident, occasioned by his strong feelings toward the material civilization he found in the United States, and now withered by the passage of time, speaks to the larger issue, for it illustrates the central dilemma surrounding the life and work of Stanton Coit, and hence, his place in American history. In the final analysis it is necessary to know who he is and what he thought, and that issue is the basic purpose of this study.

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II.

If our knowledge of the public man appeared limited the contours of his private life seemed even more difficult to recover. One writer described Coit as "an idiosyncratic figure . . .a nervous extrovert with an excitable disposition and a flair for the dramatic."[31.]

In his pursuit of those varied interests which placed him in the role of settlement worker, social reformer, religious statesman, and Fabian socialist Coit frequently displayed a penchant for publicity and dramatic effect. His distinctive and highly individualized approach to the problems of the working poor set him apart from contemporary reformers and often provided good copy for newspaper reporters alert to controversial ideas. Moreover, his regular commentary on social issues allowed him to cultivate a public persona without the usual political obligations. On occasion this disposition backfired. His advocacy of radical measures to deal with massive unemployment during the critical winter of 1893-94, regardless of their merits, actually undercut his position.

Coit's temperament often fluctuated with the circumstances in which he found himself. To the young he was easily accessible and outgoing but seldom demonstrative. Among those with whom he worked Coit appeared, at times, more distant. Personal intimacy proved difficult and his

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numerous activities kept him in constant motion, a pattern of behavior unsuited to close, enduring relationships. According to his daughter, Virginia, "in theory he was very democratic and believed in individual responsibility. In practice he was . . . autocratic."[32] Stanton Coit was not a man given easily to compromise.

Coit's forceful personality and self-contained opinions frequently worked at cross-purposes with his underlying objectives and bred a tension that, in the long run, proved self-defeating. Nowhere was this more evident than in his work in the Ethical Movement. Coit's determination to impress his own personality on South Place, his decision to establish an Ethical Church, his challenge to the Church of England to remake itself along Ethical lines, and his continuing fascination with liturgy and ritual took him far beyond the acceptable bounds of the American Ethical-humanist camp and led Felix Adler to regard him as "the enfant-terrible of the Ethical Movement."

The distinctive traits Coit exhibited in life also reveal themselves in his autobiographical memoir. In this work, begun in 1937, Coit wished to record and give meaning to "my own instinctive way of welcoming the incidents of life, each as it emerges, but they are also as good an illustration as I possess of the kinds of events which to me appear worth narrating."[33]

What has survived of Coit's original effort is a

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fragment of forty-four legal size pages loosely organized into six chapters.[34] Within these pages the author claims to reveal "not eccentricities of my individuality, but characteristics of the things often trivial and ridiculous but sometimes important and nobly serious, which have befallen me from without."[35] The excitement generated by Coit's memoir originates in part form the absence of personal correspondence, beyond a handful of letters, or a collection of private papers, both consumed in a bombing raid which destroyed his London home.[36]

From the standpoint of biography the characteristics which emerge as important derive from Coit's recollections of family life in Ohio, dominated as it was by his mother's spiritualism, as well as the formative influences he encountered at Amherst College. Those incidents cover a period of approximately fourteen years and provide information essential to an understanding of his subsequent life.

What may appear as trivial are Coit's "psychometrical experiments and my experience of spiritistic phenomena."[37] Reading character was a practice associated with mesmerism, a healing procedure first employed in Europe and which attracted wide interest in America during the first half of the nineteenth century. "Mesmerized persons, especially those who attributed their powers to the inspiration of guardian spirits, were indistinguishable in their actions

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from many of the later trance mediums of the spiritualist movement."[38.] Coit's mother believed in such guardian spirits and was known to frequent trance mediums. Some of the finer aspects of psychometry and its relation to other forms of psychic phenomena Coit learned from William James.[39.]

These alleged experiments began when Coit was twenty-nine and occurred intermittently over a period of twenty years. His experience with spiritistic phenomena took place when he was eleven, and, while open to various interpretations, Coit's description provides a narrative rendition of the physical effects characteristic of spirit manifestations during the period in which he grew up. The fascination Coit exhibited with these forms of parapsychology is one indication of the impact of his early and prolonged exposure to spiritualism.

If these several kinds of events, at once historical and psychological, constitute the substance of Coit's autobiography, his narration reveals the self-perception of the author at the time he wrote about them. Though unfinished, his autobiography clearly presents "the consciousness of the driving force" which animated his life. It is here, in "a man's master form," that the private personality discloses the intrinsic background of the public figure and demonstrates that to know the man we must first understand the child.

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In projecting certain experiences of his childhood Coit generates the self-portrait of a youth who suffers both from a lack of confidence as well as the need to give substance to his deepest aspirations. The influences he encountered at Amherst, together with Coit's own decision to abandon spiritualism, what he referred to as "my one great revolution," liberated his mind and led him to affirm belief in a set of permanent ideals which became the cornerstone of his faith in a humanist religion.

His determination to join the Ethical Culture Society, "and two years later to study in Germany the critical philosophy of Kant," provided the opportunity and intellectual training" which enabled him to develop and teach his lifelong convictions.[40.] Coit's adherence to such ideals and the manifest expression of his devotion to an ethical system of life epitomized the power of reason in the world and awakened in him the potentialities resident in the formation of personality.

For Stanton Coit the continuity of a man's life with his faith identified the essential character of the man. This is "the driving force" which animates his autobiography, and, in the events recorded here, defines the essential meaning they had for him. Insofar as the shape of the narrative allowed him to portray the incidents of his life as dictated by a "prior purpose and vision," the reader is left, not with the annals of a man's life, but an

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expression of his faith.

What emerges is, in William James' phrase, "a relative identity," in which a number of experiences, psychologically and spatially separated, come together in a representation that contains values which belong to them all. As someone who entertained his own ideas about "the religious propensities of man," William James believed that

> the identity which the I discovers, as it surveys the long procession can only be a relative identity, that of a slow shifting in which there is always some common ingredient retained. The commonest element of all, the most uniform, is the possession of the same memories. However different the man may be from the youth, both look back on the same childhood, and call in their own.[41]

The very presence of a "relative identity" implies that "even the personality called I in an autobiography must be a creature of the story and not the model himself." Coit reinforces this view by his insistence that "my story is what happens in the book, not a string of occasions in the world."[42]

Stanton Coit's approach to autobiography took the form of a vigorous expression of naturalistic aesthetics where attention centers on the pervasive quality of various experiences which have some correspondence to actual events in his life. That approach drew its support from John Dewey's Art As Experience and conditioned his effort at reconstruction which is the common seam of this literary

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genre.

The essential concept in Dewey's philosophy is the individual experience which he regarded as "the primary unit of life." He gave a prominent place to the pervasive or aesthetic quality of an experience which can guide its development so that the quality can be transformed and enriched as one reconstructs the experience. Consequently, aesthetic quality can accumulate new meaning, ideas, and emotion.

Dewey viewed art as the process of "the act of expression." For him "the inner material of emotion and idea is as much transformed through acting and being acted upon by objective material as the latter undergoes modification when it becomes a medium of expression."[43].

> When experience rounds itself off into more or less complete and coherent strands of doing and undergoing, we have, he says, an experience; and such an experience is aesthetic to the degree in which attention is fixed on pervasive quality. Art is expression, in the sense that in expressive objects there is a fusion of meaning in the present quality; ends and means, separated for practical purposes, are reunited, to produce not only experience enjoyable in itself but, at its best, a celebration and commemoration of qualities ideal to the culture or society in which the art plays its part.[44].

For Dewey all of life is, or can be, artistic. He persistently claimed that knowing, or more specifically, inquiry is an art which requires active experimental manipulation and testing. When confronted with a specific

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situation that demands resolution the individual can reconstruct that situation by locating the problem and initiating a course of action to resolve it.

On a broader moral plane the problem that a man confronts is to decide what he really wants and the course of action he ought to pursue. Dewey's views of man's moral life placed great emphasis on the power of intelligence to imagine a future which projects the desirable in the present and works to create the instruments of its realization. Throughout this process ends and norms are clarified, tested, and modified.

Ethics conceived of in this manner blends into social philosophy. And the spirit that pervades all of Dewey's work and finds its perfect expression in his social philosophy is that of the reformer.

John Dewey proved an ideal, almost necessary, model for Stanton Coit. Their interests converged at several levels to form a solid basis of attraction. In no other American philosopher did Coit find ideas so expressive of what he believed and which adhered so consistently to his own approach to life. Both men were initially drawn to Hegelianism with its emphasis on change, process, and dynamic, organic interaction, but this influence, especially in Coit, never rivalled the naturalistic bias of the Greek philosophers, particularly Plato, while each man found attractive the new developing human sciences.

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Coincidentally, both Dewey and Coit wrote their doctoral dissertation on Immanuel Kant, with the former concentrating on his psychology and the latter specializing in ethics.

While Coit was among the first generation of leaders in the Ethical Culture Movement and his association with its societies, on both sides of the Atlantic, was much stronger and more potent, Dewey also appeared receptive to its philosophical outlook. In a letter which Coit wrote to the New York Ethical Society on March 3, 1936, he unleashed a rather startling proposal.

> Would it not be possible to create an office in the American Societies for Ethical Culture for John Dewey as figurehead President (under whatever title)? I know that he is in sympathy with us. And with extreme gratification I have noted his reason and approach to us since Felix Adler's death. Or could we not resuscitate the International Ethical Movement, . . . and the American and English Societies and make Dewey the head of our international Ethical organization.[45]

There is no indication of what prompted Coit's letter, nor is there any record of a response to his suggestion. One can infer that Coit perhaps felt that the American philosopher, already predisposed toward the Ethical Movement, could help restore its influence at a time of "world crisis." Given the specific nature of his proposals Coit may have surmised that the void left by the death of Adler required a man of stature whose presence, if not in a role of genuine leadership, could at least refurbish the

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International Ethical Movement, the activities of which Coit regarded as important and to which he had devoted much time and energy. However difficult the moment, the New York Society did not look favorably upon Coit's proposal.

Throughout his life Coit's ethical disposition frequently reflected the currents of thinking which connected Emerson, James, and Dewey, all of whom drew heavily from the well of Platonic philosophy. Coit was not an original thinker and came to depend upon those whom he regarded as "my mature guides." According to his daughter, Virginia, he "had no ethical philosophy himself. He used Platonic Ideas and ideals and followed Dewy if he said what seemed valuable."[46].

Coit's choice of a model exponent for his autobiography clearly indicates that Dewey's Art As Experience "seemed valuable." Dewey's naturalistic approach provided Coit with just the creative framework he found useful to his own purposes. Inquiry into the nature of individual experiences permitted experimental manipulation, to be achieved by focusing attention on the aesthetic quality which flowed from the act of expression. In his autobiography such experiences take the form of specific situations in his own life that demand resolution and Coit demonstrates what course of action he took to resolve the problems.

This strategy allowed him to select what he chose to reveal about his own reactions and to fund them with new

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meaning and emotion while offering the experiences as a means of character education. The end result of this strategy allowed Coit to display the social responsibility of the creative artist in the sense described by Plato, namely, "that his own good, like that of every citizen, be subordinated and made conducive to the good of all." And this was, for Coit, the central tenet of ethical philosophy.

Coit's arrangement of "personal experiences" emphasized the spiritual and psychological dimensions of his own growth. He juxtaposes material related to his childhood and adolescence with that which represents his mature belief in the ideals of a humanistic religion. In the sense intended by Dewey "both aims and means fuse and become one single organic operation, a whole which is good because it is alive, and it is true because it is good."[47].

From the material of his own life Coit sought to create "art out of experience." Dewey viewed art as "the process of the act of expression," and this served as the basic premise which informed Coit's own approach." This book treats with things which I remember. It is autobiographical; and autobiography is inevitably a form of self expression."[48].

For Stanton Coit remembering the past was a process attended by, and at one with, poetic creation. To be truly effective, Dewey argued, emotion must flow from the subject matter. In his narration of personal experiences Coit held

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to the belief, put forward by Dewey, that "we aesthetically accept any amount of moral content, if it is held together by a sincere emotion that controls the material."[49] Coit's attempt to use pure experience as his conceptual tool results in a chronicle of his own philosophical ideas against the backdrop of familial and communal events, at the same time, constantly forcing him to back away from connecting his own intellectual development too closely with them.

There is no mention of the Neighborhood Guild In Coit's memoir nor are there any references to his work in the Ethical Movement. The real significance of his autobiography goes beyond the description of publicly verifiable events to the far more difficult revelation of private experiences.

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Notes

Introduction

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15. Dictionary of American Biography, Supplement Three (1941-45), Edward T. James, ed., s.v. "Coit, Stanton," by Peter d'A.Jones, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973), p.175

16. Jane Robbins, "First Years at the College Settlement," Survey, XXVII, 1912, p.1800

17. Coit, "My First Acquaintance With the Ethical Movement," in Spiller, op cit., p.179

18. ibid

19. Harold J. Blackham, Stanton Coit: Selections From His Writings, (London: The Favil Press Ltd.,1948), p.8

20. Gustave Spiller, "Stanton Coit, A Forceful Personality," The Literary Guide, July, 1929, quoted in Spiller,op cit.,p.180. "Sometime late in 1888 or early in 1889, I heard Dr. Stanton Coit preach at the South Place Ethical Society and became an enthusiastic member of his congregation." Gustave Spiller,1864-1940, a privately published monograph originally compiled for his children and not intended for publication., p.6

21. Spiller, op cit., p.177

22. Blackham, op cit., p.9-10

23. ibid

24. Whitman, op cit., p.179; Spiller, op cit., p.100

25. Whitman,ibid

26. Blackham, op cit., p.10

27. Whitman, op cit.,p.179.

28. University Settlement Society Bulletin, December, 1892, p.11

29. The New York Times, December 5,1990, p.8

30. ibid

31. James, ed. DAB, op cit., p.175-76

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32. Virginia Fleming to George Staples, June 26, 1981

33. Stanton Coit, My Ventures on the Highway of Truth, unpublished autobiographical manuscript, 1937, p.2. I am grateful to Coit's daughter, Lady Virginia Fleming, for making available to me a copy of this document. Though unpublished and, for the most part unknown, at least two previous writers had access to this fragment in the course of their own specialized studies on Coit. Harold J. Blackham, who worked closely with Coit for more than a decade at the Ethical Church in Bayswater and was a personal friend of the family, made judicious use of this document for a highly informative essay which served to introduce a volume of Selections from Coit's writings. Harold J. Blackham, Stanton Coit: Selections From His Writings, (London: The Favil Press Ltd., 1948). Twenty years later Susan Budd consulted it while writing an essay on Coit's religious practices for inclusion in her book, Varieties of Unbelief: Atheists and Agnostics in English Society, 1850-1960, (London: Heinemann, 1968). While she did not draw heavily on its contents the material in the document concerned events and circumstances which occurred outside the framework in which she worked. Her purpose was interpretive rather than biographical and the document contained little if any information of value to her particular subject.

34. Stanton Coit's autobiography is incomplete, not just in several of its constituent chapters but as a whole work. For a man who wrote four books, edited three volumes of religious prose, translated a multi-volume work of philosophy, Nicolai Hartmann's Ethik, and published eighteen major essays and addresses, to say nothing of countless articles, the failure suggests something more than a lack of perseverance, a problem he could not resolve. Seven years elapsed from the time he began the project to his death on February 14, 1944, certainly a period sufficient in itself to compete the work. In a letter which Lady Virginia Fleming wrote to me on June 26, 1981, she indicated that "he stopped before getting to his working life," a statement which, regrettably, sheds little light on the reason for his decision.

35. Coit, Ventures, p.3

36. This piece of information originally came to light in discussions I had with Lady Virginia Fleming in August, 1981. Gregory Weinstein, who knew Coit from his days on the Lower East Side, included a note to this effect in his book. "Dr. Coit's house in London was bombed by

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the Nazis and his library was destroyed." Gregory Weinstein, The Ardent Eighties and After, (New York: The International Press, 1947), p.94

37. Coit, Ventures, p.30

38. R. Laurence Moore, In Search of White Crows: Spiritualism, Parapsychology, and American Culture, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), p.9. For a discussion of spiritualism and women's reform cf. Ann Brande, Spiritualism and Women's Rights in Nineteenth Century America, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989)

39. Coit, Ventures, p.5. "One evening many years ago, probably in 1886, when I was dining at the house of Professor William James in Cambridge, Massachusetts, he happened to mention that he had that afternoon been making experiments in psychometry with a strangely gifted lady in Boston. As I had never before heard of psychometry in the sense in which he used the term, he kindly explained to me in his study after dinner that he would put a letter which he had received from some friend in an envelope, seal the envelope, and, without writing anything on it, would hand it to this lady. With her eyes closed she would place it upon her forehead and immediately begin to describe the character of the person who had written the letter, or tell some detail of the writer's life or circumstance." The "strangely gifted lady in Boston" was Mrs. Piper whom James first met in 1885. In his report on mediumistic phenomena to the American Society for Psychical Research James referred to her as a "trance-medium." Accordingly, "I am persuaded of the medium's honesty, and of the genuineness of her trance; and although at first disposed to think that the hits she made were either lucky coincidences, or the result of knowledge on her part of who the sitter was and of his or her family affairs, I now believe her to be in possession of a power as yet unexplained." Proceedings of the American Society for Psychical Research, Volume 1, 1886-1889, p.96-97. Further experiments with Mrs. Piper appear in Volume 2 of the Proceedings, December 1890. After considerable reflection James concluded "she had supernormal powers." Volume 2, p.104. The Piper phenomena was a cause-celebre for spiritistic believers. To the best of my knowledge there is no evidence to confirm what Coit describes, yet the account rests on authoritative testimony. According to R. Laurence Moore "in the 1880's, William James talked some of his harvard colleagues into founding the American Society for Psychical Research. Intended as a new field of scientific experimentation, psychical

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research was in fact a direct outgrowth of spiritualism." R. Laurence Moore, In Search of White Crows: Spiritualism, Parapsychology and American Culture, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), p.66. Coit attributed to James, an ardent explorer of paranormal phenomena, his knowledge of psychometry. In his autobiography Coit employed the phrase, "supernormal powers," to describe his ability to read character. "I might have re-christened it (chapter two) My Ventures in Supernormal Insight." Coit, Ventures, p.2. In the dynamics of what follows Coit used the Jamesian event to introduce a series of engagements which, on the surface, provide an outlet for his display of supernormal powers. While these episodes consist of virtual events (those employed for literary purposes) whose function it is to convey emotional quality, the common pattern which appears emphasizes the character and conduct of the respondents as well as Coit himself. The characters involved are fictional and real, a narrative technique that enriches the aesthetic content and so heightens the value of the experience.

40. Blackham, op cit., p.7

41. William James, Principles of Psychology, 2 volumes, (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1890; Dover Publications, Inc., 1950), 1: 372

42. Coit, Ventures, p.3

43. Dino Ferrari, Review of John Dewey's Art as Experience, New York Times Book Review, April 8, 1934, p.1

44. Encyclopedia of Philosophy, s.v. "Aesthetics, History of," by Monroe C. Beardsley, (New York: Macmillan & The Free Press, 1967), 1: 31

45. Stanton Coit to Henry Neumann, March 3, 1936, The Papers of Felix Adler, Manuscript Division, Butler Library, Columbia University

46. Lady Virginia Fleming to George Staples, June 26, 1981

47. Ferrari, op cit

48. Coit, Ventures, p.3

49. ibid, p.4. John Dewey, Art As Experience, (New York: Minton, Balch & Co., 1934), p.68. According to Dewey "In the development of an expressive act, the emotion operates like a magnet drawing to itself appropriate

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material; appropriate because it has an experienced emotional affinity for the state of mind already moving. Selection and organization of material are at once a function and a test of the quality of the emotion experienced." p.69

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CHAPTER ONE

Stanton Coit dismissed "the ordinary method pursued by writers of autobiography" because it "always seemed to me mechanical and not vital, much less psychological or spiritual."[1] That he preferred a method more suited to the aesthetic aspects of his life revealed Coit's affinity with the world he now chose to narrate, and, simultaneously, qualified its historical dimensions. "I cannot detect that my innate capacity has made any progress from the earliest years which I can remember to the present day, nor can I discover any change of direction from childhood to old age in the kind of interests which have spontaneously attracted me."[2]

Accordingly, in his organization of those "things which I remember" Coit discarded historical sequence in favor of a rigorous attention to "incidents and developments of the same order, irrespective of the time and place in which they have occurred."[3] But, he noted, "this does not mean that I jump about at haphazard from detail to detail. On the contrary, if a venture which I dared to take at the age of ten is practically identical with another at forty and a third at seventy, I have grouped these three together."[4]

Insofar as he viewed autobiography as a proper medium for the act of expression, and sensitive to the conditions art imposed, Coit sought to distance himself from "recent

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writers of memoirs and of biographies" whom he accused of having "failed to discriminate between self-expression and a repulsive counterfeit thereof."[5]. To clarify the distinction "to which I am here alluding" Coit turned to John Dewey's Art As Experience which, he insisted, "all writers of memoirs and of biographies would do well never to forget."[6].

> An inner agitation that is discharged at once in a laugh or cry passes away with its utterance. To discharge is to get rid of, to dismiss; to express is to stay by, to carry forward in development, to work out to completion. A gush of tears may bring relief, a spasm of destruction may give outlet to inward rage. But, where there is no administration of objective conditions, no shaping of materials in the interest of embodying the excitement, there is no expression. What is sometimes called an act of self-expression might better be termed on of self-exposure; it discloses character, or lack of character, to others. In itself, it is only a spewing forth.[7].

While Art As Experience served as a "restatement and compression of his philosophy of life," the specific problem which engaged Dewey was "that of recovering the continuity of aesthetic experience with normal processes of living."[8]. In the Act of Expression, the chapter from which Coit took this passage, Dewey insisted that in terms of aesthetic quality the mere giving way to spontaneous reaction did not constitute expression. "Not all outgoing activity is of the nature of expression."[9]. Enunciating what became for Coit the ingredients of his own artistic strategy, Dewey insisted

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that "while there is no expression, unless there is urge from within outwards, the welling up must be clarified and ordered by taking into itself the values of prior experiences before it can be an act of expression."[10].

In composing his autobiography Coit did not wish to confuse "spurious for real expression," nor to appear as a man lacking in character. The link between the form of expression and the character it revealed lay at the heart of Coit's distinction. To assimilate meanings from the background of his own experiences and insure that his expression proved a faithful representation of character Coit again looked to the American philosopher, for whom "the act of expression is not something which supervenes upon an inspiration already complete. It is the carrying forward to completion of an inspiration by means of the objective material of perception and imagery."[11].

According to Dewey a genuine act of expression uses the material to enrich the deed and "only where material is employed as media is there expression and art. . . Everything depends upon the way in which material is used when it operates as medium."[12]. Reflecting on the material of his own life Coit hastened to show that

> in my selection of personal experiences I have been interested not so much in my impulsive re-actions, or in what actually occurred at the moment, as in a carrying forward in development, in working out to completion what the event and my spontaneous re-action pointed toward. My interest has been in the

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> administration of objective conditions, in the shaping of materials into universal forms, and I have attempted to draw the scientific, aesthetic and ethical lessons which lie at the heart of the incidents I have narrated. But I am emboldened in so doing by a reassurance from Professor Dewey that such a procedure is not inartistic.[13]

To be truly effective, Dewey argued, emotion must flow from the subject matter. In his narration of personal experiences Coit held to the belief, put forward by Dewey, that "we aesthetically accept any amount of moral content, if it is held together by a sincere emotion that controls the material. A white flame of pity or indignation may find material that feeds it and it may fuse everything assembled into one vital whole."[14] The flame which for Coit fused the separate experiences of his life into one vital whole was the meaning they now assumed for him.

Coit's emphasis on personal reminiscence strengthens the belief that "all autobiographers, of necessity, by the very act of autobiography, reconstruct themselves. The theme that any autobiographer chooses provides a shape for his narrative. It also provides a meaning."[15] The reconstruction Coit achieved in this fragment takes the form of a spiritual exposition distinguished by the "ethical lessons" he sought in his own life and defined by the psychological underpinnings which revealed its element of necessity. Confessional in its narrative pattern the story Coit tells conveys the emotional significance he attached to

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various events, the material of which serves as media for the act of expression.

The essential elements of that story issue from Coit's experiences with spiritualism, the problems encountered in his own adherence to its underlying premises, the incidence of a dramatic conflict which liberated him, and the resolution to satisfy the need for a mature identity by affirming belief in the ideals of a humanist religion. At one point in his autobiography Coit provides a microcosm of the drama implicit in this narrative pattern.

> From earliest infancy I had been brought up to believe in spirit-communication and that until I was in my twentieth year I continued to entertain this belief. The discarding of it at that age was the one revolution which my mind has undergone in eighty years. But it was not merely the discarding of a belief outgrown. It involved a re-interpretation of cosmic powers and of the human spirit in terms purely natural, psychological, social and ethical, to which I have held fast ever since.[16].

The central place of dramatic conflict in the narrative "is an aspect of the dialogue and of that perspective on the past that enables a known result to be juxtaposed with the difficulties preventing its achievement."[17]. The strength of the emotional content Coit imparts to the narrative, his attention to detail, and the forcefulness with which he addresses the relationships testify to the power of that dramatic conflict, all pointing to the deep and lasting impression created by the experiences of his childhood.

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An essential ingredient in confessional narrative is a testimony of faith which serves as a motive for action. The painstaking effort with which Coit explains the title of his autobiography introduces the main elements of his faith which he later reinforces by a spirited defense of those beliefs. The vehicle for Coit's testimony of faith and the claim "that at the age of twenty I held the views which I have been teaching ever since as a leader in ethical societies" is a poem consisting of eight stanzas which he delivered as part of the commencement exercises at Amherst.

In Coit's autobiography events are both actual and virtual. As a means of expression virtual events "describe the kind of truth autobiographers feel that they can tell." What distinguishes them from actual events is the purpose they serve, namely, "they must convince and they must contain an emotional factor. They are qualitative in their very constitution and have no existence apart from values, from the emotional impact which is part of their appearance."[18].

In his account there is an emotional need for Coit to unburden himself by exploring states of mind, his own as well as those of others, and this generates a pervasive quality occasioned by scenes in the world and they blend with subject matter to create a perspective which helps to shape the narrative. This is the essential function served by Coit's psychometrical experiments, what he facetiously

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termed "My One Parlour Trick," as well as his description of "spiritistic phenomena" and his childhood sufferings.

Coit's experiences with "spiritistic phenomena" originated in his boyhood home and were a legacy of his childhood, more specifically the result of his mother's own beliefs. "Ever since 1854, three years before I was born, my Mother had been an enthusiastic spiritualist."[19] Now, eighty years later, and with his own faith a safer given than his life, Coit recalled that "the significant fact" about his mother's decision was how "she rejected absolutely all authority and tradition as the basis of ethical and religious belief, and in place thereof substituted immediate experience, careful observation and direct insight, as well as her own powers of logical inference."[20]

In his autobiography Coit's own involvement with "spiritistic phenomena" suggests the enduring influence of childhood experiences which left him with a fascination for the psychological aspects of the supernatural, which he rechristened the supernormal. Reading character becomes the power of "supernormal insight" while his reference to spirit-communication connotes the unexplained force resident in nature. What is striking about his narration of these episodes is the fact that Coit displays the very qualities exercised by his mother.

His description of those events employs characters who are both fictional and real, a technique that enriches the

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qualitative aspect of the content and so heightens its value. Coit's experiments in psychometry occurred in the United States, Great Britain, and Germany, places that were significant to his intellectual and moral development. The episodes involved members of his own family, relatives of his wife's family, and his friend and former teacher George von Gizycki, in addition to five other people, including a colleague in the Ethical Movement.

The common pattern which flows through these encounters is the character and conduct of the respondents. In every case Coit emphasizes the motives which inspired the action, the result being a series of object lessons in moral behavior. In the face of the mocking laughter of the women in Chicago with "a high social position" Coit remarks, "Madam, is it possible because you are rich . . . you think that a mere porter at a railway station has no personality and no individual reality."[21] Social status does not define the moral worth of the individual

> I once psychometrised a friend of long standing . . . a colleague of mine in the Ethical Movement. Instantly I received an overpowering impression that I had misunderstood the inner nature of his admirable character. You are not, I said, after all ethical in your ultimate motives, your insight and deepest interests are merely aesthetic. What inspires and arouses you is not the right, the good, in contrast to the wrong and bad, but the beauty, the propriety, the loveliness and charm of goodness. What repels you is not badness but ugliness of wrong conduct and character.[22]

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While in these experiments Coit employed methods similar to those of a spiritistic medium he separated himself from the beliefs associated with them. Claiming that "psychometry, of course, is not limited to the use of unseen handwriting as the basis of experiment," he related how, "for the entertainment of friends, I have often simply touched the finger-tips of one of their hands or only looked into the palm of the hand."[23] Coit's light-hearted regard for such practices belied his own position on this matter, voiced by the English widow who declared, "I believe in your psychic powers although you do not."[24]

Coit's experiences with spiritistic phenomena revolve around the activities of Frank Goodman, an eleven year old medium, who, with his family, lived with the Coits for two years. The narration of events which presumably occurred during that time appear as an exercise in fiction as well as a parody on spiritualism. All the physical effects normally associated with spirit manifestations current at the time find their way into the story, together with some that appear clearly bizarre.

Yet, within this parody there is the underlying emphasis on character. In an effort to explain Goodman's activities Coit turned the entire matter over to Dr. Broad, president of the Society for Psychical Research. Coit has Dr. Broad infer that "very often there is some young person, girl or boy, of very mediocre intelligence, whose presence

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seems somehow to be the cause or occasion of strange psychic phenomena."[25].

This was not an evaluation of Frank Goodman but a generalization which Coit seized upon to declare that "my recollection of Frank Goodman is that he was not below mediocrity in intelligence, but he certainly was not above. As regards his character, he was upright, conscientious, obedient and kind-hearted. He was amused by the strange occurrences, except when he was pinched."[26].

It was not Frank's character that was at fault. He was merely an instrument for what could not be explained as psychic phenomena. This was the same kind of response Coit gave when asked about "my happy guesses." After a review of the most plausible theories he admitted, "I am inclined to suspend judgment altogether on this matter," which stopped short of an outright denial that he actually possessed such powers.

Dewey treated art as the "culmination of nature," to which scientific discovery is a handmaiden. Coit's fascination with paranormal phenomena, an outgrowth of his long exposure to spiritualism, seems to reflect, at one level, Dewey's panoramic view of experience and nature. Allowing for the fact that nature includes all phases, aspects and structures of existence, Coit gave "familiar experience a strange guise by clothing it in unusual garb, as of a supernatural apparition."[27]. In his autobiography

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this materialization takes the form of supernormal insight. According to Dewey

> There are no intrinsic psychological divisions between the intellectual and the sensory aspects; the emotional and ideational; the imaginative and the practical phases of human nature . . .Seeking, desire, need, can be fulfilled only through material external to the organism . . . Our needs are drafts drawn upon the environment . . . with conscious interest and attention. To be satisfied, they must intercept energy from surrounding things and absorb what they lay hold of.[28]

For Coit, reading character from the material presented stirred this instinctive need to find fulfillment and the emotion and affection released constituted the unity of experience. In the case of Frank Goodman, there is interaction with an environment that is human as well as physical where "things and events belonging to the world, physical and social, are transformed through the human context they enter, while the creature (Goodman) is changed and developed through its intercourse with things previously external to it."[29]

In the organization and description of these psychometrical experiences, which represented a very controlled effort by Coit to transpose material related to the circumstances of his own life, he assumes the role of mediator who exercises psychical powers, similar to those which occur in a seance, the effect of which is the revelation of character and conduct. This type of action

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reveals innate sensibilities directed at motive, intention, desire, and outcome, elements which play a functional role in the experience. Coit dramatized his use of material to enrich events for the emotion they contain, a narrative technique he employs throughout the memoir.

The awareness of a literary and artistic consciousness appears with equal force in the precise interpretation by which Coit explained the title of his autobiography. In the opening pages of the first chapter he "disclosed the fact that many of those which follow were written before I had found a name for the volume and that in my judgment that title which I have chosen is expressive of their purport and nature."[30.]

In his search for "a name less hackneyed than Memoirs or Autobiography and more suggestive of what I had to say and the way I meant to say it," Coit referred to the advice offered by a Anglican clergyman.[31.] "Inspired, if not from above, at least from beyond himself," his friend informed Coit "that the title of my book was to be Adventures on the Highway of Truth."[32.]

The need for this fiction originates in the problem encountered by the first person narrator, namely, "to establish his authority, his viewpoint, and his narrative technique so that we believe that he is who he claims to be but also that his story can carry conviction."[33.] Once the clear outline of a title appeared Coit began to establish

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his authority by a subtle alteration of it, what he termed "my slight emendation of words."[34] Coit preferred ventures to adventures and his explanation set forth the viewpoint he wished to convey.

In a literary play on words he declared: "For of the latter I have had few; and these few have been fraught with no great significance to myself, to others or to the object to which my life-work has been devoted."[35] For Coit events proved less important than the principle which informed his own approach to them. "Every occurrence of a commonplace order has been to me an occasion for venture into that ideal realm which sets the mind free from hope and fear, asks for nothing but loyalty, appeals only to our creative impulse, gives no guarantee of success and rebukes no incapacity to achieve."[36]

In his exploration of events Coit insisted that "it is not the incursions of others into the realm of ideal reality, but only my own about which I was writing."[37] The contrast of ventures with adventures emphasized the nature of his experiences and the particular attitude which informed his life-work. Harold Blackham acknowledged the fact that "when he says . . . every occurrence has been to me an occasion for venture into that ideal realm, he is looking back over a long life dominated by one supreme interest and conviction."[38]

For Stanton Coit the ideal realm was a state of mind

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created from within the mileau of common experience but which did not depend upon any one sequence of events. "There is a life which is above hope as well as above fear; and it intensifies instead of relaxing the impulse to make the world better. That life is wholly ethical, trusting exclusively in the inherent worth of goodness."[39].

Coit's ethical idealism, bound as it was to a belief in eternal values, gave voice to his faith in the limitless possibilities of human experience. He personalized this faith with the declaration that "I have always prided myself on my attempt to keep to roads that were open to all passengers by land or sea, the roads along which even by law all members of the community have a right to pass and are in the habit of doing so."[40].

His allusion to the highway brought a heightened sense of the emotional content with which Coit invested his own experiences. He relished the symbolism and proceeded to enlarge its meaning with the frank admission that "the word Highway especially gratified me . . . A glorious word this, charged with democratic passion and rich with the political, economic and ethical experiences of the whole human race from the beginning."[41].

To reinforce the expressive function he chose for the title of this volume, the nature of which exemplified the entire purpose he assigned to the first chapter, Coit employed the metaphor of the traveller.

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> The expression of Truth pleases me. Highway to Truth would not have fitted my ventures. For with me truth has never lain at the end of the road, but in fragments all along the way on both sides. I have never been a seeker after it in its ultimate unity, but have always been satisfied with meanings close at hand, manifold, coming of themselves into sight. The metaphor of a traveller to a distant goal would not be applicable to me. My method has not been that of an adventurer, who, keeping his gaze fixed upon the far-off Absolute, fails to note the revelations with which the immediate present teems. Nevertheless, I have in fact advanced like a traveller, inasmuch as my seemingly piecemeal truths have after a time shown themselves to be parts of one complete and abiding pattern.[42]

For Stanton Coit truth was not absolute; it did not exist beyond the realm of human experience but flowed from it. Yet, it was not the actual events themselves but the implicit meaning they possessed which signified their true worth. With an eye on the relationship between means and ends Coit maintained, in the sense employed by John Dewey, that "a course of action has its unity as a genuine sequence, instead of a random series, in virtue of the fact that the separate acts which go to make it up are means chosen and performed because they lead to that last event which is the end."[43]

The kind of organic unity with which Coit invested the separate incidents of his life acquired a moral significance. When viewed independently, each action retained its own meaning; taken together, they confirmed the

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final form his life assumed. If Coit employed language in the service of narrative technique the basis of his argument originated with his belief in a set of permanent ideals, which, to use Blackham's expression "are prescriptive and project the formal pattern of possible achievements."[44.]

For Coit the personal and social character of religion was "one and indivisible." It issued from ideals "which are above trial and error, which do not wait upon further experience, which are independent of the shifts of the human situation, the fluctuations of thought and feeling, the vicissitudes of fortune, the secondary ideals of social order and personal happiness."[45.] According to Blackham, an authoritative voice on these matters, "this insight into the source and nature of humanist religion was Coit's enduring vision. . . It was this truth, and it is a religious truth as well as a philosophic truth, which Coit had grasped, and which worked within all that he was trying to do."[46.]

In his essay On the Function of Cognition, which he referred to as "the fons et origo of all my pragmatism," William James marked "the final identification of truth with the success of ideas."[47.] James used the term to signify the objective aspect of experience and the ideals to which Coit subscribed carry the same meaning.

Like James, Coit accepted the idea of a plural universe in which men and women sought partial truths but where no one achieved ultimate truth. He rejected the Christian

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edict that this world was merely a preparatory experience to the revelation of some final truth in favor of an ethical approach which emphasized that "the power to do right is part of ourselves."[48] In Coit's use of scripture there is an attempt to draw out the analogy between his own inward and decisively moral conviction and that of the Christian faith. He regarded "the Biblical injunction that we should wait upon the Lord and that He would give us that which we desired, as only a theological way of saying that we fix our attention devoutly upon each incident in our lives as it occurs, being sure that, if we did so, the deeper, the universal, meanings of existence would be opened to us."[49]

Coit's interpretation of the Biblical text along scientific and ethical lines demonstrated his belief that such precepts had application beyond the boundaries of traditional religion. Within the context of the analogy Coit emphasized man's capacity to discover for himself the moral content resident in the experiences of life, and, in the process, shifted the reader's attention away from reliance upon a personal deity to the insight available to each individual. In an effort to reinforce the nature of ethical character and conduct, while at the same time demonstrate the prerequisites necessary to its attainment, Coit remarked "it is a pity that these wise precepts should have been applied by theologians only to supernatural verities, and not to the permanent underlying laws in our

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common everyday life."[50]

Drawing the Christian meaning into the fold of ethical conduct, Coit insisted that "from the point of view of ethical religion everything that challenges us upon the instant to make a decision is a door that will open, if we knock."[51] At which point he maintained "there is always but one right line of conduct and that in each given circumstance it is our duty to see and pursue this . . . In all that we see and hear, however ugly, there is a strain of beauty; and every sequence of facts is a specific illustration of the law of cause and effect."[52]

What Coit implied, after the fashion of his own logic, was that men and women accept this duty insofar as "a rational will makes the laws it is bound to obey."[53] Regardless of appearances, for him, every occurrence was "an occasion for venture into that ideal realm" just as every affect originated from some cause, even when the task was that of choosing a name for his autobiography.

> Such being the case, I regret that the title of my book would have been too cumbersome if I had named it My Ventures On The Highway of Truth, Beauty And Goodness and had added words to the effect that this highway is none other than every human being's experience from the cradle to the grave. But, happily, in literature, if not in science, the word Truth is not limited to mere sequences of fact. In all great prose and poetry and in all religious terminology the word Truth points not only to reality but to beauty and to the ever-present Right.[54]

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Stanton Coit envisioned the title of this volume as expressive of the nature and purpose of the entire work. For him autobiography was less an impersonal summation issued at the close of an illustrious career than an attempt to demonstrate the extent to which his own life embodied what Ralph Waldo Emerson described as "the moral sentiment in man."[55] In his Lecture on the Times, Emerson, who was one of Coit's early "guides," argued that in the chain of being

> the conscience of the Age demonstrates itself in this effort to raise the life of man by putting it in harmony with his idea of the Beautiful and the Just. . . For the origin of all reform is in that mysterious fountain of the moral sentiment in man, which, amidst the natural, ever contains the supernatural for men. That is new and creative. That is alive. That alone can make a man other than he is. Here or nowhere resides unbounded energy, unbounded power.[56]

In the pages of his autobiography, "sketched with a few strokes accomplished by his own hand," Coit left a spiritual portrait which revealed the unbounded power of that moral sentiment at the center of his life.[57]

> My defense of my belief in the ideal despite its failure to dominate nature and man, rests upon the peculiar relationship which according to my interpretation holds between the inner life and out-going effort to make the world better. There is such a thing as loyalty to principle and to the ideal of society, even if all effort to do good proves vain and even if not only the present state of mankind is impenetrably dark, but also the distant future is

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> hopeless. Most persons who under such circumstances remain loyal to principle console themselves by believing that in the course of time some supernatural power will cause right to triumph over wrong. I remember that, before I had ventured far into the meaning of this problem, I used often to repeat to myself James Russell Lowell's lines: Truth forever on the scaffold, Wrong forever on the throne. But that scaffold sways the future. . . , and so on. I soon asked myself, however, Suppose Wrong is to remain forever on the Throne, shall we on that account accept it as our god? My answer to my question was and is that in the spiritual life there are a higher realm and a lower, that the realm where hope for the future is the wellspring of our energy is the lower, that in the higher, although we never cease from active effort, we are no more perturbed by evil that is to come than by evil which has already passed into oblivion. We transcend not only the past and present but the future of man. There is a life which is above hope as well as above fear; and it intensifies instead of relaxing the impulse to make the world better. Such a life is wholly ethical, trusting exclusively in the inherent worth of goodness. . . What Ought-to-Be, although it never is to be, is a more than adequate inspiration, and that we need no reassurance as to the outcome of our effort; whereas hope, when adversity confronts us, transforms itself into fear, and when hope is strongest, it is most misleading and most prone to delusion and to blindness. Accordingly, when I reiterate that spirit is supreme, I do not mean that it is all-powerful or that it is certain of triumph in the long run, but merely that the eternal values which spirit discerns, however weak and ineffectual are inherently worthy of supreme devotion.[58]

Stanton Coit's ethical idealism derived from the

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Platonic concern for the well being of society, and, like the Greek philosopher, he saw man writ large in the activities of the whole community. In the natural universe of fact he perceived the world of the ideal. The attainment of what ought-to-be involved not the dissolution of what was, but the perfection of man's place in society along lines already established. Virtue did not consist in conformity to a rule considered as alien to the character of man but simply a free expression of his inner life.

With Emerson, Coit looked to individual action as the tell-tale sign of improved collective enterprise. When he refers to "the peculiar relationship which . . . holds between the inner life and the out-going effort to make the world better" Coit employs the same meaning in this construction which Emerson used when the latter confided to his journal that "every man hath his use no doubt and every one makes over the effort according to the energy of his character to suit his external condition to his inward constitution. If his external condition does not admit of such accommodation he breaks the form of his life and enters a new one which does."[59].

In his approach Coit renews the transcendentalist belief that pain and evil are not real in the sense that they are finite and remediable. Here Coit uses evil to refer to the absence of control and order in society, a defect he believed man could overcome by "trusting in the

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inherent worth of goodness." Coit interpreted life spiritually and believed with Emerson that "religion in the mind is not credulity . . . it is life."[60] In language reminiscent of the distinctions which Plato attributed to society Coit argued that what separated those who dwelt in the higher realm from the rest of mankind was "direct devotion to the ideal."

> I have noticed as a positive fact that men and women of the highest character are never cast down and never become either embittered or cynical, although their life-work is thwarted. And this not because they console themselves with the thought of another life or with belief in Providence, but because the same direct devotion to the ideal sustains them, which must sustain the Infinite himself in his efforts to redeem the world he loves, when he beholds it given ever more systematically than ever before to debased ambition and petty greed.[61]

Coit's use of spirit preserved the central meaning Plato gave it "as the natural ally or servant of the rational self" while, at the same time, he invested those eternal values with the status of reality which represented, for him, the Principle of life.[62] Like Plato, Coit found in the attainment of the vision of reality the greatest happiness of man. Believing Pascal "the most widely known but not the only thinker who has held that there is an order of being which only the heart discloses to us," Coit made this the central premise of his testimony of faith . Indicative of the spiritual humanism of Pascal was his

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insistence that "it is not necessary to hope in order to undertake, nor to succeed in order to persevere."[63.]

While such affirmations recorded his profound allegiance to the role of Plato's disembodied reason in the formation of the ideal, Coit's emphasis is ethical rather than scientific. Knowledge is not separable from virtue and the good is also the true. Within Coit's statement there appears a pattern of opposition and conflict reminiscent of the forces contending for mastery of the human spirit; the relationship between the inner life and the out-going effort to make the world better, loyalty to the ideal in contrast to the hope and fear in normal expectations, Truth and Wrong struggling in the lines of Lowell's poem. For him, these conflicts illustrated fundamental choices the resolution of which lay in the power of those "eternal values which spirit discerns."

Despite the failure of the "ideal of society . . . to dominate nature and man" Coit continued to find inspiration in his devotion to eternal values. Writing in 1948, Harold Blackham, in true Wordsworthian fashion, said of him: "his days were bound each to each by ethical piety. . . (reinforced) by his faith in eternal values, . . . for by that his life's work stands or falls."[64.] In this regard Coit's autobiography takes the form of a religious parable in which he determined to live in the ideas that contained the reason of his life.

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Coit's assertion of belief was in fact a revelation of character, and, what is more an argument for the proposition that consistency was a necessary ingredient in a man of moral worth. In A Student Manual of Ethical Philosophy, written by George von Gizycki, his former teacher at the University of Berlin, a book Coit translated for use at the South Place Ethical Society, there is a description of character which embraces many of those qualities suggested by Coit's own disposition.

> A man of moral worth possesses what we call in a narrower sense of the word, character; we attribute to him a certain fixity. . . a steadfastness and uniformity of conduct; he is. . . to be trusted and confided; his spirit possesses a certain serenity, for he is sure of himself. The will to do right is his controlling spring of action, and he does all he can to discover what is right. He has fixed principles. . . a deep sense of justice and of the rights of others. . .he has respect towards himself and his true aim. . . is the attainment of moral satisfaction with himself.[65]

Part of the purpose in Coit's autobiography was to examine the motives which informed his own actions, "to look and see for myself," and by this attain a sense of moral satisfaction with himself. Apropos of Coit's thinking Gizycki insisted that "the importance of the motives of action consists in our being able to infer from these the character of the doer."[66] And it was Kant, on whom Coit wrote his doctoral dissertation at Berlin, who linked the moral worth of character to the motives which inspired

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action.[67]

It was not only Coit's testimony of faith which elicited this emphasis on character. The autobiography itself is a study in character, his own, that of his mother, as well as those of his teachers at Amherst. In the opening pages of the first chapter Coit proposed that

> after the closest recollection and introspection, I find no evidence that the shiftings of environment from home life in Ohio to college days in Massachusetts, thence to Berlin for my University studies, with travel in Europe and through England, and back to New York City, and then on to London for the rest of my life, have been determining factors either in my outlook upon life or in the career which I have pursued. Indeed all these external changes seem to me to have arisen from a prior purpose and vision, and thus to have been only means towards an end which they themselves did not create, but which called them into being.[68]

To impose upon the particular incidents of his life "a prior purpose and vision" represented for Coit the controlling chord of unity Dewey said characterized an entire experience. The particular influence of discrete actions gives way to the moral significance they convey as a sequence of events. The meaning each possesses as a separate moment succumbs to the organic unity which confirms the final form his life assumed. Individual material exists only to serve the total experience.

Once established, each event acquires that single quality which "pervades the entire experience in spite of

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the variations of its constituent parts." According to Dewey "this unity is neither emotional, practical, nor intellectual, for these terms name distinctions that reflection can make within it."[69]. Coit is less interested in these distinctions than in the dominant property which characterized the experience as a whole.

In reviewing his life the single quality which exemplified this unity, provided the fulfillment it possessed, and represented its consummating phase, was the creative nature of his own belief in a set of permanent ideals, adherence to which defined his faith in a humanist religion. In the context of his own philosophical history Coit adopted the same position as Dewey, for whom "means and ends are two names for the same reality."[70]. Being less a division in reality than a quality in judgment, the proposition corresponded with Dewey's insistence that "character includes the style and nature of ends."[71]. The end to which Coit projected his life-work was, for him, a mark of character.

In its entirety the life experience revealed the true personality in the sense described by James: "A man's character is discernible in the mental and moral attitude in which, when it came upon him, he felt himself most deeply and intensely active and alive. At such moments there is a voice inside which speaks and says: This is the real me."[72].

It was in his mental and moral attitude that Coit

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defined himself. "To me the inherent worth and power of truth, beauty and goodness were very God of very God. These verities were eternal, creative principles. . . To me the love of them was Piety and they themselves were Deity; Piety and Deity together constitute the subjective and objective factors in all religion."[73].

At the conclusion of the poem, written when he was twenty-two, and which served as the vehicle for his testimony of faith, Coit asked

> Must we wait? Why do we wait
> Until we pass through death, before we let
> Our Spirit live its life? With it is not
> Eternity both here and now?[74].

His response, drafted when he was eighty, revealed that

> These questions are autobiographical. Not only was I continually putting them to myself, but I always replied that eternity is here and now. And by eternity I meant not continuation throughout all time to come but, as mystics and as the great theologians have taught, a quality of heart, an attitude of mind, over which even the prospect of annihilation casts no shadow. Insofar as any one cares more for moral than for worldly values he ceases to be subject to accidents of time. He has entered the realm where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt.[75].

J. Hutton Hynd, whom Coit recruited "in England for the American Ethical Movement," set forth the main lines of Coit's philosophy of life when he remarked that

> Coit did not say that it is the deed rather than the creed that is all-important; he was more ready to say that the deed is determined by the creed! What a man does depends upon what a man

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> believes. A man's life is his confession of faith because his life is a demonstration of the confession of faith which he holds in organized, unorganized, or disorganized form somewhere in his mind and in his heart . . .Coit did not hold that it was necessary that a man should have a fixed and final statement of belief; he was ever eager to let the reasoning process have its way with dogmatic statements but he held that among the creative tasks of rational religion the making of creeds should have a place as a means toward helping men and women and children to proceed with the business of living as upon a reasonably organized philosophy of life.[76].

The continuity of a man's life with his faith, the extent to which the creed forms the deed, identified the essential character of the man. Coit's insistence upon the moral values over the worldly formed the basis of that creed, which, on numerous occasions, he presented to those with whom he came into contact. His own philosophy of life demonstrated the extent to which the ideals were prescriptive, releasing within him a formal pattern of possible achievements.

It was this simple principle which lay at the historic center of his mother's spiritualism. Conceived as "a new revelation, opening a passage from the highest point of physical science, into spiritual philosophy. . . it seemed a foundation on which a form of society might be built which would result in the regeneration of the whole family."[77].

Within the American culture "spiritualists proposed a

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religious faith that depended upon seeing and touching. . . The Spiritualist's outlook encompassed what seems in retrospect to have been the most liberal, progressive, and liberating intellectual currents of their generation. . . They called spiritualism science, but it was also a surrogate religion."[78] Eschewing Christian doctrine while preserving the efficacy of its values, Coit retained the ardor of those who saw in the appeal of spiritualism "their desire to make religion rational."

His own resolution of the exigencies of growing up mirrored that complex phenomenon which joins the individual life history with the mileau in which it develops. Coit's adherence to a set of permanent ideals, the manifest expression of his devotion to an ethical system of life, epitomized the power of reason in the world and awakened in him the potentialities resident in the formation of personality. Empowered by these beliefs he cultivated a philosophy, which, in its essential elements, became the governing idea of everything he sought to accomplish. According to Harold Blackham, his assistant at the Ethical Church for more than a decade,

> This is the man. This was he in his boyhood's home in Ohio, in his college at Amherst, in his self-dedication to the Ethical Movement, in the public stand which he took in social affairs, in his creation of the Ethical Church, in his translation of the Ethik of Nicolai Hartmann, and, above all, in the serenity of his last days of disappointment and grief. (Nothing in

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his life became him like the leaving it.) This was his witness from the beginning to the end, seasonable and unseasonable, buoyant and persistent, like Epictetus. In this he was stoic again, like Emerson before him. The child was father of the man, and his days were bound each to each by ethical piety.[79]

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Notes

Chapter One

1. Stanton Coit, My Ventures on the Highway of Truth, unpublished autobiographical manuscript, 1937, p.2. In his study of mesmerism, a precursor of spiritualism, Robert C. Fuller pointed out that "the terms spiritual and psychological were. . . completely interchangeable in the mesmerist's vocabulary. Each referred to the fact that the mind was, in some fundamental respect, irreducible to physical conditions." Robert C. Fuller, Mesmerism and the American Cure of Souls, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982), p.59

2. ibid

3. ibid

4. ibid

5. ibid, p.3

6. ibid, p.4

7. ibid Quoted in John Dewey, Art As Experience, (New York: Minton, Balch & Co., 1934), p.61-62. In Outlines of a Critical Theory of Ethics, Dewey wrote: "If we take the moral feelings, not one by one, but as a whole, as an attitude of the agent toward conduct, as expressing the kind of motives which upon the whole moves him into action, we have character. "Jo Ann Boydston, ed., The Early Works of John Dewey, 1882-1889, Volume 3, Early Essays and Outlines of a Critical Theory of Ethics, (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1969), p.246

8. Dino Ferrari, Review of John Dewey's Art As Experience, New York Times Book Review, April 8, 1934, p.1; John Dewey, op cit., p.10

9. Dewey, op cit., p.61

10. ibid

11. ibid, p.66

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12. ibid, p.63. According to Dewey, "the selective operation of materials so powerfully exercised by a developing emotion in a series of continued acts extracts matter from a multitude of objects, numerically and spatially separated, and condenses what is abstracted in an object that is the epitome of the values belonging to them all." p.68. Here Dewey provides a poignant explanation of the rationale Coit used to construct the portrait of himself which emerges from the pages of his autobiography.

13. Coit, Ventures, p.4. Dewey insisted that "the act of expression that constitutes a work of art is a construction in time, not an instantaneous emission . . . It means that the expression of the self in and through a medium, constituting the work of art is itself a prolonged interaction of something issuing from the self with objective conditions, a process in which both of them acquire a form and order they did not at first possess. John Dewey, op cit., p.65. This is an apt description of the process at work in Coit's autobiography. In the Outlines of a Critical Theory of Ethics, Dewey pointed out that "character includes the style and nature of the ends, the objects by which the individual mediates his impulses, and thus affords sufficient basis for taking into account the objective result of acts." Boydston, op cit.,p.242

14. ibid; Dewey, op cit., p.68. "In the development of an expressive act, the emotion operates like a magnet drawing to itself appropriate material; appropriate because it has an experienced emotional affinity for the state of mind already moving. Selection and organization of material are at once a function and a test of the quality of the emotion experienced." Dewey, op cit., p.69.

15. Susanna Egan, Patterns of Experience in Autobiography, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), p.20

16. Coit, Ventures, p.10

17. Egan, op cit, p.176

18. Susanne K. Langer, Feeling and Form: A Theory of Art, (New York: Scribner, 1953), p.217

19. Coit, Ventures, p.5

20. ibid, p.19

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21. ibid, p.6

22. ibid, p.8

23. ibid This was a common mediumistic practice and reinforces the point made here.

24. ibid, p.5. With respect to Dewey's insistence upon objective conditions Coit noted that "as a verification of my boasted ability to read character from unseen handwriting I have cited from the Farnham Herald the unsolicited testimony of a well-known resident of the Haslemere. If on this latter point a reader should desire to have other witnesses, he might apply to any of my three step-children or of my own three daughters." p.30. When I inquired of Lady Fleming about such "other witnesses" she could not support her father's statement.

25. ibid, p.18

26. ibid

27. John Dewey, Art As Experience, (New York: Minton, Balch & Co, 1934; G.P. Putnam's Sons, Caprican Books edition, 1958), p.267

28. ibid, p.247,255

29. ibid, p.246

30. Coit, Ventures, p.2

31. ibid, p.1

32. ibid

33. Egan, op cit., p.24

34. Coit, Ventures, p.2

35. ibid

36. ibid

37. ibid

38. Harold J. Blackham, Stanton Coit: Selections From His Writings, (London: The Favil Press Ltd., 1948), p.3

39. Coit, Ventures, p.37

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40. ibid, p.1

41. ibid

42. ibid

43. John E. Smith, The Spirit of American Philosophy, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1963; Revised edition, 1983), p.131

44. Blackham, op cit., p.22

45. ibid

46. ibid, p.22,23. Blackham recounts that in carrying forward his own approach Coit "never shook what he had grasped free from confusion with the transient conditions of traditional institutional religion . . . nevertheless, he had a commanding view and a generous inspiration lacking in ethicists whose austere moralism is too didactic to amount to regenerative religion." p.23. Blackham also reinforces Lady Virginia Fleming's earlier comment about her father's attachment to Dewey with the remark that "Coit . . . enthusiastically endorsed and propagated Dewey's statement of religion as essentially identical with his own. He quoted approvingly from his writings perhaps more frequently than . . . from any other contemporary philosopher. And it is one of the indications that Coit's ethical idealism was a genuine religion, not a substitute for theism." p.23, 24

47. Ralph Barton Perry, The Thought and Character of William James, (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1935) 2: 450-51 cf. Note 15. William James, The Meaning of Truth, (New York: Longmans Green & Co., 1914).

48. Stanton Coit, Ethical Culture as a Religion for the People, An Address delivered before the South Place Religious Society, September 18 and 25, 1887, in Gustave Spiller, The Ethical Movement in Great Britain: A Documentary History, (London: The Farleigh Press, 1934), p.24,25. "The power to do right is part of ourselves. It is as much a part of ourselves at least as the power to think, to see or to eat and there is no more need to ask some superhuman being for it than for these. There is only need of exercising it, no matter how weak it may be." p.25

49. Coit, Ventures, p.3

50. ibid

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51. ibid

52. ibid According to Fuller spiritualists, along with Unitarians and Swedenborgians, "refused to identify spirituality with moral conduct and personal piety. Theirs was what William Clebsch has described as an aesthetic spirituality. Aesthetic spirituality here connotes not so much the appreciation of beauty attributed to or inhering in objects of artistic creation but rather a consciousness of the beauty of living in harmony with divine things, in a word, being at home in the universe." Fuller, op cit., p.83. cf. William Clebsch, American Religious Thought, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), p.xvl. While Coit did not adhere to the dictates about moral conduct and personal piety, the sense in which he referred to beauty approximates the meaning Clebsch described. In a note to this statement Fuller added that "I understand this religious posture, which is shared by such otherwise unlikely company as Jonathan Edwards, Ralph Waldo Emerson and William James, to be similar to what Sydney Ahlstrom designates harmonial religion." cf. Sidney Ahlstrom, A Religious History of the American People, (New York: Doubleday; Image Books, 1974) 2: 528. While the company might prove unlikely it represents a philosophical line with which Coit had much in common, and, in the case of Emerson and Dewey, exercised significant influence on his own religious disposition.

53. Immanuel Kant, Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals, translated and analyzed by H.J. Paton, (London: Hutchinson & Co. Ltd., 1948; Harper & Row Torchbook ed., 1964), p.126. The sense of this phrase is found in Coit, Ventures, p.3.

54. Coit, Ventures, p.3

55. Ralph Waldo Emerson, Lecture On The Times, in Edward W. Emerson, The Complete Words of Ralph Waldo Emerson, (New York: Houghton-Mifflin, 1903-04), 1: 271

56. ibid

57. Blackham, op cit., p.3

58. Coit, Ventures, p.36-37

59. Edward W. Emerson and Waldo Emerson Forbes, eds., Journals of Ralph Waldo Emerson, (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Co, 1909), 2: 1824-32, January 30, 1832, p.457

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60. ibid July 6, 1832, p.492. "Religion in the mind is not credulity, and in the practice is not form. It is life."

61. Coit, Ventures, p.37

62. Richard Nettleship, The Theory of Education in Plato's Republic, (London: Oxford University Press, 1935), p.12

63. Coit, Ventures, p.39

64. Blackham, op cit., p.4

65. George von Gizycki, A Student's Manual of Ethical Philosophy, trans. by Stanton Coit, (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co., 1889), p.114. In terms of the individual this was the ethical ideal.

66. ibid, p.128

67. The title of Coit's doctoral dissertation was The Inner Sanction as the Final Aim of Moral Action.

68. Coit, Ventures, p.2

69. Dewey, op cit., p.35,37

70. Smith, op cit., p.130

71. Boydston, op cit., p.242

72. Henry James, ed., The Letters of William James, (Boston: The Atlantic Monthly Press, 1920), 1: 199

73. Coit, Ventures, p.32

74. ibid, p.41

75. ibid

76. J. Hutton Hynd, The Creative Task of Rational Religion: A Memorial Tribute to Dr. Stanton Coit, (St. Louis: Ethical Culture Society of St. Louis, 1944), p.10

77. Whitney R. Cross, the Burned over District: The Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion in Western New York, 1800-1850, (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), p.326

78. R. Laurence Moore, In Search of White Crows: Spiritualism, Parapsychology and American Culture, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), p.7,19,36,62.

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For purposes of this work what Moore said about his own analysis is instructive." In analyzing the reasons for the appeal of spiritualism and psychical research to the American public, I do not want to be misunderstood as saying that the particular claims of either one made it into what historians are wont to call the mainstream. They did not, and that fact had an important effect on the behavior of people who became vigorous advocates of supernormal phenomena." p.xii. Moore's approach to spiritualism rests on the assumption that "no historical belief or activity can be wholly deviant with respect to the age in which it appeared." For a later discussion of this assumption as it relates to some of his conclusions in the book cf. R. Laurence Moore, "Insiders and Outsiders in American Historical Narrative and American History," AHR, Vol. 87 No. 2, April, 1982, p.390

79. Blackham, op cit., p.3

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CHAPTER TWO

Almost without exception, though not always in orthodox fashion, members of the Coit family aspired to "a godly righteous and sober life."[1] Of Welsh origin the family settled first in Connecticut where "some of its representatives have acquired distinction as preachers, and a large number of them have been closely identified with religious work."[2] Though spiritual pursuits engaged some members of the family, others demonstrated remarkable enterprise as "interest in new schemes were balanced by prudence and foresight."[3]

A geneological study of the family identified John Coit as "the first of the name in America," who "came over, probably from Glamarganshire, Wales, between 1630 and 1638. He was in Salem, Massachusetts, where he had a grant of land, in 1638." Six years later he moved to Gloucester, "where he was selectman in 1648, and his son John's name also appears there, on the records, at the same time." John Coit occupied a residence" at the end of the neck of house-lots now called Wheeler's Point, where, and on Planter's neck, he had considerable land. He was admitted freeman in 1647. . . He married Mary Ganners or Jenners in England, where all his children were born previous to his emigration to America."[4]

A shipwright by trade "John Goyte (Cotye) was in

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Dorchester in 1635 (and) removed to Marblehead, then part of Salem," where he occupied lot number 38, a choice piece of land facing the harbor.[5] When, on November 14, 1638, the town laid out additional lots, the record indicated a grant of land confirmed on that date to "John Coit on the neck, three acres."[6] Coit's arrival coincided with the greater availability of land in Marblehead while the commercial prospects were such as to appeal to a man with his skills. "No more than ten years after the arrival of John Endicott (in 1629) shipbuilding was a thriving industry of Salem, and her seamen had begun to talk of sending their ventures as far away as the West Indies."[7]

However, within a few years the growth of the surrounding region, together with the competition bred by the ensuing changes, soon dampened this enthusiasm. "Besides, all hopes were now renounced, that Salem would become the capital of New England, which had been a favourite object. The college (Harvard) had been placed in the neighborhood of Boston, and Boston had learnt to improve all the advantages, by which it had become the most flourishing town in New England."[8]

While Salem struggled to maintain her position in the region some of her citizens faced problems of a different kind. "In the quarterly court held at Salem, January 25, 1641, there were sixty-eight civil cases."[9] Though we do not know the exact nature of the case, one of the litigants,

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"John Goit (Coit) was admonished for saying it's better to go to hell gate for mercy than to Mr. Endicott for justice."[10.]

John Coit moved to Gloucester in 1644, the same year the legislature at Salem called attention to "the defect of freemen at Marblehead."[11.] During the previous decade the settlement had acquired a permanence which convinced its inhabitants to petition the General Court for incorporation as a town. . ."the final act. . . being issued in May, 1642." In addition to her new legal status, which made it easier to secure grants of land, Gloucester offered commercial opportunities as well. The town's "superiority as a finishing base . . .attracted mariners" while "the timber growing in the Cape, especially the oak, furnished the best material for shipbuilding."[12.]

Nearly all of the original settlers had land in several locations. In addition to their home-lots, "those living on the neck of house-lots (Wheeler's Point) had them on Planter's Neck between Lobster Cove and the sea. . . Planter's Neck, where lots were early laid out and numbered, was at Annisquam, the spot which tradition has always reported to have been the first to receive permanent occupants."[13.]

John Coit "received a grant of land in New London, Connecticut, in 1650, "along with seven others who migrated from Gloucester to that town. To accommodate the settlers

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from Gloucester an area of land "in the rear of the town plot was opened. . . this position was designated as beyond the brook and the ministry lot. It was carved into house lots and took the name Cape Ann Lane."[14] There were nine lots, "six acres each, extending both sides of the narrow street. John Coite occupied the third lot."[15] Following distribution of the properties and as Coit was the first shipwright in New London "Mr. Coite exchanged with Mr. Welman on Close Cove, probably at its head, on Harbor's Mouth Road, he being by occupation a ship's carpenter, and desirous, on that account, of locating near the water, where he could be accommodated with a building yard."[16]

John Coit died on August 29, 1659, and as one historian of the period noted, "neither the date of his birth, nor his age at the time of his decease has been ascertained."[17] According to his last will and testament John Coit left an inventory valued at 103 pounds while that of his son, Joseph, who died on March 27, 1704, amounted to 312 pounds. When Coit's grandson, the Rev. Joseph Coit, died at Plainsfield in 1750 the value of this estate was 1070 pounds, quite a substantial sum by the standards of that time.

The Rev. Joseph Coit was the first native of New London to receive a college education. His name appears on the first list of graduates of the Seminary at Saybrook, "which was the germ that expanded into Yale College . . .

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Plainsfield honors him as her first minister, and his descendants are supposed to be more numerous than any other branch of the family."[18.]

During the ensuing years the Coit progeny spread from New London and Plainsfield to Preston and Norwich, Connecticut, where they took an active role in civic affairs. Samuel Coit "was much employed in civil matters, representing Preston in the General Assembly. . . and sitting as a judge on the bench of the county court and of the maritime court, in the time of the Revolution. In 1774 (he) was moderator of the town meeting on the Boston Port Bill, and one of the Preston Committee of Correspondence."[19.] Insofar as "the posterity of Colonel Coit have been quite numerous, and, as they filled a large place in the town for one or two generations they have been distinguished from their New London cousins as the Preston Coits."[20.]

Samuel's oldest son, Benjamin "spent his life as far as known as a farmer, in his native place, where he became a very influential citizen."[21.] He often served as "Moderator of Town Meetings," was "Representative in the State Legislature in 1772, 1773 and 1778, Judge of the County Court."[22.] His son, Issac, served for a time as a surgeon's mate with the Hampshire Co. regiment in the American Revolution and his name was on the "muster roll dated Camp at Ticonderoga, February 24, 1777."[23.] He originally

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"settled in Preston, but removed about 1785, to Norwich and Preston, Connecticut."[24] Stanton Coit's great grandfather, "a wealthy farmer in Western Massachusetts and the father of fifteen children, spent a long life in the toils of agriculture."[25] Isaac Coit died in his eighty-ninth year leaving "a numerous family to honor his memory by their industry, temperance and uprightness."[26],

One of that family, Harvey, the sixth of his children and Stanton's grandfather, was for many years a farmer in Massachusetts but "when advanced in years removed to Columbus, Ohio, where his three sons preceded him. His last years were spent in Worthington, Ohio."[27] Harvey Coit married the daughter of John Stone who also served in the American Revolution as "Quarter Master on the sloop Defence . . .discharged September 26, 1781, . . .the order dated Boston, April 26, 1782, signed by said Stone, payable to his daughter, Nancy Stone, for wages for two months, eleven days service."[28] Their marriage was a fruitful union and produced eight children.

A native of Norwich, now Huntington, Harvey Coit, the third child, and "reared a farmer boy," remained in Hampshire County until 1836 when he "left his home in Massachusetts" and "at the age of seventeen . . .started to make his way in the world. He went to Columbus, then scarcely more than a village. . . and commenced his career with his uncles. . . as a clerk in the store of Stone,

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Kelton & Company."[29.]

When Stanton Coit's father undertook his journey there were two routes available by which to reach Ohio. The overland trail represented by the National Road was the natural highway for western migration and originated with an act of Congress in 1806. Construction began at Washington in 1815 and the first segment, which stopped at Cumberland, Maryland, opened three years later.

In response to "resolutions of the Ohio General Assembly . . .for the construction of a great national highway between East and West "the Congress enacted legislation on May 15, 1820, "which recited in its preamble that by continuation of the Cumberland Road from Wheeling through Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois, the lands of the United States may become more valuable and authorized the President to appoint three commissioners."[30.] By the time Harvey Coit set out for Columbus the National Road reached all the way to his destination.

A more circuitous route lay through the Erie and Ohio canals which cut across New York State and penetrated the Ohio heartland. At the same time the Ohio legislature petitioned Congress for extension of the Cumberland Road they also authorized the appointment of "three commissioners to locate, through the public lands, a route for a navigable canal from Lake Erie to the Ohio River."[31.] Nothing of practical importance occurred until the beginning of 1822

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but once work started a steady pace ensued and navigation though the canal from Cleveland began in 1831. In the judgment of one historian of the city of Columbus "the beginning of a new era of trade, travel, transportation, and of the material and social progress in Ohio dates from the construction of the Ohio Canal and the National Road."[32.]

The journey of Harvey Coit exemplified, in a single instance, the importance of that internal development which occurred in the northern part of the country from the time of his birth, when neither route existed, to the moment he departed, when both were available. In the tradition of those Yankee-Yorkers who preceded him Harvey Coit brought "certain standards of civilization and culture" which were to prove useful to the task of building a community in the village of Columbus. According to one account.

> Mr. Coit was one of the sensible class of young men who realize that the good things of life do not come without effort, and he bravely started, resolving to do his best, although his salary for the first year amounted only to fifty dollars. The second year yielded a salary of seventy-five dollars, while his third year of service brought him one hundred dollars and a reward for faithful work by his admission into the firm as a partner, the firm name continuing the same.[33.]

Harvey Coit remained with the firm in this capacity for several years before "starting a general store on the corner of Town and High Streets, continuing at this location for forty-five years."[34.] As time passed the area grew unevenly

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forty-five years."[34] As time passed the area grew unevenly resulting in a residential district among which were scattered commercial dwellings. Shortly before the Civil War began William Dean Howells, then a young man in his twenties, visited Columbus and recorded his impressions of this section of the city.

> All up and down the wide shady streets which ran from High eastward, and were called Rich and Town and State and Broad, there were large pleasant houses of brick, with or without limestone facings, standing in lawns more ample or less, and showing through their trees the thrilling light of evening parties that burst with the music of dancing from every window. High Street was the only street of commerce except for a few shops that had strayed down from it into Town Street, and the buildings which housed the commerce were not impressive, and certainly not beautiful. A few hotels, three or four, broke the line of stores; there was the famous restaurant of Ambros, and some Jewish clothiers; . . . The streets of dwellings stretched from High Street to the right, over a practically interminable plain, and shorter streets on the left dropped to the banks of the Scioto. . . A dirty bridge crossed the river where in the slack water ordinarily drowsed a flock of canal boats which came and went on the Ohio Canal. Some old-fashioned, dignified dwellings stood at the northern end of High Street, with the country close beyond.[35]

Harvey Coit arrived in Ohio at a very opportune moment, and, with a puritan shrewdness for business, became one of "the prominent capitalists in the city."[36] The Columbus Business Directory, which appeared in 1843, took note of the fact that "the location of the National Road, and of the

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Columbus Feeder to the Ohio Canal, gave an impetus to improvements, and by the year 1830, the price of property and improvements of the town had very considerably advanced." During the previous decade "business was brisk, and the price of real estate run up at railroad speed. Since which time business has been dull, and the price of property on the decline."[37].

At about the time Harvey Coit began his own business the city's economy showed signs of recovery, fueled by the start of "the road-making ear." As one student of the city observed "if the decade from 1832 to 1842 was a prosperous one to Columbus, the ten years form 1842 to 1852 were still more so."[38]. Between 1839 and the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act there were thirteen companies organized and incorporated for the purpose of constructing turnpikes into, out of and through Columbus, one measure of the extraordinary activity during these years. "Turnpikes, plank-roads, and railroads were projected and constructed, or put in the way of construction."[39].

These inventions generated cultural and material benefits that facilitated "the interchange of the various productions of nature and art "while they removed "national and provincial antipathies."[40]. A signal mark of the times, such benefits led to "an epoch of general prosperity. . . not previously equalled or since surpassed. Excepting the episode known s the crisis of 1857, brought on mainly by the

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currency disorders, excessive speculation and bad banking, this prosperity continued without serious interruption until the outbreak of the Civil War."[41.]

While the growth of transportation served to initiate "an epoch of general prosperity," the integration of life it fostered removed whatever "provincial antipathies" stood in the way of further settlement in this community. German migration, which began in earnest during the 1830's, accelerated, especially in the fourth and fifth wards. Twenty years later "it has been estimated that Germans owned one-third of all Columbus property and that more than half of all the construction in the city was centered in the fifth ward which, by this time, had a population of slightly over 5,000 souls."[42.]

Among the benefits such migration brought to Columbus were "various productions of nature and art." In 1838 the German community "set up in Columbus the first kindergarten in America. They campaigned for calisthenics and vocational training in the schools; they developed music, literary, and dramatic societies."[43.] The growth visible in the fourth and fifth wards occurred in the vicinity of Harvey Coit's general store and mirrored changes in the city as a whole.

According to the federal census of 1850 the population of Columbus increased during the preceding decade "from 6,048 to 17,871, or at the rate of nearly two hundred per centum" Real estate values in the city, "assessed for

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taxation in 1852, was set down at $3,113,612 . . .while the "grand total of property in the city" amounted to more than six million.[44.]

One of those who benefitted from the "grand total of property in the city" was Harvey Coit. Amidst the general prosperity which marked the forties and fifties this sensible young man used the profits from his general store to accumulate as much property as his means allowed. In time Harvey Coit "desired to turn his attention to brokerage and real estate, his own holdings having become numerous and valuable."[45.]

Soon after he decided to go into business for himself Harvey Coit met Elizabeth Greer "the gifted daughter of Joseph Greer an old settler in Worthington, Ohio."[46.] They were married on April 16, 1844. An Episcopal colony founded by Colonel James Kilbourne, and "established by the Scioto Company of Granby, Connecticut, in 1803," the settlement took its name from the parish in which "he had been born."[47.]

The town flourished as "the Indians gradually drifted away" and soon it began to attract business enterprises, the most important of which was the Worthington Manufacturing Company. Joseph Greer and his wife, Nancy Agnes Dixon, who was "born near Belfast, Ireland," where they married, bought "land through Colonel Kilbourne (and) came to Worthington in 1812 with their family."[48.]

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As their American neighbors fought against the British the Greers "built a home and a factory for making woolen goods on the east bank of the Whetstone River. When Joseph Greer died in 1830, Nancy moved from her home on the river to a house on High Street and here she began to earn money for the support of her large family by taking the students of the Worthington Academy to board."[49]. With an unassuming display of pioneer ingenuity and "to show her skill at tailoring she ripped apart a dress suit which her husband had brought from Ireland and put it together again that she might claim it as her own work. She then showed the finished garment to the students and in that way got orders for making their suits."[50].

Ohio was the first western state penetrated by the Protestant Episcopal denomination and a church was "erected in the town in 1823"[51]. Nancy Dixon Greer was "an ardent churchworker in the Episcopal congregation and a close friend of Bishop (Philander) Chase (who) left his post as a rector of a parish in Connecticut and moved to Ohio in 1817, . . .fixing his residence on a farm between Columbus and Worthington."[52]. The missionary impulse began to spread in an area where "houses were preaching places, meetings were held in barnes, in the woods, and a four weeks circuit caused Worthington to become a mere speck on the map of a constantly growing conference."[53].

Elizabeth Greer was born in Worthington in January,

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1820, and "grew to womanhood in her native village. She early displayed many of the intellectual traits which in later life made her known so well to the people of her native state. . . She attended the Worthington Seminary and taught school for several years afterward."[54] Her name appeared on "a list of the pupils in 1839-40" who attended the school which the Ohio legislature chartered on March 9, 1839. This seminary for girls owed its existence to Miss Serepta Marsh, "a thoroughly educated teacher. . .one fully capable of imparting her thoughts to those under her care."[55] In his autobiography Stanton Coit described his mother as a woman with "a deeply religious nature."

> Until a few years before my birth she had been a devout communicant of the Protestant Episcopal Church of America, and indeed for a number of years before her marriage at the age of twenty-three, she had been, in her native village of Worthington, Ohio, a teacher of latin in what was then called a young ladies seminary, which was under the auspices of the Protestant Episcopal clergy of Ohio. Through such close ecclesiastical contact she became fully conversant not only with the spirit but with the doctrine of the Church.[56]

Elizabeth Greer "taught . . .at the Female Seminary in Worthington until she married Harvey Coit. . . and moved to Columbus."[57] The continued growth of Ohio and the social changes it brought in its wake led to the eventual demise of this institution. "Legacies were expected which did not materialize and when coeducation was established at Ohio Wesleyan, the Seminary could not compete and was forced to

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close its doors in 1857."[58.]

On March 5, 1845, a year after moving to Columbus, Elizabeth Greer Coit gave birth to a daughter. Virginia died on July 1, 1846, the first of four of their children who passed away at a very early age. Charles, born on December 21, 1846, died before his seventh birthday on September 4, 1853; Anna, born on September 2, 1851, died at the age of three on January 10, 1855, and a fifth daughter lived for less than two weeks, from January 27 to February 6, 1864.[59.]

While "the period between 1849 and 1853 saw the appearance of the Asiatic cholera in Columbus" there is no indication that any of the Coit children died as a result of this disease.[60.] Of those who came of age Alonzo was the third child, born on June 23, 1849, followed by Elizabeth on December 4, 1853, and Isabella (affectionately known as Belle) on November 26, 1855. The seventh of eight children, George Stanton Coit arrived on August 11, 1857. Several years before the birth of her third son, Elizabeth Coit, "through personal experiences of her own, and owing to the tidal wave of modern spiritualism which was rising and sweeping over the United States, became converted to belief in spirit-communication."[61.]

In recalling his entrance into the world Coit explained the circumstance which led his mother to forsake the Episcopal religion.

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> She had become afflicted with dropsy. The physicians said she would die if she were not tapped; and yet there was great fear that, if an operation were performed, she would not survive. Just at this time there came to Columbus a spiritualist healer who cured people by the laying on of hands and making passes over the body of the patient. So great was his repute that my father brought him to our home to practice his treatment upon my mother. He came three successive days; at the end of which time the dropsy had entirely disappeared. In narrating this incident to me my mother told me that then and there she dedicated her life, soul and body, to the spirit-world, the source of all life. To her last breath (she died at the age of eighty-two) her new faith never wavered.[62]

The magnitude of Elizabeth's Coit's decision to dedicate her life to the spirit-world became, in the sense expressed by her son, the dominant influence of his childhood. It conditioned the values he acquired no less than the system of belief with which he grew up. In a manner which emphasized the seriousness of the lessons she imparted Coit acknowledged that we "were taught from our earliest days that perfect health of mind and body and every good and noble thought and impulse came to us from pure and holy spirits, and every mean, selfish or hateful desire and susceptibility to illness were due to the influence of evil spirits." Given this kind of theology "the only way to ward off the evil and attract the good was to pray to the latter to protect and guide us."[63]

Beyond the immediate family Elizabeth's new beliefs

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became a divisive issue in the relationship she maintained with her sister, Isabella, who according to her nephew, "was a woman of as marked personality in her own way as was my mother in hers. . . who had been horrified that my mother had become a spiritualist."[64] In his autobiography Coit recalled that his mother "forbade that my Aunt Isabella should take me to be baptized at Holy Trinity Church."[65] However, with a determination which gave credence to his description of her, Isabella, "without my mother's knowledge or permission carried me off within three weeks of my birth and had me baptized. Thus not only without my will, but without that of my father and mother, I was, to use the formula of the Church, made a member of the Church, a child of God, and an inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven."[66]

During Stanton's childhood there were intermittent occasions when Isabella's efforts on behalf of his spiritual well-being amply expressed her own opposition to Elizabeth's new posture. "But, despite this aunt's alertness on my spiritual behalf, my mother triumphed absolutely."[67] Stanton Coit's account of this domestic struggle for his soul prefigures both his own later venture to free himself from the grip of spiritualism as well as the importance of religion in the Coit family.

In his autobiography Coit recalled that "the depth and strength of her revolt against all authority in morals and religion" she maintained with respect to "the attitude which

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her children should be trained to hold towards the church."[68] When, as a boy, Coit expressed regret "that my sisters and I did not go to the Sunday School and to Church services as did our friends," his mother issued a powerful, and what must have seemed to them, a final rejoinder.[69]

> My son, the time will come when, of all the things I have done for you, you will be most grateful for the fact that I never permitted you to go to Sunday School, where you would learn what in after years, if you have any intelligence, you will be sure to unlearn. When you are old enough to judge for yourself, you may join what Church you please or join none, but in childhood and early youth you must not be committed and pledged.[70]

If the child experienced any hurt as a result of the parent's admonition his life redeemed the promise she made to him. Moving beyond this creative dialogue, and exercising his own powers of logical inference, Coit amplified the contributions of his mother. "In this connection it may be in place to add that my mother not only guarded us against teachings which she felt the modern mind was sure to discard, but also against motives and objects in life which might blind us to the supreme moral values of character and conduct."[71]

When Coit broke with spiritualism "I dreaded to inform her of this right-about-face in my convictions, lest it would cause her deep and lasting grief."[72] Upon considerable reflection Coit "mustered up courage to break the news. To my lasting astonishment and to my ever-

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deepening admiration for her character, she replied that she was not in the least distressed at my giving up belief in personal immortality, for every man must follow the truth as he sees it, withersoever it may lead him."[73.]

The attention and deference Coit gave to his mother, conveyed by the stimulating and forceful language with which he arranged the narrative, illustrate the dominant position she assumed in the life of her children. Upon learning of her brother's autobiography Coit's sister, Mrs. Frank C. Kelton, then eighty-three and still living in Columbus, Ohio, wrote him a letter in which she issued a rather strong admonition of her own: "I do not want you to write a book which will put our mother down as believing in all these physical manifestations. Her religion was a spiritual philosophy. Her spiritualism was a religion."[74.] What influence this letter had on Coit is difficult to assess. However, several pages later he remarked that "for many years I have been convinced that my mother was primarily a freethinker and rationalist and only subordinately a spiritualist."[75.] More easily recognizable is the fact that those qualities Coit attributed to his mother's religious outlook defined his own views.

In recounting his mother's triumph Coit portrayed her as a woman who approached the moral content of life with a sureness and strength which exemplified her rational and independent turn of mind. Nowhere is this done with more

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telling effect than in the detailed account of the values she imparted to her children. "She taught us that at school we must never work for prizes but only to learn the truth, that we must never have as our motive the object of leading our class and getting ahead of others, and that we must never seek worldly honors as an ulterior end." To Elizabeth Coit, so for her children, "social position and material wealth were as nothing in value compared with truth and the right."

Even by Victorian standards Elizabeth's code of conduct extended the reach of childhood aspirations. The strength of her own ideals seemed to reinforce what undoubtedly was a common theme in the Coit household. "The curse in organized religion and in education was that preachers, priests and teachers were liable to have one eye upon preferment and only one eye upon science, art and social duty, and that this made their eyes squint. She insisted and brought home to us until it entered our blood, that no human being could serve two masters who exacted conflicting lines of loyalty."[76].

The imperatives by which Coit explained his mother's prescription for well-being recreate the spiritual and psychological dimensions of his own growth and development. They reaffirm Elizabeth's Coit's determination to guard her children "against teachings which she felt the modern mind was sure to discard, but also against motives and objects in

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life which might blind (them) to the supreme moral values of character and conduct."

Elizabeth Coit's secular creed proved a natural complement to her spiritual beliefs. "Every good and noble thought and impulse" was a sign of that temperament which rejected worldly honors and social status as an end in itself. The force of her own logical inference dictated that the authority and tradition of organized religion and education were incompatible with "science, art and social duty." In the pursuit of "truth and the right," his mother insisted "you must not be committed or pledged." Again Coit invokes the biblical adage in the service of ethical ends to reinforce his belief in man's capacity to discover for himself the moral content resident in the experience of life. Taking the values he ascribed to his mother, Coit invested them with the power that proved the source of his own character and conduct.

Among the impressions he recorded about these years Coit mentioned his father only briefly and then in the context of a discussion of the spiritistic phenomena which occurred during his childhood. Even this terse characterization became an occasion to emphasize the dominant force which Elizabeth Coit represented for both father and son. "My father like my mother, never believed that natural causes produced the physical manifestations with which our house was beset, or that fraud could account

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for them. Like all the rest of us, he at the time attributed them to spirits, who somehow had control of physical forces. But he never took them seriously."

If Harvey Coit did not regard such phenomena seriously neither did he evidence much concern for the formal liturgy of religion. "Apparently he had no interest in a life after death, he was not accustomed to pray and he neither believed nor disbelieved in a personal creator. Indeed, as I recall his conversations with me, I should say that his reverent devotion to my mother was the highest sentiment which he ever entertained. In this respect I was not unlike him."[77].

If Elizabeth Coit imparted to her children a firm sense of moral right she demonstrated an equally marked concern for the social and political issues which arose in the middle of the nineteenth century. The regard shown to Elizabeth Coit at home found its genuine counterpart in the respect accorded to her by those she encountered in her work on behalf of the rights of women. Elizabeth Coit was president of the First Woman Suffrage Association in Columbus and "for many years the Suffrage Association met at her home once a month to discuss plans for the advancement of women."[78].

> It was a small group with no great influence socially or politically, but it kept the spark alive, ready to burst into flame when the time was ripe. As treasurer of the state association, she attended state conventions and spoke in Columbus and neighboring towns, when the cause was an unpopular one. Many were

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> the slurs and disagreeable letters Elizabeth Coit received. Once her eight year old daughter came home from school, crying Mother, are you strong-minded and do you wear pants? she asked. Mrs. Coit replied, My dear, I hope I am strong-minded. I should be very sorry to have had children if I were feeble-minded. Intelligent enough not to feel hurt at the slurs, Mrs. Coit was always serene, as she believed sincerely in the righteousness of the cause and was firmly convinced of its ultimate success. She was not impatient for suffrage to be granted as she felt that women needed more education and more preparation for citizenship. During the Civil War Mrs. Coit was one of a committee of three which drafted a constitution for the Soldiers' Aid Society and she served on that committee for three years. A friend of Susan B. Anthony, Lucy Stone, Frances Willard and Mary Livermore, her home was always open to suffragists, as her husband and children were in sympathy with her work . . . Mrs. Coit and Dr. Harriet Henderson were active in lobbying for a bill permitting women to vote for members of the board of education. This bill, passed in 1894, was the first victory for Woman Suffrage. . . She died in 1901, so that she did not see the ratification of the suffrage amendment, but her daughter, Belle, later the wife of Frank C. Kelton, carried on suffrage work with zeal until the victory was won.[79]

Stanton Coit was born in the closing years of the last decade before the great civil conflict which served as the landmark of his youth. In the autobiography he spoke poignantly of his own involvement in its closing moments.

> My earliest recollections in life were of the Civil War. . . My father and mother were ardent abolitionists of slavery and used to help slaves, who had escaped from Kentucky, to pass through

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> Ohio to Canada. In a childish way I hated slavery infinitely more than the horrors of the War which ended it. Vivid is my remembrance of the evening of April 14, 1865. That night at the corner of the street where our house stood there was the wildest jubilation. A bonfire had been built thirty feet high; from a pole across the top of it had been hung a more-than-life size effigy of Jeff Davis, the President of the Confederate States. When the bonfire was lighted and the flames had reached the effigy, I standing near by picked up a stone and threw it at the figure which was beginning to burn. Unfortunately the stone was very hot; and for days after, the palm of my right hand was blistered. But the next morning I was out before breakfast to see the smoldering fires. Then I learned the news that, the night before Abraham Lincoln had been assassinated. Rushing home I told my mother. To my astonishment, for I did not understand, she burst into tears and sobbed as if her heart would break. It was the only time I had ever seen her cry; and I remember asking whether she had known Abraham Lincoln and whether she had loved him. Thereupon she wept more copiously but did not reply. So wonderful to me and unaccountable was her grief that I remember it with greater poignancy than any other incident connected with slavery and the Civil War. Next to her grief stands out in my memory, with all the vividness of present experience, the face of Abraham Lincoln which a fortnight later my father lifted me up to look at, when Lincoln's open coffin lay in state under the dome of the Capital at Columbus, while thousands passed by to gaze at the rugged features of his tragic countenance.[80]

In his description of this historical moment Coit injected a wide range of emotions from "the wildest jubilation," which exacted its own cost in a blistered hand,

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to astonishment at his mother's reaction, informed by the child's lack of understanding, and which culminated in the awe of those final moments at the capital when he viewed "the rugged features" of the slain president. What appears central to his account, however, is the way in which Coit elevated his mother's grief above the particular incident responsible for it. It is she who dominates the scene.

Coit's recollections of life from the close of the Civil War to his admission to Amherst in 1874, a period which approximated his adolescence, exhibit a similar range of emotions and focuses attention on "a peculiarity of temperament and the influence of my boyhood." Coit described the experiences he assigned to his boyhood as "the sufferings of an imaginative child." In all, there are three sets of experiences, the first of which occurred between the ages of eight and eleven, the next occasioned by the death of his sister, Elizabeth, when Coit was fifteen, and the last which took place while he was a student at Amherst.

Each cluster of experiences impart to the narrative an emotional content which flows from the subject matter and in fact controls it. From a literary and psychological standpoint the attitudes conveyed gain their effect by the obvious use of dramatic technique. The cumulative effect of this emotional content is the perception of anxiety and unhappiness Coit sought to impart about this period of his

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life. The common thread which binds these events together is their allusion to character-formation, that beguiling and complex process of achieving a sense of identity which is at the center of adolescent growth. In each situation it is the integrity of the personality which is under attack. What emerges from his characterization is a highly self-conscious youth whose own reactions became a constant source of embarrassment which successively tested the limits of his endurance.

The first set of experiences involve Coit's relationship with his brother and sisters, within which one gleams an estimate of self, together with an awareness of his place in the family.

> Once at school, when I was about eight years old, a big rough fellow, Charlie Lechler, (I have never been able to forget his name) said to me: Tell me, is it really true that you are not a son of Mr. and Mrs. Harvey Coit and that they got you out of the workhouse? For months my anguish of doubt and horror were unutterable and I had not the courage to tell my parents. . .At last I gained courage and confronted my mother with the searching question: How is it that you are always telling the cute things the others used to say and do, but you never mention what I said and did? With no idea as to why I had asked her, my mother burst into a ringing laugh and kissing me said: My dear boy, you never said or did anything that was witty or amusing.[81]

As a child Coit presumably endured the effects of somnambulism and recounts two incidents where it caused him "to suffer intolerable humiliation." One source of this

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embarrassment was the teasing administered by his brother and sisters. "They delighted in telling others, especially guests, and in warning them that if they heard someone prowling about in the middle of the night they need not be alarmed, as it would be no one but John, as they always called me"[82].

The second incident occurred a few weeks later when "I was permitted for the first time to make a railway journey alone."[83]. Coit went to visit Aunt Isabella in Cincinnati, and, following his arrival, "my aunt made me lie down on the drawing-room sofa for a nap."[84].

> The next thing I knew, I was standing on the front doorstep of my aunt's house and in the street below were some twenty men and women looking with puzzled astonishment at me, and I heard my aunt say: It is nothing! He is sound asleep and does not know what he is doing. He imagines that he is still in the railway train and that an accident has happened. Did ever any human being suffer such bitter shame as I did, when it was explained to me that I had been screaming at the top of my voice, gesticulating and warning people to take care or they would be killed.[85].

A railroad setting also figured prominently in an incident which took place the "first time" Coit went to the theatre.

> There was a scene in the play, in which a man was being tied by villains across the railway line. In the railway station at one side of the stage there was a woman locked in; and the audience could see her through a window. She heard what was going on outside and, when the villains had run away and a

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> steam-engine was rapidly approaching at the back of the stage around a curve, she rushed about like mad to find an axe with which to break open the door. At that instant I cried out in so loud a voice that everyone in the crowded theatre turned and stared at me: Quick for pity sake: Or the man will be killed! For days I nearly died of shame at having made such a fool of myself.[86].

In the absence of what Cushing Strout referred to as "a vocabulary of analysis" by which to study "the difficult, shifting middle ground between ego psychology and sociology," he recommended "the narrative method. . .whose imagined characters, drawn indirectly from experience, dramatize in their lives the sort of intellectual, cultural, and psychological interplay" which finds reference in the historical personality.[87].

A concern for the nature of that experience reinforces the fact that the more autobiography adheres "to the true potential of the genre the more its real subject matter is character, personality, self-conception, all those difficult-to-define matters which ultimately determined the inner coherence and the meaning of a life."[88]. However, if the particular subject matter reveals a mark of authenticity it likewise exposes the central dilemma which applies with equal force to the narrative method as to other forms of interpretation. "The meaning of the past is intelligible and meaningful in terms of the present understanding; it is thus with all historical understanding. Facts are thus placed into relationships retroactively in which they did

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not stand when they were first experienced. For some readers this shift evokes the problem: what then is truth in the account?"[89].

In this instance the answer lies in the peculiar relationship which exists between author and narrator. With respect to Coit's childhood, it was the author who selected the kinds of events he wished to recount and perceives what is meaningful in relation to the reality his life assumed. Whether Coit was right in assigning meaning to a particular event or sequence of events is another matter entirely. It was the author who endowed these events with the emotional content they possess. Here, as elsewhere, Coit exhibits a tendency to invest experiences with drama when he evaluates their significance, and, in so doing, overemphasizes the impact of each event. I, the author, who relives the moment and I, the narrator, who assigns value to that moment reinforce each other. It is clearly the author who sets the entire process in motion. "Past life is being rearranged because it is being interpreted in terms of the meaning (or meanings) that life now is seen to possess. The dominant autobiographical truth is, therefore, the vision of the pattern and meaning of life which the autobiographer has at the moment of writing his autobiography."[90].

While the author searches for truth conceived as a definitive but elusive object, "the truism that in autobiography history and fiction are intentionally distinct

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proves too slippery to hold."[91] Coit's autobiography is inseparably linked to a study of character and his self-conception determined, in large measure, the form of the narrative. What is essential, therefore, is not to propose "a psychological theory of personality but to come to an understanding of the self-conception which the author had of himself."[92]

Coit's self-conception issues from the emotional content with which he endowed his childhood experiences; its qualities evoked by the symbolism he employed. In each of the events he recounted there is a sense of shame and doubt, of exposure and anxiety, so much so that the youth appears overwhelmed by the events and circumstances he encounters. They dominate the child to the extent that they represent an attack on his autonomy as a person. And it is this basic attitude which seems missing from the experiences, the essential faith in existence and the inability to differentiate between what Erik Erikson refers to as "inner and outer, real and imagined dangers."[93] What is apparent is "his inability to hold on and to let go with discretion."[94]

Stanton Coit was slight of build and Charles Lechler was "a big rough fellow," the workhouse stood in stark contrast to his house, the lack of courage announced his "doubt and horror." The teasing he sustained was, in some measure, a form of testing and the claim that his brother

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and sisters called him John implied a distortion of his name. The "first time" events brought him face to face with the larger world whose power took the form of a railway train. The motor engine was the symbol of an industrializing society which expressed the dominant cultural pattern of his youth. In each case the child saw in these events not the progress and achievement of society, or even wonder at the possibilities of locomotion. He saw only danger. Years later Coit became a bitter critic of industrial civilization in the form it assumed in the United States, and, as an urban reformer fought against the encroaching power and abusive practices "typical of the materialistic standards which have dominated America since the Civil War."[95.]

As Erikson remarks: "Standing alone has many connotations of pride and isolation, of wishing to be admired, and of the fear of being exposed to devastating inspection and, of course, of falling."[96.] Coit's embarrassment was not that of the child, but of the man for the child. It was not the events which caused him to feel shame, but his childhood itself.

Coit's account of the death of his sister appears in three, separate places in the autobiography, and, when brought together, the various segments reflect its significance as the central experience of his adolescence. In his reconstruction of this event and its attendant

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circumstances Coit revealed an emotional power which spoke to the importance he attached to it no less than the pain it released in him.

Coit first alluded to Elizabeth's death with the remark that it was "another occasion of poignant suffering which I still vividly recall."[97] The choice of such an introduction implied that this event was simply one more experience in a chain of incidents while it gave no hint of the dominant position it actually assumed. To release the full measure of power this event possessed Coit designed a metaphor capable of representing both an adolescent's reaction to a life-crisis as well as absorbing the adult's response to events he now viewed with hostility. Elizabeth was four years older than Stanton according to whose account she died of typhoid fever "in the middle of October 1872 when I was fifteen years old."[98]

> Some ten days before, a pear tree which had been growing in our back garden for many years but had never bloomed suddenly burst into full and magnificent blossom. I had often heard throughout my childhood that if a fruit tree blossomed out of season in the yard of anyone's house it was a sign that someone in the family was about to die. The sight of this pear tree filled me with unspeakable alarm. The alarm grew so intense that one evening just at twilight I found a long rod and brought a tall ladder to the tree. Up this ladder I climbed and worked for half an hour beating off with the rod every blossom, and when I descended I said to myself: My sister is not gong to die. I slept quietly that night; but next morning, although her fever had left, my

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> sister was so weak that she passed peacefully away. I have never been able fully to realize what the idea was which prompted me to beat off the blossoms from the pear tree, and to hope that by so doing I should avert the calamity to which the unseasonable blossoming of the tree, according to the popular superstition, was a portent. Psychologically the explanation of course is that, as I had heard the popular saying, the mere association of it with my sister's illness intensified my alarm and the removal of the blossoms broke the association of ideas and for a moment relieved my anxiety. I am sure that I was not naturally or by education superstitious; but that excessive and undisciplined imaginativeness made me suffer more than any other members of the family, who also had noticed and commented upon the unseasonable blooming of the tree. From that day to this I have always been alert that a mere association of ideas, however painful, should not get the better of my judgement. But, fearing lest I might, I have, for instance always avoided the reading of harrowing fiction. Although such stories were not literally true they have always, if they were well told and seemed to be within the range of someone's possible experience, harrowed my soul unduly.[99]

At one level of understanding the purpose of this metaphor was to portray the adolescent conflicts brought on by the death of a loved one. At the same time it was the kind of instrument that retained the power of suggestion by which Coit sought to convey the emotional force he attached to this period of his life. Coit's alarm and subsequent actions projected a sense of fear and jeopardy experienced by an adolescent faced with the loss of his sister. However in the emotional content of the metaphor and the drama Coit

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imparted to the account one can also perceive the magnitude of what the event and its surrounding circumstances entailed.

Without reaching for a psychoanalytical interpretation of the metaphor but relying on what is, essentially, the kind of "narrative method" suggested by Cushing Strout, what seems appropriate here is to discern those qualities which inform the symbolism Coit employed without losing sight of the dual function the metaphor assumed. And there does appear in Coit's use of this metaphor an implicit logic consistent with that determining the meaning he sought in the pages of his autobiography. In his account of this stage of life Erikson pointed to the fact that

> the young adult, emerging from the search for and the insistence on identity, is eager and willing to fuse his identity with that of others. He is ready for intimacy, that is the capacity to commit himself to concrete affiliations and partnerships and to develop the ethical strength to abide by such commitments, even though they may call for significant sacrifices and compromises.[100]

Coit's attack on the tree was an attempt to defend his sister against the explicit threat to life while, at the same time, protect himself from the implicit loss of those concrete affiliations he wished to develop. That he was the one who took such action exemplified "the ethical strength" which Coit saw as necessary to "such commitments," then and now. By such means the youth sought "to beat off with the

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rod every blossom" and thereby avert the calamity of Elizabeth's death. Yet, in the broader context of his actions' Coit's aggression took aim at the very forces at work in his childhood, a period marked by "sufferings" and "a most fantastic, mystical, way of dreaming, instead of observing and thinking." If, as James implied, the man and the youth "both look back on the same childhood, and call it their own," Coit's metaphor seemed to gather force from an inward rage directed at this period in his life, which, retrospectively, in the light of a full life, he now viewed with disdain.

Coit attributed his actions to an "undisciplined imaginativeness" and "the mere association of ideas," an explanation intended primarily for the reader. In the manner in which he tied the metaphor to "the reading of harrowing fiction" Coit announced that "such stories were not literally true." That they "were well told and seemed to be within the range of someone's possible experience" recalls his earlier assertion that "we aesthetically accept any amount of moral content, if it is held together by a sincere emotion that controls the material."

In his autobiography Coit announced that "I had loved her dearly but grieved at her death only in the way in which a youth would, who had been taught to look upon death as a mere incident which did not prevent the continued personal presence of the loved one."[101] Subsequent events, however,

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intruded upon this attitude and intensified it. A fortnight after Elizabeth's death Coit's mother arranged "a seance at the house of Mrs. Schaefer, who was well known in our town as a horn-medium. She was a gross and common-looking old woman, who had a deep bass voice."[102] The entire family attended, including Elizabeth. Coit's description of Mrs. Schaefer, together with the reaction he attributed to the seance, exposed a less than enthusiastic attitude toward spiritualism, which, over the next several years, grew into outright opposition.

"From that day to this, although I cannot rationally justify my feeling, the very idea of seeking communication with loved ones who have died, has seemed to me an unholy thing. Perhaps, on that occasion, I began to pass from spiritualism to mysticism."[103]

Erik Erikson described the adolescent mind as essentially "a mind of the moratorium, a psychosocial stage between childhood and adulthood, and between the morality learned by the child, and the ethics to be developed by the adult. It is an ideological mind, and, indeed, it is the ideological outlook of a society that speaks most clearly to the adolescent."[104] The death of his sister called into question "the morality learned by the child" and ignited those broad ideological overtones compressed in the incidents which mark this period and whose emotional reality found expression in Coit's use of the metaphor. His growing

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skepticism toward spiritualism, which represented the dominant cultural pattern in the family, weakened Coit's sense of identification with the beliefs of his mother. The death of Elizabeth bred a sense of loss which lessened his capacity for those very affiliations from which come the ethics of the adult.

Stanton Coit opened the last chapter of his autobiography with the admission that "in the autumn of 1872, a whole generation before the word psycho-therapy became current in common speech, I had an experience in my own person of restoration to health through what is inadequately called mental treatment." At this moment in his life, "although I was only fifteen years old," he acknowledged that "depressing experience in my recent past had begun to undermine my bodily strength."[105.]

In mourning over the death of his sister Coit, nevertheless, reached out for the strength by which to recover. The pain he experienced in the act of testing reality seems "partly due to the necessity, not only to renew the links to the external world and thus continuously to re-experience the loss, but at the same time and by means of this to rebuild with anguish the inner world, which is felt to be in danger of deteriorating and collapsing."[106.]

This kind of situation clearly demonstrates that "the mourner is in fact ill, but because this state of mind is common and seems natural to us, we do not call mourning an

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illness."[107] Yet, that is precisely the way Coit treated it, when years later, he referred to "the occasion of my illness."

> As I have already narrated, I suffered no conscious grief. But after a few days I began to grow weak, and, profusely perspiring at night, rapidly lost weight. I had no physical pain and was not conscious of any mental suffering. It was rather as if something in me had died, as if the well-spring of energy had run dry. During the day I could still go about; but after a fortnight I had become so thin and pale that friends whom I met scarcely recognized me until I spoke to them. My parents wisely refrained from betraying to me their alarm at the change in my condition, but one day early in November they told me that, if by Christmas time I was well enough, they wished me to start on a trip round the world. They would find some friend to accompany me.[108]

According to Coit, his parents, by the use of remedies "purely natural, social, mental and moral, to methods and factors which had nothing to do with spiritism, but which, in my opinion, illustrate the only sound psych-therapeutics," had induced a recovery.[109] They had promised him a trip around the world. "By the end of the first week in December, however, I had so far recovered that all my old interests in life revived. I began to realize, moreover, that if I took this trip I should lose a whole year at the High School, and would be compelled upon my return to drop into a lower class. The prospect of such a calamity greatly troubled me. Accordingly, of my own free

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will and gladly I gave up the world tour."[110.]

In his account of Elizabeth's death Coit mentioned on three separate occasions that she died in October, 1872, when he was fifteen. The truth of the matter is that she died one year later, on October 15, 1873.[111.] Coit's insistence on the date, conditioned as it was by repetition, is, in my opinion, related to a later event about which there is no mention in his autobiography, and that he purposely concealed this incident by changing the date of his sister's death. Moreover, in his description of the illness he experienced "in the autumn of 1872" there are allusions the nature of which appear more plausible when associated with this later occurrence, which, in many respects, was the culmination of Coit's adolescent crises.

Records at Amherst indicate that Stanton Coit graduated from "old" Columbus High School and entered college in the fall of 1874. After completing his freshman year, during which time he lived at Mr. Redding's house, he left school and spent the next year at home in Ohio.[112.] Coit's name was absent from the register of officers and students for the academic year 1875-76, and, under the personal column of the Amherst Student for September 25, 1875, there appeared the following note: " '78 Coit has not returned this year on account of ill health."[113.] On December 4, 1875, a second notation appeared which read: "'78 Coit intends to enter '79"[114.]

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It certainly appears plausible that Coit experienced some form of illness following his sister's death, and that it may have been complicated by a growing awareness of the ideological crisis to which it gave rise. However, the ill health Coit experienced several years later, by which time that crisis attained proportions sufficient to incapacitate him, resembled more closely in detail his description. At that time he did lose a whole year of school and dropped to a lower grade. In his account Coit said he fell ill " in the autumn," but "by the end of the first week in December, however, I had so far recovered that all my old interest in life revived." The notices which appeared in the Amherst Student correspond to the chronology of the illness he recounted. Whether there ever was "a trip round the world" is immaterial except as it served to illustrate Coit's opposition to what he called "spurious methods and fantastic unrealities (which) are coming increasingly into vogue under a motley of names, such as Medical Psychology, Psychotherapy, Mental Science, Spiritual Healing, Christian Science."[115]. The list goes on but the fact remained that the suffering Coit experienced in 1873 was only a prelude to the more serious illness which befell him two years later.

Among the subjects which candidates for admission to Amherst were required to pass was a written examination in Latin grammar, including Prosody.[116]. In his autobiography Coit noted that "I passed well in every one of the fifteen

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subjects except Latin prosody, in which I never had proper instruction."[117]. He wrote his parents "to report this result." Coit waited "a whole fortnight" during which time "I suffered deeply lest my parents had been so ashamed of having a son who could not pass an examination in Latin prosody that they had decided to disown me and meant never to write to me again."[118]. Coit wrote a second letter, "telling them of my apprehension and daring even to rebuke them and proudly asserting that I felt quite equal to earning my own living."[119].

Accordingly, when the letters finally arrived, delayed by an absent-minded father, they "were overflowing with loving kindness and were full of assurances that my failure in one subject made no difference to them and that I ought to rejoice that I had done so well." But Coit does not rejoice. Instead, he turns the emotion on himself, and, in a revealing comment, exposes his own dilemma. "I have always remembered one sentence in my mother's second letter: How little you understand a father's or a mother's love, if you think they could disown their child for such a reason."[120].

It was not that Coit failed to understand his parent's love, but that he had such a need for it. His compulsive reaction demonstrated the extent of his insecurity and revealed the tendency to overidentify with those in whom he believed he could trust. Coit exhibited this same

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inclination during his college years and it did not go unnoticed.

The other Amherst incident occurred "in the spring of my second year" when Coit "had a feverish attack of quinsy sore throat, and a classmate kindly brought me, as he knew I had never read it, a copy of Alice in Wonderland.[121] Although the intent was to "divert me from my frightful pain" the effect was quite the opposite.

> The madly fantastic thought and experience which Alice undergoes only heightened the semi-delirium caused by my fever. How did I know that I was really I and not a thought in someone else's mind? And I felt my body swelling until if filled the room and my feet and legs went up the open fireplace into the chimney. Naturally, I have ever since loathed and hated Alice, her Wonderland and the author of this clever portrayal of a mind disintegrating into the chaos of lunacy. Of course, in the book it is all frolic and fun. But is the world, as a deranged mind experiences it, a becoming theme for literary treatment, and is such a portrayal suitable to put into the hands of a sensitive and imaginative young person?[122].

The speculative imagination and sensitivity Coit associated with his own adolescence came alive in the myriad activities depicted here and reawakened all the fears he entertained about himself.

Coit's description of the "fantastic thought and experience which Alice undergoes "closely parallels the mode of expression he used to characterize his own childhood. His poignant question demanding to know the true identity of

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I, the subject, recalls the boyhood incident with Charlie Lechler, exposing the central dilemma of his youth. In Erikson's phrase Coit's adolescence reveals "a protracted identity crisis as well as the emergence of a self-made identity." His reference to "this clever portrayal of a mind disintegrating into the chaos of lunacy," written sixty years after the incident with which he associated it, projects a mental image which comes close to defining Coit's own condition at that time and evokes the power still resident in his memory. There is a note of empathy in Coit's off-handed remark that "of course, in the book it is all frolic and fun." In retrospect, his own childhood, recounted in his book, seemed devoid of such amusement.

Coit's reaction to Alice in Wonderland prepared the way for an attack on what he saw as certain attitudes prevalent in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Comparing Alice to Defoe's Robinson Crusoe "as regards the mentality and the world which they severally depict," Coit remarked that the latter "was an expression of the wholesome objectivity of the eighteenth century, Alice of the morbid self-doubt of the nineteenth. The children born in the last half of the nineteenth century were nourished on Alicism."[123].

The contrast between "wholesome objectivity" and "morbid self-doubt" replicates Erikson's topology for childhood. While Coit shows a decided preference for the

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mentality of Crusoe, he is careful to separate himself from the children "nourished on Alicism." Coit, the author, does not regard Alice as simply "a triumph of nonsense" but as an example of "decadent adult literature," an assessment closer to the view put forward by later critics.

The first American edition of Alice appeared in 1865 when Coit was eight years old, a point in time which coincided with his "earliest recollections in life," and at which his own autobiographical experiences began. Coit first encountered Alice when he was twenty, the period during which he "began to devote one hour regularly, to what was, perhaps, not so passive an attitude of mind as at the time I thought it to be," and which meditation resulted in "the one great revolution. . . my mind has undergone in eighty years."

If Lewis Carroll poked fun at conventional Victorian didacticism Coit interpreted this as a dangerous symptom of the perils which befell western civilization. His disdain, so personal in tone, called attention to the different values to which men now gave their allegiance. In a bitter paroxysm Coit drew the lessons which for him, reflected the consequence of Alicism.

> No wonder the fibre of the intellectuals of America and of the British Empire has softened and become unequal to the problems of the twentieth century in politics and economics. If not the cause, Alice is a symptom of that upper class degeneracy which in its later stages made America incapable of

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> enduring economic depression with manly serenity, and still prevents England from coping effectively with Nazism, Fascism and communistic dictatorship.[124]

For Stanton Coit the Alice books were "morbid literature, depicting, as they do, and presenting as an object of mirth, the world as it would appear to a person in delirium."[125] Through the looking-glass of the Alice books Coit found only turmoil and he viewed with equal pessimism the confusion which beset the modern world. For him mankind had attained "the last level of metaphor in the Alice books: life viewed rationally and without illusion, appears to be a nonsense tale told by an idiot mathematician."[126]

Throughout these adolescent encounters Coit insisted that they were due "to precocious speculative imagination and lack of experience."[127] To the last I the author and the I the narrator reinforced one another in a conscious effort to establish that elusive truth deposited in history and literature.

> The suspicions, doubt and skepticism of my youth were in no wise due to lack of common sense judgments on my part. I was a most trustful child, engrossed in play and work; but, because I possessed what I may, without boasting, be allowed to call an unusual degree of reasoning power, I was the more quick to see for instance, that my having taken for granted that my reputed father and mother were my real parents, was after all no absolute proof that I was not a foundling. This was also why I vividly saw and felt the possibility of my being disowned for having fallen short in my scholarship. In my own eyes I had

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> dishonoured the family and the very name of Coit and deserved to be disowned. And surely my parents entertained the same standard as myself?[128].

The events he recounted, layered in specific emotional content, and informed by dramatic technique, suggest a deeper meaning lay behind "the suspicions, doubt and skepticism" of his youth. The reasoning power which the author claimed to possess as an adolescent fell prey to the kind of experiences he used to represent his childhood. Even here in his final summation about this period of life, Coit maintained a presence of the apprehension which the narrator experienced. In the characterization he imparted to these events Coit exhibited the tendency to indulge himself, and, the sufferings he presumably endured became, physically and psychologically, the vehicle for a morbid self-concern. His achievement of individuality suffered at the hands of a dependent parental relationship from which he struggled to free himself. In the process he came to realize that "the boy bears within himself the seeds of the adult man; else, he must as an adult acquire new patterns of behavior, sharply and intentionally opposed to those of his boyhood."[129]. It was the signal achievement of his college career, that, in the environment of Amherst, "where strong missionary influence was fused with the new philosophy of human relations," Stanton Coit discovered this truth about himself.

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Notes

Chapter Two

1. William Gilman, comp., A Memoir of Daniel Lathrop Coit of Norwich, Connecticut, 1754-1833, (Norwich: The Bulletin Press, 1907), p.63

2. Ezra S. Sterns, ed., Geneological and Family History of the State of New Hampshire, 4 volumes (New York: Lewis Publishing Co., 1908) 4: 1914

3. Gilman, op cit., p.47-48

4. Rev. F.W. Chapman, the Coit Family or the Descendants of Jon Coit, (Hartford: Press of the Case, Lockwood & Brainard Co., 1874) p.13-14. According to the Vital Records of Gloucester, Massachusetts, there were various spellings of the name, among which appear Coit, Coite, Coyt and Coyte. Vital Records of Gloucester, Massachusetts; to the end of the year 1849, 3 volumes (Topfield: The Topfield Historical Society, 1917-1924) Chapman's genealogy, together with the VRG indicate the various spellings applied to members of the same family. In the National Cyclopedia of American Biography the family name appears as Coyte. National Cyclopedia of American Biography, (James T. White & Co., 1901; Ann Arbor; University Microfilm edition, 1967) 2: 573
John Babson listed Coit as selectman in 1649, but there is no record of his son's appearing at the same time. Both father and son "who are known to have been residents of Gloucester, or proprietors of its soil, "received grants of land in 1650. John James Babson, History of the Town of Gloucester, Cape Ann including the town of Rockport, (Gloucester Proctor Bros, 1860), p.52. On Coit's receipt of a grant of land in Salem in 1638 consult Joseph B. Felt, Annals of Salem, Massachusetts, 2 volumes, (Salem W & S.B. Ives; Boston James Munroe & Co., 1845) 1 168. With respect to the birth of Coit's children Chapman indicated that one of his sons, Joseph, was "born (perhaps) in Salem." (p.16) The Vital Records of Salem has no record of a Coit family birth (under any of the several spellings of that name). However, a list of recorded births where the surnames do not appear shows a child named Joseph. The Vital Records of Salem, Massachusetts, (Salem The Essex Institute 1916) 2 449-50. Chapman indicates that John and Mary Coit had seven children, but only four accompanied their parents to American. In addition to John there were two daughters, Mary and Martha, and

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Joseph. Mrs. Coit died on January 2, 1676. She outlived her husband by sixteen years.

5. Sidney Perley, The History of Salem, Massachusetts, 3 volumes, (Salem S. Perley, 1924-1928) 1 2

6. ibid p.26; Also cf. Felt, op cit., 1:168

7. Ralph D. Paine, The Ships and Sailors of Old Salem, (New York: The Outing Publishing Co., 1909), p.19-20

8. Rev. William Bentley, " A Description and History of Salem," Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society, 1799, (Boston: Freeman & Bales, 1800; reprint edition Charles C. Little & James Brown, 1846), VI 234

9. Perley, op cit, 1: 2

10. ibid

11. Felt, op cit., 1:206. However, Coit apparently did not sell his property in Salem until years later. Perly lists the date of sale as February 9, 1647, and Felt numbered John Goyt (Coit) among the freeholders when Marblehead became a town in 1648. This is the only variation I found in the spellings previously indicated.

12. James R. Pringle, ed, "The Permanent Settlement of the Massachusetts Bay Colony at Fisherman's Field, Cape Ann, in 1623," The Book of the Three Hundredth Anniversary Observance of the Foundation of the Massachusetts Bay Colony at Cape Ann in 1623 (Gloucester Tercentenary Committee, 1924), p.144; 154 and 27

13. Babson, op cit., p.184-85

14. Francis M. Caulkins, History of New London, Connecticut, (New London H.D. Utley, 1895), p.71. This work first appeared in 1852 with only part of the edition bound up at that time. In 1860 the remaining sheets were bound, with additional matter, bringing the work to that date. This is a reprint of the 1860 edition.

15. ibid

16. ibid; cf. Chapman, op cit., p.13-14

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17. ibid, p.275 Note 3. The National Cyclopedia of American Biography recorded the date of his death as August 25, 1659. cf. 11: 573

18. Caulkins, op cit., p.275-76

19. Chapman, op cit., p.33. This is the line of the Coit family from which Stanton Coit descended.

20. ibid

21. ibid, p.61

22. ibid For additional information on the Coit family in New England cf. James Savage, comp., A Geneological Dictionary of the First Settlers of New England, showing three generations of those who came before May, 1692, on the basis of the Farmer's Register, 4 volumes, (Baltimore Geneological Publishing Co.,1965), 1: 422

23. Massachusetts Soldiers and Sailors of the Revolutionary War, A Compilation From the Archives prepared and published by the Secretary of the Commonwealth, (Boston: Wright & Potter Printing Co., 1898), 3: 730

24. Chapman, op cit., p.177-18

25. ibid

26. ibid

27. National Cyclopedia of American Biography, 11: 573

28. Massachusetts Soldiers and Sailors of the Revolutionary War, 15: 104

29. National Cyclopedia of American Biography, 11 573; A Centennial Biographical History of the City of Columbus and Franklin County, Ohio, (Chicago: The Lewis Publishing Co., 1901), p.382

30. Alfred E. Lee, History of the City of Columbus, Capital of Ohio, 2 volumes, (New York: Munsell & Co., 1892), 1 322

31. ibid, 1 330

32. ibid, 1 320

33. A Centennial Biographical History of the City of Columbus and Franklin Country, Ohio, p.382

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34. ibid, p.383

35. William Dean Howells, Years of My Youth, (New York: Harper & Bros., 1916), p.169; 210-11

36. A Centennial Biographical History of the City of Columbus and Franklin County, Ohio, p.383

37. Columbus Business Directory for 1843-44, (Columbus J.R. Armstrong, 1843), p.32

38. Jacob Studer, Columbus, Ohio Its History, Resources, and Progress, (Columbus, 1873), p.53

39. ibid, p.42

40. Thomas Babington Macaulay, The History of England from the Accession of James the Second, 4 volumes, (Philadelphia E.H. Butler & Co., 1849), p.110

41. Lee, op cit. 2: 55

42. Richard N. Camper, German Village Portrait (Chagrine Falls, Ohio West Summitt Press, 1978) p.20

43. The Ohio Guide, compiled by workers of the Writers' Program of the Work Projects Administration in the State of Ohio, American Guide Series, Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Society, 1940, (Oxford University Press, 1943), p.79

44. Studer op cit., p.53-54

45. A Centennial Biographical History of the City of Columbus and Franklin County, Ohio, p.383

46. ibid

47. Mrs. Louise Heath Wright, "The Methodist Episcopal Church of Worthington, Ohio," the Old Northwest Geneological Quarterly, vol 7, no.1, (1904), p.28; Mrs. Louise Heath Wright, "Shedding Light on Worthington (Ohio), The Woodrow Guild of the First Presbyterian Church of Worthington, Ohio, (1931), p.12

48. Ruth Young White, ed., We Too Built Columbus, (Columbus Stoneman Press, 1936), p.44

49. ibid

50. ibid

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51. Wright, The Old Northwest Geneological Quarterly, p.29

52. White, op cit., p.44

53. Wright, ONWGQ, p.29

54. White, op cit., p.45

55. Mrs. Louise Heath Wright, "The Worthington Female Seminary," The Old Northwest Geneological Quarterly, vol 6 (1903) p.154

56. Coit, Ventures, p.10

57. White, op cit, p.45

58. Wright, The Woodrow Guild of the First Presbyterian Church of Worthington, Ohio, (1931) p.41

59. Chapman, op cit., p.267

60. Studer op cit., p.49

61. Coit, Ventures, p.10

62. ibid

63. ibid, p.11

64. ibid, p.20

65. ibid

66. ibid

67. ibid

68. ibid, p.20

69. ibid The character of his mother which Coit developed is consistent with that found in Ruth Young White, ed., We Too Built Columbus, (Columbus: Stoneman Press, 1936), p.379-412

70. ibid

71. ibid, p.21

72. ibid

73. ibid

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74. ibid, p.18. According to Moore "spiritualism was a diffuse movement with no official philosophy other than the claim that spirit-communication was a scientific fact. . . In spite of its diffuseness and in part because of it, spiritualism spoke to the interests of many Americans who sought a rational theory." p.41,49. Also cf. Mary Farrell Bednarowski, Nineteenth Century American Spiritualism: An Attempt at Scientific Religion, PH.D dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1973.

75. ibid, p.21. Coit's evidence for this estimation of his mother rested primarily on her reaction to his "right-about-face in my convictions." The description does not appear contradictory with his treatment of her beliefs throughout the document. Freethought and rationalism were by no means incompatible with spiritualism. cf. Moore, op cit., p.50-51. Coit opened chapter five with a statement whose purpose seemed to emphasize once more his concern with objectivity. "It is often said that old men in telling of ideas and principles which animate their long-past years are liable to read into them much later impressions and convictions. Fearing lest I might have fallen unconsciously into this error I have sought for documentary evidence where such was procurable. The letter, for instance, from my sister which I have quoted and which is now in my daughter's possession was, as it were, outside confirmation not only that weird occurrences took place in my father's house during our childhood, but that my mother was in character and religious belief such as I had declared her to be." p.30

76. ibid, p.21

77. ibid Immediately following this statement Coit remarked: "Accordingly, nothing has ever amazed and disgusted me more than the theory of the Freudian psychoanalysts that when a son has intense affection for his mother, it is due to physiological causes and generally induces a dislike and even hatred for the father." p.21

78. Mrs. Frank C. Kelton, "Politics," in White, op cit., p.381-82

79. ibid

80. Coit, Ventures, p.34

81. ibid, p.25

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82. ibid, p.24

83. ibid. Coit indicated the journey was "about 120 miles from Columbus."

84. ibid

85. ibid

86. ibid. p.25. Coit's narration of these incidents retained all the qualities Dewey prescribed for a genuine act of expression: "the urge from within outwards," the deliberate attention to detail, especially in his account of "the first time I ever went to the theatre," the use of material to achieve emotional effect, the fact that the emotion resides in the subject matter as well as the existence of a single quality which pervades the entire experience. At the conclusion of each of these events Coit exacted the lesson he felt they contained and so worked out "to completion what the event and my spontaneous re-action pointed toward."

87. Cushing Strout, "Personality and Cultural History in the Novel" Two American Examples, "New Literary History: A Journal of Theory and Interpretation, Vol 1 Spring 1970, p.425. Also cf. David Brion Davis, "Some Recent Directions in American Cultural History," American Historical Review LXXIII (February, 1968), p.700,704-05

88. Karl J. Wientraub, "Autobiography and Historical Consciousness,"Critical Inquiry, Vol. 1 No.4 (1975), p.824

89. ibid, p.826

90. ibid, p.827

91. Francis R. Hart, "Notes for an Anatomy of Modern Autobiography," New Literary History, Vol. 1. No. 3 (1970) p.486-87

92. Weintraub, op cit., p.834. With respect to this point Maurice Mandelbaum cautioned "that the general knowledge of human nature involved in historical explanations does not consist in clearly formulable laws comparable to laws formulated in any advanced science. Nevertheless, because they remain closely tied to types of actions with which we are acquainted in everyday life historians can utilize them." Moreover, "while some historians hold that

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(psychoanalytical theories) may be fruitfully applied both in biographical studies and in explaining the persistent patterns of action of various political figures, many of the actions with which historians are concerned involved the decisions of individuals concerning whom there is insufficient knowledge to warrant a concrete application of psychoanalytic theory." Maurice Mandelbaum, The Anatomy of Historical Knowledge, (Baltimore the Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), p.122; 218 Note 13. I am grateful to Thomas Stemshorn for this citation.

93. Erik Erikson, Childhood and Society, (New York; W.W. Norton, 1950; 2 rev. ed. 1963) p.408

94. ibid p.25.

95. Coit, Ventures, p.36

96. Erikson, op cit., p.410

97. Coit, Ventures, p.26

98. ibid; cf. p.18

99. ibid, p.19

100. Erikson, op cit., p.263

101. Coit, Ventures, p.18

102. ibid

103. ibid, p.19

104. Erikson, op cit, p.262-63

105. Coit, Ventures, p.42

106. Melanie Klein, "Mourning and Its Relation to Manic-Depressive States," in Contributions to Psycho-Analysis, 1921-1945, (London The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis, 1973), p.321. Klein refers here to a process of "normal mourning."

107. ibid

108. Coit, Ventures, p.42 It is quite possible that what Coit experienced was a brief case of clinical depression , a psychiatric disorder in which a person feels extremely sad over a period of time, usually loses interest in life and cannot function in everyday

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responsibilities. The psycho-therapeutics Coit's parents administered closely resembles interpersonal psychotherapy. It assumed that depression is rooted in interpersonal problems and social functioning, and that if these improve, the depression will be alleviated. In this case the proposed trip round the world proved to an effective placebo.

109. ibid

110. ibid

111. Chapman, op cit, p.267

112. Catalogue of the Officers and Students of Amherst College for the Academic Year 1874-75, Amherst, Massachusetts, p.16. Coit continued to use the name George, though infrequently.

113. Amherst Student, September 25, 1875. Volume 8 No.15, p.120

114. ibid, December 4, 1875, Vol. 9 No. 5, p.40

115. Coit, Ventures, p.42. Coit does not indicate when he entered Amherst but does say that he wrote the poem in 1879, thereby leaving the reader to assume he enrolled at the college in 1875.

116. Catalogue of the Officers and Students of Amherst College for the Academic Year 1874-75, p.21

117. Coit, Ventures p.27

118. ibid

119. ibid

120. ibid

121. ibid. Given the fact that Coit omitted any mention of his absence from Amherst in 1875-76, this "feverish attack of quinsy sore throat" occurred in the spring of 1877.

122. ibid Coit's reaction bore a remarkable similarity to the warning issued by Dr. Paul Schilder, research professor of psychiatry at New York University. Addressing the American Psychoanalytical Society in 1937 Schilder declared that most of Alice's adventures are "calculated to fill her with anxieties" of a pernicious nature. "She feels separated from her feet,

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she is stuffed in and out of small holes, and she never knows from minute to minute whether she will be small or large. . . There are severe deprivations in the sphere of food and drink. . . The poem of the Walrus and the Carpenter is of an astonishing cruelty. The Lobster is cooked. Alice herself frightens the birds with tales of devourings. The fear of being cut to pieces comes again and again into the foreground. The head of the Jabberwock is cut off. There is a continuous threat to the integrity of the body in general. . . This is a world of cruelty, destruction, and annihilation. Joseph Wood Krutch, "Psychoanalyzing Alice," Nation, Volume 144, January 30, 1937, p.129-30. Krutch offered a mild parody on Schilder's address, hence the title of the article.

123. ibid p.28

124. ibid

125. ibid From the standpoint of Coit's adolescence as it appears in this study it may be useful to attach the following citation. "What Carroll wanted to do finally was not retreat from Victorian reality. . . but to enrich it. Enrich it with a dramatic conception of society and of the self. When his writing works, as in the Alices, it alternates, mixes together, games of competition, which strengthens the self, with games of balance, which weaken and open it outward." Richard A. Lanham, A Review of Kathleen Blake, Play, Games, and Sport: The Literary Works of Lewis Carroll, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974) in Nineteenth Century Fiction, Volume 29, p.482. Whether Coit ever appreciated this we will never know, but it is not without a certain relevance to the characterization he designed in his autobiography.

126. Lewis Carroll, The Annotated Alice: Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass, Introduction and Notes by Martin Gardner, (New York: Clarkson N. Pater, Inc., 1960), p.15. As employed here the phrase nonsense tale assumes the meaning given to it by Coit rather that intended by Gardner, namely, "the world as it would appear to a person in delirium."

127. Coit, Ventures, p.28

128. ibid

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129. S.N. Eisenstadt, "Archetypal Patterns of Youth," in Erik Erikson, ed., Youth: Change and Challenge, (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1963), p.25

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CHAPTER THREE

Among the "early guides" responsible for Coit's passage "from spiritualism to mysticism" was Ralph Waldo Emerson. Writing in 1907 Coit recalled with enthusiasm his first acquaintance with that "high and pure personality."

> When I was but fifteen, someone had urged me to read Emerson. Going into a bookshop, the first volume of his which my eye fell upon was entitled The Conduct of Life. Opening to the first essay, I read words which from that day to this have not declined in their power over me, for I have not yet sounded the depth of the wisdom of their insight. The essay is entitled Fate, and after reading a few lines I stopped, transfixed by this sentence: To me the question of the times resolved itself into a practical question of the conduct of life. How shall I live?[1].

For Stanton Coit it was a question "which not only challenges reason but wakes up the will and cleanses the heart. That practical question of the conduct of life was not only the problem of the transient hour. It is the deepest interrogation of all time."[2].

To one of his later associates, J. Hutton Hynd, "it was characteristic of Stanton Coit that he should have given attention to an interrogation having so many moral and spiritual implications, at once pointed and personal."[3]. Nourished from childhood on the spiritualism of his mother, the disposition for which now began to weaken, Coit's introduction to Emerson took the form of an essay whose

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principal theme addressed "the problem of the transient hour" and for which his own circumstances made him receptive. "I have ever since thought no happier circumstance could occur in the life of a youth of fifteen than that this question should be thrust. . . into the center of attention."[4].

Elizabeth Coit imbued her children with a firm sense of moral right and her son was quick to grasp the possibilities of an inquiry, one of the special qualities of which was its capacity to tolerate so many religious inferences. One sense of the satisfaction Coit derived from this encounter lay in his admission that "I bought this book, and read and re-read it, until it seemed to me as if I had no thought or will of my own separate from it or uninspired by it. And from that volume I passed to the others."[5].

Neither Coit's attachment to Emerson nor the influence which he exercised over young men appeared as an isolated phenomena. Speaking just of the essays "extending from 1838 to about 1870," Moncure Daniel Conway revealed a measure of the impact which Emerson had on young people who came of age during those years when he noted "I know none equal to them for bracing up the heart and mind, and directing young men to a high standard of character. He was the forerunner of the ethical freedom which we enjoy to-day. Though we may not accept his philosophy literally, Emerson yet remains precious to us."[6].

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Coit also knew about Emerson "through Bronson Alcott (who) was a friend of (his) mother," and, on one occasion, "stayed at our house" in Ohio.[7] "When I went to college at the age of seventeen my conversation must have fairly reeked with Emerson."[8] At Amherst "I was reputed to know Emerson's writings by heart. . . Of course it was just at that time when not only in New England but throughout America Emerson was the rage." His new wisdom, however, did exact its price. "Indeed so many of his aphorisms were known to me by heart and were so often on the tip of my tongue that I used to be unmercifully charged by my fellow students."[9]

According to Coit, "no matter how trivial the subject of conversation, . . .my intimate friends. . . persisted . . . in turning to me and, with mock solemnity, asking me to tell them what Emerson had to say about it."[10] Coit's known affection for Emerson was the subject of a playful parody which appeared in the Amherst Student for March 15, 1879. "Smith collegian to fellow student who is reading Emerson: What are you reading? F.S. The charmingest book; I love metaphysics so much, don't you? S.C., meditating, Well, really, I don't know, I never studied medicine much. Pitying smile from F.S. followed by a nervous consultation of Webster by S.C."[11]

In his autobiography Coit indicated that "during my junior year when Emerson came to the college to lecture, I

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was the one undergraduate who was asked to meet him at the house of the professor whose guest he was. I spent the afternoon talking with him. That was the red letter day of my life."[12] Emerson lectured at College Hall on March 19, 1879, at which time Coit was a senior. The subject of his talk was "The Superlative or Mental Temperance," which a correspondent for the Springfield Republican characterized as "a title only enigmatic to the superficial, and embodying the key-note to the music of his thought."[13]

> With cumulation of wise and powerful aphorisms, the sage exhibited the beauty and charm and value, the danger and weakness of the superlative, or exaggeration in action, religion and language; and the higher reach of that control which he termed mental temperance. With this and from this contrast he joined and presaged the destiny of this country.[14]

One of the students in attendance that evening was J. Franklin Jameson, who confided to his diary his own impression of the sage of Concord. "We went to a lecture . . . by Ralph Waldo Emerson, whom I had seen only once before. It was intensely interesting to me, not so much for the lecture tho' that was very bright, but for seeing him. I never looked at any man with such feelings as I had before him. He is evidently growing old."[15]

In its commentary on this campus event the Amherst Student for March 29 called attention to the fact that "after an absence of ten years. . .the fame of the lecturer certainly gave every reason to believe that the hall would

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be crowded, but all such hopes proved utterly groundless. Amherst people, citizens and students alike, never seem to know when a good thing is offered to them."[16] Neither the aging demeanor of the speaker nor the attitude of Amherst people dampened Coit's enthusiasm. However, if he cherished the memory of this occasion, "two years afterward another was even more brilliantly illuminated," and which brought home to Coit the danger of the superlative.[17]

> It was the day when an acquaintance told me that he had recently met Emerson at Concord and that, when the conversation disclosed that he lived at Amherst, Emerson asked whether he had happened to know a student whose name was Stanton Coit. To be remembered after two years by Emerson was to me an immortality of fame: And in my elation I rushed to an old college friend to share with him my joy and pride. With cruel suddenness I was hurled down from the height to which I had soared, by my friend's quietly remarking: For the last two years, so I understand, Emerson has lost his memory, except for trifles. Ever since that day my friend's wit has been treasured by me as more edifying than all the wisdom I had learned from the epigrams of Emerson.[18]

In the course of his own social growth Stanton Coit learned to separate the various parts of the Emersonian canon with the result that he discovered a less satisfying form of the ideal but one accompanied by a more mature appreciation of its usefulness. In an interview with Frederick Gould at the close of the nineteenth century Coit indicated that while "Emerson's transcendental individualism was the timely antidote for the material individualism of

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America. . . the reform he taught was spiritual, a reform of the soul. Transcendentalists retreated to the settlement of Brook Farm. They did not penetrate the slums, or grapple with the reform of the laws."[19.]

This kind of response led Gould to inquire about Carlyle and Coit used the occasion to enlarge the historical comparison. "I never cared for Carlyle as I did for Emerson; his message could not fill the soul of young Americans as it did that of Englishmen."[20.] While Coit conceded the Scotchman's influence within "the Transcendentalist circle of Boston" he believed its force limited by the difference in spirit which animated reform in England and America.

According to the records of Amherst College Coit attained very high grades and was "among those who received first appointment to Phi Beta Kappa for the class of 1879."[21.] The list included Frank J. Goodnow, a future member of the Board of the University Settlement Society of New York, and J. Franklin Jameson. The Amherst Student for April 26, 1879, carried the announcement of Coit's appointment in philosophy for commencement.[22.] Coit's selection as class poet at graduation led him to write Thought and Feeling which he delivered as part of the College Hall Exercises, and for which he received the Bond Prize, "one hundred dollars for the best production spoken on the commencement stage, as determined by the

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Trustees."[23] In his autobiography Coit indicated that

> The reason that I was asked to be class-poet was that no one else could be found who was foolish enough to make the attempt,and I assented more out of good nature than of self-confidence. I felt at the time, however, that if I really had something to say, I could express it as effectively in iambic pentameter as in any other way; for I was as much of a novice in writing prose as verse.[24]

Coit gave sparingly of his time to student activities. He served "on the committee for the sophomore supper for the class of '79 which was held at the Round Hill Hotel in Northampton, Massachusetts, on June 22, 1879. It was an occasion to

> Let every young Sophomore fill up his glass
> And drink to the health of his glorious class.[25]

It appeared that Coit "had a very bad voice."[26] The Grinds, a student organization, "who were really consarned for yer," said of Coit: "He has a remarkably sweet(?) voice"[27]

G. Stanton Coit joined Chi Psi fraternity in his junior year, along with five others, including Goodnow. The Olio, Amherst's yearbook, listed Coit "as a member of the Chess Club, one of eighteen members of his class drawn to the sport of kings."[28] And in the French Conversational Club Coit acquired the nickname, "our pet"[29] In his senior year Coit was "First Senior Critic on the Athenae, a magazine published by one of "the two literary societies" whose existence dated to "the early part of October, 1821," but

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"whose exercises were for the most part oratorical."[30]

Coit's abilities as a serious student and polished speaker were evident before he left college. In his diary for January 2, 1878, Jameson noted: "went down and talked with Coit, always a pleasure. He thinks of orating on the cheapness of human life, suggested by reading Milmarn's Jews. He thinks much and deeply."[31] On March 31 of that year Jameson recorded: "after lunch, went out to walk, and first in to see Coit, whom I found in Goodnow's room. Coit is a splendid fellow." A year later, on March 22, 1879, Jameson indicated that "Coit wanted me to hear his oration, which he has corrected somewhat. I couldn't suggest any amendments, of course, that amounted to anything. It is a splendid oration."[32]

Following his acceptance into Athenae on January 16, 1878, Coit participated in a debate on the question "Resolved: that only expurgated editions of Shakespeare and the early English writers should be placed in the College library."[33] Coit debated the negative side of the issue. When "some gentlemen from Alexandria (who) were present "took the floor" with a motion that Athenae appoint a committee of three to confer with a committee from Alexandria in respect to procuring an orator for the regular lecture to take place in spring term," Athenae appointed Stanton Coit.[34]

His devotion to Emerson and his spiritistic background,

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combined with a rather naive, introspective yet skeptical personality, at times made Coit the butt of campus humor, a situation he apparently accepted gracefully. There was a "personal note" in the Olio for December, 1877, which testified to Coit's attempt to grow a mustache: "Coit is using McSweeny's Canker Hash, which is warranted to start a mustache on a pine board in three weeks."[35] In a light-hearted repartee which appeared in the Class Book, a compilation of four years' memories, F.M. Carson, of the class of '79, exercised the collegian's license with a rather mischievous sketch of Coit in his sophomore year.

> About this time we learn that there is but one mind in the class, and that a poorly developed one. Under ordinary circumstances this would have seemed a startling revelation; but we are so accustomed to similar responses from the oracular mind reader, that we are able to withstand almost anything. When, however, we hear that the morally virtuous gentlemanly, well-meaning Mr. Coit, has a mind which is bound down by 10,000 fetters, the climax is capped and we are silent.[36]

On the matter of Professor Root's class in physics, with students exposed to a practice common "under the reign of the German University system and denied a text-book, the results proved to be a little ambiguous (and) were really startling."[37] One of his classmates recalled how "Mr. Coit, also, was an earnest learner, and the class were glad to have him bring up that difficult problem, concerning the difference between lamp chimnies and capillary tubes."[38]

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All indications point to the fact that Coit thoroughly enjoyed the time he spent at Amherst. Some years after graduation he commented to Jameson that "there is no other place in the world so dear to me as Amherst."[39] The stimulating environment of the college, together with fresh associations, had their effect on his temperament as well, though they did not remove completely the more prominent characteristics connected with his adolescence. During the period immediately following graduation Coit, on occasion, revealed some of these concerns in the private correspondence he maintained with his chosen friend from those college days, J. Franklin Jameson. In a letter to Jameson written on September 17, 1879, from Amherst, where he was a "resident graduate," Coit, suffering "from a most wretched lonesome feeling," confessed "I have not, as you have, learned to find full companionship in books. I need people, but I hope it is only because I have depended upon them so much; but I did so unconsciously."[40]

In another letter to Jameson, dated February 7, 1880, from Columbus, Ohio, Coit demonstrated that the sensitivity and self-concern which marked his youth remained an integral part of his personality. Referring to an incident which occurred several months earlier, Coit now admitted

> I was very much hurt last fall at Amherst that in all the six weeks I was there, Goodrich did not come to see me once. Even a little human kindness would have prompted him to come, I should have thought. And while I admire

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> Goodrich's abilities and strong manly purpose in life, still I am too sensitive and too dependent on others' kindness, to feel no sting in his treatment of me. For I liked him very much; and he ought not to have cut me so completely out because I was a classmate.[41]

Toward the end of the same letter, and in uncharacteristic fashion, Coit admonished his friend whom he thought spent too much time studying. In so doing Coit displayed an attitude which, years later, informed his approach to the work of the Neighborhood Guild.

> I do hope you are not studying so hard as you used. Jamie, don't study so hard. You will be old before you are young. It is a shame! Why don't you make some acquaintances among the young people of Worcester? I believe you are awfully selfish of yourself. You will find that people are worth more in intellect and character and sympathy than you imagine, although their faculties have no systematic training. But I did not intend to preach, for you know better than I and I beg your pardon.[42]

In these letters to Jameson, as well as those which followed, Coit demonstrated a need for the friendship and encouragement he found at Amherst. Goodrich's abilities and manly purposes could not excuse his neglect, and one is left to surmise if Coit's approach to Jameson was actually a feint reprisal for the lack of correspondence. This need, characteristic of the insecurity so recognizable in the adolescent, accompanied his growth to manhood.[43]

While at Amherst Stanton Coit came under the influence

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of strong-willed men who sought to harness the new religious and scientific forces which infiltrated the college and employ them in the service of the orthodox faith. Foremost among those who left their imprint on the young man from Ohio were William A. Sterns, Julius H. Seelye, Laurens P. Hickok and Elihu Root, the physicist. In his autobiography Coit spoke affectionately of the man who was president "when I entered the college." Throughout his tenure at Amherst Sterns had "won the respect and love all who knew him. He was one of those men who need only to be seen in order to be revered, but who, the better they are known, the more deeply are trusted."[44.]

Julius H. Seelye "was a student of Kantian ideas" whom Coit described as "reputed to be one of the strictest Evangelical theologians of New England."[45.] He succeeded to the presidency of the college upon the death of Sterns in 1876 and it was during his administration that the community began "the task of rethinking spiritual values to fit the needs of nineteenth century America."[46.] His accession occurred at a time when the secular forces emanating from abroad gathered real momentum in their assault on orthodox beliefs. Seelye had a "profound respect for German methods (yet). . . cherished the evangelical faith, and was determined to preserve the college as its fortress."[47.] While "his administration reflected the primacy which piety still retained. . .the German ideal played havoc with this

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tradition."[48] The intrusion of this ideal created the suspicion that "truth was, perhaps, not yet entire. Moreover, "it cut even more sharply into the old faith, for it declared anew the validity of human reason, of man's power to discern for himself, without divine revelation or intuitive perception, the nature and content of truth."[49]

In the opinion of one historian of the college Seelye's dilemma was the product of his "misfortune to grow up in a Kantian world and to survive into the day of William James."[50] In his effort to ameliorate this situation Amherst revitalized the faith of its Puritan forebears and focused attention on those elements of the tradition which seemed consistent with both its spiritual purpose and the forces of reform circulating throughout its ranks. During the 1870's and afterwards this expression of faith took the form of an emphasis on "the lively conscience and the sense of mission."[51]

Coit described Hickok to Gould as "my teacher in philosophy (and) the leading Hegelian at that time in the States."[52] "Twenty years after his death one writer recalled that Hickok "was not a man whose affections and passions nestled close together, or whose imagination, like a strong wind, bore him and others with him in new and unexpected directions."[53] A later estimate of the intellectual climate prevailing in the western democracies throughout much of the nineteenth century concluded that

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among those "British and American divines faced with the challenge. . . posed by the new Germany infidelity most failed the test, but here and there a questing spirit undeterred by barriers of language and undismayed by alien ideas began to read and to wonder." One such "questing spirit" was Emerson; Theodore Parker was another, and a third, "in some ways more dedicated to the new philosophy than either, was Laurens Perseus Hickok."[54.]

In his Rational Psychology (1849), "the first, and most important, of the works which set forth his system, the language recalls Kant (but) the scope of Hickok's Science is Hegelian."[55.] In a manner which "affirmed the independent and restive quality of intellectual activity. . .we are led to see that we are in possession of true knowledge according to the obvious purport of our daily experience. The mind is justified to itself."[56.]

In man's pursuit of "transcendental inquiries" Hickok referred him to ideas beyond those of space and time, foremost of which was personality, "that assemblage of powers which, under a universal rendering, give us the sense of manly endowment, spiritual presence."[57.] Hickok constructed his philosophical position "as a defense, on the one hand, against the stolid assertion of Scotch philosophy and, on the other, against the volatile speculation of Transcendentalism."[58.]

In his quest for a consistent Calvinism Hickok found

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both skepticism and rationalism untenable. The first he believed led to atheism while the latter proceeds, in the beginning, "to Absolute Idealism, and ultimately, as the systems of Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel testify, to idealistic pantheism."[59] During his years at Amherst Stanton Coit moved steadily toward the kind of rationalism Hickok decried, and, in the course of time, with the same predictable results. "I had passed from theoretical belief in disembodied spirits to belief in human beings as spirit, that is, as beings who are able to discern by direct insight good as distinguished from evil, beautiful from ugly, and true from false."[60]

During the post Civil War period Laurens Hickok was a relatively important figure within the geographic and intellectual perimeter occupied by Amherst College. The system of ideas found in his Rational Psychology appeared in works which served as college texts, and "the two manuals, one on psychology and the other on ethics, marked an era in instruction in Amherst college and became influential elsewhere."[61] In the preface to the 1859 edition of his Moral Science (1853), which Seelye revised "and used. . . as a text at Amherst," Hickok wrote: "The moral law is above nature, not taken from nature. The virtuous man must say I am thus, and I live thus, because this only is worthy of my spiritual being; not at all, I stand here and do this because otherwise the ongoings of nature would torment."[62]

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The thrust of this lesson was not lost on his student. Though undoubtedly enriched by the passing years Coit testified that at the age of twenty-one I grasped, "as firmly as I have held ever since, the fact which all psychologists and metaphysicians accept as elemental truth, that it is illegitimate logically ever to jump from what is to what ought-to-be." Characteristic of the virtuous man he insisted that "norms of truth, beauty and goodness we bring with us as regulative principles in the judgement of values and by them measure the worth of facts. We never derive standards of perfection from events or things as they actually are." To affirm what was worthy of his own spiritual being Coit admitted "it was for this reason that I repudiated Nature, the realm of cause and effect, as an object of worship, but still retained the ideal as worthy of utter devotion and called it God. Nature as a whole is at best a footstool, not the crown, of being."[63].

Continuous with and growing out of his Rational Psychology, Hickok's system of ethics derived from the belief "that the paths and methods of spiritual thought could be laid down with something of the same exactness and certainty with which the mathematician follows the clues of space relations."[64].

Reflecting the influence of Hickok, which "was great and permanent," Seelye originally conceived of ethics "as a precise and systematic science (where) the rules of justice

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and equity could be reduced to rigid formula."[65]. As part of his accommodation to the challenge he faced, and which revealed the concessions he made, Seelye eventually moved away from the influence of Hickok toward a position that "was closer than he himself would have conceded to the transcendentalists."[66].

In a manner which signified both personal affection and intellectual respect Coit referred to Root as "my revered teacher (who) had been a pupil of the renowned Helmholz, the leading physicist in the University of Berlin; and he brought to us the latest advances not only in mechanics but in the critical philosophy of Germany. "Without pausing to alter his rhythm Coit added: "he had evidently been also a pupil of Lotze, as is shown by his reference to the doctrine that the ultimate reality of being is a double somewhat, having both a material and a spiritual aspect."[67].

Elihu Root came to Amherst in 1876 and, "during his brief career of flaming activity, was regarded by the undergraduates as their most gifted teacher. But he burned himself out early, broke down, and died in 1880. Except to that college generation he is now little more than a name."[68].

Root grew up "in a home of simple habits and godly living," early drawn to "the profession of theology." It was only when he arrived in Germany that he broke out of the struggle "between his choice in the light of judgment and

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the whole trend of his nature."[69] In an effort "to dive deeper for the truths of life. . . he gave himself up to the study of philosophy."[70] In that effort "it was Professor Lotze. . .who gave direction to Mr. Root's life" and helped him to reconcile the perceived antagonism between science and religion which then was rampant in America. In a system where the controlling motive was ethical Lotze maintained that "the conception of being is not complete till both the mechanical and the ideal are investigated in their relations and interactions. . . It was this dignifying of physical laws as a revelation of God. . . that first induced Mr. Root to think that his early purpose might be entirely accomplished in the study and teaching of physics."[71]

In Thought and Feeling Coit transposed his affection and respect for Root into lines which epitomized "this dignifying of physical laws as a revelation of God." Like those he admired Stanton Coit was a questing spirit in search of the truths of life, who, in his class poem, preserved more than the memory of a single moment; he recorded a timeless reflection of his own ethical idealism.

> There is one hour, however, which to me
> Shall not grow dim. A year or more has fled
> Since then. For months before, our brains had been
> Oppressed with learning laws of motion sound,
> Of heat and light. There's motion, hence a God,
> We did not learn. Was Aristotle then
> All wrong? This universe, we found, was one
> Vast mechanism; that matter, motion, force
> Acknowledge Law as God; While it in turn
> Has none. I say this Modern Physics is
> A science without soul; and hearts will starve
> That beg before her palace door. Indeed

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She boasts aloud No charity from me!
And yet that course of study, like a day
Of gloom which - before it dies - in the clouds
All burst in glory, had its consummation:
In an hour immortal in my soul.
For he who spoke then bade us leave awhile
The point of view which science takes, and stand
That hour with God. (Since finite minds may see
Each view in turn, though not both views at once;
And men of science being more than science
May declare that Spirit is supreme!
He told of that philosopher and sage,
Who holds all matter has a Spirit side
As well. He said those lines of England's great
High singer were to him not poetry
Alone, but deep soul-truth, religion, life:

He, They, One, All; within, without;
The Power in darkness whom we guess;

I found Him not in world or sun
In eagle's wing, or insect's eye;
Nor thro' the questions men may try,
The petty cobwebs we have spun,

If e'er when faith had fallen asleep.
I heard a voice Believe no more,
And heard an ever breaking shore
That tumbled in the Godless deep;

A warmth within the breast would melt
The freezing reason's colder part,
And like a man in wrath the heart
Stood up and answered, I have felt.

And when his words were done, how heartily
We used our hands (since other cymbal we
Had none) and struck then each on each until
The place resounded with the music of
Our praise: I'm sure those waves of motion proved
There is a God, and that he then was there,
And now my spirit travels back and stands
Within that hallowed hour, and feels again
The breath of God's eternity pervading
It; His Spirit still reigns then supreme.[72].

Root's appeal to the undergraduates of that time found expression "in his physical nature; in his mental training and gifts; and in his qualities of heart. In each of these

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there was in him a remarkable development and perfection."[73.] When Lawrence Abbott's article on Root appeared in the August, 1926 issue of Outlook, J. Franklin Jameson forwarded a copy to his more famous namesake "and distant cousin," accompanied by his own assessment. "He was a man of brilliant abilities in his field, but still more he was a man of remarkable character, radiating extraordinary influence upon young Amherst men during his few years of teaching."[74.]

John W. Burgess, a member of the class of 1867 who returned to Amherst in the fall of 1873, left a vivid description of the rigors of academic life at his alma mater. "Everything was as hard as it could be made. Study and recitation, investigation and discussion, from early morning till night and deep into the night, every day in the week except Sunday, when we had to hear two sermons as well as attend prayers in the morning."[75.] Burgess viewed society at Amherst as limited but "really charming in its simplicity, geniality, and intellectuality. It was, of course, a somewhat provincial society, but it was sound to the core, educated, refined, and at times approached brilliancy."[76.]

Stanton Coit was part of that college generation for whom Root would always be more than just a name. When the man looked back at the youth it was, perhaps, characteristic of them both to find in Tennyson the poetic thought to which

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each adhered. "What held me spell bound in Professor Root's lecture was his reading of the quatrains from Tennyson's In Memoriam where the poet recognizes that emotion discloses to us that realm of reality, to stand in immediate touch with which is the distinguishing mark of spirit." While Coit readily admitted that "it is quite probable that the Power in darkness whom we guess and whom the heart reveals was to Tennyson an infinite, intelligent and all-loving personality. . .even those who, like myself, feel this interpretation to be altogether inadequate, may be nonetheless conscious of a Power which pours down supernal beauty and meaning upon and into the godless deep of mechanics and psychology."

With his own faith securely in place Coit argued that while "logic and sense-experience fail to reveal it, the human heart stands up and answers I have felt, felt the power that creates things beautiful and good." While many thinkers "have cast discredit upon emotion," they likewise admit "that neither reasoning nor the senses open to us the values which feeling craves and without which our life is like a maniac throwing flame! And perhaps even Tennyson meant that feeling does not reveal the good, but only prompts us to surmise its presence."[77].

Though written long after he departed the lecture hall what Coit found in Tennyson was a spirit of expression which captured the values implicit in his own faith.

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> I was not a believer in a self-conscious person as the creator of the world, but I took the liberty of designating the inherent principle of truth, beauty and goodness as God, because I counted that principle to be worthy of complete self-surrender and to the power which redeems those who trust it absolutely, and because in all religious systems whatever is so revered is called God . . .I overtly repudiated the notion of inevitable human progress although at that time belief in progressive evolution was wellnigh universal.[78].

A witness to the scientific and social movements which "so profoundly stirred the Victorian era," Tennyson "believed that the ideal cannot be divorced from the real except at its own infinite peril. Beauty cannot be sundered from Truth and Goodness; all three must be kept together under one roof."[79].

A remark once attributed to Benjamin Jowett who was then Master of Baliol College, Oxford, and a churchman of independent mind, exposed a more vital attraction which Tennyson may have had for Coit. "A student who really understands Plato may be said to have the key to the gateway of knowledge. . .there is more of the fundamentals of philosophy in Tennyson's In Memoriam than in any systematic philosophy of modern times."[80]. The English poet celebrated the Greek philosopher who provided Stanton Coit with the enduring beliefs he later recounted as ethical idealism. In the fated passage of the Republic, which Coit knew well, Plato declared

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> this is the way the phenomena look to me: in the knowable the last thing to be seen, and that with considerable effort, is the idea of the good; but once seen it must be concluded that this is in fact the cause of all that is right and fair in everything, in the visible it gave birth to light and its sovereign; in the intelligible, itself sovereign, it provided truth and intelligence, and that the man who is going to act prudently in private or in public must see it.[81.]

While Coit rejected an "infinite, intelligent and all-loving personality" as God he came to see, with Plato, the idea of the good, and, in Tennyson, the truth that "great poetic thought is essential to true poetic beauty."[82.]

> Our initial acquaintance with the dynamic influences which Plato called Ideas comes to us indirectly through the loveliness of what they prompt us to create, and through the vibration of joy which these creations awaken in the heart. They are the power in darkness which we not only guess but which beyond all doubt we know intuitively. How could we feel their directive power, if they were non-existent, or if our intuitive judgment did not constrain us to assign existence to them.[83.]

To Frederick Gould Coit acknowledged "his has been a marvelous influence." When compared with the Aristotelian mind, Coit explained, "the Platonic type combines the poetic, the intuitive, the artistic sense. That may account for the hold Plato has taken. Many who cannot follow abstract thought, and do not love it, can catch the meaning of Plato's poetic presentations, and are entranced by them."[84.] Nowhere, perhaps, did the "poetic presentations"

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to which Coit referred express his own ethical idealism, Platonism marked out in practical Christian life, than in Tennyson's Crossing the Bar.

> And so the Word had breath, and wrought
> With human hands the need of creeds
> In loveliness of perfect deeds,
> More strong than all poetic thought;
>
> Which he may read that binds the sheaf,
> Or builds the house, or digs the grave,
> And those wild eyes that watch the wave
> In roarings round the coral self.[85].

At Amherst Stanton Coit learned that "the clash between Spirit and the sense-world is not absolute."[86]. It was one measure of the distance he had travelled as well as the extent to which the community of influences working within the college had prepared him to receive what it offered. It was also in this atmosphere, infused with ideas at once fluid and provocative, that Coit experienced "the one revolution which my mind has undergone in eighty years."

> During my twentieth year I began to devote. . .one hour regularly, to what was, perhaps, not so passive an attitude of mind as at the time I thought it to be. For after two months of such regular meditation, my mind during these very hours worked its way out altogether from the belief that health and good thoughts come to us from good spirits and ailments and bad thoughts from bad spirits. . . In my hours of meditation it also occurred to me that the benefits, mental and moral, which I undoubtedly received, were due primarily to quiet concentration upon what was good and not upon spirit-guides; and I said to myself: I will go on with the quiet hours without asking disembodied intelligences of a good kind to draw near and to protect me against wicked

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> intelligences. I will fix my mind simply upon what is wholesome and right and commit myself to it. . .I continued my meditations for five months after my new interpretation as to the cause of the power which came to me. Despite this change in theory I found no diminution of insight or strength. On the contrary, my vision was clarified, my courage augmented and the influence for good which I seemed to have among my classmates was certainly not lessened . . . The influence was an effect' not of any innate virtue on my part but of the practice of daily ethical meditation an hour alone, such as I have described it. . .Such meditation as I practiced, whether one's religion be theistic, spiritualistic or purely ethical, gives a distinctive tone to what one says and does and to one's general bearing, and communicates to others an impression of spirituality.[87].

Stanton Coit, by an act of will, broke away from the assumptions which informed his mother's spiritualism and adopted a wholly different view. The doubts he experienced as an adolescent developed into lasting conviction, lost their hold, and at the age of twenty, disappeared. According to Harold Blackham "this was the revolution. It enabled him, once for all, to make the distinction between direct insight, responsible choice and action, and the various theories and dogmas by which people supported, justified, and explained their judgments and acts. This distinction between moral personality and ethical beliefs was confirmed by his position and experience at Amherst College."[88].

In his autobiography Coit quoted from a letter he

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received from a correspondent in Philadelphia who wrote: "A friend of mine told me that he had recently met a classmate of yours at Amherst, a pastor, who said I knew Coit well; he was the most skeptical man in our class, but also the most spiritual."[89] In writing about his life in college Coit sought to clarify the distinction between the religious views of those around him and the spiritual qualities he acquired.

> I may say that often during my college days, as everybody knew that I was not an orthodox believer, and that I never took part in prayer meetings or participated in the sacrament, no one ever spoke of me as being religious; but what was more surprising was that. . . the word spiritual was frequently used to describe my attitude of mind. It was as if intuitively even orthodox Evangelical Christians felt that there was a distinction between being religious and being spiritually minded.[90]

Though Coit did not attend prayer services or participate in the sacrament he did go to the sermons delivered on Sunday. Jameson's diary for Sunday, October 6, contains this entry: "After supper or rather dinner, went down to Coit's to see about the resolutions to be passed by the class. He had talked it over with Deyo, while taking a short walk with him. Frank Goodnow and I, after Coit had gone to church, drew up a resolution."[91] Coit maintained this practice, even if irregularly, after his new interpretation took hold. In his diary for Sunday, February 2, 1879, Jameson noted: "Coit sat in my pew. Seelye

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talked." while the entry for February 9 read "went back to church, where George sat with me."[92] On May 18 of that year Jameson wrote: "After PM church. . . Coit and I walked southward to Neill Valley. It was hot, but I enjoyed it thoroughly. Hardly ever had a pleasanter talk with him."[93]

In the autobiography Coit mentions that during his senior year one of the professors "begged" him

> to take charge of a youth of wayward disposition who was then in his second year at Amherst, and who on account of his behaviour would not be allowed to return to college in the autumn. I took this youth home with me in the summer to my father's house in Columbus, and he remained there until the following June. He caused us no anxiety and in June he passed all his examinations and was re-instated in his class. It has always especially amused me that the professor who examined him in Paley's Evidences of Christianity told me that no student whom he had ever examined had shown such thorough mastery of Paley's argument as did S.Y.[94]

The presumably recalcitrant student was Samuel Jackson Yates, a junior from Plainsfield, New Jersey, and Coit did not begin to tutor him until after his return to Amherst as a "resident graduate" in the fall of 1879. It would also appear that Yates was not a behavior problem but merely in need of help with his studies. In a letter to Jameson, written on September 17, 1879, and which reflected his own uncertainty about the future, Coit asked "Why am I here?" Without a moment's hesitation he replied: "I wanted to do a good deal of reading this year and I knew that at home there

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would be a great many distractions and altogether too much society for work so I thought I would come here." To his friend he readily admitted, "Besides I had tried to get a position as teacher but could find no vacancy; and here I may be able to do some tutoring of conditioned fellows. I shall read in philosophy with Jule (Julius Seelye) and Hickok but only a portion of my time will be devoted to that."[95].

Several months passed after which Coit wrote to Jameson from Columbus on February 7, 1880. To "my dear, dear Jamie," he confided: "Unlike most of our class-mates you had heard about I have not been working hard, not harder than when in college. I seem to spend all my force in aspiring to be and do much; so that my only real and regular work is eating and sleeping, to repair the waste I spend in aspiration. When you send items to the Student next time, say of me; Coit is aspiring." If this self-deprecating humor exhibited Coit's own frustration, on a more positive note, he informed Jameson that "I have collared a job. I hear Yates recite three times every day and look after him besides. But he behaves perfectly and thus requires no watching at all. At present he is studying Seelye's revised edition of Hickok's Moral Science, Butler's Analogy and McCosh's Logic."[96].

Despite the fact that he "collared a job Coit's dissatisfaction with himself and the extent of opportunities

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available to him were the source of the melancholy tone he displayed in this letter. "I don't study at all after supper, and during the day great gaps of idleness (unintentional) disfigure both morning and afternoon, so that at bed time when I take a minute for a bird's-eye view of the day's work, I just glance once and turn over to go to sleep, for fear of harrowing dreams." Looking at himself through the reflection of Jameson's character, and with a touch of envy which seemed almost apologetic, Coit disclosed that "I wish I could earn the feeling of peace which you must have, if you have egotism enough even to be self-conscious at all, from always working your best. But I reconcile myself to myself, by believing that my inability to work hard and faithfully is a temperamental and not a moral defect."[97]. If Coit sought to reconcile his inertia by calling attention to a "peculiarity of temperament," what seemed important was his belief that such a deficiency was not moral but personal. This distinction allowed him to preserve that ethical strength necessary to his own perception of self.

on July 18 of that year Coit wrote Jameson, this time from Plainsfield, where he was a guest of the Yates family. In a somewhat ebullient mood he exclaimed: "Yates has really graduated; Pres. Seelye's letter to his father says that Sam will be graduated when the Chemistry has been finished and the diploma will be sent as soon as Pres. Seelye returns to

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Amherst." With a mixture of surprise and satisfaction Coit mused "So I have been successful in the year's work which looked so portentous in the beginning. Yate's mother and father are of course delighted."[98]. It was not long into the letter, however, that Coit became more serious, and the extent of his remarks provide an apt description of the conception he entertained about himself.

> I wish you would take it upon yourself to urge me to study more and all that sort of thing. I do need encouragement so much. Will it pay for me to apply myself closely to valuable books? That is, am I worth spending labor on myself? Won't you please tell me my chief intellectual and practical faults that will keep me from amounting to something more than the average college graduate. Please write to me seriously about myself. Doubtless to you I seem full of joy and confidence if not conceit - but really underneath it all I am not quite a fool - so few persons ever care to correct my faults or are ever interested in me enough to urge on to hard study, that no wonder I am flighty and try to appear to be more than I am. I do wish you would take enough interest in me to look after me; I am susceptible to personal influence to a marked degree, and am conscious of you in my life already as a power. You see, my father and mother and brother think that I already know more than they about study and what I am capable of doing; so I am without such an encouragement and sympathy as you receive from your father. Don't you think my greatest need is close application to reading and a withdrawing from social enjoyment?[99].

What emerged from Coit's still-life portrait were many of the same characteristics noticeable in his adolescence, but now more poignant for the recognition he accorded them.

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While Coit displayed his insecurity and lack of direction, he continued to exhibit the tendency to overidentify with those he trusted. If Coit had worked his way out of that close dependence upon parental approval which marked his earlier years he now sought the same acceptance from his close friend. There was almost a touch of envy, if not outright regret, in Coit's remark about the lack of familial understanding, a sign, perhaps, of the changes which had taken place in his own life.

His self-concern was genuine because the long quest for an identity survived unresolved into manhood. Coit's sense of individuality, of who he was and what he wanted to do with his life, remained uncertain and troublesome. If he sought to intellectualize this confusion the pattern was a natural outgrowth of his experiences, together with the fact that he lacked a sense of purpose on which to focus his attention. Stanton Coit was a young man in search of himself and the journey was an arduous one. Yet, behind the melancholy there was a glimmer of hope as Coit recounted in his autobiography, and to which he alluded in this letter to Jameson.

Perhaps owing in part to his work with Yates and his own availability Coit "was invited by the President of Amherst to become a tutor in English Literature."[100.] With this challenge in the offering Coit wrote Jamie that he planned to leave the next day for Brooklyn.

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> where Hagen will receive me with true chumliness. . .He will be gone all day and I will have a fine opportunity to read. Shakespeare I shall finish first. Then I shall read several rhetorics and English grammars; and I shall study a spelling book, and have Hagen hear me spell every day. I dread the possibility of my being ground by those impudent freshies and sophs because of some hideous mistakes and blunders on my part, in pronunciation or spelling or grammar.[101]

In looking back at this time in his life Coit took note of the fact that "I was the only non-communicant who had ever been invited to be a member of the teaching staff of the College. This exception being made in my favour, I once asked Julius Seelye. . .how it had come about." To which he replied: "Coit, we all believe that you have seen the real Christ, and that is all we care for."[102]

If Seelye's comment demonstrated once more Coit's avowed spirituality what struck him about this remark was not the literal interpretation placed upon its meaning but the fact that it reflected true character working in the person of an orthodox Christian. Despite his reputation Seelye "distinguished between the reality he worshipped and the formula by which he described it; and he believed that it was possible to be directly in contact with the quickening reality and not through any formula whatsoever."[103] The impact which this explanation presumably had on Coit derived at least in part from the stature of the man who offered it. John W. Burgess regarded

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Seelye as "the most suggestive mind with whom. . .I was ever brought into contact. His personal presence was simply magnificent. Tall, ample, straight, and muscular, with a head of grand proportions, out of which looked splendid gray eyes; with a voice of great strength and singular resonance, and gestures of most impressive power." Such was the "outer temple of a mind, spirit, and a spirituality which I have never seen successfully rivaled since, and certainly had never seen before."[104].

Insofar as Seelye's appellation was true it exemplified that clergyman's move toward a more natural theology based upon sources other than Paley's Evidences of Christianity and Butler's Analogy, another example of the transition taking place in his own mind. The experience of God in the personal character of the individual now joined forces with the historic moral sense of mankind. In the spirit of changes already at work in the college, character became a symbol of reconciliation and acceptance a sign of the secular faith pursued by a "lively conscience." It was evidence of the breadth of change in the governing ideas of the culture as well as the extent to which belief gave way to appearance.

Sometime after Coit's death at Birling Gap, Sussex, on February 15, 1944, Theodore Baird, future Emeritus Professor of English at Amherst, penned this note to a colleague. "I suppose you noticed this Stanton Coit, 1879. He began as an

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instructor in English at Amh Col but did not go on to despair of Western civilization somehow."[105] In the sense in which a casual remark embodies a truth deeper than what it acknowledges, Baird's comment stands as a tribute to the influence of these years on Coit's future activities.

A short time after Coit had taken up this position he encountered the man whom he later described as one of "the guides of my maturer years."[106] The meeting resulted in an experience that gave both purpose and direction to the rest of his life.

> One day in 1881 to a college friend, at Amherst, I was expounding this idea, when he exclaimed: But you ought to hear Felix Adler, the Radical! He is doing the very thing of which you are dreaming! Soon I went to New York to hear the man who was putting my creed into deed. After hearing him once, I realized that what my friend had said was true; and on the following Monday morning, at nine o'clock, all uninvited, with the wise impetuosity of inexperience, I called at Professor Adler's house and announced: I have decided to be an Ethical Lecturer. Ever since that day Ethical Societies have been my spiritual home and have given me full opportunity to do the best work of which I have been capable.[107]

In the Ethical Culture Society of New York Stanton Coit found the answer to "the practical question of the conduct of life," and readily acknowledged that "the preparedness of my own mind for the work of this new movement, which had only started in 1876, was due to the influence of Ralph Waldo Emerson."[108] According to Adler's son-in-law, Horace

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Friess, "Coit explained it was ethics and its concrete applications that attracted him. Preaching is not our chief means of furthering the spread of goodness;. . .rather to help change the physical and social environment of men, so that it shall be more favorable to a truly human life."[109].

Adler advised his impetuous admirer to further study, but he had no way of knowing just how important and necessary this movement was for Coit or in what ways he already had prepared himself for it. Here was the purpose he needed, as well as the opportunity "to realize (Emerson's) dream of a new church based on moral science . . .aiming toward a stronger ethical commitment in practical affairs."[110]. Coit explained his seeming impetuosity when he disclosed that "when I heard for the first time of the Ethical Movement I seemed but to be receiving a message of the existence of a greater estate waiting for me to claim it." After a few months "I gave up my post at Amherst College, and went to New York City. There for a year or more I conducted the moral instruction classes of the children of members of the Ethical Society, at the same time meeting with Professor Adler, Mr. Salter, Mr. Sheldon, and Mr. Weston in regular discussions as to the aims and principles of our Movement, and also attending courses of lectures on political science and constitutional history at Columbia University."[111].

Spiritually and psychologically, Stanton Coit's journey

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appeared at an end. He had found the beacon light whose promise told him who he was and how to live. He never afterward strayed beyond its glow.

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Notes

Chapter Three

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3. J. Hutton Hynd, The Creative Task of Rational Religion: A Memorial Tribute to Dr. Stanton Coit, 1857-1944, (St. Louis: Ethical Society of St. Louis, 1944) p.3

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17. Coit, Ventures p.12. The phrase appeared in the report of the Amherst Record for March 26, 1879

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22. Amherst Student, April 26, 1879, Vol. 12 No. 13 p.152

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CHAPTER FOUR

The distance from Amherst to New York symbolized the close proximity in which the nineteenth century village now stood to the twentieth century city. In Arthur M. Schlesinger's phrase "the needle of national interest (had turned) from the country to the city" as the growth of industry and trade steadily eroded the space between them.[1] This development served as one measure of the breadth of change which had occurred since the civil war in the governing ideas of American culture.

When Stanton Coit entered college the Nation, testifying to the impact of this change, speculated about the fate of "declining towns" in the older parts of the country.

> The steady creation of wealth, and the necessity of employing it, the overcrowding of professional life in the cities, and the natural attraction for a country life felt by all people of our race, make it not only possible but highly probable that year by year many of the small farms of the East will gradually be swallowed up in large farms, of one kind or another, and that the owners will in course of time acquire that sense of responsibility which long ownership and complete identification of interest give. . . The change will have, among other good results, the effect of making the work of the individual reformer easier than it now is.[2]

Casting aside the pull of cultural values, this widely read journal, aroused by "the problems of human

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improvement," believed it was time to merge the factory with the farm. Henceforth, the prospect of rural America lay in the outgrowth of urban life. Industrial capital, by expanding the agrarian enterprise, offered hope for "declining towns" while it broadened the base of urban wealth. The natural attraction of the country provided a welcome surcease from the crowded conditions of the city. And, despairing the contradictory interests at work there, one saw in rural communities "a real opportunity for men of means and education who desire the public good to obtain lasting influence and power."[3] For the Nation, if not individual reformers, "declining towns" offered one solution to the problems of growing cities.

To Charles Loring Brace, the driving force behind the Children's Aid Society, the problems of the city had less to do with finding an outlet for industrial capital than improving the quality of life among the urban poor. Writing in 1872 Brace warned that "there are just the same explosive elements beneath the surface of New York as of Paris."[4] To alleviate the pressure exerted by the dangerous classes this reformer proposed to surround them with "the influence of education and discipline and religion. . . to so change their material circumstances and draw them under the influence of the moral and fortunate classes."[5] This, he argued, would make them useful and productive members of society.

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The Nation took a rather dim view of this call to reform, by whatever method employed, be it that of law, philanthropy or religion. These "have at least had a tolerably fair trial; and it is not too much to say that their results. . . are not a little discouraging."[6]. If optimism did not accompany the reformer's impulse industrial capitalism steadily cultivated social and political formations largely indifferent to individual values. To many thoughtful observers this situation threatened both the organization of society as well as the traditional ethical standards associated with Christianity. Moreover, such indifference to human needs placed in jeopardy the historic role of religion in a democratic state, what one writer identified as "the rights and duties of the Christian pulpit in relation to politics."[7].

Typical of the stress generated by the rise of the industrial city were the fears expressed by the American novelist, Harriet Beecher Stowe. In her book, We and Our Neighbors, which appeared in 1873, Stowe, "a sensitive barometer of middle class Protestant concerns," decried "the paganism of contemporary city life."[8]. After rummaging through the slums of New York the well-to-do heroine asks "can it be that in a city full of churches and Christians such dreadful things. . . are going on every night?"[9]. To a writer for whom "moral character. . . (was) the real authority in a society "the central dilemma became how the

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Church could "once more influence behavior and regulate society in urban America."[10]

While elements of the middle class denounced the absence of moral character the business community took refuge in the apparent strength of a growing economy. The New York Times predicted that "the healthy condition of our industries. . .almost insures us against any real financial distress."[11] Such confidence notwithstanding, national events fulfilled the worst fears of both reformer and novelist.

As Stanton Coit pursued his education the laboring classes struggled to find a place in an environment increasingly hostile to their presence. Unbridled railroad speculation, combined with overexpansion in major industries, brought on the Panic of 1873. Substantial unemployment fueled labor unrest which grew throughout the decade. A local incident in Martinsburg, West Virginia, in 1877 spread along the tracks to Pittsburg and other cities, culminating in a general railroad strike which took one hundred lives and injured a thousand more.

While Coit chased his own demons more than one million immigrants entered the United States, most of whom took up residence in already overcrowded cities. The depression lasted sixty-six months, marking it as one of the most severe in the nation's history. So intense were the events of 1877 that they "cast a shadow of alarm over the rest of

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the decade," representing for many "a symbol of shock, of the possible crumbling of society."[12.]

The grim events of the seventies jarred "that comfortable assumption of dominance and mastery" with which the middle class viewed its own position. And, on the occasion of America's centenary, in the face of slums and starvation, farmer's protests and labor riots, "Protestantism presented a massive, almost unbroken front in defense of the social status quo."[13.] The Independent, an orthodox journal of opinion, described striking laborers as "rioters and public enemies," while The Congregationalist, in more rigid fashion, heralded them as "reckless desperadoes."[14.]

If the broad-based center of American Protestantism remained largely indifferent to the plight of the oppressed the supporters of a more liberal theology took an altogether different view of the Church's responsibility. The Rev. Joseph Cook, a Congregationalist minister who "undertook to reform the shoe factories of Lynn (Massachusetts) and had lectured at Amherst, insisted that "the Church must be the sheet anchor of moral reform."[15.]

Washington Gladden argued that "questions of social life and of national well-being were matters of practical philanthropy: How to mix Christianity with human affairs; how to bring salvation to the people that need it most; how to make peace between the employer and the workman."[16.] To

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Gladden, a mainstay of the liberal tradition, "the struggle between capital and labor was a question of conduct, a question concerning the relations of man to man, relations that it was Christianity's duty to define and regulate."[17].

Beyond the church door "the unprogressive character of American philanthropy" gave rise to institutional responses that were as judgmental as the attitudes which supported them. To Josephine Shaw Lowell and the men and women who rallied to the Charity Organization Society "urban poverty was mainly the result, not of economic or structural maladjustments in society, but of the individual failings of the poor themselves."[18].

If the reformer's impulse remained alive, despite the efforts of both religion and philanthropy, the events of this period recast the central dilemma raised by Mrs. Stowe.

> Christianity could not long remain immune to influences that challenged its conception of man and of social organization and that threatened to replace traditional civilization whose very genius was both a contradiction of and a threat to the Christian ethic.[19].

Torn between the churches' desire to exercise moral supervision and society's need for positive action religion itself came under siege. A church which originated among the poor now viewed them as outcasts; a church once allied to commonwealth concepts now chartered individualism; a church possessed of a tradition which exalted persons above property now justified near absolute rights of property.

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The ideal of an organic community fell victim to a religion which largely accepted a competitive enterprise system.[20.]

It was not a condition which men of social conscience accepted easily. Henry Codman Potter, who served as rector of Grace Episcopal Church during the late seventies, and thereafter became Episcopal bishop of New York, insisted that "the pulpit has a much more serious office to perform than the preaching of comfortable sermons."[21.]

Confronted by such inconsistencies Protestantism's response was the social gospel. As the decade drew to a close theological liberalism began to thrive and a concerted effort appeared "to reorient Protestant ethics to the needs of a newly industrialized society."[22.]

Among the numerous people who had lost faith in historic Christianity were a group of radical Unitarians who, "vowing a religion of humanity, broke with their church and organized the Free Religious Association."[23.]

> Liberals in the strict sense of the term, these religious heirs of the Transcendentalist movement, divested Christianity of all orthodox meaning and viewed it simply as one of the great, though imperfect, religions of the world. As humanitarian nationalists, they (sought). . . a native religion . . . universalized by the genius of American liberty.[24.]

The founders of this secular movement, established in 1867, were Francis Ellingwood Abbott, who had left his Unitarian pulpit, and Octavius Brooks Frothingham, the spiritual leader of an independent religious society in New

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York. For Abbott "the dominant idea of American politics (was) that of natural reason and natural right. . . Yet this republican nation. . . still continue in a more or less earnest manner their nominal allegiance to Christianity, with its absolute spiritual despotism."[25] It was this incongruity between religion and politics which, to him, obstructed the path of social reform. "A free State must have a free religion," one that rested "on the great law of natural reason."[26]

If Unitarians presented "the humiliating spectacle of a divided allegiance" by its "devotion to freedom and Christianity," Francis T. Washburn challenged the Free Religionists to "show what other course is open to a clear intellect."[27]

The response to Washburn's arraignment of the charges levelled against Christianity came in 1873 with the publication of Frothingham's The Religion of Humanity, a text which quickly became the spiritual manifesto of the Free Religionists. Here Frothingham, heir to the radicalism of Theodore Parker, expressed his desire for a religion whose premises rested on the authority of intellect supported by a rationalistic ethics independent of Christianity. Harper's Magazine described this work as "a curious commingling of the mystical and the critical, the spiritual and the rationalistic, the like of which is hardly to be found elsewhere."[28]

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While the humanistic ideals of Frothingham seemed like a curious amalgam out of which to fashion "a native religion," the real weakness of the Association lay in its failure to apply them to specific social causes. A more constructive effort in this direction, and one whose development "sprang from similar rationalistic roots. . .was the ethical culture movement."[29].

A logical extension of the moral idealism implicit in Unitarianism, ethical culture also represented a movement whose advance pushed beyond the boundaries of Reformed Judaism toward the high ground of humanitarian religion. While the Free Religious Association gave expression to "the libertarian tendencies of Emerson's thought, the Ethical Movement attempted to realize his dream of a new church based on moral science."[30].

In a series of lectures begun on May 15, 1876, and whose principal object was to create the basis for "a new order of life and society," Felix Adler initiated the organizational scheme which developed into the Ethical Culture Society of New York. Convinced that a system of natural ethics provided common ground for believers and non-believers alike, Adler wished to combine ethical religion with practical measures of social reform.

Having joined the Free Religionists before bringing this movement to light Adler became president of the Association in 1878. Mindful of the need for concerted

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action he proposed a reformist platform that called for the Association "to take an immediate and practical interest in the problems of poverty, industrialism, and property."[31] While new projects awaited Adler's attention in New York little activity occurred in Boston. Though his position did prove useful in drawing interest to the Ethical Culture Society, after four years, during which he found the members of the Association "unresponsive to the main initiatives he proposed," Adler resigned in frustration. In so doing he threw down the gauntlet of reform and confronted the organization with its own inertia.

> What great charitable movement has found its source here among those who maintain the principle of freedom in religion? What living thing for the good of mankind, for the perfecting of morality among yourselves and others emanated within the last twenty years from the Free Religious circles of this city?[32]

Felix Adler was born in Alzey, Germany, in 1851 and came to America at the age of six when his father, Samuel, "a leading figure in Reform Judaism in Europe," accepted an invitation "to become rabbi of Temple Emanu-El in New York City."[33] The Adlers arrived in the United States at a time when, throughout the nation, the storm clouds of civil war gathered force.

> It was indeed a fire-baptism into American nationality and remained basic to their personal consciousness of American social and political ideals. The nation's standard, as Felix came to see and to treasure it, was established in that struggle.[34]

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During the war and its aftermath Felix encountered the bleak conditions of New York's laboring poor, an experience which helped to shape his zealous regard for social reform. "Accompanying his mother on regular charity trips," Felix got a first-hand look at "the substandard housing, the neglected sewage systems, and the myriad other dangerous health hazards of the filthy tenement environs. . . To improve their social, physical, and spiritual state of existence. . .later became the keynote of the practical activities of his Society for Ethical Culture."[35.]

Upon reaching adolescence Felix displayed those qualities of an intellectually gifted but socially isolated young man who began to turn his "sensitive social conscience inward," to subject his own religious beliefs "to constant review and critical judgment." In time he began to experience doubts, the most urgent of which related to the existence of God.

Following his graduation from Columbia College in 1870, and encouraged by his brother, Isaac, Felix went abroad to continue his education. He arrived in Paris on the eve of the Franco-Prussian War, the outcome of which left a lasting impression "not only for its political but for its general moral significance."

In the atmosphere of the German university at Berlin Felix Adler came under the spell of neo-Kantian idealism and its critique of religion. Kant's insistence that practical

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reason, namely morality, could exist independently of any theological system, coupled with his belief that "the deity and immortality could not be demonstrated" exerted a powerful influence on Adler. "These two concepts, the autonomy and the centrality of ethics, became the philosophical basis for the Ethical Culture Movement, adding a philosophic complement to Emerson's call for a purely ethical religion and to America's moralistic religious tradition."[36].

With the state of man's knowledge changing before his eyes, and attracted by "a wide range of historical, psychological, and philosophical studies," Felix relinquished his belief in a personal God in favor of a more rational approach to religion.

In practical affairs the question of social consequence at this time in Germany and throughout the continent was the growing labor movement and its support for the ideas gathering force under the banner of social democracy. For Adler it was Friedrich Albert Lange's Die Arbeiterfrage (The Labor Question)

> which proved epoch-making in my life. I read his book. . . with burning cheeks; no work of fiction ever excited me as did this little treatise. It was ethical in spirit, if not in its ruling ideas. It favored productive co-operation, and seemed to point a way to immediate action, as Socialism did not.[37].

By the time Adler received the PH.D. in Semantics at

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Heidelberg, to which he transferred in 1873, "such moves then being common for students in Germany," his experiences had impacted in significant ways on "the development of his ethical principles, and, hence, on the conduct of life."[38.]

Concerned that "freedom in religion" had failed to generate those consecrating influences necessary to the moral life of man, Felix Adler, imbued with his own principles, turned his full attention to the Ethical Culture Society.

Foremost among the principles to which Adler subscribed and "to which I early gave ascent, and to which I have ever since adhered as a correct fundamental insight, is. . .that every human being is an end per se, worthwhile on his own account."[39.] As the starting point for ethical culture the proposition owed its intellectual vigor to Emerson, who saw in man the potency of divine power, and Kant, who endowed him with the force of moral law. Felix Adler embraced this doctrine of self-reliance and made it the well-spring by which to activate the social conscience and breathe new life into religion.

Aware of the diminishing force of the denominational churches Adler saw the reformulation of religion as a necessary prerequisite to preserving and strengthening its place in the life of man. Witness to "the growing edge of a new stage of society" and stirred by "the anarchic conditions in American industry," Adler believed that

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"religion must step in between the contending classes . . .and preach the sermon of justice as it has never been heard before."[40.]

Armed with an idea, now firmly in place, Adler sought to return to that earlier conception of morality where the right life served as the true basis of ethical religion. Only this approach, he argued, "could still legitimately make an absolute claim upon man's conscience."[41.] If it stood for anything at all the movement reflected Adler's belief that "the ethical end is the sovereign, supreme end of life to which all other ends must be subordinated."[42.] This was "the gospel of the religion of the future" which Adler also sought to make "a gospel for the poor."

By shifting "the ground of religion from theology to ethics," and displacing belief with experience Felix Adler joined his experiment to a social purpose whose aim was to regenerate society. Yet Adler saw the ethical spirit of his work as more important than the philanthropic. To his wife, Nell, he wrote "the simply philanthropic aspect of such work as mine stands in the way of the appreciation of its deeper purpose."[43.]

For Adler the measure of man's self-worth was a necessary precondition to the attainment of the private virtue which lay at the heart of ethical culture. "The movement must give birth to personalities who have attained for themselves an abiding ethical faith, and are aflame with

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it."[44] Only then did Adler believe it possible to reach out to the secular universe of the masses and reunite the personal ethics of the individual with the political ethics of the state. What Felix Adler sought to create in Ethical Culture Societies was an exemplar of those larger possibilities he saw implicit in civilized society.

If the interior meaning of ethical culture was to enhance moral character Adler equated the success of the movement with the ability of men and women to cultivate a social ethics as the basis of industrial reorganization. In this new stage of society" he envisioned, "the social question is its alpha and omega."[45] Adler's concern for "the general state and future prospects of industrial workers" underscored what Reinhold Niebuhr saw as the distinct characteristic of modern man, namely, that he had "no social relations sufficiently organic to give his life real significance."[46] Writing in 1880 Adler concluded that

> the lack of strong and great purpose among the efficient is a worse evil than the situation of the inefficient. . .The hope of regeneration for the whole of society must come from its ablest members. Is not the real root of the evil unfettered individualism,. . . and the fact that the problem of concerted action has not been solved.[47]

If the reformer's impulse found in the potency of religion an abiding vitality the strength of Adler's commitment derived from premises similar to those employed by Alexis de Tocqueville to explain the influence of

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religion itself. Echoing the spirit of that French citizen one writer claimed that

> religion is simply another form of hope, and it is no less natural to the human heart than hope itself. . .Religious institutions. . .derive an inexhaustible element of strength from man himself, since they belong to one of the constituent principles of human nature . . .As long as religion rests only upon those sentiments which are the consolation of all affliction, it may attract the affections of all mankind.[48]

In an effort to tap that "inexhaustible element of strength" in man, while at the same time, resolve "the problem of concerted action," Adler decided that "two approaches are vital: one through the family relations, having a more internal, spiritualizing effect; the other through political organization, having a more direct, practical bearing."[49]

The simply philanthropic aspect of Adler's work captured the imagination as it worked to improve family life. In 1877 the Ethical Culture Society supported the organization of a visiting nurses program to relieve the problem of "the homebound sick in poor districts," a service which later found permanence through the efforts of Lillian D. Wald.

The following year, Adler, together with Alfred Wolff, established a "tuition-free kindergarten, the first of its kind in the eastern United States."[50] Throughout the

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ensuing decade Adler became involved in a broad array of civic activities, among them construction of model tenement houses on Cherry Street, but none epitomized the basic reforming philosophy of ethical culture more than the Workingman's School. Conceived as "a model elementary schooling of life-like character" the school, begun in 1880, emphasized

> the physical side of life, for health through examinations and through activity indoor and out, . . a diversified program of arts and crafts, the gates of labor (learning by doing) as well as the gates of study, bringing plants, animals, and art objects into the classroom, workshops, and art room.[51]

For the children growing up in an industrial society Adler proposed "a broad and generous education, such as the children of the richest might be glad in some respect to share with them which will prepare them for their future station in life, but also make them capable of living in a truly human way."[52]

Adler's approach to reform differed from that of his contemporaries and helps to explain the early success of the movement. His emphasis on moral character, actualized by measures of practical reform, enhanced the dignity of the individual in the face of that wholesale anonymity bred by industrial society. By providing new impetus to basic motives in the Judeo-Christian tradition Adler rekindled interest in man's conception of religion, both as an

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individual system of belief as well as a social power for good. The relationship he saw between the fate of man and the future of the whole community reinforced the central premise in the American experience at a time when reform seemed to lack the force of its governing ideals. Years later, Stanton Coit testified to the appeal of Adler's ethical idealism.

> Undoubtedly to Felix Adler what every child in his School, every member of his Society, every citizen of New York ought to have been was in very fact a living principle or energy struggling to express itself in the child, the member, the citizen. It was because Adler felt this that he always addressed his words and work to the ideal self of each person he talked with or worked with. To him the ideal self was the supreme reality, it was not only good but real.[53]

The young men attracted to ethical culture found in its general outlook and specific causes a moral context capable of enhancing the personal significance of their own lives. For them this experiment in moral religion presented a welcome contrast to the disillusionment they had experienced with a denominational church. Among the four original applicants whom Adler accepted as "broadly qualified to become his first colleagues" each sought "an ethical alternative to the revealed and supernatural faith."[54] Moveover, all but one (Sheldon) had succumbed to the power of Emersonian idealism, from which the ethical movement continued to draw its strength.

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William Mackintire Salter and S. Burns Weston had attended Harvard Divinity School, and, in the course of time, came to Adler by way of the Unitarian pulpit and the Free Religious Association. Both had studied abroad, Salter at Gottingen (1876-77) and Weston at Berlin (1881-82) and Leipzig (1882-83), prior to their commitment to ethical culture. During the winter of 1880, at a time when each man occupied a pulpit in Massachusetts, Salter and Weston became friends who met "occasionally in Boston or Roxbury." Weston spoke to Salter's congregation at Wayland in March of 1881, shortly after his own departure from Leicester, an event brought on by a series of discourses on Free Religion. It was at this time that Salter encouraged Weston to study in Germany.

The oldest of the group at twenty-nine William Salter grew up in Burlington, Iowa. His father was one of the "Andover Band" of Congregational ministers, pioneer seminary graduates who helped to settle the state during the 1840's. "A reading of his father's copy of Seelye's Ecce Homo first inclined him to the ministry, and after his discovery of Channing and Emerson. . .the thought of a personal quest for truth in the religious realm, regardless of results, entered my head."[55].

Salter first met Felix Adler in 1879, and, the following year, accepted an invitation to speak at the New York Society for Ethical Culture. A man given to "careful

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deliberation and independent questioning. . .the challenge of specific human service and organization, without dogmas to defend, had an immediate appeal for Salter."[56] A letter to Adler on April 6,1880, in which he indicated that he would be "able in the fall to start an Ethical Society somewhere," elicited an uncertain response and Salter returned to his congregation at Wayland.[57] After a meeting with Adler in July of 1881, in Boston, Salter returned to New York to commence his training, which, by the end of the following year, prepared him to accept a position as leader of an ethical culture society in Chicago.

S. Burns Weston was reared on a farm in Madison, Maine, and attended a "Christian Church. . .without any formulated creed other than the Bible itself."[58] Upon graduating from Antioch College in Ohio, where he studied philosophy with G. Stanley Hall, Weston enrolled as a divinity student at Harvard and "occupied the same dormitory room Emerson used half a century earlier."[59] While there he saw Emerson frequently, both on campus and at the annual Boston conferences of the Free Religious Association where, in 1878, he first met Felix Adler. "Weston recalled every association with the older Unitarian heretic as precious and every gathering as dominated by his presence."[60] During his stay in Cambridge Weston also encountered William James whose course in psychology he regarded as "most inspiring."

By the time Weston left Harvard for Leicester he had

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lost his faith "in God and immortality." At Leicester Weston cultivated a reputation as "the frankly non-theistic and non-Christian Unitarian minister."[61] After two years with this liberal congregation Weston returned to Harvard as "a special student." A diary entry for July, 1881, included the brief notation, "11 to 18 in Boston and Gloucester with Prof Adler and Mr. Salter."[62] At this meeting Adler repeated his sentiments, expressed two months earlier, that Weston, "not go to Germany until another year," and instead return with him and Salter to New York. Weston demured and set sail "for his Wanderjahre, two years of intermittent study and travel."[63] In a letter to Adler from Berlin on May 27, 1882, written to report his progress, Weston mentioned "an American student in whom you will be interested."[64]

At seventeen William Sheldon resolved "to go through college." To his private journal he confided "there is growing within me a respect for all creeds and religions and I have grown much more liberal in my views."[65] From his home in West Rutland, Vermont, Sheldon went to Middlebury College for two years before transferring to Princeton. While there he "listed his denomination as Congregational and his politics as Republican."[66] Several years after his graduation in 1880 Sheldon revealed that "Princeton taught me a great deal in many things, but while I was there. . . I was taking an attitude that, by the time of my graduation,

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put me far outside the pale of its theology."[67].

Uncertain about his future Sheldon travelled to the Middle East and Europe after which he registered at the University of Berlin in October, 1881. Here he met Burns Weston and "learned of the possibility of a new type of ministry with the Ethical Movement."[68]. While at Berlin he developed "a close and lasting friendship with Weston who recommended him to Adler as "another potential candidate for Ethical Cultural leadership."[69].

Upon his arrival in New York Stanton Coit possessed few of the qualities which advanced education, travel abroad, and life experience had conferred upon his as yet unknown associates. After a brief stay in New York where he met Salter and conferred with Adler he decided to go to Europe." By September of 1882, Coit had followed Weston and Sheldon to Berlin, where he wrote Weston his thanks for a pleasant introduction to the city and university, and promised not to bother him further unless he had something of importance to say about our future work."[70].

Coit's visit "to the city and university" was brief and by late fall he was back in New York. In a letter to Weston on November 4, 1882, Salter indicated "Coit is here and reports seeing you. How did he impress you? He seems almost over modest in regard to himself and to have a positive aversion to metaphysics."[71]. In a more decisive manner Salter informed his friend that Coit "will teach in

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the Ethical School this year, and as he goes to Germany next, I do not see why the way should not be open for you to come here."[72.] Salter reinforced this point by recommending to Weston that he "enroll, as Coit and he himself had, for seven hours each term at Columbia in Burgess's lectures on Constitutional Law and Political History.[73.] In closing the argument Salter insisted: Burgess is a strong man. It is an education in itself to come under his influence."[74.]

Coit's association with Adler and Salter convinced him that here was a cause, sufficiently generous in its aim and outlook, to accommodate his own ideas of what civilized society required. In Adler's compelling sense of duty Coit found an organizing spirit of social concern and moral belief that went beyond Emerson, the kind of work which embodied that sense of mission fostered at Amherst, and informed by a rationalism that evoked the influence of his mother. What Stanton Coit recognized in Seelye he saw actualized in the Ethical movement.

While there was six years difference in age between Adler and Coit, their personal background and particular experiences made the distance seem greater.

Felix Adler came of age in an environment which presented him with different and conflicting views of life. Deeply influenced by the religious ideals of his father he sought to reconcile the tenets of Judaism with the economic and racial problems of New York's laboring poor, while

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dissenting from the narrow theology of the Christian Evidences as taught at Columbia College. At the time he first met Coit Adler's beliefs had found their own expression, the result of his contact with poverty, science, and the rigor of Kantian philosophy.

Stanton Coit grew up in Ohio where his family engaged in spiritualistic ritual played out against the background of more traditional Episcopalian beliefs and whose mother was an ardent suffragette. Orthodox religion had little place in his life, supplanted as it was by good and bad spirits, and his mind became hardened to the rationalism she instilled in him at an early age. His fondness for Emerson grew into a cult of its own as he became a youthful disciple of transcendentalism. By the time he met Adler Coit had discarded the spirits and solidified his belief that what the civilized world needed was a religion of pure ethics.

While Adler's long and agonizing appraisal of formal religion led him beyond the church and synagogue, Coit's rejection of spiritualism heightened his search for Emerson's "new church founded on moral science. . .the church of men to come." Of all those drawn to the Leadership in the Society only Coit made a conscious effort "to be a churchman in an Ethical Culture pulpit.

It was their individual temperament, however, that proved most difficult in establishing a genuine relationship. They were so much alike. Introspective to

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the point of being shy and sensitive to the forces around them, each possessed a strong personality which gave expression to an indomitable will. Both were driven by an idealism rooted in practical reform but they occupied different positions.

Adler's German education and European exposure "provided him with concrete social direction, goals, and methods, with a social vision." Coit lacked this training and direction and so appeared to Adler as a man, who, though energized, had no plan or destination. While each took the measure of the other the result, on both sides, was a mixture of optimism and caution.

Given the extent to which Adler's message suited Coit's own temperament, Gustave Spiller later remarked that "captivated by Emerson, it is only surprising that he did not hear before 1881 of professor Felix Adler's Ethical Movement."[75] The moment notwithstanding, it was Harold Blackham who revealed the genuine significance of Coit's decision. With his accustomed clarity Blackham insisted that

> Coit's ethical idealism was formed and fixed before he went to meet and hear Felix Adler in New York and two years later to study in Germany the critical philosophy of Kant. These steps gave him his life's work in the Ethical Movement and the intellectual training which enabled him to develop and teach his lifelong convictions.[76]

While Coit's involvement with the moral instruction

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classes signified his apprenticeship in the Ethical Culture Society he soon realized the extent of training and personal discipline Adler prescribed "for the office and function of ethical preacher." In recalling his early association with the Ethical Movement Stanton Coit displayed the firmness of character implicit in the choice he made and so gave renewed meaning to the Jamesian axiom that "the individual must in reason be adequate to the vocation for which the Spirit of the world has called him into being."[77].

> The great event of each week, however, for me was to listen, each Sunday morning, as one of an audience of some 2,000 persons, to the stirring but closely analytical addresses of Professor Adler. But the more he unfolded the principles of the conduct of life, the more I became aware of my own unfitness, philosophically and in general intellectual equipment, for the office and function of ethical preacher. I accordingly, with the advice of wise friends, decided to study for my degree of Doctor of Philosophy at a German university. In 1882 I went to Berlin, and in December of 1885 attained the object I had set before myself. During all these many months of study, the purpose of becoming an ethical lecturer never flagged. On the contrary, the wider my acquaintance with the philosophic systems of the world, and the more intimate my understanding of the problems of ethics and of the relation of the practical will to the speculative reason, the stronger and more intense grew my love for the life-work that I had selected.[78].

One of those "wise friends" whose advice impacted on Coit's decision may have been J. Franklin Jameson. In correspondence to him dated October 15, 1883, from Berlin,

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Coit referred to a letter "I received. . .from you last winter."

> This letter did me a great deal of good both for the tone of friendship that pervaded it and also from a half warning, half encouraging remark you made about me. You said something to the effect that you had always thought I might do some good in the world if I would study hard and learn the facts of human life.[79]

While Coit now possessed a genuine cause and his energies moved along a definite path, he remained sensitive to the need for encouragement, so evident in earlier correspondence with Jameson. This all too human trait, still over-extended in Coit's developing personality, explains Salter's observation that he appeared "over modest in regard to himself." What the older man interpreted as reserve or timidity Coit experienced as uncertainty, if not fear. The reassurance Jameson provided assumed special value, coming as it did from one whom he counted among his closest friends.

Acknowledging his own boyhood tendency to engage in "a most fantastic mystical way of dreaming, instead of observing and thinking," Coit reassured Jameson that "now I try to discipline myself by the severest logic and to limit myself to observation and inference."[80] In a light-hearted appraisal Coit readily admitted that "it is much more fun to float around in the sky on a platonic idea."[81] This caprice was, in reality, a sign of Coit's growing maturity

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and self-confidence. Equally important in this regard was the tone of Coit's five page letter which remained positive throughout, and, at time, bristled with excitement.

Coit's new found excitement grew out of his contact with the ideas of Immanuel Kant whose influence permeated philosophical studies at the University of Berlin. In an unusual display of authority Coit shared with Jameson his own thoughts about the proper role of the speculative reason.

> I am fully convinced that the speculative reason gives us only empty forms of truth and that the contents must come from the senses and moral consciousness, and I cannot agree with Kant that the facts of moral life justify the belief in the personality of God and the immortality of the soul, but further that these doctrines are of no interest to us from a moral, practical point of view; the vitality of religion is its moral character; and so the historical religions are standing upon a false basis.[82]

His assessment reaffirmed ideas the origins of which grew out of Coit's experiences at Amherst. What he found in Kant was an intellectual frame of reference by which to articulate his own faith in a practical humanism. If Coit disagreed with the particular arguments employed by Kant he nevertheless believed that the genuine value of his ideas lay in the extent to which they indicated "a point of departure for a new religious movement throughout society," one whose vitality rested upon the moral character of the individual.

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> In showing that the fact of the Moral Law in us and not the fact of the Personality, or even the existence of God is the basis of Morality, that the Law gives its own sanction, in showing this, Kant shows a point of departure for a new religious movement throughout society, a point of view which does not antagonize science; which even is congenial with positivism, but which commits itself to no form of dogmatism.[83]

With his mind now fixed, Coit indicated that "my specialty is to be Ethics. . . but in order to understand Ethics of course I must study the whole department of philosophy."[84] As if to justify his friend's confidence, and anxious to share with him his present determination, Coit informed Jameson that he planned "to hear Paylen on a general Introduction to Philosophy and Pedagogik, Prof. Dilthey on Logic and Zeller on General History of Philosophy."[85] Somewhat apprehensive about his ability with the language Coit, nevertheless, had already taken steps to master it.

> I suppose it will be somewhat difficult for me at first to understand the lectures; I shall not try to take notes the first month. I have been in a German family three months, and can understand everything in ordinary conversation and in sermons. Reading German begins to be quite easy. I have been reading principally Lessing, Shiller and Goethe. I found Philosophy much easier to read as the vocabulary was so small and so Latin.[86]

Inasmuch as Jameson was at Johns Hopkins Coit inquired about its department of philosophy. "Do the Professors

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publish any philosophical journal?. . .I should like very much to keep informed, while I am in Germany, on the philosophical thought in America."[87]. Coit's interest was not without purpose as he confided to Jameson that "I am in hopes that after I have finished my studies here I may find some sort of a position in America, to lecture to students, but that is looking far ahead; and it is said only to you."[88].

Toward the end of his letter to Jameson, which he described as "hardly legible," Coit reported that he spent the summer (with Robbins) "in Weimar" and "three weeks with Frank Goodnow in Paris. . .indeed I've had a jolly time ever since I left New York."[89].

In his letter to Jameson Coit did not mention his preparatory role in the Ethical Movement. If he evidenced concern about his own intellectual fitness "for the office and function of ethical preacher," such diffidence had less to do with the merits of his education than the unprecedented nature of the position to which he aspired.

Determined to secure the training necessary to his calling and mindful of the importance Adler attached to an understanding of "the religious and ethical thought of the past," Stanton Coit enrolled in studies with the Philosophical Faculty at Berlin. The university of Fichte, Schelling and Hegel, it was the center of German learning and an institution whose influence derived in large measure

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from the scientific organization which characterized learning as well as the participation of its distinguished faculty in the social and political life of the nation.

In commenting on his own recent experience abroad Richard T. Ely provided one measure of the stature accorded public universities in Germany. "A German university is, from beginning to end, through and through, a professional school. It is not a school which pretends or strives to develop in a general way the intellectual powers, and give its students universal culture."[90].

The social and political climate in Berlin amplified Coit's experience and deepened his own beliefs as it brought him into direct contact with new and potentially explosive ideas. Among those who intensified Coit's intellectual development, and with whom he established a close and lasting friendship, was Georg von Gizycki. Both Salter and Weston had encountered Gizycki previously and "Coit followed sympathetically his expositions of Utilitarian Ethics and yet manifested a practical spirit that reacted powerfully on his teacher."[91].

Gizycki was at Heidelberg with Felix Adler and his own approach to philosophy seemed to approximate that which inspired ethical culture. His relationship with Coit created obligations that cut both ways and apparently reinforced Gizycki's commitment to Adler's new movement in America. Years later he acknowledged this obligation to

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"(Dr.) Coit in his Moralphilosophie. . . and translated Coit's early addresses on the Ethical Movement."[92.]

"An aristocratic socialist," Gizycki strengthened ideas Coit already possessed. To him good and evil existed at the level of man's moral responsibility, which, ethically, he cannot refuse to assume. And from an ethical point of view the raison d'etre of man's existence is "to give your whole life a supreme moral purpose." In language reminiscent of Emerson, Gizycki declared "the ideal forms struggle everywhere to actualize themselves. . . We feel in ourselves the pressure of the ideal world upon the real. . .(And) the ideal world, the world as it ought to be, is the world as our moral feeling wishes it."[93.] For Stanton Coit here was a purpose which accorded with the intellectual thrust of his own philosophical beliefs, and, at the same time, retained that practical idealism worthy of application.

Coit's student days were not always preoccupied with "the divine masters of philosophy." The condition of Germany and its response to the rapid growth of both industrialization and international socialism was a matter of central concern in Berlin, about which some of the faculty had strong opinions. A particular source of controversy was the growing strength of social democracy and the ideas to which it gave support. Writing at a time when Coit was a student there Richard T. Ely described the conditions in Germany to a largely unsuspecting American

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audience. "The very cornerstone of their belief is that the individual is not responsible for the present condition of things; that harmony can be secured only by the combined action of society, by a social, and not by an individual regeneration."[94]. In contrast to the national spirit fostered by LaSalle, who sought to use it as the basis for a united Germany, the new social democrats, according to Ely, appeared convinced "that the existing powers of state and society would not yield their positions without a combat."[95].

Reacting to the interests and ideas which regulated political life in Berlin, and exposed to the virulent forms of Prussian nationalism he encountered in the university, Stanton Coit assumed a political position for the first time in his life. Years later he vividly recalled the decision.

> Even before I took my degree in 1885 at the University of Berlin I had become professedly a socialist, in resentment against the teachings of von Treitschke and Adolf Wagner whose lectures I had attended. Ever since then I have felt that periods of peace, organized on the principle of cut-throat competition, were meaner and baser than periods of war; for war is in the open, whereas peace has hitherto been war masquerading as an angel of light.[96].

Appalled by the Junker mentality and rabid nationalism which marked von Treitschke's politics and Wagner's economics, Coit felt compelled to take a position, which, if not politically developed, appeared consistent with his own philosophy. For a young man whose sensibilities lay in

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Kantian ethics Coit found it virtually impossible to reconcile his beliefs with "the Kultur of the Cynic who...preached that the State is power, and war is its first, most elementary function."[97.]

One writer's memory of Treitschke led him to recall that in the lecture hall "no one expected complete objectivity from him, and seldom did a lecture pass without drastic judgements upon some country or other that had failed to take Germany at its own valuation."[98.] To several generations Treitschke's "brilliancy of language" and "fervid eloquence" enabled him to exercise "his unique power of interpreting to Germans their own minds and aspirations."[99.]

The force of ideas at work in the university and the intellectual leadership he encountered there left a deep impression on Stanton Coit. Two and a half years in Berlin, coupled with the training he received, did much to alleviate the anxiety about his own intellectual fitness. His relationship with Gizycki and Zeller strengthened Coit's philosophical outlook while contact with von Treitschke and Wagner developed in him a political awareness.

On a more personal note Coit still experienced the recurring need for friendship and encouragement in a manner which revealed a disturbing side of his personality. In a poignant letter to Jameson written on June 10, 1885, Coit enclosed a picture of himself with the request that his

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friend accept it "as a token of my desire that you remember me."[100] Apparently with no word from Jameson since he last wrote, almost two years ago, Coit employed this tactic in the hope his friend would reciprocate. "My sending the picture is also a device for getting a letter from you in acknowledgement of the receipt of it; and haven't you a photograph of yourself to give me?"[101]

For Coit the exchange of photographs was a supportive symbol of their friendship. Despite the relationship they enjoyed as classmates their correspondence appeared quite irregular, and Coit always made a point of it. In his previous letter, after the now customary request, "I should like so much to hear from you," Coit added the more serious reflection, "Why shouldn't we write oftener than we do?"[102] In the total context of their correspondence the question hardly appears as a casual comment. Rather, it serves as a persistent indication of Coit's need for the strong support he felt Jameson could provide him.

Stanton Coit still viewed his chosen friend with a sense of the insecurity bred by his own admiration for the character and solidity he saw in Jameson and so wished to emulate. Keenly sensitive to his position in their relationship Coit imposed upon it the added burden of his own vulnerability. "Until I have finished my studies here and have really done something like honest work in the world, I fear I shall never be able to write you as I should

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like."[103].

Implicit in Coit's approach to Jameson was the apparent belief that only when he achieved something worthwhile could he pursue him on common ground. Only then would the relationship be one of equals. If Coit's ardent pursuit of Jameson proved a necessary source of strength the relationship also became the object of that personal indignity he sometimes experienced because of it. In a painful admission which merged past and present Coit recalled their student days at Amherst.

> When I used to come down to my room at the Chi Shi building, and tell what Jameson said and thought, Frank Goodnow used to call you my little tin God. It may be my weakness or your strength, as you please to explain it. But your faithful work and calm temper of mind and sober judgment always shamed me, and do still.[104].

Between the time he wrote to Jameson and the latter's response in September/October, Coit "spent six weeks in Switzerland." As he told Jamie by return post "I took my books with me and settled down for awhile on Lake Lucerne and then went to St. Beatenberg near Interlaken."[105]. Obviously looking forward to the completion of his work in Berlin, and anxious to return to America, Coit predicted he would remain "two months longer and somewhat more." His schedule already set, and with an air of exhilaration, Coit rushed forward. "When, thank Heaven, I shall be through with my studies in Germany! I go to Paris for a month, to

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London for two months, and then to the land I have grown, in my absence, to know and love. I am already impatient to be home, and so may cut down my months in Paris and London to weeks."[106].

In a tone marked by anticipation Coit revelled in the excitement of his forthcoming trip to England. "I am looking forward to my London visit as an epoch-making period of my life; for there I am going to become an eye and ear witness to the actual conditions of the poor and at the same time look into all the efforts being made for its amelioration. And this actual study of facts will be a new undertaking."[107].

As to the effects of his stay in Berlin Coit informed Jameson that "since I have been in Germany I have gotten rid of the last trace of transcendentalism and can understand now better minds like yours, which are born sane. Cleared of metaphysics, I feel now as if I could do some good work in my specialty, Ethics."[108]. Quickly, Coit returned to the thought of going home, and, obviously in high spirits, proposed "a triumphal march of friendship through the various cities of the East" before returning to Ohio.

In a more serious vein he told Jamie "I don't know what for a job I shall get, when I return; but I hope in some city to start an Ethical Society, like Mr. Adler's in New York, Salter's in Chicago, and the one founded last winter in Philadelphia."[109].

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Rejuvenated by his winter vacation and Jameson's letter Coit began the final preparation for defense of his work, now all but complete. In his doctoral dissertation, translated as "The Inner Sanction as the Final Aim of Moral Conduct," Coit sought to identify "the universal, distinguishing characteristic of right action, and, using this characteristic as the standard of value, to determine the relative worth of the various objects that may be proposed as the final aim of conduct."[110].

In his approach to the subject Coit accepted the essential premise of utilitarianism, namely, "that action is right which tends to increase most the general sum of happiness," but the method he employed led him to reject "universal happiness" in favor of the intuitive principle by which "the tendency to bring it about is the truly ethical conception." While Coit rejected "externally verifiable consequences" and so retreated from the outward result of utilitarianism, he retained its inner motivation. "Inward peace attends that way of living which makes for universal happiness."[111].

For Stanton Coit "the inner sanction as the final aim of moral conduct" rested on a "clear conscience, satisfaction, or peace of mind." Moral decisions were intuitive and Kant's assertion that morality required a transcendental basis was unwarranted. "Any sane man may know whether he thinks he is doing right or not. . . If any

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one should affirm the contrary, he would unwittingly remove the very foundation of morals."[112] In the opinion of one reader Coit "came closer than he seemed willing to admit to the Kantian sanction of the ultimate good will."[113]

Within the fold of Coit's arguments are some of the characteristics of his mature thought. His reasoning exhibits the tendency to alternate between philosophical inference and personal disposition. Coit's attribution of the "inner sanction" to "any sane man" runs the risk of transforming the science of ethics into a matter of rational choice where moral action becomes the natural mode of conduct pursued by rational men. His assertion that those who "lack the proper moral faculties. . .simply drop out of our consideration entirely," represents a peculiar limitation on the scope of ethics. The appearance of a discernible frontier to applied ethics raises the question of whether Coit, in fact, harbored an elitist attitude.

Unable to achieve certainty by a valuation of external success Coit fell back upon the inner "moral sense," a tactic with potentially serious implications. Open to the charge that reliance on peace of mind could "indicate an abnormal and monstrous state of mind," Coit insisted that "doing right" must include the motive of benevolence and the social ideal of "universal happiness."[114]

What seems apparent in the circumscribed reasoning Coit employed is his presumption to treat the idea, what ought-

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to-be, as the fact which exists. The abstraction becomes real in the mind of the author, and, when placed in the context of the argument, supports his conclusion. But the abstraction may prove erroneous in the same way that any sane man may not know, from an ethical standpoint, whether he is doing right.

In the final analysis Stanton Coit "rejected the Kantian (and Adlerian) concept of absolute worth and the accompanying transcendental significance of right action."[115] Believing the power for good lay within, he embraced a conception of man whose rational nature, when informed by proper motives, predisposed him to right action.

Following defense of his dissertation on December 12, 1885, Coit left Berlin in route to Paris and London. In correspondence to Burns Weston on December 20, Walter Sheldon, who earlier in the year had returned to Berlin to study medicine, took note of Coit's hasty departure.

> Coit is gone. . . He was so busy with his examinations and left so soon after taking his degree that we met but seldom. Of course to my regret. He takes cum laude, the next highest degree which is given here. His essay will be published in July in the London Mind. He spends one month in Paris and two months in London.[116]

Sheldon concluded his remark about Coit with the salient observation that "he has a very ardent nature but a pretty sound head."[117]

Notes

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Chapter Four

1. Arthur M. Schlesinger, The Rise of the City, 1878-1898, A.M. Schlesinger and Dixon Ryan Fox, eds., A History of American Life, Volume X, (New York: Macmillan Co., 1933), p.1

2. The Nation, Volume 19, No.479, (September 3, 1874), p.479

3. ibid

4. Charles Loring Brace, The Dangerous Classes of New York, (New York: Wynkoop and Hallenbeck, 1872), p.29

5. ibid

6. The Nation, Vol. 15, No. 380 (October 10, 1872), p.237

7. Charles Howard Hopkins, The Rise of the Social Gospel in American Protestantism, 1865-1915, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1940), p.5

8. Paul Boyer, Urban Masses and Moral Order in America, 1820-1920, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), p.132; Harriet Beecher Stowe, We and Our Neighbors, (New York: J.B. Ford, 1875) p.386

9. Stowe, ibid

10. ibid, p.439-440. "Human character is at the root of any social system (and) moral character, by its pervasive influence, is the real authority in a society." Thomas P Joswick, "The Crown Without the Conflict: Religious Values and Moral Reasoning in Uncle Tom's Cabin," Nineteenth Century Fiction, Volume 39 No.3, December, 1984, p. 258. For a discussion of Stowe's fiction see: Alice C. Crozier, The Novels of Harriet Beecher Stowe, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969)

11. The New York Times, July 2, 1873

12. Henry F. May, Protestant Churches and Industrial America, (New York: Harper & Bros., 1949; reprint ed. Octagon Books, 1963), p.95 "As late as 1886, in the midst of another crisis, a spokesman of social Christianity warned his readers that another 1877 may be the prelude to another 1793." T. Edwin Brown,

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Studies in Modern Socialism and Labor Problems, (New York: D. Appleton, 1886), p.67

13. ibid, p.91

14. The Independent, July 26, 1877, p.26; The Congregationalist, July 25, 1877, p.236

15. Joseph Cook, Transcendentalism, (Boston: J.R.. Osgood & Co., 1878), p.223

16. Washington Gladden, ed., Sunday Afternoon, A Magazine for the Household, Vol. 1 (1878), p.85

17. Washington Gladden, Recollections, (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1909), p.252

18. Boyer op cit., 146. "Reduced to essentials the charity organization movement rested on three simple but sweeping assumptions: first, the roots of urban poverty lay in the moral deficiencies and character flaws of the poor; second, the eradication of the slum evil depended upon bringing the poor to recognize and correct these deficiencies; and third, the realization of this goal would require a greater degree of cooperation among the diverse, often overlapping charitable societies of the typical large cities." According to Boyer "these were the ideas that struck the generation of the 1870's and 1880's with such revelatory force and drew thousands of middle-class volunteers into charity organization work." p.144 Also cf. S. Humphrey Gurteen, A Handbook of Charity Organization, (Buffalo: privately printed, 1882) and William R. Stewart, The Philanthropic work of Josephine Shaw Lowell, (New York: Macmillan Co., 1911)

19. Hopkins, op cit., p.23

20. This statement is drawn from Martin E. Marty, Righteous Empire: The Protestant Experience in America, (New York: The Dial Press, 1970) p.107-108

21. Harriet A. Keyser, Bishop Potter, The People's Friend, (New York: T. Whittaker, 1910), p.58-59. Also cf. Henry Codman Potter, Sermons of the City, (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1881) For Henry Ward Beecher, to whom the seriousness of the office was never in doubt, there were two cardinal principles in the use of the pulpit. First, that the power of the pulpit is personal power, the living force of the human soul brought to bear on living souls for the sake of their transformation; and second, that the sermon is only an

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instrument to this end, that it is to be measured by its power over men's minds and hearts; that the criterion of a sermon is not its accuracy of statement or its elegance of diction, but its power of building men so as to bring them into the condition of children of God." Harper's Magazine, Vol. XLV. No. CCLXX, November, 1872, p.782. From a review of Henry Ward Beecher, Yale Lectures on Preaching, (New York: J.B. Ford, 1872)

22. Hopkins, op cit., p.14 According to Hopkins the social gospel was "America's most unique contribution to the great ongoing stream of Christianity. This indigenous and typically American movement, initiated in the gilded age, was called into being by the impact of modern industrial society and scientific thought upon the Protestantism of the United States during the half century following the Civil War. Defined by one of its leaders as the application of the teaching of Jesus and the total message of the Christian salvation to society, the economic life, and social institutions . . .as well as to individuals, social Christianity involved a criticism of conventional Protestantism, a progressive theology and social philosophy, and an active program of propagandism and reform. It reached its climax in the optimistic prewar years of the twentieth century." p.3 cf. Shailer Mathews, "Social Gospel," in Shailer Mathews and G.B. Smith, A Dictionary of Religion and Ethics, (New York: Macmillan, 1921), p.416-17

23. ibid, p.57

24. Aaron Ignatius Abell, The Urban Impact on American Protestantism, 1865-1900, (London: Archon, 1943; reprint ed., 1962), p.18-19

25. The Index, Vol. 2, No. 51 (December 23, 1871), p.402. The Index was the official publication of the Free Religious Association.

26. ibid

27. Index, Vol. 2, No. 51 (December 23, 1871), p.415

28. Harper's Magazine, Vol. 47, No. CCLXVIII, June 1873, p.132

29. Hopkins, op cit., p.57-58

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30. M.W. Meyerhardt, "The Movement for Ethical Culture at Home and Abroad," American Journal of Religious Psychology and Education, Vol. 2 (May, 1908), p.75-76. Within the Ethical Movement "true religion is based upon the moral life and the moral law has an immediate authority, not contingent on the truth of religious beliefs or philosophical theories." Meyerhardt, p.76,78. In May of 1877 Francis Abbott wrote to Felix Adler "to ask if he was correct in thinking that you have taken a position respecting Judaism very analogous to that I took respecting Christianity in 1868, that is a frank advance from the limitations of all special historical religions to the freedom of universal spiritual religion." Horace L. Friess, Felix Adler and Ethical Culture: Memories and Studies, ed by Fannia Weingartner, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), p.75

31. Howard B. Radest, Toward Common Ground: The Story of the Ethical Societies in the United States, (New York: Frederick Unger, 1969), p.59

32. Stow Persons, Free Religion, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1947), p.96. Reviewing his experience as president of the Association he wrote W.J. Potter: "The impression has deepened on my own mind that the purpose indicated by Frothingham and held in view by me from the moment I entered the Association cannot be fulfilled, at least by me. The temper of the Association is surely not friendly to a new departure . . .in reality I retire from the Association because I find it slow, even unto deadness in our cause, and because I do not believe that energies should be spent on resuscitation which are all required for the joyous work of new construction." Quoted in Friess, p.76-77. According to Radest "Adler's resignation in 1882 marked. . .the final step in the decision to build an Ethical Culture Movement. If the Free Religious Association had turned in the directions Adler thought necessary, an independent Ethical Culture Movement might well have died in the first years of its birth or been assimilated into some other, larger venture." p.59,60

33. Howard B. Radest, Toward Common Ground: The Story of the Ethical Societies in the United States, (New York: Frederick Unger Publishing Co., 1969), p.14. Temple Emanu-El was the wealthiest Jewish congregation in the United States.

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34. Horace L. Friess, Felix Adler and Ethical Culture: Memories and Studies, ed by Fannia Weingartner, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), p.20

35. Benny Kraut, From Reform Judaism to Ethical Culture: The Religious Evolution of Felix Adler, Monographs of the Hebrew Union College, No.5, (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1979), p.16

36. Radest, op cit., p.16

37. Felix Adler, An Ethical Philosophy of Life, 2 edition, Preface by David Saville Muzzey, (New York: Appleton-Century Co. Inc., 1946), p.11-12 Henry Neumann indicated that Adler "never could call himself a Socialist." Henry Neumann, Spokesmen for Ethical Religion, (Boston: The Beacon Press, 1951), p.18

38. Friess, op cit., p.34

39. Felix Adler, An Ethical Philosophy of Life, 2 edition, Preface by David Saville Muzzey, (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1918; D. Appleton-Century Co., 1946), p.6-7

40. Friess, op cit, p.55,61

41. ibid, p.55

42. ibid, p.91

43. Felix Adler to Nellie Goldmark Adler, October 2, 1880, Felix Adler Papers, Butler Library, Columbia University

44. Felix Adler, "Some Characteristics of the American Ethical Movement," The Fiftieth Anniversary of the Ethical Movement, 1876-1926, (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1926), p.8

45. Friess, op cit, p.65

46. Reinhold Niebuhr, Reflections on the End of an Era, (New York: Charlie Scribner's Sons, 1934), p.100

47. Ethical School Letters, File 205:1 Felix Adler Papers, Butler Library, Columbia University.

48. Fred Krinsky, The Politics of Religion in America, (Beverly Hills: The Glenco Press, 1968(, p.37

49. Ethical School Letters, op cit

50. Friess, op cit., p.95

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51. ibid, p.96

52. ibid, p.100. Taken from an Address by Felix Adler delivered October 24, 1880.

53. Stanton Coit, The Ethical Church Monthly Magazine, February, 1940, p.22

54. Much useful information about Adler's first colleagues appears in Dr. James F. Hornback, The Philosophical Sources and Sanctions of the Founders of Ethical Culture, unpublished doctoral dissertation, Columbia University, 1983. Hornback worked under Friess at Columbia and was Leader of the St. Louis Ethical Society. He also served as president of the American Union of Ethical Societies. I wish to thank Mrs. Natalie Koretz, archivist at the New York Ethical Culture Society, who brought this study to my attention.

55. Hornback, ibid, p.72

56. ibid, p.74

57. ibid

58. ibid, p.135

59. ibid, p.132-133

60. ibid

61. ibid, p.75

62. ibid, p.139

63. ibid, p.135

64. ibid, p.140

65. ibid, p.185

66. ibid

67. ibid, p.185-186

68. ibid, p.187

69. Friess, p.86. Both Weston and Sheldon returned to New York in September, 1883, where, according to Hornback they met regularly with Adler and enrolled at Columbia

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University to study "in the Political Science program of John W. Burgess." p.153

70. Hornback, op cit., p.249-50

71. ibid. William Salter to Burns Weston, November 4, 1882.

72. ibid

73. ibid

74. ibid

75. Gustave Spiller, "A Forceful Personality," The Literary Guide, July, 1929, quoted in G. Spiller, The Ethical Movement in Great Britain: A Documentary History, (London: The Farleigh Press, 1934), p.180

76. Horace K. Blackham, Stanton Coit: Selections From His Writings, (London: The Favil Press Ltd., 1948), p.7-8

77. William James, "Address at the Emerson Centenary," Writings 1902-1910, (New York: The Library of America, 1987), p.1122

78. Stanton Coit, "My First Acquaintance With the Ethical Movement," The Ethical World, March 16, 1907; quoted in G. Spiller, op cit., p.178

79. Stanton Coit to J. Franklin Jameson, October 15, 1883, J. Franklin Jameson Collection, Box 72, File 375, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress

80. ibid

81. ibid

82. ibid

83. ibid

84. ibid

85. ibid

86. ibid

87. ibid

88. ibid

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89. ibid

90. Richard T. Ely, "American Colleges and German Universities," Harpers Magazine, Vol. 61, June, 1880, p.254

91. Hornback, op cit., p.249-50

92. ibid

93. Georg von Gizycki, A Student's Manual of Philosophy, trans by Stanton Coit, (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co., 1889), p.301

94. Richard T. Ely, French and German Socialism in Modern Times, (New York: Harper & Bros. 1883), p.232-233

95. ibid

96. Stanton Coit, My Ventures on the Highway of Truth, unpublished autobiographical fragment, 1937, p.34

97. William Harbutt Dawson, "Some Memories of Treitschke," The Nineteenth Century and After, Vol. LXXVII No. 455, January, 1915, p.156

98. ibid, p.153-154

99. ibid, p.156

100. Stanton Coit to J. Franklin Jameson, June 10, 1885, op cit

101. ibid

102. Stanton Coit to J. Franklin Jameson, October 15, 1883, op cit

103. Stanton Coit to J. Franklin Jameson, June 10, 1885, op cit

104. ibid

105. Stanton Coit to J. Franklin Jameson, September/October, 1885, op cit

106. ibid

107. ibid

108. ibid

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109. ibid

110. Stanton Coit's doctoral dissertation, "Die innere Sanktion als der Endzweck des moralischen Handelns," was published in translation as "The Final Aim in Moral Action" in Mind (London) for July, 1886, Vol. XL, No. 43, pp.324-52. Quotations cited here are from the translation. p.326

111. Mind, Vol. XL, No. 43, July 1886, p.335

112. ibid, p.335-336

113. Hornback, op cit., p.253

114. Mind, op cit., p.346; Hornback, ibid, p.254

115. Hornback, ibid, p.253

116. Walter Sheldon to Burns-Weston, December 20, 1885, quoted in Hornback, p.254

117. ibid

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CHAPTER FIVE

Stanton Coit arrived at Toynbee Hall in London in January, 1886, where "he spent three months. . . by the kind invitation of Canon (Samuel) Barnett, "arrangements for which had been made shortly after he received his degree.[1] Situated in St. Jude's parish, Whitechapel, a rough, impoverished, working class district in the East End, the settlement house afforded Coit every opportunity to witness "the actual conditions of the poor" as well as "the efforts being made for its amelioration."

Engaged in "pioneer educational and social work," Toynbee Hall "was itself an ethical movement with Christian inspiration (which). . . appealed strongly to Coit."[2] His presence there, together with occasional meetings in London, served to provide the occasion for that rare cultural exchange the outcome of which resulted in both the organization of "the first British Ethical Society" and the development of "the first social settlement in America."

At this time London was a cauldron of discontent fueled by a network of reformist groups whose very existence announced their concern for the spiritual and material poverty of the working classes. While these organizations involved different people they all knew each other, representing, as it were, a loosely uncoordinated but interlocking directorate of highly competitive yet quite

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ideological persons. Disputes were commonplace among the assorted groups, distinguished as they were by the size of their membership, the prominence accorded their star performers and the small but intensely written publications each sponsored. All were created in London, for what Bernard Shaw admitted with rueful good nature about the Fabians, namely, "that provincial cities had little interest in such esoteric, intellectual groups," applied in modified form to most of the other organizations.[3]

The deplorable economic conditions which Coit observed in London also contributed to the revival of socialism. "For almost thirty years. . .the English working class abandoned it and turned instead to trade unionism, to consumers' co-operation and to the support of the middle-class reformers."[4] During that time the relentless march of capitalism trampled on the best intentions of such organized effort, provoking a moral revulsion which now brought in its wake the cry for a "social politics."

An important source of energy for the revitalization of socialism was Henry George's Progress and Poverty. E.R. Pease later remarked that this book "gave an extraordinary impetus to the political thought of the time," and Bernard Shaw, in calling attention to its "enormous circulation in the early eighties," indicated that this work "beyond all question had more to do with the Socialist revival of that period in England than any other book."[5] When he arrived

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in England for a lecture tour in 1884 George attracted huge audiences and "thoroughly frightened the men of property." In the unequal distribution of wealth, "this association of poverty with progress," he saw "the great enigma of our times."

> It is the central fact from which spring industrial, social, and political difficulties that perplex the world, and with which statesmanship and philanthropy and education grapple in vain. . .It is the riddle which the Sphinx of Fate puts to our civilization and which not to answer is to be destroyed. So long as all the increased wealth which modern progress brings goes but to build up great fortunes, to increase luxury and make sharper the contrast between the House of Have and House of Want, progress is not real and cannot be permanent. The reaction must come.[6]

What empowered the spirit and prepared the way for socialism as it spread the fear of a reaction to come was George's message that "poverty was an evil that could be eradicated by political action." How best to implement that message generated endless arguments, distinguished one group from another, and provided pages of copy for the numerous pamphlets which circulated throughout London.

Of the many socialist sects that sprang up in Britain during the 1880's the most enigmatic and influential were the Fabians. Disavowing the old notion of waiting until the recruits were sufficient to war against capitalism at the barricades, the Fabians seized the moment and permeated the environment with socialist ideas. They moved socialism off

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the Street and into the drawing room, and, in the process, made it respectable. They were educators rather than politicians and their star performer was George Bernard Shaw, with whom Coit later became a close friend. A constant critic of the citizen democracy, Shaw supported guild socialism as a "positive organizing force." If his message was seldom without vigor Shaw bestowed upon almost everything "a bewildering optimistic coherence." Other members of the group were more skeptical.

In the first issue of the Practical Socialist, an important organ of the Fabian-Society which appeared in the early months of 1886, E.R. Pease looked for "a new interpretation of the old law." Reflecting the uncertainty surrounding the present dilemma he asked for "a proper understanding of the modern way of expressing economically our love for our neighbour."[7]. In the very next issue came the reply "it is by Education that socialism can be mainly promoted in a constitutional country. . . it is by education alone that we can teach the masses to distinguish between the good and the evil."[8]. To Sidney Webb "the difference (was) rather a question of ethics than economics." From his point of view there was enough work to go around and "no one need wait for the millennium."[9].

While inexperienced in the politics of reform Coit was an avowed socialist, and, even during the 1880's, "socialism was an integral part of the united moral community that he

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hoped the ethical movement would build."[10] This conviction remained with him, and, when he decided to live permanently in England, Stanton Coit joined the Fabian Society. By then he had developed "a comprehensive outlook upon the national life," at the center of which was "the ethical demand for reforms which would meet the actual needs. . .of a genuine community life."[11] H.J. Blackham afterward recalled that "his socialism was kept green by its idealistic-realistic substances to the end, and in the later seasons of his life was never yellowed by the cooler winds of doctrine."[12]

Despite his brief stay in London the timing of Coit's visit coincided with "a moment of new beginnings," what Reba N. Soffer hailed as "a genuine, vital revolution in the contents, methodology, and purposes of social thought."[13] What motivated this intellectual uprising, helped to give it force and meaning, was an awareness that the coercion of social phenomena represented a direct threat to political liberty in a democratic society. If the eighties marked "a new phase in the recurrent struggle for individual freedom," the vigorous debate which ensued "found articulate expression for new norms, new criteria of social values, new conceptions of freedom."[14]

Clearly alarmed at conditions in England, a new generation, educated in the public schools and universities, took the position that "individual and social life should be more rational and more humane."[15] Eschewing nineteenth

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century social theory, with its emphasis on "inherent laws of human nature and society," they turned instead to the importance of individual motives and the circumstances responsible for behavior. In the character of experience they sought that social organization consistent with personal freedom.

Young, idealistic, and endowed with a religious enthusiasm, the men of Oxford and Cambridge exhibited a sincerity equal to their belief in the values they espoused, good will, social responsibility, altruism seasoned with self-interest, and the Victorian faith in the "cumulative growth of mind and character." Though lacking in worldly experience they were optimistic at the thought of taking action in pursuit of new ideas and possessed the moralist's conviction that right must prevail against the evils of ignorance and despair.

Equally influential as motives to action was a civic consciousness informed by the lengthening shadows of a growing disparity between the classes, the potential power of a barely literate majority, a rising tide of interest in trade unionism , the imminence of a violent reaction to the poverty and unemployment rampant in the cities as well as a sense of personal responsibility for these conditions. Industrialization had transformed the social and economic order and with it the values that reflected the self-worth of the individual and the freedom necessary to the common

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good. At issue was the very character of England.

The varied responses to this national crisis resulted in significant changes in thought and social attitudes, cultivating new movements which struck at ideas deeply rooted in the traditions of English life. Chief among these were the responsibilities of government to the cause of individual freedom, the capacity of society to respond to the conditions of life in the cities, and the meaning inherent in contemporary values when viewed in the light of Christian morality.

A particularly creative response to these issues was the settlement house. Inspired by the Oxford idealism of Thomas Hill Green the settlement house represented both the mature product of older influences as well as the innocent expression of a new form of social organization. It became at once a part of the struggle for democracy. The spirit which informed Toynbee Hall, and appealed to its American visitor, was "that when men of educated intelligence and humane sentiment came to live as citizens amongst the poor, they would gain a rare experience of the actual facts of crowded city life, and a direct sympathy with its conditions more valuable than any speculation."[16]. Located in the heart of a poor neighborhood, the residents of the settlement house undertook "to provide education and the means of recreation and enjoyment for the people. . . to enquire into the condition of the poor and to consider and

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advance plans calculated to promote their welfare."[17].

The settlement house was a class conscious effort at social and political reform, whose presence in the midst of urban and industrial poverty, represented an ethical revolt within a democratic society. It was a statement of belief that sought to counter the ignorance and indifference of the governing classes which many believed threatened freedom and democracy in England. Without rejecting either representative government or class position, educated members of the middle class sought to make democracy the product of co-operation. The settlement house marked an effort to restore a sense of national cohesion through the classes without removing all the distinctions that separated them.

In Barnett's poignant phrase, "the settlement would be common ground for all the classes," a place where education could organize the means by which to render democracy effective. In this oasis of the urban wilderness the poor gained access to the liberating principles necessary to genuine historical progress, with the expectation that such a transformation would preserve middle class values by their very affirmation. Through its commitment to the basic value of the individual, supported by an heroic effort to activate his worth, the settlement house wished to alter the conditions in which he lived and worked and thereby address the problems related to community life in an industrial

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environment. As a laboratory for social experiment and practical reform the settlement house proved invaluable as a source for the collection, analysis and application of empirical data, serving as a training ground for the new methods which grew out of and contributed to "the genuine revolution in the social sciences."

The university settlement evoked the reformer's impulse as its institutional character provided a point of convergence for the energy and enthusiasm with which men and women sought to attack the problems of industrial England. Through its programs Toynbee Hall wished "to create a spirit of comradeship among the students, and to inspire them with a healthy sense of being fellow-labourers in a great cause."[18]. Because the settlement took no formal position on religion or national politics it maintained a working relation with both labor and capital, all the while remitting "the essential spirit of Christianity." The personality of Barnett seemed well-suited to this kind of work. "Acting by the way of suggestion rather than of direction, he succeeds both in sending the residents and visitors individually out into work which interests them and draws forth their best effort, and also in retaining for the settlement as a whole much of the quality of a united force."[19].

Struck by the presence of these young men and the impact they had on the work of the settlement Stanton Coit

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inquired about the moral qualifications demanded of residents. In an address delivered the following year he described the encounter which took place.

> Feeling that not being a Christian, if the fact were discovered, I might possibly seem to others a wolf in the fold, I went to the young curate there, expecting to make a clean breast of my heresies. I began by asking him what religious tests were demanded of the young men who wished to live at Toynbee. His answer took the wind quite out of my ethical sails. He said, simply that a man shall be unselfish, and prove himself so in his conduct. What was that but a body of young men making unselfishness the one essential thing in the organization of their highest life.[20]

One such resident, when asked about the aim of Sunday afternoon lectures, replied "it was to show how religion bears on the problems that relate to the welfare of men."[21] Such sentiments revealed an approach to religion which sought to embrace "the contemplation of our present life and its interests." They affirmed a positive role about the influence religion could exert on the condition of the national life, an attitude strikingly similar to that espoused by the Ethical Culture Society of New York.

The nexus of organization at the settlement was the club, which appeared as the proper antidote for class. The club structured activity according to rules which ordered the relationship of its members, thereby making it a forum of democracy. The club appealed to Coit for the same reason it did to the men of Toynbee Hall. It afforded the

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opportunity to bring "into all social movements and institutions, but far more, into the ordinary life a certain spirit of brotherly equality."[22] To members of the middle class this method of sharing the life of the people appeared at once both natural and politic.

What Stanton Coit observed of the general philosophy and particular organization at Toynbee Hall had a decisive impact in shaping his immediate plans. Years later he acknowledged that "my sojourn among the workers for the poor in East London determined upon my line of activity, which for twelve years I pursued assiduously."[23] While this kind of work fixed itself in Coit's mind his presence in England placed him at the center of preliminary developments the outcome of which resulted in the formation of the London Ethical Society, an event in which he played a significant if intermediary role, and, as later circumstances indicated, prefigured his future place in the Ethical Movement.

During his stay at Toynbee Hall, and in visits to Gordon Square and elsewhere, Coit "met a group of men hailing from the three Universities of London, Oxford and Cambridge."[24] With a "rooted suspicion" of any attempt to cure the evils of English life by socializing the means of production they believed the proper approach lay in the need to reform character. Influenced by the Oxford idealism of Thomas Hill Green they accepted his concept of "active citizenship" which equated "the activities of good

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individuals with an inherently progressive order" and sought a means "of directing men to the root principles of action and the conditions of permanent welfare in individuals and communities."[25].

A brilliant and articulate band, which included J.H. Muirhead, Bernard Bosanquet, James Bonar, J.S. Mackenzie and R.B. Haldane, they expounded a theory of Ethics and Politics recently developed in the universities. Given prominence by Edward Caird and Green the main premise of this new teaching centered in the idea that "the one thing of supreme value in the world was the good will, the one supreme rule for social guidance to treat humanity in thy own person and the person of others always as an end and never as a means only."[26].

Endowed with purpose but lacking an organizational format these young philosophers met with Coit, who, according to Muirhead, "kindled the latent fire into a lively flame." At their meeting Coit discussed "the aims and principles of the American Ethical Societies (and) in the course of the conference he urged the formation of a similar society in London. Soon after that meeting the London Ethical Society started."[27].

Stanton Coit's role in the birth of the British Ethical Movement was strategic. Gustave Spiller, the historical voice of that movement, acknowledged as much while J. H. Muirhead, pointing to the group's need for direction at this time, recalled that "whether of their own initiative in this

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case they would have formed a society or not is doubtful."[28] With respect to the later development of the movement in England, where Coit played a significant role, one writer insisted that "these societies were copies from an American original."[29]

Stanton Coit was back in New York for the tenth anniversary of the New York Ethical Culture Society on May 16, 1886, "and for presentation on the platform for the first time as fellow members of the Fraternity of Ethical Teachers along with Adler, Salter, and Weston."[30] Among the honored guests on this occasion was Moncure Conway, "the American minister of London's century-old South Place Religious Society."

Excited by his recent experiences abroad and anxious to begin the work for which he had so diligently prepared himself, Coit seemed perplexed by the assignment he received. His own recollection of the decision, written twenty years later, still bore a rueful tone. "As soon as I returned to New York, Professor Adler and his Society invited me to become an assistant lecturer. But I was to speak only on twelve Sundays during the year. The rest of my time was to be devoted to conducting the ethical lessons of the children's classes and to work among the poor."[31]

Inasmuch as both Salter and Weston, once accepted into the Fraternity, assumed the leadership of their own society, Coit's appointment made for a rather awkward situation.

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Likewise, in May, prior to the tenth anniversary celebration, Adler had introduced Walter Sheldon to a prospective group in St. Louis as a possible leader there, a position he subsequently endorsed. While Coit accepted his circumstances graciously they were not what he had anticipated. In a carefully worded letter to Burns-Weston on April 24 Coit indicated that the "Professor and I get along very pleasantly thus far together and I like him much better than I expected to."[32] Coit assigned to his words the uncertainty of his own position, but which finally led him to reveal that "I should rather have worked with Salter."[33]

The hesitation which seemed to mark Adler's acceptance of Coit was, to some extent, a matter of personality. According to one associate who knew them both Adler and Coit "were so different in manner and metaphysics, and so much alike in strength of will and charismatic leadership, that he waited for the younger man to prove himself in other settings before accepting him."[34] That moment came in the spring of 1886, when, along with Walter Sheldon, Coit gained full acceptance into the Fraternity.

If Coit's position within the Ethical Movement differed from that of his colleagues he found a creative outlet for his energies in Adler's charge "to work among the poor." Beginning in the spring of 1886 Stanton Coit inaugurated a series of outings to Staten Island.

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> He would call at tenement houses on the lower East Side, between Houston and Grand Streets, tell the occupants that a party was going to Staten Island the next Sunday and ask wouldn't you like to come along? For three or four months he took from 75 to 100 persons to the Woods of Arden on Staten Island, where they enjoyed boating, fishing and wandering through the woods. The host never preached to his guests, just did what they did, and helped them have a good time.[35]

While a welcome relief from the oppressive conditions of tenement house life, Coit soon concluded that such excursions were not enough. He then decided to live among the poor. During the months that followed "he spent some time in searching out that particular part of the East Side in which family life most obviously lacked the moral initiative a group of young resident educators and reformers might bring."[36] According to one account Coit undertook this task with all the natural enthusiasm of a person totally unfamiliar with the risks it involved.

> At first he was inclined to take rooms in a great barrack of a tenement with an especially evil reputation in a neighborhood notorious for crime. At the solicitation of friends, he visited the local police station and inquired whether there was any likelihood of danger to a manifest outsider. The officials in charge refused to guarantee a fair degree of safety. He therefore selected a smaller and quieter building at 146 Forsyth Street, which in its five stories sheltered some twenty families.[37]

At some point during the summer Coit "rented three rooms on the second floor" and began preparations to move

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into his new residence. "His friends laughed at him."[38] At the time Coit lived at 50 East 77 Street, and according to one story, when he "told the truckman to take his library to Forsyth Street, the latter could not believe his ears. To Forsyth Street? That's no living place for the likes of you. I've moved out of there long ago."[39] His neighbors viewed Coit's arrival with equal bewilderment. "A myth sprang up that he was a cast-off son of wealthy parents, who sought the East Side in the last descending stages of want. Popular sympathy was altogether with the supposed victim."[40]

Years later Coit reinforced these anecdotes with the more serious observation that "such a course of action seems now quite common place and in order; but then it was an unheard-of thing that a man of means and education should voluntarily settle himself and draw others to work with him in the by no means savoury surroundings of a tenement house."[41]

The place to which Coit moved, between Rivington and Delancy Street, housed mainly second and third generation German and Irish immigrants. "In the Forsyth tenement houses between these two boundaries, the length of a block merely, it is estimated that upwards of two thousand people live. . . there are a few tall brick houses, touching one another, and fronting a street that is scarce ever clean, and never without a repulsive odor when the sun is warm. . .

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this is comparatively a good village, but some of the houses are famed for the mortality of their occupants."[42.]

On Forsyth Street life was hard, dirty and crowded. Family life reflected the realities of its environment, within which there was little evidence of either cultural awareness or the moral disposition to change it. Children found the regimen of the streets "at its best a rough school of experience." If education was hard the social health of the tenements proved a decided threat to the strongest character. Yet, there was here, among those with whom Coit began "a natural tendency to thrift and the people were relatively moral and intelligent."[43.]

Among the inhabitants a sense of order and governance flowed from the activities of the ward boss whose intimate knowledge of the needs of the people in his district was a constant reminder of the relevance of politics to daily life. It was their votes that sustained the machine for it provided the jobs. Machine politics governed the neighborhood through its control of local institutions, saloons, pool halls and public houses. This was the political and social system created by the growth of the city.

A staunch and unrelenting adversary of this system was Charles B. Stover who first met Coit "upon the recommendation of Rev. Lyman Abbott, of Brooklyn's Plymouth Church."[44.] A graduate of Lafayette College, Stover spent a

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brief period at the University of Berlin in 1885 "to continue his studies in theology, but he soon experienced a crisis in religious belief."[45] There is no indication that he and Coit ever met though both men spent part of the same time in residence. Stover visited Toynbee Hall at the end of the summer of 1886, "and, at the first moment of this acquaintance with the Guild, became attached to it by the expectation of its becoming another Toynbee Hall. . . I asked Mr. Coit whether such might not be the development of the Guild. He replied, will you help to make it a Toynbee Hall."[46] Upon learning of Stover's "loss of his religious belief" Coit is said to have replied: "But although you have lost faith in the Christian doctrine, you still believe, do you not, in the Christ-like life? Yes, more than ever! was Stover's reply. Then why not come here and help me and live out the kind of life you believe in."[47]

Years later Coit recalled that "everything that was confirmed afterwards by his work as a social and civic reformer through years of self-sacrificing devotion and unerring moral insight into men and events, was disclosed by his unconscious revelation of himself in the first conversation he had with me in 1886, when he came to Forsyth Street."[48] Some of those familiar with this undertaking suggest "Dr. Coit. . . considered that actual life as a settlement began. . . with the arrival in the residence of Charles B. Stover early in 1887."[49]

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Stover was a man who longed to be useful, to find a place in which to leave his mark. A prodigious worker he frequently gave entire days to a single project, and, as he worked eighteen hours a day, entertained numerous activities all at once.

> Within the area of his special interests, his foible was omniscience. He attempted to see all around and through every issue. He read voluminously at the Public Library, accumulated a thousand books on New York City, history, municipal reforms and reformers, reports of legislative commissions and municipal departments, pamphlets, maps and blue prints dealing with current municipal improvements. He annotated such material meticulously, and often caustically. . .His daily bread was newspapers which he combed assiduously for signs of hidden or budding evils and opportunities. He smelled out what he regarded as heresay or wickedness easily and quickly and was prepared for its eruption. . . He excelled in discussion and debate, where swift, accurate and powerful thrust and parry are at a premium. . . Daily life for Stover was a series of battles, skirmished, triumphs, defeats, delaying actions, celebrations around great issues. He dramatized himself in and through these, and his committee meetings seldom lacked flavor. . . He had a somewhat fanatical manner, uneasy but determined. He would at once plunge into the subject and hold the leadership in discussion and plan.[50].

To this patriot of reform and newly arrived resident Forsyth Street was grist for the mill of his vast interests. Here were causes to last a lifetime. One year after his arrival Stover described this area as

> a quarter inhabited by a portion of the

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> great unknown, who are unknown to each other as well as to those above them. The very closeness in which they are crowded together often increases the separation between them. . .No such thing as neighborhood exists. . .The absence of mutual acquaintanceship frees the families from the gossip which is always spoken of as the bane of village life, but it frees them from a great deal else which gives to village life its moral purity, its wholesome self-respect, its ambitious public-spirit, everything, in fact, which is productive of fine men and women."[51.]

Decrying the absence on this block of those "elements which work for righteousness," Stover went on to point out that "if we except the fact that a few of the men belong to trade-unions, there is absolutely no organization to care for the intellectual, moral or social interests of the locality."[52.]

The building Coit occupied was relatively new, unlike the drab gray and red stock of housing which characterized most sections of the Lower East Side. Upon moving into his new quarters Coit spent the first weeks getting to know the people of the neighborhood and gaining their confidence. No sooner had he arrived than Coit made arrangements out of pocket to have the street cleaned on a daily basis, a gesture that brought him the desired recognition while it generated much skepticism. Though his neighbors regarded him as a strange and unlikely resident, "the suspicion engendered by his arrival neither intimidated nor dismayed Coit."[53.]

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Once established, the interior decor of his lodgings took on the appearance of a well-ordered residence, yet Coit avoided any pretense of wealth or social superiority. He was twenty-nine years old and carried his tall, neatly clothed frame with just the proper bearing to mark him at once as an outsider. With sky-blue eyes and auburn hair he appeared the very picture of well-bred determination. If he seemed "a man with a mission," Coit was also a stranger in a foreign land which made his first task to watch and listen.

> His windows were an observation post. Through them he looked out on the America of the foreign-born: clogged streets, sunless as wells; rows of red or gray tenements, acrid with the despair of generations; pushcarts packed with cheap merchandise, superficially mimicking the atmosphere of fiesta, lit by flares at night; sweatshop workers, their families and their borders shoehorned into squalid flats that cost $14 to $15 a month, more than half of what their occupants could earn. . .He studied the faces of the people, the beautiful-ugly, young-old, kind-cruel faces, charged with emotion, bewildered by the problems of the new world, speaking in a babble of tongues, German, Polish, Russian, Italian, but most often in the guttural accents of Yiddish. He watched, listened and learned.[54]

Stanton Coit's decision to live and work among the poor re-enacted the experiences of Edward Denison and Arnold Toynbee and so established the British legacy of residency as one of the essential elements of the settlement house movement in America. Responding to Adler's charge "to work among the poor," Coit added a new dimension to Ethical

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Culture as an "urban industrial movement." His deliberate resolve to create a separate forum within which to apply its principles likewise foretold the confidence and strength of character he had achieved.

Coincidental with a bitterly contested mayoral election, during which Adler raised the specter of ominous and evil consequences attending the labor question, Coit's action set the example "purposefully to seek out the alien and to communicate with him on an intimate basis."[55] Remarkable on its own account, the first settlement worker originated "a conception of the immigrant and his place in American society which stood in sharp contrast to the prevailing views of the period."[56] Those who followed him into the urban centers of America cultivated an "appreciation for immigrant heritages and an effort to bridge the gap of ignorance and misunderstanding which then separated the foreign-born from the native-born."[57] Years later, one writer looking back on this moment, remarked that "the time had passed when a Coit could envision the settlement house as a vital alternative to revolution."[58]

The knowledge Coit acquired during his first weeks of residence conditioned his approach to the settlers of this new American environment. While Coit's activities seemed deliberately measured, every move conceived to induce confidence in his presence and reinforce his position, he was anxious to begin "the cultivation of neighborly

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acquaintance." Coit's movements gave expression to his belief that the way to access influence among these people was simply to go to them. His initial encounters, especially "the picnics for the young people (which) were his first means of securing a following," demonstrated the truth of this axiom while "his unvarying readiness to be of service to them" led the people in this locality "to recognize in him the best of neighbors."[59] "Here he hoped to make friends in time, and, unostentatiously, without preaching, to do good."[60]

A year after he came to the Lower East Side an interview with a reporter from the Christian Union uncovered the fact that Stanton Coit had "no cut-and-dried plan, but waited to see what the circumstances and character of the persons immediately about him would naturally suggest." His reason for coming, however, was unmistakable. "The idea which inspired his undertaking is no less than the thought . . .of a complete reorganization of the social life of the people, starting with the family as the moral unit and fanning out to the neighborhood as the next wider social group."[61]

At first Coit "supposed the factory would be the point of union for the working classes, but he found the forces against him there, and turned, as to the proper place for beginning a social reorganization, to the home and neighborhood about which concrete humanity naturally

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gathers."[62] Against the background of the city's intensifying labor problems, and the efforts, recently revived, toward industrial unionism, Coit maintained "that all modern attempts to rally the working classes about the factories as the center of co-operation tends to disintegrate the family life, and that any industrial co-operation must be preceded by intellectual and spiritual reorganization."[63]

Ever sensitive to the social and environmental conditions of those among whom he now lived, and "firm as were his convictions," Coit "felt that he had no right to obtrude himself and his scheme upon his neighbors. As a stranger, he would approach them with the same deference and reserve as though theirs were the highest social position."[64] Coit's scheme rested on the belief that "the poor cannot be properly reached by extending to them a ten foot pole, nor can they in their way be admonished out of evil. Hence the futility of religious methods. They must be won from it."[65]

It was the young people whom Coit wished to attract and his own observations led him to the conclusion that "the most pressing need was a boys' club."[66] Accordingly, he approached several boys with the idea, and as news of his plan spread, other boys came forward." At the second meeting thirty-eight lads presented themselves, while on the third meeting there was a swarm of fifty-eight

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applicants."[67] Coit tactfully responded to this happy dilemma by limiting membership to thirty, "and taking as the charter members . . . a club of half a dozen boys who had been meeting in the dismal rooms of a poor old blind woman."[68] With the original nucleus of these six boys, surreptitiously known as the Lily Pleasure Club, Stanton Coit launched the Neighborhood Guild, which, in the space of four years, became the University Settlement.

Sometimes later Charles Stover related an anecdote about the club's name that captured the spirit with which the group began. "The name (of the club) was of the boys' own choosing. Mr. Coit was at first inclined to remonstrate. The Lily Pleasure Club! he said to them; what do you mean by calling it the Lily Club? The boys looked surprised at his question, and one of them said, Why! don't you know that beautiful flower? Mr. Coit told me that he felt more than a little rebuked, and thought that the boys from the tenement-houses had shown a finer sense of the beautiful than himself."[69]

The idea proved an immediate success "and soon Mr. Coit felt encouraged to rent the basement of the tenement, in which he lived, for a club room. Here the boys or young men, their average age being eighteen years, were organized into a club."[70] From its anonymous beginnings "the Boys' Club grew and prospered, having adopted as its motto the mystic letters O.I.F., the abbreviation indicative of its

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meaning: "Order is our Basis, Improvement our Aim, Friendship our Principle."[71.] Encouraged by this initial prosperity Coit resolved to establish a club for the whole family. In time, and "with the assistance of some young ladies from uptown, a club of young women, another of little girls and a third of small boys were successively brought into existence, and placed in the relation of younger brothers and sisters to the older O.I.F.'s."[72.] Before the end of the first full year Coit augmented his "little family" by the addition of a kindergarten, which, under the guidance of trained teachers, occupied the rooms in the morning."[73.]

The original quarters of the Neighborhood Guild consisted of "a club room, classrooms, and a small gymnasium."[74.] One witness to this experiment, impressed by its decor, noted that "the walls are of a subdued color, and are covered with photographs of world-renowned works of art, both pagan and religious, while an upright piano occupies a prominent position in the largest room."[75.] The presence of a piano brought genuine distinction. At 146 Forsyth, "an old fashioned wooden house, there developed entertainments and dancing. In the eighties there were few pianos, not six in the neighborhood. . .they began to teach piano. Then a club of four private pupils organized to play mandolin, and then a mandolin class developed. . . But . . . The lower East Side in the late eighties was a zither neighborhood.

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There wasn't much good music in the Lower East Side."[76.]

Another visitor, obviously unfamiliar with tenement house living, commented "there is no magnificence here to present a discouraging contrast to the home of the members."[77.] And one observer, drawn to "a large autotype of the sistine Madonna and child," remarked that "everything is simple, but the eyes become accustomed to nothing that is not artistically good."[78.] Once settled in their new surroundings Coit secured "a neat brass sign" which he placed above the entrance to the basement, announcing to all who passed beneath its portal, that "here are the rooms of the Neighborhood Guild."[79.] In these matters "Coit asked no help from anyone. He bore all the expense himself."[80.]

By the fall of 1887 the Neighborhood Guild had become a thriving social experiment and total membership in its clubs numbered about one hundred. The club rooms were open five nights a week until eleven o'clock, with each club assigned a particular time for its activities. The clubs met at least twice a week. Coit believed "the moral impression is more vivid from two evenings a week than it would be from six, and the smaller number makes it possible in the same rooms to conduct three clubs a week instead of one."[81.]

The Lily, as the boys' club referred to themselves, engaged in "woodcarving, drawing and modeling, instruction provided by teachers from the Industrial Association." Those with special talents received additional lessons, as

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there was no effort "to turn them all into one groove."[82] When the boys' club gathered there was an hour for amusement. As Coit placed great stress on physical recreation, he provided "swinging bars, Indian clubs, dumbbells, rowing apparatus, games of all sorts." What impressed one visitor though was the lack of restraint, "no sort of morose police force, and the boys are masters of the situation."[83] Of special interest to the Lily Pleasure Club was "its weekly military drill," executed to the accompaniment of patriotic songs. "On Sunday night" club members engaged in "the weekly debate," usually on "labor, social or political questions."[84]

One evening Charles Stover attended a debate on Prohibition. "I have been told it was not nearly so good as the debate they had two weeks before, about base-ball, or the one they had two weeks later, about tenement-houses. However, it was not bad, and it was pleasing to see how few of the boys had anything to say in favor of the saloon."[85] From the outset "Coit insisted that it should be their club and not his. He had them elect one of their own number President, taught them parliamentary rules and soon left them to mange a good many of their meetings by themselves."[86]

In their turn members of the Lady Belvedere, young ladies of the same age and number, amused themselves "in feminine fashion," devoting considerable time "to learning

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to sew and embroider." This club originated "soon after the Young Men's Club was well started," owing largely to the efforts of Mildred Conway, the daughter of Moncure Conway, who came to work with Coit in the spring of 1887. "The youths ruled out Young Women as not respectful enough."[87] A reporter from the New York Sun seemed surprised to discover that "in these housewifely arts the members become so interested that they will spend the entire evening with their needles instead of only the allotted hour, giving up the following hour's amusement at the piano or with games."[88] Surely such diligence gave rise to a moment's skepticism!

The young ladies normally met on Tuesday and Thursday "when they have their own girl-times." The regular meetings "are conducted according to Cushing's Manual, and the special work of the Club is assigned to committees. It is hoped that by their experience in their weekly meetings they are being prepared for the larger duties of citizenship. The same methods are used with them as with the boys, so that they. . .may soon be able to take an intelligent and active part in reorganizing the industrial and social life of working women."[89]

On a number of occasions members of both clubs gathered for talks, sometimes "about history, sometimes about morals, and sometimes about social manners." Charles Stover recalled one evening when "there was the reading of poetry

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for a while, and though the ideas were not always caught, the sentiment never failed of appreciation."[90.]

In addition to these two clubs there were, by the beginning of 1888, "two younger clubs of boys and girls from twelve to fifteen years old and numbering about twenty-five members each."[91.] As one witness recounted "neither of them has yet been christened, the responsibility of a name being too great to be settled in a hurry."[92.] The seriousness of the decision notwithstanding, the girls became known as the Mayflower Club and the boys eventually identified themselves as the Order Club. While these young girls benefitted from the efforts of Jean Gurney Fine and Dr. Jane Robbins, who were among the first women at the Guild, it was Coit who recruited the Club's original members. According to one of those involved at the time

> he stopped her on the street and said, little girl would you like to join a club? Then come Saturday morning to 146 Forsyth Street. The girls had never heard of a club, but they talked about it to each other and spread the news. Their mothers were doubtful. But the whole gang were there Saturday. Miss Fine and Dr. Robbins were there. Dr. Robbins told them stories, they sang. Later they had plays, Shakespeare's Midsummer Night's Dream, Mrs. Jarley's waxworks. Gave it for mothers. This all happened in the fall of 1887.[93.]

Coincidental with his efforts on behalf of young men and women Coit used "the basement on one side of the house . . .and started a (free) kindergarten school for the children of the neighborhood."[94.] A veritable "fairy-land

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amid the gloomy and depressing tenements," it relieved the burdensome conditions which that life imposed on mothers and children while, at the same time, kindergarten teachers sought to instill an organized pattern of play into the lives of the untamed.

"In the fall of 1887 Dr. Coit. . . asked for and received the co-operation of Miss Christine Goldmark and Miss Mary Frances Johnston in the organization of a kindergarten."[95] Miss Goldmark was the sister-in-law of Felix Adler who "had received kindergarten training in Dresden." Miss Johnston had studied in New York and "met Miss Goldmark while visiting the Dresden Training School." They became well acquainted and upon their return to New York "gladly gave their services for one winter to the Guild, securing material as best they could thru donations and contributions levied upon generous and sympathetic friends."[96]

To the serious-minded reformer kindergarten was fast becoming a vital issue. The public school system introduced the first kindergarten in 1870 and the New York Kindergarten Association came into existence almost twenty years later, "for the purpose of furnishing physical, moral and intellectual training to the younger children of the city."[97] Its first president, Richard Watson Gilder, indicated just how vital the issue with this challenge: "plant a free kindergarten in any quarter of this

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overcrowded metropolis, and you have begun then and there the work of making better lives, better homes, better citizens, and a better city."[98] To the well-intentioned this was no idle boast as one newspaper writer had already discovered upon visiting the Guild. "From their looks it is manifest that when children are clean as these, and Dr. Coit suggests not starved, they are promising material, whether gathered from Paradise or Gramercy Park."[99]

Once a week all the clubs got together for what their members referred to as "gala night." Given such an opportunity "they dance, sing, or amuse themselves as the moment prompts. . .varied now and then by some other entertainment. Miss Conway. . . is usually the pianist on such occasions. The clubs feel no restraint, arrange their own programmes and are by no means disconcerted by visitors. They essay the lancers but are more at home with the Virginia reed."[100] When the entertainment became more formal, members sometimes invited their parents.

At festivities like these ritual served an important function. Club members chose as their colors white, old gold and maroon. The girls wore "old gold sashes with white and crimson rosettes" while "the boys 'white sashes blend their colors, and so with the younger club's crimson, to denote their union in a common endeavor."[101] At the initiation of a new member "sashes of these colors are worn . . .a song is sung and a promise made by the newcomer to do

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all in his or her power for the honor of the Neighborhood Guild."[102].

The guiding spirit of the Guild lay in the attitude of its members who viewed themselves "simply as friends of their leader, helping him in the good work for others."[103]. In Coit's own words, "he resolved to do what parents of wealth and leisure would do for their children. He desires to develop their social instincts, to train them to think seriously on the important questions of the day; to cultivate in them a proper sense of cleanliness, sobriety and morality, and so help to make them good citizens. . .our desire is to give them a common interest, to draw them closer together."[104].

In an interview with The New York Herald Charles Stover emphasized the fact that Dr. Coit lays more stress on amusement than anything else. Education and classes are incidental. Nothing is done by admonition. He does not say, Boys, you must not drink. You ought not to use tobacco. The boys have a debating society and they discuss the use of tobacco and the abuses of liquor. Education, intellectual as well as moral, can be effected in the same way."[105].

To Stanton Coit recreation was not "simply a means to the end in moral culture. The innocent pleasure which accompanies it is a worthy object in itself, even if nothing further is obtained; for the members of the Guild are mostly

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factory workers who have long hours and severe toil. Accordingly, the stamp of wrong is not set on pleasures that are not essentially harmful. More than recreation is provided for, however."[106].

As the work of the Guild proceeded Coit "began to develop his methods and aims, attracting other college trained men to his side."[107]. Elmer Severance, Forbes and William Brown Thorp were Amherst graduates who first learned of Coit's scheme when he visited his alma mater in June of 1886. Toward the end of the following year Forbes confided to Coit: "I am disgusted with the life I am living. It is easy and pleasant but it is for no one but myself. I am doing nothing for anyone else and life is worthless almost . . .All around me I see want and misery and it seems as tho few men could more easily give up a part or all of this than I can."[108]. Forbes spent a year with the Guild after which he entered Yale Theological Seminary.

Coit became an active spokesman for the Guild and travelled to a number of colleges. In addition to Amherst he visited Columbia University, where he could count on the support of Burgess, and Wellesley, where he enlisted the support of the professors who wanted "some kindred enterprise started." The circle of support which Coit tapped gave ample evidence of the influence acquired by Amherst graduates during this period of time. Following his return from a trip to Europe in the fall of 1887 Coit

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accepted an invitation from Herbert Baxter Adams to address his seminar at John's Hopkins. The invitation was honor enough, recognition that his work had caught the attention of the outside world, but the opportunity to visit with Jameson made the trip all the more enjoyable.

Upon his return to New York Coit wrote Jameson "a word of thanks," the letter providing a taste of the excitement the trip generated. "Rushing off to Vassar the next day as I did and failed to send the word of thanks I had in mind for you, what shall I call it; for your letting me see you and for what you did and said. "Savoring the reunion Coit added, "it was so gratifying to me that we should restore our more familiar acquaintance. I enjoyed every minute of my stay in Baltimore." Ever-grateful for his encouragement Coit told Jameson "it pleases me that you found my lecture forcible; for I should so like to have the power to move people to think as well as to act."[109].

One of those at Johns Hopkins whom Coit did inspire was Morrison I. Swift, who joined the Guild upon receipt of his doctorate in political economy. A graduate of Williams College who also studied in Berlin, Swift harbored extremely hostile views toward orthodox religion. Moreover, he entertained a conception of education directed at political action and came to believe that "there is power enough in the lower classes to reconstruct the world, and sooner or later they will fulfill their mission."[110]. His own

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political instincts were those of a socialist who maintained that "if the practical moralist hesitates to cast his lot with those who hold the future in their grasp, let him prepare himself for the imperviousness and inflexibility of those who own the present, and dedicate himself to a life of barren and impotent pleading with the rich."[111.]

Gregory Weinstein, who, at the invitation of Charles Stover, came to live in the house on Forsyth Street, recalled that these were "men of education and culture, who came to bring sunshine and refinement into the lives of the children of the neighborhood."[112.] If their initial idealism fell prey to the manifold problems of this new environment, these early residents viewed themselves as "originators and experimenters" who sought to identify needs and demonstrate "the most effective ways of meeting them."[113.] It was part of the political culture necessary for a social transformation.

Almost from the beginning Coit relied heavily on the support of "a number of outside helpers, both men and women."[114.] Practically all were college-trained and grew up accustomed to the voluntary association which characterized residential living. Coit accepted the premise that college training led to a greater emphasis "on wholesome forms of social activity than on substantive cultural instruction as a means of exerting moral influence."[115.] By one estimate "as many as twenty-two

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volunteer workers were in the field before the Guild was two years old."[116].

Within this time "a branch guild was organized in the tough neighborhood of Cherry Hill, "formed by Mr. P.J. Mosenthal of City College and Mr. Ellis G. Seymour, who subsequently opened a second branch in Brooklyn. They took quarters "in the model tenement houses on Cherry Street," constructed by the Tenement House Building Company, in which Felix Adler and E.R.A. Seligman were principals. In addition to the set of clubs, "a kindergarten had been established." It was Coit who made arrangement with Adler to secure for Charles Stover the position of manager of these tenements, thereby providing him with an income.

In the notes he compiled for a proposed history of the University Settlement, A. J. Kennedy described Coit as a feminist. "The whole structure was co-ed. The girls worked. They raised money. They were on the Guild Committee (representatives of those clubs who achieved the status of Guild membership). Also on the Executive. Controlled the kindergarten. It was exceptional."[117]. Not everyone appreciated Coit's liberal approach. Kennedy indicated that "Stover couldn't get along with them; was not happy with women."[118].

The moral culture which lay at the heart of Coit's scheme embraced ideas that gave new direction to social reform. Throughout the work of the Neighborhood Guild there

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occurred a class conscious interaction and exchange which emphasized that each had something to offer the other. The uptown citizen brought a cultivated and informed attitude, capable of serving as a model of concern, who willingly shared this higher knowledge. The downtown resident possessed an historical awareness of a totally different order, infused with a realism about life drawn from experiences with tenement life, discrimination, crime and poverty, the very problem which tore at the fabric of society and whose solution, at least in theory, demanded cooperation. The polite mannerisms of one stood in stark contrast to the rough temperament of the other, but the object of the relationship was to become friends, not merely in an aesthetic sense but for the practical opportunities made possible by this exchange.

The incidence of such cultural transference was a far cry from the more traditional approaches of charity organizations and churches, but stopped short of a disavowal of their general aims. While Toynbee Hall provided the general plan, the idea of the Guild and the goals toward which it worked, drew upon a complex assortment of forces long at issue in American life, shaped gradually by Coit's distinctive personal approach. The founder himself attested to the fact that "the Neighborhood Guild. . . was in great part suggested by the real nature and tendency of many institutions, whose nominal and professed fellowship and aim

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were much narrower."[119].

For those emissaries of middle-class life the work which engaged this relationship satisfied a broad array of personal and social needs. The tasks they set for themselves were educational and humanitarian, dedicated to aims which served the public interest and advanced the fortunes of other lives. They embodied the same virtues and dignity which drew previous generations into schools, civic organizations, church work and charities but with fewer restraints, and, for those involved, a greater sense of purpose.

To Charles Stover the work itself was purely humanitarian. "Dr. Coit puts much reliance on personal influence; therefore his helpers are earnest young men and women who donate their time and strength."[120]. While some of the teachers were paid, Stover was quick to emphasize, perhaps only too mindful of his own condition, that "the Neighborhood Guild is under no organization, pays no salary to its leader. . . and does not afford even a living to anybody. Nor is there any stamp of charity in its work. With all that is done care is taken that no pauperizing influence should be exerted on its members."[121]. For Morrison I. Swift this was "a most significant characteristic" of the enterprise, what he described as "the lately born idea of philanthropy."[122].

> The people are not approached as paupers upon whom some great good is to be

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> conferred; they are treated as self-respecting personalities, capable of helping themselves, and willing to do it. They are required to pay for all they receive, but the fees are so small that they can be readily met. They are not men treated as inferiors.[123]

The redemptive quality of this philanthropy helped define the nature of the relationship by placing it on a self-sustaining basis. In discarding the "stamp of charity," the Guild altered the meaning and purpose of philanthropy within the bounds of that exchange. If the keynote was now "help to self-help," its true meaning lay in "the moral and practical necessity of cooperation."[124] The Guild discarded the practice of material relief bounded by moral distinction in favor of the development of institutional means to affect the lives of the poor through personal involvement. Altering the status perception so as to create the "self-respecting personalities" did not remove the inequality of their respective roles. What it did accomplish was to establish an acceptable basis upon which to maintain the genuine purpose of their engagement. As Swift readily admitted, "it is true they are to be taught and improved."[125]

In the various activities of the Guild this engagement drew heavily on the force of personality. For Coit "the one thing essential was direct personal influence, which can set forth the attractiveness of life. . . nothing but personality can organize the social chaos of the masses into

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rational and moral co-operation."[126]. Coit's emphasis on personality referred not only to the individual character but, in a broader and perhaps universal sense, to what Hickok described as "that assemblage of powers" indicative of "manly endowment, spiritual presence." Taken in a communal meaning, Coit envisioned the Guild possessing this kind of force. "Being democratic and voluntary, with a decentralized authority, it will live by means of a diffused personality."[127].

To lay the foundation for such "rational and moral co-operation, "the Guild sought" to draw together first the best people of the neighbourhood, the most intelligent, upright, faithful, honest, industrious and public-spirited . . .and out of these it expects to form the remnant of the righteous who shall save the dissolute, the intemperate, the lazy, the hungry, the neglected."[128]. Coit viewed society as an organic unity and the Guild idea rested on the belief that "the regenerative forces lie side by side in the same organization with the disintegrating ones, and need only nurture to develop and overwhelm the others with their growth."[129].

The training ground for this moral and social idealism, the point at which the strength of personality and the potential for individual and collective action joined forces, was the young people's club. By their very nature they possessed an element of exclusiveness which served to

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promote standards of conduct. Membership provided a symbol of status in the wider world of the street. Yet, the purpose of the club was not merely to serve as an antidote for the street, but to undertake "the constant inculcation of social duties, insistence upon the study of the economic and moral problems of the day, and the enlistment of their members into a detailed scheme of reform."[130]. The provision of facilities for recreation and pleasure created a wholesome environment which served as a governing influence over the manners and morals of the young. This environment represented a microcosm of that social regeneration Coit saw permeating the neighborhood.

Each club possessed a well-defined structure and followed definite procedures informed by parliamentary rules. Clubs, once established, became part of the Guild, elected officers to lead its activities, sent representatives to work on various committees and paid weekly dues, "one-fourth of which they give away in charity to those who are poorer than themselves."[131]. Each club independently, and the Guild as a federation, exhibited the republican virtues of middle-class democracy. The "detailed scheme of reform" at the center of its political ideology had a strong nationalistic tone exemplified by its concern for the neighborhood as a community of interest that was, for the moment, central to their lives. The motto chosen for the Guild, Order, Improvement, Friendship, embodied

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those values Coit believed necessary to the success of that democracy. The seeds of a civic consciousness abounded in debates, the training in self-government and the art of group accomplishment, all of these broadened by travel to the city and its institutions. Ethnic and national identity lent further cohesion to organizational pride and evoked aspirations which themselves grew larger with the years. Young working class men and women found in the Guild an effective counterweight by which to balance proximity to the economic and social problems of the city.

The club became for many the government of their lives. And, as one observer shrewdly recognized, "it appears that into this is subtly ordered a network of ethical doctrines . . .this embroidery in fact becomes the texture of the sermon. . . . what is unquestionably clear is that these views require that active participation of those who preach them. Preaching and practice, having not always gone together, thus attract attention."[132] Education and reconstruction lay in the deed and not the creed. When it came to the moral discipline exercised by the club, Coit, in true Kantian fashion, insisted that "the categorical imperative never speaks in a more severe and unconditional tone than through the corporate conscience of a young people's club."[133]

Armed with the values he believed essential to that corporate conscience, reinforced by his faith in republican

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virtue, Stanton Coit pursued the belief that by cultivating a common moral sense and purpose among citizens of the neighborhood he could produce individuals with the character to effect social change. And, in the words of James K. Paulding, an early resident, "the Guild aims to supply the soil in which such impulses shall grow and come to their right development and it is not so much what is done as the method of doing it that counts in such a work."[134] It was character upon which "the social edifice of the future must rest." As envisioned by Coit this reforming enterprise sought to prepare young people "to struggle for political and industrial progress within the bounds of social order."[135]

Modeled after "the institution of the family as the tested experiment of a co-operative society pursuing as many aims as there are sides to human life itself," the guild programs served to teach and thereby reinforce the values of this communal existence: respect for personality, individual ability, character; the importance of an orderly process of activity, the strength implicit in personal initiative, the confidence to effect change, and the benefits derived from cooperative effort. The combination of education and recreation attested to the ancient wisdom which called for a sound mind in a healthy body. "The supreme aim" of the Guild was "the completest efficiency of each individual, as a worker for the community, in morals, manners, workmanship,

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civic virtues and intellectual power, and the fullest possible attainment of social and industrial advantages.[136.]

The network of ethical doctrines which permeated the Neighborhood Guild was a direct outgrowth of the social gospel movement that sought to make religious values the practical standard in the conduct of daily life. For Stanton Coit the particular influence of that movement was the Ethical Culture Society whose purpose was to establish "a religion of the future which Adler also sought to make a gospel for the poor. "Essaying the importance of this philosophy Stover affirmed that Coit's "prime endeavor here seems to have been not to model the Guild after Toynbee Hall, viewed as a University Settlement, but rather, in accordance with his own ethical system, so to organize the people around the family, as the unit, as to originate forces of social regeneration."[137.] Coit's intention to do for the children of the Lower East Side "what parents of wealth and leisure would do for their children" had its origins in the Workingman's School, many of whose activities, in kind if not actual practice, he instituted at the Guild[138.] The emphasis found in club activity, that of recreation and education, parallel Adler's insistence on "the physical side of life and learning by doing."

The very principles and aims which Adler prescribed underwrote the work of the Guild; its focus on personality as a necessary inspiration for the right life, the formation

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of moral character as the absolute prerequisite to change, the regimen of activities which cultivated a social ethics to serve as the well-spring of industrial reorganization. Where Adler looked to the educated and efficient Coit utilized them as "a body of trained workers along secular lines "to combat the "unfettered individualism" of the neighborhood. The problem on concerted action found its solution in the young people's club.

Separated from its denominational moorings, religion, now cast in the form of a social philosophy, drew its strength from man himself. "The teaching of any religious doctrines is in direct hostility to the idea of neighbourhood organisation. . . one word. . . of either theological or anti-theological teaching would have driven away from us one element or another."[139]. If the doctrinal faith had become a hindrance to moral reform it was not yet the enemy. "There is nothing, however, either in the structure of the Guild or in its emphasis of civic knowledge and of devotion to the community, that conflicts with the doctrines of the Church."[140]. A.J. Kennedy remarked that "Adler and Coit provided the perfect religious hybrid. Ethical culture had no new symbols."[141].

In its "devotion to the community" the Guild embodied the same approaches Adler decided were vital to any reform effort, and, which he incorporated in the Ethical Culture Society; "one through the family relations, having a more

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internal, spiritualizing effect; the other through political organization, having a more direct, practical bearing." Coit described the Guild as "an expansion of the family idea of cooperation" and referred consistently to its energizing effect. "In the family all ages and both sexes meet mentally and morally, and do not limit their combination of effort to the attainment of any one special object in life . . .(needs) become supreme as occasion demands, and each member receives the kind of help adapted to his present need."[142] What Adler had achieved in the uptown atmosphere of the Ethical Culture Society Coit sought to replicate in the downtown environment of the Neighborhood Guild.

The political organization of the Guild evolved slowly and Coit readily admitted that "greater mastery of social problems and methods of reform is needed on the part of, at least, a few of the leading members. . .than can be acquired in leisure hours by people hard at work in factories all day."[143] Yet, the intention to utilize those "who have shown most ability and most interest in the Guild work" appeared as part of the original scheme. The very presence of the Guild represented an implicit challenge to the politics of the ward boss. Cultivating democratic principles through its civic and moral instruction while bearing witness to the practical benefits of individual and collective action raised the standard of reform in the face of the machine. If the Guild did not alter appreciably the

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contours of industrial life, it set in motion that educative process whose most visible achievement was a generation of men and women whose activities recast the form and substance of municipal politics.

The work undertaken by Coit spread to other societies within the Ethical movement. The Ethical Record for April, 1888, announced the formation of a Neighborhood Guild Association in Philadelphia "through the initiative of the Ethical Society." Officially organized on December 28, 1887, the "design and method. . .of Family Guilds among the working people of various neighborhoods. . . is the direct outcome of a work carried on, for a year and more, by this Society, under the name of the Working Boys Guild."[144.] Family Guild No. 1, as it came to be known, pursued the same objectives as Coit's Neighborhood Guild because, like its counterpart in New York, it was an outgrowth of the Ethical movement. In its conception and organizational design the Neighborhood Guild was an expression of the practical philanthropy which appeared as a recurrent theme of the Ethical Culture societies during this time. These programs were one means of arousing the "moral sense of the community," and represented the kind of missionary activity encouraged by Adler, Coit and others.

The Neighborhood Guild was not an official part of the Ethical Culture Society of New York, but this was little more than a procedural formality. As became the custom each

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of the founding apprentices "stamped his personality on the society he was creating. The men and women who joined them did so for the sake of an idea, but also in response to the particular way that each of these men embodied that idea in institution."[145]. This convention, however, did not change the substance of the relationship. The principles and aims of the Guild reflected the teachings prescribed by Adler who supported Coit's work from the beginning, and the assistance the Guild received throughout the early period of its history came primarily from the Ethical Culture Society. Moreover, Coit regarded the work of the Guild as part of his responsibility to the Society while still engaged as Adler's assistant. In a letter to Jameson, dated May 10, 1889, Coit reinforced this conclusion, when, in a reference to his duties at the Ethical Culture Society, he indicated that "my chief work consisted in organizing the Neighbourhood Guild in Forsyth St."[146].

The country of the immigrant laborer was the industrial neighborhood. Here, among the "honest working class," Stanton Coit pursued a course of action whose broad purpose became "the conscious organization of the intellectual and moral life of the people. "This, he believed, was "the crying need of our day."[147]. To the extent that personal experience reflected those larger concerns of the body politic, Coit's experiment foreshadowed a social awakening to the moral and physical condition of urban America. If he

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viewed that condition in educational and developmental terms his decision to establish the Neighborhood Guild revealed something of the intellectual process which guided that experiment. At the center of the process was a concern about the role of democracy as the organizing principle of society. While ethical culture served as its philosophical, albeit religious, support, the Guild's social and idealistic orientation suggested its political position.

At a time when increasingly "immigration accelerated urbanization and confounded the natural problems of growth and development. . .when urban progress was experimental, uneven, often accidental, "Coit's decision to live and work among the poor set in motion a social movement whose influence carried well into the twentieth century.[148] "The Neighborhood Guild was a radical institution for its time," one which, unlike the labor union, offered "the worker and his family a voice in decisions affecting all aspects of his life, not just those relating to wages, hours, and working conditions."[149] Yet, the Guild drew upon many of the traditional values associated with political democracy in America, which gave it a rather conservative demeanor. This seeming dichotomy placed it squarely within the American reform tradition, for while the Guild reinforced values which lay at the heart of a constitutional democracy, it did so in a manner and by means that called attention to the national, moral and political importance of the problems at

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issue.

Concentrating his efforts in a single neighborhood transformed it into a representative symbol for problems which existed within and beyond its boundaries, and that made it, in one sense, coextensive with the nation. Implicit in that relationship was the belief that disordered tenement districts did not constitute "a workable concept of community." If the key lay in social organization, the neighborhood became the conceptual representation of a particular ideal of community.

Essential to that social organization was the need of people themselves to revise their own way of thinking. Previous assumptions about the motives of men could be altered by a positive knowledge of how to change so as to improve social conditions. Coit surmised that "when awakened to responsibility and instructed, their impulsive kindness becomes a persistent principle of all-round care for one another."[150] If such an attitude altered perceptions of the poor it also signified a new approach to the industrial classes among whom individual rights and social sovereignty did not exist.

Organizing the social life of the neighborhood became "a vital principle of reform, inasmuch as it gives life to many a worthy undertaking which otherwise languishes from lack of support and enthusiasm."[151] The principle carried within it the presumption of a natural capacity for

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community life. This principle depended for its success on actualizing the community in the name of mutual responsibility which could then replace individual effort with collective force as the cornerstone of a democratic society.

Advancing by "patient experimental action, leaving aside the sentiments of pity and mercy which have been outworn by the spread of democratic ideas," seeking the cause of poverty not in a man's character, but in his environment, these lessons, hard won, foretold "the enlightenment of the people in social principles."[152] Then, Coit believed, "the realization of the just state would not be remote, nor would it be brought in with violence."[153] In the form it came to assume Coit envisioned the Guild as one of "those various anticipations, in miniature, of a new order of society."[154]

Coit's intention was not to alter many scattered lives, but, rather, to reconstruct the common life of the neighborhood. From the beginning this effort retained a distinctly social purpose fostered by the most natural relations with the individual. It addressed the spatial proximity of people to each other and sought to make it the bonding element of reform. In this sense the motto of the federation of clubs, Order, Improvement and Friendship, became at once the touchstone signifying "a workable concept of community for an individual urban environment. And, the

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particular ideal of community developed by Coit became itself coextensive with the neighborhood.

> This laying hold upon a neighborhood in the city for purposes of deliberate community reconstruction was the inspiration of Stanton Coit who effectively adapted the English parochial concept, with its ecclesiastical suggestion, to American conditions under which religious prejudices were in danger of bringing local responsibility to complete disintegration. He clearly saw that it was through the home that neighborhood no less than church must have its being and make its growth. Conversely, the endeavor to understand and compass the family gradually emphasized the fact that sound family life depends, in large measure, on extraneous forces. The family was by outside acquaintance either supported in its loyalties and standards or its foundation was being undermined by them. Where wholesome neighborly relations were lost, it was almost inevitable that family morale should go with it.[155]

The success or failure of Coit's efforts turned on the presumptions which supported his democratic idealism as well as the fluid structure of his cooperative entity, the family, to respond to the particular ideal of community he proposed. In a word, the fate of reform lay in the continuity of means and ends.

Coit's general scheme consisted essentially of three stages: (1) institutionalize the social and political environment, together with the attendant values which will serve as the model of the community projected for the neighborhood (Guild); (2) organize members of the

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neighborhood in such a way as to filter out the best elements among whom to instill the highest ideals and standards, with special emphasis on the requirements of a democratic society (clubs), and (3) send participants into the wider world of the neighborhood to transmit the lessons learned, recruit members from other families and so expand the network (members and residents). Throughout, the primary purpose of the Guild, as Coit originally conceived it, "lay in its internal work with young people's clubs."[156].

The presumptions which underwrote this plan derived, in part, from Coit's own experiences, especially those he encountered in London and at the Ethical Culture Society, as well as the intellectual process which shaped his perspective toward the poor. At an informal gathering of uptown ladies, held on March 27, 1888, at the Fifth Avenue Hotel, where he substituted for Dr. Andrew White, Coit, in a lecture on Culture and Poverty, informed his audience "that the problem how to ameliorate the condition of the poor in great cities had been solved by two men, Walter Besant and Auguste Comte. . . their theory of personal effort having been practically the only one which has borne fruit."[157].

Walter Besant's novel, All Sorts and Conditions of Men, appeared in 1882. The book describes how a young heiress inherits a large number of tenements in Whitechapel, eventually goes to live there where she discovers the misery

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and unsavory conditions of the slums and resolves to brighten their lives by instilling in them a desire for things of which they as yet know nothing. She decides to place within their reach, absolutely free, the same enjoyments as obtain for the rich. The plan outlined in this novel became the model for The People's Palace in London.

Auguste Comte, the French philosopher and founder of Positivism, popularized the idea, which originated with Turgot, that the behavior of the individual is determined by society rather than by his own unique personality or education, and that society is not simply a collection of individuals, but has a character of its own, which molds the character of people living in it. Comte expanded this idea, developed its scientific dimensions, integrating them with tenets of sociology, a word he invented, into a systematic philosophy which he then composed as a Religion of Humanity. An elaborate ritual, hymns, and a calendar of saints were all drawn up and services held. It became, for a time, popular in London where Frederick Harrison was the leader of the movement. Once established at the Ethical Church, Bayswater, Coit developed something very similar to this.

In its general purpose the Neighborhood Guild was educational, but in a way that stressed the benefits of inter-personal relations leading to cooperative action. Coit's efforts in this regard led one writer to conclude

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that the significance of Toynbee Hall for the American settlement house movement lay in "its institutional character rather than the nature of its programs."[158] In a now all but forgotten and unread account of the English settlement movement, Werner Picht drew the lines even more sharply.

> A settlement is a colony of members of the upper class, formed in a poor neighborhood, with the double purpose of getting to know the local conditions of life from personal observation, and of helping where help is needed. In contrast to this the Neighborhood Guild, which Stanton Coit founded in England and America, are organizations which embrace the entire population of poor Neighborhoods, and have therefore in their conception nothing to do with the Settlement.[159]

While Coit acknowledged that "many details of the Toynbee work are repeated in the Guilds. . . still the difference between the latter and the former is fundamental."[160] When compared to his own organizational scheme Coit viewed "their dislike of method and system" a decided hindrance. "The practical effort to improve a set of young men must disclose a best way of doing so. . . if there is any reason for the existence of a club, it must reveal, to a rational observer, its aims and principles."[161] In addition, Coit believed that "unless it unifies its thousand scattered and wide-reaching efforts, and renders them democratic," Toynbee Hall risked becoming "a permanent force on the side of culture and

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character."[162] In the organization of the Guild Coit and Stover sought to avoid dependence on outside sources for money, both men influenced in this regard by their Toynbee experience. At the outset Guild philosophy assumed "that the people were willing to pay for anything they really wanted."[163] By March of 1888 Coit revealed to his uptown audience that "a society has been organized by wealthy persons of the city to establish home clubs in the tenement districts. This society is known as the Neighborhood Guild Association."[164]

Coit's perceptions about the poor were representative of an educated and cultured segment of the middle class. In fact, they were not about the poor as a specific group but about poverty as a social problem. Of the former he learned something when he went to Forsyth Street. His views of the latter benefited from much education and social discourse but little actual experience, and that he acquired in a different cultural setting. His underlying presumptions were the peculiar result of educational and life experiences, riveted by the exigencies of personality. Intellectually, the ideas which informed the plan of the Guild reveal a process weighted by philosophical principles, a blend of American pragmatism and European idealism, very similar in form and expression to that found in the Ethical Culture Society.

What galvanized this process, converting principle to

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plan, were the very real problems of the city and the rising pressure to action directed at those who were among the best educated members of their class. For Stanton Coit the reforming impulse, already at work in the Ethical Culture Society, to which he had committed himself without restraint, called up the sense of mission and the lively conscience, the Emersonian strains in The Conduct of Life, the ethical impulse which emphasized the deed not the creed, and his own search for something worthwhile to do in this world. Upon meeting Adler for the first time Coit indicated his desire "to help change the physical and social environment of men, so that is shall be more favorable to a truly human life." And it was Adler who told Coit "to work among the poor." Inspired by these personal and intellectual imperatives, Coit undertook "the work of organizing the mental and moral life of the people."

It was Seelye who recommended to Coit the study of sociology which, at that time, "referred generally and rather loosely to an ethical science of society."[165.] At first glance the principles upon which the plan of the Guild rested seemed useful to such an exercise. Closer examination, however reveals an intellectual process in which the mind formulates a perception of things not as they are but as it needs them to be. That process dictates the reality of the ideal to the point at which the ideal assumes the form of a psychological actuality. The abstract and the

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concrete exist side by side as a means of eliminating differences. The mind fails to discriminate between its own conception of the way things exist and the external reality addressed. This pattern of thinking characterized many of the basic premises Coit entertained.

The Neighborhood Guild was an institutional representation of a pre-conceived personality type which possessed certain moral and intellectual qualities. The institution was the force, creating and patterning relations after the family, a concept Coit stereotyped in terms of theory and which drew upon his own free-flowing background. However, this synthetic model was not a fluid concept that fit into either the immigrant cultural patterns or particular national ideas of family organization. His expectations, while embraced by some, ran up against social and cultural barriers that proved a major obstacle. The populations of Forsyth Street possessed neither the social background nor moral disposition to think about a few blocks of neighborhood in terms of a democratic community. They were better able to relate to the system of governance already established in the person of the ward boss than an ethical program leading to moral regeneration.

The implicit assumptions he entertained about human nature grew out of values actually experienced which Coit presumed, in his own mind, were transferable to any one group of people. Prominent among these assumptions was

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Coit's insistence on the rational nature of man, his inherent goodness, a natural capacity for community, and the ability to supplant individual effort with mutual responsibility. His concept of democracy as an organizing principle rested upon similar presumptions as they applied to community: an organic view of society which fostered the belief that, at the level of neighborhood, there existed the necessary resources, that, once under control, would serve the common good, and his preference for a cooperative movement instead of a competitive society as the harbinger of republican virtue. Moreover, Coit's idea of neighborhood was a textual concept which bore little resemblance to the actual conditions of life in a tenement district. These perceptions came to possess a certain naivete which proved crucial and ultimately forced the Guild to alter its approach, if not its philosophy.

Coit's approach was personal and ethical and these qualities characterized his democracy, one that depended heavily on a hope and confidence in the undeveloped powers of human nature as well as the moral forces he presumed existed in the social organism. For Stanton Coit these perceptions foreshadowed the reality of the ideal at work. Felix Adler once described Coit as "the only person I have known who was brought up from childhood in spiritualism. I surmise that his marked and strange tendency to worship abstractions as if they were real personalities may be due

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to this circumstance. . . the tendency to regard as if it were a tangible entity that which has merely a mental existence."[166].

Edward King, "one of the Settlement's earliest residents," and "the fervent exponent of the Labor Movement," reviewed Coit's book, Neighbourhood Guilds: An Instrument of Social Reform, for the Charities Review when it appeared in 1891. He indicated that "the reader who has actually studied at close quarters these experiments in Guild work, or has been discouraged by the practical failure of it, must be prepared to forgive the author much, because with all its merits the book is more the manifesto of a propagandist than a book of accurate social science."[167]. In a poignant and telling statement, which addressed the intellectual process Coit employed, King remarked that "one has the constant feeling that the author does not fully realize the full force of the obstacles standing in the way of every such attempt to do everything on all sides, at the same time in the same place, and quickly, even for only a few people. It seems strange that he should hope to escape the complication of all the difficulties which beset the separate solutions of each line of work and should base his belief on the analogy between the flesh and blood intimacy of the family and the artificial aggregation of a neighborhood gathering."[168].

In a reference to the censorious attitude with which

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Coit viewed the activities of other organizations, King, with equal vigor, replied: "It is easy to imagine the irritable specialist growling, he criticizes the incompleteness of the Working Girl's Clubs, the narrowing results of the political associations and churches, trade unions, spasmodic temperance, charity organizations and almost everything else under heaven! Surely the brightness of his own social vision obscures a just estimate of methods not his own."[169]. With a pungent characterization King concluded his review by noting that "vitality and enthusiasm are more important than order and discipline is a sentence which shows the spirit of the man and the book."[170].

King's analysis of Coit and his book disclosed the psychological dimensions and intellectual discontinuities which permeated Coit's ideas. To one who had actually studied the work of the Guild firsthand Coit's ideas appeared more resilient as ethical philosophy than as the basis for an accurate social science. In part, this accounts for the subsequent failure of the Guild along the line Coit originally conceived it. As a program of reform, built around the organizing principle of democracy, it left virtually unacknowledged both the growing presence of the labor union as well as the central position of the ward boss.

Years later, after much of the social movement Coit helped inaugurate had crystallized, A.J. Kennedy made the

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following observation: "Coit was Pollyana. . . Stover's emphasis on city truly Barnett. (He) seized the essence of Barnett's system which was increase in public works. Coit was for lifting people up by their boot straps. . . His program of individual development was Protestant to the core in this. But by 1893 he was fully Trade Union."[171.]

Though at first it prospered, problems at the Guild began to appear as early as 1887 and continued to grow during the following year when Coit left to succeed Moncure Conway at the South Place Religious Society in London. His departure brought to a close the first stage in the short-lived history of this unique and original institution. The second and final stage, during which Charles Stover managed the Guild, was turbulent and very nearly calamitous, owing in part to the advent of a new approach as well as the changes that occurred both within the Guild and throughout the neighborhood.

Coit and Stover had different ideas about social regeneration and how to achieve it. Stover appeared more pragmatic than Coit and saw the Guild as a university settlement closer to the Toynbee Hall model but modified to fit American urban conditions. For him there were"very compelling reasons" to transform the Guild into a Toynbee Hall. The common sentiment pointed to

> a numerous class of educated young men, who are deeply interested in the social problems of to-day, their sympathies for human suffering the warmest. . . such

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> would find a field of labor in a Toynbee Hall. . . various educational, sanitary, social and political reforms could be undertaken. . . From (it) might proceed a thorough purification of this sink of political corruption. Persons resident here would acquire that familiarity with the men and affairs of the district which is so necessary for a successful reform movement.[172.]

Stover favored political persuasion, organizing groups of people to change the social conditions in which they lived. During Coit's tenure some of the men he recruited, "and those who sought him out," began to have serious doubts about the orientation of the Guild.[173.] The arrival of Morrison I. Swift encouraged Stover to move in the direction he had, up to that time, only contemplated. After Coit's departure Stover, with the assistance of Paulding and Swift, together with the advice of Edward King, focused more attention on the larger issues of the city while he sought to maintain the Guild's position in the neighborhood. King's involvement with the labor movement and his support and encouragement of Stover fed the latter's inclination for a broader political program which actually went far beyond the original ideas of the Guild and deprived it of the energy and resources necessary to its survival. Despite the organization of the Neighborhood Guild Association, underwritten by men like Felix Adler and Bishop Henry Potter of Brooklyn, to secure the financial future of the Guild, Stover's activities, and his resentment of this dependence, created a conflict which almost destroyed the institution.

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What aggravated and intensified these problems were other developments which bore directly on the work of the Guild put in motion by Coit. Difficulties sprang up on Cherry Street where the guild concept and its cultural presumptions came into contact with the highly charged combination of idealism and anarchism which characterized Russian Jewish life in that part of the Lower East Side. The other branch which Ellis Gray Seymour of Amherst developed in Brooklyn received almost no attention and died for want of integrative support and a visible proximity to the strength of the organization. Adding to these concerns was the establishment of the New York (Women's) College Settlement House on Rivington Street, an event which had a devastating effect on the Guild, especially in light of what was going on in 1889. The College Settlement took some of the most talented people away from the Guild at a time when they could least afford it, and the population declined noticeably as the girl's clubs went to Rivington Street. Amidst this turmoil the Guild, "in the autumn of 1889," moved across the street to 147 Forsyth, where it occupied "the whole of an old fashioned dwelling house, flanked by two tall tenements."[174.]

If Coit's departure left no counter-balancing attitude to serve as a brake, the Neighborhood Guild Association brought in outside elements and dissident views. By January of 1890 the Guild was in financial trouble, and,

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quixotically, Stover issued the following appeal: "except some generous person soon enable the Guild to meet its current expenses, we see nothing to prevent its early and speedy dissolution."[175] During the next year "the work was seriously embarrassed by lack of funds" while "the small number of workers in proportion to the task" was at least partly responsible for the closing of the Cherry Street branch.[176] Morrison I. Swift complained that the Guild's financial support "was for a long time the most meager, and though men of character, ability and education were there making a struggle to preserve the work begun in that outcast region, they were perpetually stared in the face by failure . . . from lack of money."[177]

While uncertainty shadowed the work of the Guild a group of men, familiar with its predicament, set in motion a series of meetings the end result of which was the organization of a University Settlement Society "to establish in the poorest parts of the city, institutions similar to Toynbee Hall and the University Settlement in London, and the headquarters of the (Women's) College Settlement Association, adopting the Neighborhood Guild at 147 Forsyth Street. . . as the first of the proposed society's settlement."[178] This sudden turn of events made possible by a group of well educated and commercially successful gentlemen, which rescued the Guild from dissolution, brought an angry and impetuous reaction from

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Stover. Rebelling against what he viewed as the imposition of nineteenth century philanthropy he let it be known that "I decline to be a dispenser of the doles of the rich."[179].

The dilemma which Stover helped to create within the Guild now prevented him from accepting the circumstances necessary to its reorganization. The "cultural meliorism" of which he complained was in reality far more sensible and, to a surprising degree, consistent with the central premise of the original Guild, namely, that man has the power to aid in his own improvement. Moreover, the plan addressed the seriousness of those internal problems which threatened the life of the Guild. Reorganization signified compromise and Charles Stover was in no mood to forfeit his political passion to a practical solution. That he rejected this compromise demonstrated again the extent to which reform was, in certain respects, prisoner to the ideological markings of those who pursued it.

If the Neighborhood Guild was the forerunner of the settlement house movement, both were the product of the context within which its main participants came of age, and therefore, part of a process of social and cultural self-definition. Within that context there existed a dialectical tension between the political and moral sovereignty necessary to a democratic society and the industrial practices and social neglect that seemed to threaten the very institutions upon which such a society depended. In

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different ways and under separate circumstances this tension level evoked profound concern among educated men and women. What they came to recognize was that social justice, not violence, was the proper response to the human condition. Lacking confidence in the established agencies of church and state they sought new forms through which to achieve this objective.

In the wake of their public concern there existed, simultaneously a private quest for meaning and purpose. Both found resolution in work among the poor. The educated individual nourished the myth of the common man, and, in the process, became a reformer. In the search for social justice the reformer became a radical who found strength and example in Emerson's heroic individual and Whitman's unique self, and, like them, sought to break down the barriers that society created between human beings.

The re-emergence of social radicalism in the 1880's combined the exercise of moral suasion with the institutionalization of benevolence in order to pursue a social transformation. The emphasis was less on the kind of religious orientation characteristic of the ante-bellum years than on the requirements deemed necessary for an ethical and transcendent democracy. Yet, their objective maintained a consistency with that earlier period in that it sought to make the poor useful members of the body politic. The social reformer became a radical when he gave to moral

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suasion a decidedly utilitarian tone and exchanged benevolence for a social politics which applied nineteenth century middle class conceptions of democracy to the problem of twentieth century urban, industrial life.

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Notes

Chapter Five

1. Robert A. Woods and Albert J. Kennedy, The Settlement Horizon; A National Estimate, (New York: The Russell Sage Foundation, 1922; Reprint ed., The Arno Press, 1970), p.42

2. Harold J. Blackham, Stanton Coit: Selections From His Writings, (London: The Favil Press Ltd., 1948), p.8

3. Norman and Jeanne MacKenzie, The Fabians, (New York: Simon and Schuster 1977), p.84

4. Norman MacKenzie, Socialism: A Short History, (London: Hutchinson University Library, 1949), p.78

5. ibid, p.20, E.R. Pease, History of the Fabian Society, (London: Frank Cass & Co., 1918)

6. Henry George, Progress and Poverty, (San Francisco, 1879; Reprint ed. 75 Anniversary, Robert Schalkenback Foundation, 1966), p.10. The book first appeared in a cheap English edition at the end of 1881.

7. E.R. Pease, "Ethics and Socialism," The Practical Socialist: A Monthly Review of Evolutionary or Non-Revolutionary Socialism, Vol.1, No. 1, 1886, p.17 In their study of the Fabians Norman and Jeanne MacKenzie indicated that "the first Fabians had been educated at good schools and at university; even such exceptions as Bland, Pease and Shaw came from literate, middle-class homes. They belonged to the middle class or identified with it, and as such they emphasized duty and social obligation; their message was essentially directed at their own class, guilty with a sense that they were not fulfilling their responsibilities to the unfortunate. Norman and Jeanne Mackenzie, op cit, p.184

8. Practical Socialist, Vol. 1, No. 2, 1886, p.32

9. Sidney Webb, "The Economics of a Positivist Community, "The Practical Socialist, Vol. 1, No. 2, 1886, p.39. In addressing the "marked contrast" between "the Positivist state of society and the existing order of things," Webb declared that "the difference is rather a question of ethics than economics. "For those attracted to Positivism Webb made it clear that

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"looking at the matter from an ethical point of view, we can see that there is work to be done. . . and no one need wait for the millennium, each one can begin it for himself."

10. Susan Budd, Varieties of Unbelief: Atheists and Agnostics in English Society, 1850-1960, (London: Heinemann, 1968), p.225

11. H.J. Blackham, op. cit., p.9

12. ibid

13. Reba N. Soffer "The Revolution in English Social Thought, 1880-1914," American Historical Review, Vol. LXXV, No. 7, December 1970, p.1938. Since the publication of this article Soffer has expanded her arguments into a book. Reba N. Soffer, Ethics and Society in England, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978)

14. Helen Merrell Lynd, England in the Eighteen Eighties, (London: Frank Cass and Co. Ltd., 1945; Reprint ed. A.M. Kelly, 1968), p.9

15. Soffer, op. cit., p.1939

16. Second Annual Report of the Universities Settlement in East London, (Oxford), 1886, p.5 J.A.R. Pimlott expanded the meaning attached to such speculation when he remarked that "the basis of contemporary social discontent was not the presence of any exceptional suffering, but the growth of a speculative conviction. "As proof of this he offered the enormous popularity of Henry George. J.A.R. Pimlott, Toynbee Hall: Fifty Years of Social Progress, 1884-1934, (London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1935), p.27

17. ibid. Cf. The Memorandum of Association. Writing about the settlement house in 1891, Robert A. Woods indicated that "the idea of the sharing of the life of the poor by university men owes its origin to no one person. It has been a gradual development which has taken up elements from the teaching and influence of nearly all the great spiritual leaders at the universities (mainly Oxford and Cambridge) during the last thirty years." Robert A. Woods, English Social Movements, (New York: Scribners, 1891), p.79

18. Second Annual Report of the Universities Settlement in East London, p.12. Pimlott reinforced this point with his comment that Toynbee Hall "was a means of focusing

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on the problem of the East End the interest of public men of importance and the energies of enthusiastic volunteers from all classes of society." To Pimlott the attention drawn to the East End reflected the larger purpose implicit in the interest of public men and enthusiastic volunteers. "An educated and politically conscious working class and a socially conscious upper class were indispensable pre-requisites of the democratic state." Pimlott, op cit., p.43

19. Robert A. Woods, op cit., p.97

20. Stanton Coit, Farewell Address to the New York Ethical Culture Society, Ethical Record, Vol. 1 No. 2, July, 1888, p.57

21. Second Annual Report, op cit., p.34

22. ibid, p.40

23. Stanton Coit, "My First Acquaintance With the Ethical Movement," The Ethical World, March 16, 1907, in Gustave Spiller, The Ethical Movement in Great Britain, (London: The Farleigh Press, 1934), p.178

24. J.H. Muirhead, "A Recollection on the Immediate Causes of the Formation of the (London) Ethical Society," in Spiller, ibid, p.1

25. ibid

26. ibid

27. The Ethical World, September, 1915, in G. Spiller, op cit., p.1-2

28. Muirhead, In G. Spiller, op cit

29. Reba N. Soffer, Ethics and Society in England, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), p.181

30. James Hornback, The Philosophic Sources and Sanctions of the Founders of Ethical Culture, unpublished doctoral dissertation, (New York: Columbia University, 1983), p.232-33. Walter Sheldon was also present, having returned from Berlin in the early months of 1886.

31. Stanton Coit, "My First Acquaintance With the Ethical Movement," in G. Spiller, op cit., p.178-79. Coit returned to New York in April, 1886

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32. Stanton Coit to Burns-Weston, April 24, 1886, in Hornback, op cit., p.25 Weston Papers, Philadelphia Ethical Society.

33. ibid

34. Hornback, op cit., p.233

35. The New York Times, February 17, 1944

36. Woods & Kennedy, op cit., p.42

37. ibid

38. The New York Times, February 17, 1944. The University Settlement Society Bulletin, January, 1892, p.6. Charles B. Stover, The Neighborhood Guild in New York in F.C. Montague, Arnold Toynbee, Herbert Baxter Adams, ed. Johns Hopkins University Studies in Historical and Political Science, Seventh Series, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1889), p.65 Exactly when Coit moved to the lower East Side is a matter of some confusion. Woods and Kennedy place his arrival in the summer of 1886 while Charles Stover recounts that "Mr. Coit began his residence in Forsyth Street either in December of '86 or January of '87." (Charles Stover to Isabel Eaton, Secretary, Ethical Culture Society, January 27, 1905). The University Settlement Society Bulletin for 1892 is less specific. "It is now close upon five years since Dr. Stanton Coit took up his residence in the five story tenement at No. 146 Forsyth Street." (p.6) In his doctoral dissertation on The History of the University Settlement House completed at New York University in 1946 May Meyer wrote that "Stanton Coit settled in Forsyth Street in the summer of 1886." (p.3)

    What complicates this issue further is the various estimates of when Coit actually began the work associated with the Neighborhood Guild. Woods and Kennedy place the organization of the first boy's club in November, 1886, while Stover indicates "the work of the Neighborhood Guild began with the year 1887." (Stover to Eaton) The University Settlement Society Bulletin for 1892 leaves the impression that only a very short time elapsed between Coit's arrival in the Lower East Side and the moment he "began to gather about him some of the young men and boys of the vicinity to form the nucleus of a club that had his own apartment for its meeting place." (p.6) The New York Times for February 17, 1944, noted that "after studying conditions for two months Dr. Coit felt the most pressing need was a boy's club." Evidence in the

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Papers of the University Settlement Society indicates that the Lily Pleasure Club began in 1886. Max Meyer, referring to Coit's activities, noted that "in February, 1887, he organized the Neighborhood Guild, a federation of clubs which he had gathered and for which he had found leaders." (p.3) Newspaper references to the work of the Guild generally correspond to Stover's estimates which align closely with those used by the University Settlement Society.

Inasmuch as Coit began the excursions to Staten Island in the spring of 1886, and decided to live among the poor during that time, I am inclined to place his actual residency in the summer of 1886, the date indicated by Woods and Kennedy and which corresponds independently with that of Meyer. On the basis of the evidence at hand it seems likely that Coit, after assessing the actual living conditions of his neighbors, decided upon the organization of a boy's club, as a first experiment, before the end of that year. From this experience grew the Neighborhood Guild, the formal designation of which occurred in the early months of 1887.

39. Gregory Weinstein, The Ardent Eighties and After: Reminiscences of a Busy Life, (New York: The International Press, third ed., 1947), p.92-93. Also cf. Woods & Kennedy, op cit., p.42

40. Woods & Kennedy, op cit., p.42

41. Stanton Coit, in Spiller, op cit., p.178-79

42. Morrison I. Swift, "The Working Population of Cities and What the Universities Owe Them," Andover Review, June, 1890, p.592

43. University Settlement Society Annual Report, 1903, p.7-8

44. James K. Paulding, Charles B. Stover, 1861-1929, (New York: The International Press, 1938), p.17; Harrison Graham Lowry, The Social Settlement and the Search for Community: The Neighborhood Guild in New York, MA thesis, University of Wisconsin at Madison, 1968, p.55-56

45. Lowry, op cit., p.58

46. Stover, Neighborhood Guild, in Montague, op cit., p.68

47. Paulding, op cit., p.18

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48. ibid, p.129

49. The Kindergarten Magazine and Pedagogical Digest, Vol. XIX, No. 9, May, 1907, p.610

50. Papers of the University Settlement Society, Jacob Eisenger Collection, MSS 326, Box 22, Series 8, A.J. Kennedy Notes. Hereafter referred to as Papers.

51. The Christian Union, May 3, 1888, p.551

52. ibid

53. The New York Post, Magazine Section, January 16, 1966, p.4

54. ibid

55. George Cary White, "Social Settlements and Immigrant Neighbors, 1886-1914," Social Service Review, Vol. 33, March, 1959, p.55. Shortly after the election, at their thirty-fourth annual meeting, the Directors of the Children's Aid Society took note of the fact that "the increase of wealth and of poverty have created a gap that keeps apart the rich and poor more than fomerly, so that the spirit of self-sacrifice for the unfortunate is not so strong as it was a generation or so ago." The New York Times, November 24, 1886, p.8

56. Henry Moscowitz, "Music School Settlements," Survey, Vol. XXVI (June, 1911), p.462

57. White, op cit., p.55

58. Howard B. Radest, Toward Common Ground: The Story of the Ethical Societies in the United States, (New York: Frederick Unger 1969), p.203

59. Woods & Kennedy, op cit. The University Settlement Society Annual Report, 1902, p.9

60. The Christian Union, January 5, 1888, p.8

61. ibid

62. ibid

63. ibid

64. ibid

65. The New York Herald, September 18, 1887

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66. The New York Times, February 17, 1944

67. The Christian Union, January 5, 1888, p.8

68. ibid; Charles Stover, Neighborhood Guild, in Montague, op cit., p.65

69. The Christian Union, May 3, 1888, p.551

70. Charles Stover, Neighborhood Guild, in Montague, op cit., p.65

71. University Settlement Society Buleltin No.1, January, 1892, p.6. According to information in the Papers the Lily Pleasure Club was organized by Coit in 1886 and changed its name to O.I.F. in 1890. MSS 326, Box 20, Folders 1-2,

72. ibid. The club of young women, known as the Lady Belvedere, was originized in 1887 by Mildred Conway, the daughter of Moncure Conway, who was one of the first volunteer workers from uptown to join Coit. This group represented the female counterpart to the Lily Pleasure Club. The Mayflower Club for young girls, ages ten thru fourteen, likewise developed in 1887 through the efforts of Jean Gurney Fine and Dr. Jane Robbins. Most of the girls were of German and Irish nationality, with "a few Italians." MSS 326, Box 20, Folder 4.

73. ibid

74. The New York Sun, March 25, 1888

75. The new York World, March 18, 1888

76. Papers, MSS 326, Series 6, Box 18, Folder 12. A zither was an instrument with from thirty to forty strings stretched across a soundboard and played much like a classical guitar.

77. The Christian Union, January 5, 1888, p.8

78. The New York Sun, March 25, 1888

79. The Christian Union, January 4, 1888, p.8

80. The New York Times, February 17, 1944

81. The Christian Union, January 5, 1888, p.8

82. The New York Sun, March 25, 1888

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83. The New York Herald, September 18, 1887

84. The New York Sun, March 25, 1888

85. The Christian Union, May 3, 1888, p.551

86. ibid

87. The Christian Union, January 5, 1888, p.8. According to H.G. Lowry the Lady Belvedere Club drew many of its members from amongst "sisters and friends of the boys in the Lily Pleasure Club."

88. The New York Sun, March 25, 1888

89. The Christian Union, January 5, 1888, p.8

90. The Christian Union, May 3, 1888, p.551

91. The New York Sun, March 25, 1888

92. ibid

93. Papers, MSS 326, Box 20, Folder 4. According to Kennedy "from school girls they grew to working girls and the group met still and then became the Amor Vinci Omnes Matrons (Love Conquers All). . . They didn't like the University Settlement which very quickly became institutional. (Women's) College Settlement was homey and domestic. Mayflower Club went to College Settlement and stayed."

94. The New York World, March 18, 1888

95. The Kindergarten Magazine and Pedagogical Digest, op cit., p.610

96. ibid

97. New York Kindergarten Association Annual Report, 1890, (New York: The DeVinne Press, 1891), p.13

98. New York Kindergarten Association Annual Report, 1892, (New York: The DeVinne Press, 1893), p.31-32

99. The New York Sun, March 25, 1888

100. The New York Hearld, September 18, 1887

101. The New York Sun, March 25, 1888

102. The New York World, March 18, 1888

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103. The Christian Union, January 5, 1888, p.8; The New York Sun, March 25, 1888

104. The Churchman, December 17, 1887, p.721; Charles B. Stover, Neighborhood Guild, in Montague, op cit., p.68

105. The New York Herald, September 18, 1887

106. The Christian Union, May 3, 1888, p.551

107. The New York press, May 12, 1889, p.18

108. Elmer Severance Forbes to Stanton Coit, December 28, 1887, quoted in Lowry, p.77. Papers, MSS 326, Series 6, Box 18, Folder 12

109. Stanton Coit to J. Franklin Jameson, February 3, 1888 J. Franklin Jameson Collection, Box 72, File 375, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.

110. Morrison I. Swift, Vicarious Philanthropy, (New York: pamphlet, 1889), p.15

111. ibid

112. Weinstein, op cit., p.97

113. George Cary White, op cit., p.56

114. The New York Press, May 12, 1889, p.18

115. Lowry, op cit., p.3

116. The Kindergarten Magazine and Pedagogical Digest, op cit., p.610

117. Papers, MSS 326, Series 6, Box 18, Folder 13-14

118. ibid

119. Stanton Coit, Neighbourhood Guilds: An Instrument of Social Reform, (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co., 1891; Reprint edition: Arno Press, 1974), p.82

120. The Christian Union, January 5, 1888, p.8

121. ibid

122. Morrison I. Swift, "The Working Population of Cities and What the Universities Owe Them," Andover Review, June, 1890, p.591

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123. ibid

124. James B. Reynolds, "A Charter of Democracy," Survey, March 9, 1212, p.190; Lowry, op cit., p.5

125. Morrison I. Swift, The Working Population, op cit., p.591

126. The New York Herald, September 18, 1887,; Stanton Coit, Neighbourhood Guilds, p.117-118

127. Coit, Neighbourhood Guilds, p.121

128. ibid, p.38-39

129. University Settlement Society Bulletin No. 1, January, 1892, p.11

130. Coit, Neighbourhood Guilds, p.89

131. The New York World, March 18, 1888

132. The New York Sun, March 25, 1888

133. Coit, Neighbourhood Guilds, p.136

134. University Settlement Society Bulletin No .1, January, 1892, p.11

135. Coit, Neighbourhood Guilds, p.125

136. ibid, p.11

137. Charles B. Stover, Neighborhood Guild, in Montague, op cit., p.68

138. Horace L. Friess, Felix Adler and Ethical Culture; Memories and Studies, ed by Fannia Weingartner, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), p.100. An address deliverd by Felix Adler on October 24, 1880.

139. Coit, Neighbourhood Guilds, p.90. One student of the guild remarked that "While the logic of insisting on neutrality in religion may appear elementary today, it was still an important distinction to the early settlement leaders and considered an unusual feature of the institution by the people of the neighborhood, particularly since the church mission constituted their only previous experience with resident charity workers." Harrison Graham Lowry, op cit., p.13. This emphasis upon the divisive character of religion in a pluralistic society offers only a partial explanation.

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Of perhaps equal importance was the personal difficulties many early settlement workers had with orthodox religion, a large number of whom left denominational churches before their involvement with settlement house work. Moreover, churches and scientific charities shared many of the same restrictions compared to what settlement workers viewed as the essential freedom to act. Because these organizations were part of past efforts they were viewed, by some, as an element of the problem rather than as a viable solution.

140. ibid

141. Papers, MSS 326, Series 8, Box 22, A.J. Kennedy Notes

142. Coit, Neighbourhood Guild, p.97

143. ibid, p.75

144. The Ethical Record, Vol. 1, April, 1888, p.29

145. Radest, op cit., p.109

146. Stanton Coit to J. Franklin Jameson, May 10, 1889, J. Franklin Jameson Collection, Box 72, File 375, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.

147. Coit, Neighbourhood Guilds, p.4

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163. Papers, MSS 326, Box 22, Series 8, Folder 1

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167. Edward King, "Neighborhood Guilds: An Instrument of Social Reform," Charities Review, Vol. 1 No. 1 December, 1891; Papers, MSS 326, Series 5, Box 17

168. ibid

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175. Papers, MSS 326, Series 8, Box 22 Folder 1, A.J. Kennedy Notes

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176. Report and Plan for the Winter's Work, University Settlement Society, November, 1893, p.11

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CHAPTER SIX

Throughout its long and distinguished history South Place had been a center of moral protest against theological dogmas as well as a refuge for "all varieties of unorthodox gatherings." On February 14, 1793, a group of Christian non-conformists known as Philadelphians or Universalists leased a chapel at Parliament Court, Bishopgate, from Huguenots exiled in London. Their first minister, Elhanan Winchester, was a native of Massachusetts and "a pioneer of the Universalist faith."[1] Denying the validity of the doctrine of hell which they regarded as "one of the most repulsive doctrines concerning the destiny of mankind," Winchester had gained "a following among those ready to turn from the austerities and barbarities of Calvinism."[2]

By the early years of the nineteenth century the Society had become "a center of Unitarian activity," and under the leadership of William Johnson Fox, it grew into an established and well-known London institution. His successor, Moncure Conway, was a Southern abolitionist and former Unitarian minister, who, at the request of Wendell Phillips, left the United States in April, 1863, "to lecture and persuade the English that the North is right."[3] Shortly after his arrival in London he accepted an invitation to speak at South Place, an opportunity which led to his own appointment as minister nine months later, and

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where he remained for more than twenty years.

According to Conway, "I did not preach as a candidate for the pulpit." But, as the weeks passed, "it became plain that I could not enter with zeal into the struggle in America. . .Although the only hope for even a distant benefit to the slave had seemed to travel with the Northern arms, the war became increasingly abhorrent to me. It was monstrous that the Southern negro should be forced into a conflict wherein he was the only innocent party. . . In America I should stand almost alone."[4].

In light of his own view regarding the circumstances in America, Conway's appointment proved a welcome opportunity to engage in work to which "I could bring some competency." Years later Conway indicated that "London had cordially offered me what my native country had not, a field for the exercise of the ministry for which my strange pilgrimage from slaveholding Virginia and Methodism to freedom and rationalism had trained me. So, despite Horace Greeley's reproach, reason bade me stay where I was wanted."[5].

Conway "had enjoyed the Emersonian florescence and brought its spirit at a critical time."[6]. The intellectual outlook he developed at South Place fostered its transition "to the status of a humanist ethical organism, free from all sectarian and theological fetters," a position quite congenial to the Society, whose own growth reflected "the history of radical dissent in England."[7].

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> Conway stood squarely for the right of free inquiry into the nature of man and of the universe, even if old systems of thought should be destroyed in the process. He saw the organized Church, both Catholic and Protestant, as a powerful, selfish, vested interest, throttling the life of its people, and he defied the Church. When he spoke of what religion was or should be, he grew vague because he refused to be bound; but he spoke of man with sureness, for man was his religion. . . Conway never considered himself a channel of Divine Mind and had always doubted the validity of the idealist philosophy. But he had believed in active social reform. He believed. . .in the perfectibility of the individual. Emerson's idea of the significance of the existing hour had seized his imagination and was to be embedded in all his teaching.[8]

When Conway first arrived at South Place he found, much to his surprise, "that many of his new English friends did not share his antislavery views, but that many more were interested in his powers as a liberal Unitarian preacher."[9] Then located in Finsbury, "the congregation contained no workingmen so-called, and the few artisans in it were persons of fair education."[10] Conway described the members as "mostly middle class people of literary tastes, and trained in families whose vital religion was the new Reformation. This Reformation of varied phases, some illusive, while those affecting freedom of thought steadily prevailed, had been fruitful in individual characters. I was the pastor of the veteran radicals even when they were too infirm to attend the chapel."[11]

It was to men and women brought up in

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> the radical and polemical schools, strong, fine characters, full of controversial zeal and ardor for reforms, that there entered the young Southerner; a student, not only of the English literature of that age, but of much curious and to them unknown learning, both from the far East and the far West; as full of enthusiasm for reforms as they, but with a hatred for polemics as for warfare. He in no way concealed his radical, and, as the English term was, rationalist, religious views and his hatred of theological systems;. . . ardent and enthusiastic in his study and belief in the new scientific and sociological discoveries, it was his province as a preacher and writer to transmute these into, not statements nor descriptions, but lessons and sermons appealing to the moral and religious senses of his public.[12]

Conway's association with South Place represented "one of those rare encounters between man and institution . . .Heretical London never produced a more felicitous union. The energies set loose made the old Unitarian chapel. . . the most pleasantly invigorating stopping place in metropolitan Infidelity for nearly two decades."[13] The success with which Conway managed this passage from one mode of belief to another converted South Place into "the most socially exalted and intellectually influential centre of radical religious thought in nineteenth century London."[14]

By historical tradition the minister had little to do with the fundamental government of the Society, a situation which suited Conway's expansive temperament while it allowed him to pursue his manifold interests. During the twenty-one years he spent at South Place Conway became a prolific

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writer, literary agent for Mark Twain and Walt Whitman, among others, biographer and transatlantic personality. His resignation in 1885 caused considerable emotional and intellectual concern among members of the congregation and led to a search for "the right minister-leader," a task which grew more difficult with each passing year.

At the age of fifty-two Conway decided it was time to turn his mind and spirit to other things. In his Autobiography, written twenty years later, he recalled that "I desired to leave the pulpit. I had been in that kind of work since I was nineteen; my twenty-one years at South Place chapel had enabled me to deliver my religious and ethical convictions with a certain completeness, and I had several works in view that demanded literary leisure."[15] Conway's decision to put down the mantle of the minister may have been influenced by his belief that circumstances in America now justified his return to "our native land." In The Centenary History of South Place, which he wrote in 1894, several years after he returned to that community, Conway described the reasons for his departure in terms that lend support to this conjecture.

> I was anxious to do some work for America, especially in revision of its history and in criticism of its organic laws. The Life of Thomas Paine remained to be written. My sons were in America, and other voices appealed. I was able to leave here a flourishing Society, which could not, it seemed, fail to find some leader of the new generation to bear it on to a larger life and

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fruitage.[16]

Upon his return to the United States Conway settled in New York where he inaugurated "a course of lectures in the University Club, and was fairly feted by old friends."[17] In London, the malaise resulting from his departure settled upon the congregation as "the South Place people, knowing they had lost Conway, were unhappy, for under his leadership a free religious society had evolved peacefully to its present advanced position. His pulpit had become an open platform for rationalistic, non-theological ethics and for social and historical teaching. The organization and work of the Society was possibly indebted, at least in part, to Felix Adler."[18]

As had occurred before the Society now confronted the departure of a strong leader without any thought of a successor. "The committee system at South Place, however, was some insurance against immediate collapse. Various well-known Secularists and humanists were invited to fill Conway's vacant desk for trial periods."[19] What complicated the decision was the split in the intellectual ranks of the Society, characteristic of that internal controversy, which, in one form or another marked its history. In large measure this internecine struggle remained hidden beneath the surface of Conway's harmonious relationship with the congregation. While he recognized its presence Conway chose to avoid any direct involvement. "I

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looked on all the camps as equally struggling with error, and could weigh without bias the value of each for human happiness. For as the vision of a heaven faded, the importance of the happiness of this world became paramount. I could realize any idol not worshipped by human sacrifice."[20].

The difficulties the Committee had in finding a successor were prolonged, lasting almost three years. Conway was exactly what the Society needed as a minister, given its intellectual and religious predilections. There were those who did not wish to see him leave, and once gone, sought his return. However, no direct appeal then could have secured this object as time was one of the points at issue.

In a letter written on December 3, 1885, seven months after Conway left England, Annie Besant confided to his wife, Ellen, that "he is dreadfully missed at South Place, and I do not see much likelihood of any thoroughly satisfactory successor."[21]. In a revealing passage from the same letter Besant exposed the real dilemma with her admission that "many of the older and more orthodox there could put up with his heresy, because they had grown into it, but they shrink from anyone as advanced and less familiar; while the more heretical ones don't approve of the theistic leanings which suit the first class."[22].

Allowing for sufficient time to pass could strengthen

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the possibility of his return. Fortifying this hope was the fact that, though deeply involved in his literary activities, Conway, nonetheless, maintained a lively correspondence with old friends and was ever ready with counsel. The success of this strategy lay in forestalling the appointment of a new minister and decrying the hardship this worked on the Society. His friends knew Conway well enough to realize that he was the kind of man who would, under the proper circumstances, respond to such an argument.

Mindful of the "divergence of opinion" within its ranks but equally responsive to the task at hand, the Committee, in its annual report for 1886, cautioned its members. "Permanently filling our platform satisfactorily is not by any means a simple matter. On the contrary every step requires considerable tact and judgement. . .The high reputation the Society has been fortunate enough to acquire demands that a certain level of discourse should be maintained at least."[23] The lack of "uniformity of thought and action" had become as much of a problem as the choice of a successor.

Then, in the early months of 1887, Conway "threw out a suggestion that was promptly acted upon." After conferring with Felix Adler "Conway agreed with him as to the suitability of Stanton Coit, a graduate in philosophy who had the advantage of a training in Germany. He had done an excellent piece of social service in the immigrant quarter

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of New York. Conway backed him warmly for South Place."[24.]

In receipt of Conway's suggestion the chairman of the Committee, at its meeting on May 13, 1887, and "with no accompanying explanation or provocation," introduced a motion "that Mr. Stanton Coyte of America be invited to take the services in July or September and that he be offered 10 pounds each Sunday for 4 Sundays."[25.] Much to his embarrassment, the vote resulted in a tie. In somewhat gentler tones, a second proposal was made in which "Mr. Stanton Coyte be written to first and asked whether he is likely to visit this country in July or September and if so whether it would suit him to address us for say 4 Sundays."[26.] This motion carried, but at its next meeting on May 20, and "after considerable discussion," the Committee reverted to its original proposal. The apparent confusion here resulted, in part, from the indecision about how to approach Coit, as they knew virtually nothing about the man they were inviting. They consistently misspelled his name until July 15. Considering the internal forces at work what may have framed much of the discussion was the question of whether to invite him at all!

On June 10 the chairman of the Committee "read a copy of a letter which he had written to Mr. Stanton Coyte; also that gentleman's telegram in reply which was No."[27.] However, on July 15, "a letter was read from Dr. Stanton Coit, also a cablegram saying that he would come in

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September."[28]

Upon his arrival in London Coit stayed at Toynbee Hall. "He delivered four discourses at South Place, speaking on the 4th on The Death of Socrates, the 11th on the Ethics of Shakespeare, and on the 18th and 25th on Ethical Culture as a Religion for the People."[29] Following this Coit requested "a conversazione in place of the usual monthly soiree be held on the twenty-sixth."[30] Coit received an enthusiastic response from the congregation and Spiller, the first historian of the Ethical Movement in England, later indicated that "the double address on Ethical Culture led to an invitation for Dr. Coit to become the minister of the Society."[31] In that discourse Coit interpreted for his audience the basic tenets of the American Ethical Movement.

> The highest thing is to love where there is the greatest need. . .Because fellowship with living men bears upon it the sovereign seal of the moral sanction, therefore will I know no other fellowship until that be perfected . . .Ethics is the science of good character and right conduct, and it is based on our moral experience and our moral judgment, and should be kept independent of all theology. . .We are pledged to no philosophical theory as to the nature of God and the universe, or as to the limits of human knowledge . . .We would leave the speculative thought of each individual as untrammelled as you do here at South Place, and assert that character and conduct are independent of philosophical speculations. . .Ethical Culture is a religion for the illiterate, because it intends and hopes to do away with illiteracy altogether; it sees that illiteracy ought not to be; furthermore,

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> it is demonstrating that it need not be . . .The power to do right is part of ourselves. It is as much a part of ourselves at least as the power to think, to see or to eat, and there is no more need to ask some superhuman being for it than for these. There is only need of exercising it, no matter how weak it may be. . .What, then, have we to offer? To the neglected, a friend; to those in moral danger, a guard; to the weak, encouragement; to the erring, self-respect; to the ignorant, knowledge; and unto the sorrowing, an inward joy.[32]

The Committee met on September 30, and in apparent agreement that Coit be offered the position, decided to call a special meeting of the members for October 17 "to consider a proposition as to the election of a minister." At that meeting the congregation agreed "that Dr. Stanton Coit be invited to occupy the platform for twelve months at a remuneration of 400 pounds, to which an amendment was proposed. . .to the effect that the remuneration. . .be 500 pounds."[33] The amendment originated in a discussion over whether Coit should receive the same salary as Conway enjoyed when he left. After some haggling the amendment passed.

Soon after his return to America Coit "received a unanimous invitation from the South Place Society to become their minister." The offer was not without conflict and Coit studied it carefully before committing himself. At the end of a letter to his mother on November 6 Coit disclosed "I am entirely undecided about London." With his work at

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the Guild receiving increased attention, Coit, weighing the move and what it could mean to him, indicated that "I may come home next week for a day on my way to Chicago and then stop again on my return the following week to New York."[34] As he had done on previous occasions, Coit now sought the benefit of counsel from family and friends. Later that month Coit wrote to Percy Hickson, who represented the Committee, and explained his decision, the contents of which he shared with Conway.

Coit informed Hickson that "I will on one condition accept the invitation South Place has so kindly extended to me. I make this condition because I believe compliance with it will prove as advantageous to the Society as to me. It is that the name be changed to: South Place Ethical Society."[35] Fully aware of the magnitude of his request as well as the possible strain it placed on the Society, Coit indicated that this "one change would define to the world the attitude into which you have advanced, better than ten years of lectures could do; while not to make the change would greatly check my usefulness. I frankly say I scarcely dare to hope you will do it, as you wrote me that much eloquence on my part and a long time would be required. But if that be so, I don't think I ought to come."[36] Having stated his position in rather uncompromising terms Coit sought to strengthen the argument, when, in closing, he told Hickson "I should like to say that my decision is based on

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my independent judgment, but I have the approval of Professor Adler and the other Ethical lecturers."[37].

The condition imposed by the young American reformer caught many members of South Place off guard and generated a certain resentment among a sizeable number. Yet, as Coit remarked years later, "for me at that time to have become the lecturer of any society which did not call itself ethical was a moral impossibility."[38]. What, perhaps, appeared most unusual about this transaction was that Coit forwarded his letter to South Place through Moncure Conway. Did Coit seek the advantage of Conway's support, drawing on his extensive knowledge of South Place as a barometer to the possible reaction his condition would elicit from the members? Or, did Coit wish to use Conway's position as a further inducement to the Society to accept his condition? However one wishes to regard this peculiarity in the communication Conway threw his support to Coit and urged the members "to let this young teacher have his way."[39].

Conway's letter was a rather astute political document, a kind of social polemic with something for everyone. It seemed to contain an implicit awareness that he was, for better or worse, now drawn into the Society's decision regarding Coit. Writing on November 23 "to my Friends at South Place," Conway informed them that Coit "has this day sent me a letter which he has written to Mr. Hickson, and requested me, if I approved of it, to forward it."[40].

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Accepting the position in which he found himself, mindful of his own role in initiating it, and anxious to discharge the responsibility thrust upon him, Conway told his friends "I have concluded to do so, and with it to forward Dr. Coit's wish, so far as I can.

Conscious of the situation the members faced, Conway sought to approach them as the trusted counselor they had made him. "It had occurred to me that I might, on an occasion fraught with importance to my beloved Society, fairly and without obtrusion address them directly, and give them my advice."[41] Before attacking the problem Conway sought to arrest the hope of those who still entertained the possibility of his return. "Since I left you I have been kept fairly well informed of the ups and downs of the Society;. . .and many a time felt fluttering in my breast a swallow-like longing to migrate again, and resume, if you would permit, my old desk. That, alas, is forever impossible, albeit I still hope to speak again for some Sundays at South Place."[42] If Conway had closed the door on that thought he hadn't nailed it shut.

Conway's "advice" drew its strength and effect from the emphasis he placed on Coit's attachment to the Ethical Movement and what it portended for the society, his own singular relationship with it, and the appeal he made to its historic traditions, to which, he trusted, the members felt a deep attachment. His opening cut was both psychological

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and political, aimed at what he knew to be a sensitive point of no mean significance. "My experience and observation have convinced me that South Place could hardly recover its old power unless it could find a right and true man for the work, notwithstanding the ability and culture of those who successively occupied its desk (which indeed have been remarkable)."[43.]

Having invoked the historic tradition of strong leadership and the power it once represented, he now sought to associate Coit with that line of succession. "While listening to Dr. Stanton Coit in the Ethical Society here, and observing his noble labours among the poor boys and girls, I was filled with an ardent desire that he should be heard at South Place. He appeared to me as your coming man."[44.] Navigating carefully, Conway, by enriching his original suggestion left the impression that, from the start, he viewed Coit as a potential candidate, while stopping short of an unequivocal endorsement. "My eyes have, indeed, been mistaken in such things before this, but it appears that in the present instance my judgement has been confirmed." Drawing his distant audience to him Conway presumed to interpret their own sentiments to coincide with his own. "You have also recognized the power, the fine spirit, the high moral tone, and the scholarship of this young minister, about which, in this city, there can be no two opinions among those who know him and his work."[45.]

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Turning his attention from Coit's social activism, which served to explain what appeared most visible about the character of the man, Conway now chose to interpret what this would mean at South Place. "From my interviews with him I have realized that if he were to settle in London it could not be as a mere successor to anyone. Were he to be merely an interesting appendix it were hardly worth while for you to have him. No; a strong man must always mean a new departure. He is not to finish another's statue but carve his own, embodying his own ideal."[46].

In one sense Conway's emphasis on Coit's personality set the stage for his approach to the central issue. "Those who have read my pamphlet printed among you, Unitarianism and its Grandchildren, will know that I regard this Ethical Movement as substantially one with the South Place idea. It is the most living moment now; and as South Place has for many years been informed by the spirit, I trust it will now gladly adopt the appropriate name."[47].

This was a strong statement for a man of Conway's spiritual persuasion yet so indicative of it. By endorsing the Ethical Movement, Conway, who frequently changed his religious clothing, lent his immense prestige to Coit's demand, clarifying for the members of the Society his own position in the hope that this would assist them to resolve theirs. Becoming, for the moment, one with his old congregation, Conway told his friends "it would be enough

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for me (were I a member of South Place, as I shall always be in one sense, in heart). . .that this man desires it. I would not constrain the man whom I ask to do work for me which must depend on his own knowledge, and his own perception of the best means to our common end. I would give him every freedom after giving him my faith."[48].

Employing a psychology tailored to the circumstances he addressed, Conway, in effect, asked the Society to trust in his judgment, to do what he would were this his decision. The faith to which he referred presupposed a rational outlook with little apparent regard for the spiritual and philosophical leanings he knew existed at South Place. All this remained hidden beneath Conway's historic identification with that institution. One is left to ponder whether at this climactic moment in a long letter, which Conway described as "a rather rapid and rambling one," he had actually pre-empted their decision. Given the relationship forged over twenty years, if this was his position, how could the Society now reject Conway's advice? Had the former minister indulged in a bit of deception when it came to the realities at South Place? Did he employ a shrewd combination of language and logic to displace what he knew were the very real factions within the Society? Had he taken the full measure of the implications which lay within Coit's proposal, or its actual chance of success? Was it just a change of name? Was the Ethical Movement simply

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another idol to worship? "I hope South Place had vitality enough to grow into many new names yet, representing as it were the annual rings on the growing tree. I hope some historian will one day read the whole religious history of England in the successive names of South Place, and find in its fruit the flavor of every truth which unfolded during its time."[49].

In a final burst of enthusiasm Conway joined the various threads of his argument in support of Coit and the Ethical Movement." Let him feel at once that he is not called on to abandon this new and living movement along with which he had grown up." Invoking the gods of South Place Conway moved his plea a step higher. This movement "is to him what Unitarianism was to Channing, Rationalism to Fox, and Transcendentalism to Emerson. Why, the Ethical Cause is Coit's young bride; they are in the very honeymoon; if he goes to you, you must welcome her with him; and I assure you she is sweet and pretty and will be greatly beloved by you all!"[50].

It is difficult to assess how well Conway actually knew Coit. It is hard to imagine two more contrasting personalities, each of whom came to South Place under totally different circumstances and possessed opposite temperaments. Conway was open, gregarious, balancing many interests, flexible; an extrovert who constantly played with new ideas. Coit was deeply serious, reticent, loyal to a

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single movement, with a tight-fisted disposition that tolerated little interference.

On the face of it they did not appear suitable for one another. Less than two years elapsed during which both men resided in New York City, each preoccupied with his own cause. Conway's daughter had worked with Coit at the Neighborhood Guild and, perhaps, shared her experiences. Yet, in the closing remarks of his letter to South Place Conway depicts a familiarity with Coit's situation and a personal association that appears striking, and, quite possibly, a bit pretentious.

> Dr. Coit will give up a good deal if he leaves here. He has a position of steadily increasing influence. When he returned from London lately there was such a welcome and joy that I had to persuade him not to decide at once about the London plan. But he has now decided, and he is a mildly inflexible man in such things. It will be a large personal sacrifice to part with him. Nothing but my love for South Place would have induced me to persuade him to go. But I cannot repress a deep conviction that this is the opportunity, this the crisis, for South Place.[51]

Throughout his letter Conway kept before him the crisis at South Place. His endorsement of Coit was the opportunity to resolve it and in a manner consistent with the historical development of this freethinking society. Moreover, Stanton Coit appeared to possess all the qualities necessary for such a task. Given his disposition for religious and philosophical speculation, which had led him to develop at

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South Place a "rationalistic, non-theological ethics," and influenced by his relationship with Adler, Conway saw the possibilities in transplanting the Ethical Movement to London. "It is the most living movement now," and had already broken ground in England with the establishment of the London Ethical Society. Why not South Place? It would put the Society once more in the forefront of radical opinion and this is the "old power" to which he referred.

Thinking in these terms allowed Conway to focus on the iconoclasm which was such a distinct feature of South Place rather than the contention that made the selection of a minister so difficult. It was in this sense that the Ethical Movement was, for him, an idol of the times. In the image of a growing tree he sought to convince his friends in London that now was the time for a change and this was the direction in which they should go. The successive names of the annual rings, taken in the context of the religious history of England, represented imagery capable of evoking the actual pre-eminence of the old joined to the hopeful reconciliation with the new. Conway wished to arouse their sense of expectation. As with each of those historical occasions, so now, South Place was on the verge of a new era.

In his use of descriptive language, of which he was a master, Conway presented a portrait of Coit that must have seemed hard to grasp. On the one hand he confronted the

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members with an arduous man, imbued with a new faith, and a social activist who works among the poor. Yet, this man cannot be "a mere successor of anyone," but is "a strong man" which "must always mean a new departure." While his characterization of Coit proved accurate Conway's description appeared sufficiently threatening to induce reasonable doubts in the minds of at least some members of the congregation.

At their meeting on December 9, 1887, the Committee at South Place discussed both the condition of Coit's acceptance and Conway's endorsement. They determined to let Conway know "informally. . . what steps the Committee were taking."[52] In conclusion the members scheduled a general meeting for December 21, in preparation for which "the letters from Dr. Coit and Mr. Conway be printed and appended to the circular."[53]

Inasmuch as there is no record of the December 21 meeting, a problem compounded by the absence of the Annual Report for the year 1887, it is difficult to assess the reaction of members to the decision which awaited them. All indications, however, lead to the conclusion that it was a boisterous event. In its Annual Report the following year the Committee noted that "in accordance with his (Coit's) wish, and in fact as a condition precedent to his accepting the office, a resolution had been passed to change the name of the Society. This change, naturally, did not meet with

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unanimous approval, and some discussion arose with regard to it at the Annual meeting in February.

On February 16 Hickson reported to the Committee that "no official reply had been received from Dr. Coit but that private letters had been received in which Dr. Coit had expressed his willingness to undertake the duties at South Place; also Dr. Coit had at my request telegraphed that he would come in September."[54]. At the meeting of the Committee on February 24 new officers were chosen for the ensuing year and a motion passed requesting the Secretary "to write again to Dr. Coit asking him for a formal acceptance of the position of Minister."[55]. Coit's letter arrived in March and indicated that "he would be in his place on the first Sunday in September."[56]. On April 12 the Committee met "to consider the alteration of the rules" made necessary by the terms of Coit's employment "and subsequently duly confirmed on May 31."[57]. Correspondence during the intervening period before Coit's arrival was light, but on August 13 the committee met to discuss his "wish for certain alterations to the vestry. It was decided that as far as practicable Dr. Coit's wishes with regard to the vestry be carried out."[58].

As the Society awaited its new minister one thing seemed clear. Coit owed his appointment to Conway's endorsement and not, as Spiller implied, in somewhat oversimplified terms, to the former's discourse on Ethical

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Culture as a Religion for the People. As enlightening as that address may have been the condition Coit set down overshadowed whatever impact his ideas had on the members. Furthermore, there seems little doubt that the Society chose an American rather than "an unusually successful fellow-countryman" on the basis of Conway's support of Coit as "your coming man."[59] And, as Conway reminded them, the choice of Coit appeared consistent with the American presence at South Place, historically responsible for the infusion of the ideas which proved vital to the intellectual growth of the Society. Despite their resilience to new ideas the members rejected the word culture, it having no root in their own tradition. They accepted the path offered to them but determined to retain their position as an independent center of thought. The future lay at hand.

Across the Atlantic there occurred a celebration, altogether different, but no less apprehensive. In both places there existed the strong feeling of "something attempted, something done." The announcement of Coit's appointment to South Place appeared in the April, 1888 edition of the Ethical Record which concluded that "perhaps the most important occurrence of the past year, if it be considered in relation with the changes it implies and portends, is the departure of Dr. Coit from his field of labor in New York.[60] On May 13 Stanton Coit delivered his farewell address to the season's last public meeting at the

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Ethical Culture Society, the full text of which appeared in the Record.

Coit described the occasion as "a double festival, the birthday of our Society and the sending of our first missionary to a foreign land."[61] In a reference "to the gray light of duty approaching," he spoke of South Place as "a plain, old-fashioned building of brick, named for the street it is in, midway, as if partisan neither of the rich nor the poor, but mediator, between the East End and the West. This chapel bids fair to become identified with our movement."[62]

Though he had surely never received such a notice, Coit drew this conclusion both from his own interpretation of the progress which marked the recent history of South Place as well as the implications he attached to the Society's willingness to accept the condition he imposed. Coit saw in South Place.

> a religious society. . . whose mental growth. . . is clear, logical and direct, away from theology towards an exaltation of right living into an enthusiasm. . . Until ten years ago its position was that of theism and freethought. But in the last ten years Mr. Conway's own mind outgrew theism, and he brought his congregation to see with him that belief in a personal God or immortality is not necessary to life and hope, but when regarded as such is a cause of discord among men. . . In his last discourse there Mr. Conway pointed to America, believing that this, the home of all races, would be the cradle of a universal religion. Upon his return to America. . .he recognized in

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> our movement at least the germ of the future religion, and he wrote his people so. Through him two of our lecturers, beside Professor Adler, were invited to speak at South Place. More than this, in Mr. Conway's lecture on Unitarianism and its Grandchildren, he pointed to us as the heir of the future. . .All these circumstances were preparing them to unite with us.[63]

To Stanton Coit this preparation explained why "they were ready to receive most sympathetically the outline I tried to present to them last September of Ethical Culture as a Religion for the People."[64] In his own mind when South Place extended him an invitation to become its minister this demonstrated "how they had already grown in unity of mind among themselves and with us."[65] As to the specific circumstances of his decision Coit revealed that

> I told them, I would not come without the consent of the four other Ethical lecturers; that on no account would I break away from the Ethical Union; if I came I should only come sent by the Ethical Societies. I felt the time for separate freethinking societies was past. I had never belonged to any church in my life; the Ethical Society was the first religious body I had ever united with, and as it gave me room to work and think and satisfy my need of moral fellowship, I should never leave it. It was with this understanding they invited me to come. But still I feared I might be separating myself too much from our Union. I agreed with the other lecturers that unless the name should be changed to South Place Ethical Society I ought not to go.[66]

When the members of South Place yielded to "this condition" Coit saw their decision as the final indication

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of a willingness to join the American Ethical movement. "Certainly they have given evidence that they are in good faith a sister Society of ours."[67] While Coit's address provided an explanation of "the circumstances under which it happens that one of your lecturers is to take charge of an Ethical Society in London," the statement went far beyond "the relation of South Place within itself to us."[68] He indicated, for the first time, in comprehensive detail, the political mission he discerned as the essential purpose of the Ethical Movement in England. And, in so doing, Coit marked off an agenda that would, in one form or another, characterize his activities for the next twenty-five years.

> There is no country in the world that has greater need of our movement, and in a certain sense is riper for it. Yet none where the outlook is less hopeful. The problem there is difficult and complicated; it is partly political, partly moral, and in great part sentimental. It is political because of the state Church, which through its recognition by the government gains a prestige and influence which permit it utterly to eclipse every effort at religious organization outside itself; . . .It is a question of morals, because almost the whole nation seem to think it justifiable to give assent to doctrines they have long ceased to believe, and to take part in ceremonies which have no inward meaning to them. It is a question of sentiment, so far as the beauty of the music and architecture and associations in memory charm and attract them. . .The ethical movement in England must wrestle with this question of a national church, which, as soon as the Irish difficulties are at an end, will become the centre of political controversy. The Church now does not

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> include half the nation, it does not embrace the religious life of the people, and yet assumes such pretensions. Our Ethical Society, I verily believe, offers the solution of the difficulty. We are not a sect, we are a universal church or we are nothing! . . . There is in England as well as in America a longing in all denominations to unite. Already they are co-operating in practical philanthropy; let them now all join hands on the fundamental principles of ethics, and, behold! while still in their separate church clinging to their old beliefs although no longer as essential, they have become one vast Society for Ethical Culture, a body well worth, if any might be, of the state protection and support. I have not the slightest ground for believing that our movement would succeed in such an effort in England, I only mean it must assert its right to lay claim to such a mission, its fitness to become the national church, by including all others. . .I say, in England such would be our task. Ultimately it will be the same here, but it will be longer before the question of a national church comes to the foreground in America.[69]

Coit believed these ideas "are very wide-spread in England already." He counted among their adherents the broad church people and the Positivists, who, while successful"in crushing theological prejudices and pushing to the front humanitarian thought. . .have failed to organize a growing church." He assumed the English workingmen, "judging from the orators they cheer at their clubs, are secularists." On the basis of this line of reasoning he concluded that "ethical culture. . .if it receive the guidance of wise hands, might therefore become what other

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efforts have failed to be, the rallying point of a new moral life for the nation."[70.]

In this imaginative and highly personalized interpretation Coit outlined the "wider significance" he attached to "sending the first missionary to a foreign land. It means that we have got a foothold for our work and organization in England."[71.] Stanton Coit viewed the Ethical Movement as more than a catalyst for change. It was the representative force for a new religious compound in the line of succession with historical Christianity. He saw in the activities of the ethical societies, both here and abroad, with their definite and sympathetic attitudes toward social and political reforms, imbued with the spirit of religion but without its dogmas, the seedbed of this religious progression. The historical forces at work he envisioned as preparatory to "a new social revelation, for which, however, the ages of Christian development have been preparing men's hearts and intellects."[72.] It was Coit, who, upon his return to England, actively championed the belief that "such fellowships will be the mother of thorough and permanent social reforms in politics, in education, and in family and industrial life."[73.]

By inaugurating the missionary activity he viewed as important to the growth of the ethical societies, Coit formulated a unique response to the essential themes of Ethical Culture as an international movement: "the need for

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moral reconstruction, the evolution of internationalism, and the effort to work out a dynamic relationship between cultural differences and a continuity of concerns."[74] That response, like the decision itself, emanated from his own perception that, in the condition of England lay the mission of Ethical Culture.

While the Ethical Record attached importance to the new opportunity which South Place represented it, nevertheless, regretted Coit's departure. As Adler's assistant he had proven invaluable. In his farewell address Coit paid glowing tribute to Adler, providing some indication of the influence the founder had exercised throughout the course of these two years. "Since I have been with you I have never undertaken anything, even the slightest, without getting first the advice and consent of a man always ready to listen, a man as tender and considerate towards the trifling needs of his friend, as he is just and wise and devoted to the mighty cause of the whole world's progress. His hand has steadied me daily; his far-seeing thought has warmed me; his character has enlarged me."[75] Apparently, the two men, of such marked personalities, found a way to minimize their differences.

Years later, while gathering information for "certain portraits," Adler reflected on Coit's decision. "Why did he go to England? Why did he expatriate himself? Was it the success, the solidity of the British Empire that imposed on

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his imagination? At any rate he aspired to be more English than the English, and therein he committed a fatal error. He had great influence at the time he left America, and he had little or no influence on the other side."[76].

On the face of it the question seems unusual, almost out of place, and raises the issue of Adler's own role in Coit's decision. Yet, it is one of more than passing interest, and difficult to answer. In large measure Coit did seem fascinated by what he took to be the condition of England. In an effort to explain Coit's later activities in London Harold Blackham pointed out that "it should be remembered that Coit was an American and the English Establishment has a significance to interested Americans which an Englishman would not think of taking very seriously. The American religious statesman sees the theoretic possibilities of the Establishment; without a deep knowledge of the English situation it cannot be recognized that they are not practical politics."[77]. On the eve of his departure for South Place Coit's imagination seemed quite enchanted by "the theoretic possibilities of the Establishment," and he spoke of the situation as though it entailed little more than the reconciliation of practical problems.

It was more than the solidity of the British Empire which appealed to Coit. Directly related to this fascination with the Establishment was the fact that in the

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condition of England Coit saw the very ground upon which to test Ethical Culture as an international movement. Given the fullness to which the Society had grown, and persuaded by his own particular turn of mind of the opportunity which lay open to him, Coit chose to embrace that dimension, with the result that he came to cherish the ultimate possibility, "its fitness to become the national church." Fearful of being regarded as merely another sect, he declared "we are a universal church or we are nothing!"

With respect to his position at the Guild Harrison Graham Lowry argued that "Coit's ultimate concern lay with organizing an ethical community in the sense of a formal congregation of rational religionists, and much as he was dedicated to the settlement idea his greatest loyalty was to the Society for Ethical Culture."[78.] Coit himself indicated that "the Ethical Society was the first religious body I had ever united with, and as it gave me room to work and think and satisfy my need of moral fellowship, I should never leave it."

Reinforcing this explanation, as well as his own position, was Coit's devotion to the Emersonian prescription of "a new church founded on moral science, at first cold and naked, a babe in a manger again. . . the church of men to come without shawms and psaltery or sackbut. . . and it will fast enough gather beauty, music, picture, poetry."[79.] What appealed most profoundly to Coit was Emerson's plea that

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"Pure ethics is not now formulated and consecrated into a cultus, a fraternity with assemblings and holy days, with song and book, with brick and stone. Why have not those who believe in it left all for this?"[80]. Such sentiments, active and alive at the end of his life, were a constant reminder of the true purpose Coit saw in Ethical Culture and surely influenced his decision.

Lowry is right in his assessment of Coit's loyalty to the Society, but there is another factor at work here which may serve as a response to Adler's question. The opportunity presented by South Place became the occasion for Coit to realize his original desire, namely, to preside over an Ethical Society of his own. The trade-off to which Adler refers with respect to Coit's influence may well stand as the true mark of his loyalty. However, were he successful, Coit's standing in the Ethical Movement would more than compensate for this temporary loss of stature in America.

From all indications there was little, if any, pressure placed on Coit to accept this offer by the Society. And there does not appear to have been a conflict of loyalty between the Guild and the Society, for as I have demonstrated elsewhere, Coit regarded the work of the Guild as an integral part of his responsibilities to the Ethical Culture Society of New York. The resolution of these questions lay in Coit's own conception of the kind of community South Place represented, its potential to become,

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in fact, "a formal congregation of rational religionists" along the lines he envisioned, as well as the future role it would assume in carrying forward the essential themes of Ethical Culture as an international movement. Coit was as concerned about his own future in the movement as he was about the nature of the opportunity presented to him, and this proved to be the source of his hesitation over whether to accept it.

That Coit discussed the matter with "the four other Ethical lecturers" seems quite appropriate, considering his own dependence on advice and support, as well as the magnitude of the decision. That Adler concurred in the final decision also appears plausible. He was not beyond suppressing whatever personal misgivings he may have had, and already expressed, in the face of Coit's desire to accept the appointment and the acknowledged consent of the other lecturers. Furthermore, there is every reason to believe that the condition set down for his acceptance was the result of this collective wisdom.

Lowry's claim that "Adler sent him to London for six weeks in the fall of 1887 to begin the establishment of the first Ethical Society in Great Britain" appears to rest on circumstantial evidence, part of which is clearly inaccurate. The London Ethical Society, which Coit helped to organize, was already in existence when he spoke at South Place, "the active work of (that) Society designed to begin

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in November, 1886, at Toynbee Hall," and whose first Annual Report came out for the year 1886/87.[81] It owed its existence primarily to the work of those young philosophers Coit met the previous year, most of whom "belonged to the academic world," and whose ideas and activities bore the stamp of English influence.

While Adler certainly knew of Coit's visit to South Place there is no evidence that he sent him for the purpose of evaluating that society as a potential candidate for the American Ethical Movement. Adler himself had spoken at South Place and was aware of the resistance such an idea would generate. What seems more plausible, especially in light of Alder's later interrogative, was the influence exercised by Conway, perhaps inadvertently, but in a manner not unlike that he used with the members of South Place. It was Conway who first proposed Coit as a possible candidate, interviewed him, apparently long enough to conclude that, for those at South Place, he was "your coming man." Once having accepted the offer Coit forwarded his reply through Conway to insure the acceptance of the terms he set down as well as to solidify his own position in a society to which he brought very definite ideas.

The decision to go to South Place was, in essence, Coit's determination and did not evolve as part of a grand scheme contrived by Alder to bring South Place into the American orbit. If anything, this notion, to the extent

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that is surfaced, did so only after Coit arrived in London, and proved a source of irritation between him and the older members of the Society. It was Coit's own evaluation of the possibilities resident in England and at South Place, reinforced by the strong desire for his own society, and enhanced by its potential contribution to the international aspect of Ethical Culture which convinced him to take the position.

Despite Adler's misgivings about Coit's decision there were cogent reasons why he did not press them more forcefully. Earlier references alluded to their temperament and disposition, "so different in manner. . .and so much alike in strength of will. "Adler's scrutiny of Coit bordered on the skeptical, and, in the beginning, the younger man chafed under the restrictions. That Coit turned a plaintive command "to work among the poor" into a national conquest strengthened his position while it reinforced his powers of determination. As long as he remained in New York Coit would be Adler's assistant, so the lure of independence, regardless of public expressions of affection, had a powerful appeal to a man of his strong personality.

Whereas two years ago personality separated the two men, now it was more likely to be a matter of principle. A close examination of Coit's farewell address indicates that "while essentially in sympathy with the American ethical movement, his views on many matters began to differ from

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those of Adler."[82.] In the context of Coit's decision these differences became a matter of importance. As Susan Budd indicated "Coit was a socialist, and socialism was an integral part of the united moral community that he hoped the ethical movement would build. But Adler was a pronounced and aggressive anti-socialist, and an anti-feminist. . .And Coit would have based his ethical church on a continuity with the Christian tradition, which he knew that Adler would inevitably have opposed."[83.]

While attending one of Coit's Sunday services, Adler later recounted, "I was amazed at the sort of positiveness with which he substituted Truth, spelled with a capital letter, for Jehovah."[84.] When Coit's Ethical Movement appeared some years later, Adler noted that "the striking fact about the book is the lack of discrimination between the author's personal opinions and the movement for which he speaks. There is very little to indicate that there are other views not in conformity with those expressed in the statement of principles which the book interprets."[85.]

After two years there appeared the seeds of pronounced differences in the way each man viewed the mission of the Ethical Movement. At times Adler bristled in the face of Coit's activities and later recorded sentiments which apply, only less substantially, to the content of his farewell address. "He bases his teaching on values actually experienced, and that, too, by the generality of mankind.

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In this way he thinks of supplanting the Church of England by Ethical Culture."[86] To Adler, Coit's "divagations illustrate the absence of first principles, the vain effort to find actualities that could serve as objects of worship."[87] If Coit appeared anxious for a change, perhaps, no less so than Adler, Budd draws the conclusion, based almost entirely on the force of these differences, that "when Adler recommended Coit to Conway as his successor at South Place, it must have seemed a solution to the inevitable clash between the two men."[88]

For all the deliberation which informed his decision, Stanton Coit, nevertheless, viewed South Place as a fresh opportunity to fashion a new career. "The first results were encouraging. The attendance improved. Coit's speaking was admired. He was eloquent and had a voice of exceptional quality. He was an energetic worker, ready to undertake a full measure of Sunday duty."[89] In opening its Annual Report for 1888 the Committee announced that "there is indeed but one fact of importance to put on record, the coming amongst us of Dr. Stanton Coit, as permanent Minister, and the event is yet too recent for its full significance to be appreciated, although the results, both moral and material, are already sufficiently obvious to warrant an expression of satisfaction at the course taken at the end of last year."[90]

The full significance of Coit's presence became

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apparent quickly, for no sooner had he arrived than the winds of change began to blow through South Place. At first he engaged peripheral issues, with an eye toward having "matters arranged more reverently." He wanted to appoint ushers, such persons as he thought suitable; to curtail the reading of notices from the platform as much as possible, and to remove the placards announcing work outside the Society during Sunday services. He requested the congregation "not to dissent during meetings from the views of the lecturer, and to refrain from standing outside the doors of the chapel if they disliked the practice of hymn-singing."[91.]

From the outset Coit regarded South Place as an integral part of the Ethical Movement. And, within a year's time, he proposed changes which sought to remove the internal vestiges of a religious society so as to prepare the way for the ascendancy of ethical philosophy. His activities brought him into contact with the inner workings of the Society, as almost no aspect of its life escaped Coit's attention. He requested that the arrangement for children's classes on Sunday morning be placed entirely in his hands; ordered an increase in the number of ethical works "on sale in the library," and boldly suggested that "a report of our progress be sent to the Ethical Record, a motion "which the Committee deferred for the present."

Shortly after his arrival Coit elaborated on "the

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grounds upon which he holds the term Ethical to be more appropriate to, and distinctive of, the objects and aims of the Society than the word Religious."[92.] This led to several meetings "at which various opinions were expressed, and schemes of work discussed," culminating in a Special General Meeting of the Society on December 13, 1888, for the purpose of considering "the desirability of forming an Ethical Union."[93.] After "an animated but amicable discussion," the members decided to appoint "a Special Committee," whose recommendations were subsequently adopted. Following this lively session Coit organized a conference devoted to the presentation and discussion of papers on ethical subjects. Having generated a certain momentum Coit then suggested that he undertake "to conduct an Ethical class on the second and fourth Monday evenings."[94.] And, to provide for "the cultivation in children of moral sentiment," he established an Ethical Sunday School. The winds of change had reached gale proportions.

The new "ethical" activities of the Society, what the Annual Report for 1889/90 termed "subsidiary work," proved unable to support themselves without financial assistance and so imposed new burdens on the organization. Yet, this did not appear divisive, insofar as the Committee seemed in agreement that "work so eminently in harmony with the objects and principles of the Society, ought not to be hampered in their efforts for want of means, or to be called

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upon to collect donations for it."[95] Whatever financial strain the Society experienced neither slackened the pace of changes already agreed upon nor deterred Coit from initiating new ones.

The ethical class which began in January, 1889, used as its text Coit's translation of Professor von Gizycki's Ethical Philosophy. The women at South Place established "a Committee for the discussion of various schemes of Practical Philanthropy," after which they "convened a meeting in support of Trade Unions for Women."[96] A proposal to form a girl's club bore fruit in March and proceeded to offer classes in dancing, dress-making, music and part-singing. At a meeting in April Coit suggested the formation of a Junior Ethical Union and by the following March there were forty-five members.

The Junior Ethical Union assumed the same format and adopted aims similar to the clubs Coit organized at the Neighborhood Guild in New York and at Leighton Hall, Kentish Town. The principal aim of the Union was "to join together the younger members. . . and their friends, for the purpose of studying and discussing Ethical problems and principles; of assisting in and undertaking such practical work as especially tends to elevate character, and of promoting good fellowship among its members."[97] The fundamental principles to which the members subscribed embodied that ethical philosophy which now permeated the far corners of

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South Place. The early meetings were carefully orchestrated by Coit and devoted almost entirely to the implementation of the aims. However, when he addressed them on October 16 Coit inquired about "the feasibility of carrying out a local Ethical club," which led to a motion by Gustav Spiller that resulted in some activity.

At the time of Coit's appointment life at South Place revolved around an almost one hundred year old tradition distinguished by the separate roles assigned to minister and Committee, each of whom had specific and well-defined responsibilities in the eyes of the members. The minister was not a member of the Society, nor did he serve on any committees. His principal responsibility was to prepare Sundays, which meant delivery of a discourse and arrangement of musical anthems that in their general effect would contribute to uplifting the life of the community. These specific duties afforded him a great deal of free time with which to engage in other activities. Whereas Conway used this time to pursue his myriad social and literary interests, Coit applied his administrative and organizational abilities to the internal transformation of South Place.

Coit's departure from the traditional role of the minister occasionally brought him into conflict with the Committee, as well as some of the older members, and represented, in their minds, a challenge to the very system

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of government upon which the Society depended. Having come from an environment activated by social reform, Coit encountered some resistance in preparing South Place to move in that direction. During the year, Coit, at times, expressed a desire to function in various capacities, which, members believed, infringed on the jurisdiction of the Committee and so challenged the customary relationship between the minister and the community.

In a move which must have caught many by surprise, the Committee, in May of 1889, approved a change in the rules to the effect that "the Minister for the time being shall be deemed to be a member of the Society."[98] One immediate consequence of this decision, rather casually mentioned in the Annual Report, was that Coit served on the Hymn Book Revision Committee during the period 1889/90. For an organization so tightly bound by tradition this represented a significant breakthrough. The Ethical lecturer had, at once, "stamped his personality on the society he was creating."[99]

Coit's first year at South Place was one of breath-taking activity, a time of solid achievement about which he could feel justifiably proud. While he devoted the majority of his time to the work of the Society, other interests, of a collateral nature, drew his attention. He became an Associate of Toynbee Hall, met with J.H. Muirhead to discuss the possibility of editing an Ethical Review, and began to

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explore avenues of active involvement with the London Ethical Society. In a surprisingly short period of time Coit had shifted the focus of concern at South Place "from intellectual discussions to ethical inspiration," all the while encouraging "the members to start guilds for their own children and the children of the poor."[100] In an assessment he would have endorsed The Echo of London described South-place as an environment where "there is no theological straight-lacings. South-place cares nothing for forms, everything for ideas. Liberty of conscience and intellectual freedom are its watchwords. The dissemination of ethical culture is its mission in the world. South-place is a temple, not of dogma, but of nineteenth century humanism."[101]

In the midst of converting South Place into "a temple . . . of nineteenth century humanism," Coit organized "a club consisting of eight working lads, meeting once a week in a private drawing room."[102] This small gathering became the nucleus of the Leighton Hall Neighbourhood Guild, situated in Kentish Town, "an extensive and populous section of the Metropolis." A squalid area of London, Kentish Town "was once the dwelling place of well-to-do families long since removed to Hampstead and Highgate, or tempted even further by new lines of suburban railways."[103] Established in 1889, "the original home of the guild was a small building named Milton Hall, from which the members migrated

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to a larger room, hitherto utilized in the Primitive Methodist interest, finally settling down in the premises on Leighton Crescent."[104].

As described by a writer for the Pall Mall Gazette, Leighton Hall, which the Guild occupied in January, 1890, "is two houses thrown into one, and with a gateway and carriage drive occupies a distinguished position in the neighborhood. It stands in its own grounds, although owing to their shape, they scarcely afford enough space for a tennis court."[105]. The dwelling, large and spacious, contained twenty-four rooms, "half of which are used for the recreations of the clubs or as classrooms." Furnishing the house, while no mean feat, benefitted partly from "voluntarily contributions. . .and partly by grants from the funds of the club."[106]. Prominent among the donations was a piano, the gift of Mr. Felix Moscheles, which belonged to his father, "the composer, and a friend of Mendelssohn."

A portion of Leighton Hall also served as a University Settlement, "half of the house being used as a residence by a number of university graduates who devote leisure hours to the work of the Guild."[107]. One visitor to these quarters remarked that "the rooms are as little suggestive of rough horseplay and mere loutish riot as of goody-goody talk and sentimental weakness. There is nothing of the barrack about them, but in their simple adornment taste is duly tempered with a severe simplicity befitting the resort of those who

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come to learn pleasantly and to enjoy themselves rationally."[108] A part of the house "is occupied by Dr. Coit's own modest menage, in which the only positive luxury is the Broadway grand in the sitting-room, a sign of the owner's musical proclivities."[109]

By the end of 1891 the Guild consisted of five clubs; "one for young men, another for young women, a third for persons of both sexes, chiefly married folks, a fourth for little girls, and a fifth for small boys."[110] In every other respect, except where cultural circumstances dictated some slight alteration, the Guild at Leighton Hall resembled that in New York, including "the exemplary manifesto, Order is our basis, improvement our aim, and friendship our principle."[111] Here, too, Coit sought "to do, in fact, for those who have been pupils of elementary schools what Eton, Harrow, and Rugby do for the sons of the wealthy classes."[112] As the writer for the Echo concluded, the Guild "believes in the moral effects of mere merriment. . . Now that is sound philosophy."[113]

It had been two years since Coit left the United States and the active life he pursued seemingly left little time for recreation. Accordingly, in a letter written on September 11, 1890, he informed the Committee that, "he wished to be away for nine weeks from November in order . . .to visit my aged parents in America."[114] Before leaving, however, Coit requested a general meeting be held

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"to discuss the question of . . .our Society joining the Union of Societies for Ethical Culture."[115] The meeting, which took place on October 23, generated lively discussion, but the question failed to receive the necessary support. Several weeks later, and somewhat disheartened by the outcome, Coit departed for America.

Coit's arrival in Ohio for the Christmas holidays proved a welcome respite from his labors in London. The Ohio State Journal greeted him as a prophet who was "not without honor. . .in his own country and among his own people," and expressed the hope that "he will give us an opportunity to learn more of his work among the poor of London and New York."[116] He readily obliged, and on December 12 spoke at the First Congregational Church where he discussed his work before an audience which included "many of his old friends and neighbors in this city."[117]

Upon his return to South Place Coit delivered a discourse on the Leighton Hall Neighbourhood Guild at the conclusion of which he suggested that a special collection be taken up to aid in its support, a proposal the members "considered undesirable." Coit's efforts to generate such support touched a sensitive nerve, especially in light of the fact that he regarded the Guild as beyond the purview of the Society. There were at this time about six hundred members.

At the meeting of June 2, 1891, Coit presented to the

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Committee a series of proposals which they felt "implied changes so considerable that the Committee thought it desirable to refer them to the Society. By the time this conclusion had been reached the summer recess was at hand, and with the assent of Dr. Coit, a general meeting was fixed for the third week in October."[118]. The most significant of the proposals made by Coit was his request to become a member of the Committee and "ex-officio member of all sub-committees." His petition for a leave of absence from February thru May of the following year, "to lecture for Dr. Alder," while resented by some, nevertheless, required the approval of a general meeting of all the members. Before reaching its conclusion to submit the entire matter to the Society the Committee itself held two special meetings in June, at the end of which they requested Coit "to make a statement to the members."

While "the Committee are anxious so far as may be practicable to meet his views," on the substantive issue, however, it passed a resolution to the effect that "this Committee are not prepared to recommend the Society alter the rules."[119]. And, at a meeting on July 7, despite certain clarifications, the Committee refused Coit's request to serve "as Dr. Adler's substitute," and referred the question to the general meeting previously scheduled. On August 4 the Committee requested Coit "to state formally in a letter the application he wished made to the general

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meeting," a step made necessary by the apparent confusion among the members themselves.

In a letter to the Committee written on September 8, Coit, in somewhat confused and disconnected fashion, placed himself at the center of the turmoil which by then existed. In what appeared at first as a conciliatory move, Coit reversed his position and "decided that I ought not to try to urge my wishes upon the Society. I hear of so much dissatisfaction with my lectures on the part of at least an influential minority. . .there is such difficulty in raising the necessary funds to pay the regular expenses, that it would be presumption in me to ask a consideration of the measures I should like to see carried through."[120] Adroitly, Coit played on this issue by what he knew already to be the case. "If such measures were carried through, it could be only by way of unpleasant and unprofitable discussion, and possibly of splitting up the Society into hostile factions."[121] While seeming to reach for the high ground he said "at the expense of harmony and unity I feel that I have no right, considering that the Society is not prosperous under my lectureship, to push my claims."[122]

Then, in a tone of anger and resentment, Coit declared, "I should have resigned long ago, so distasteful to me has been the manner of criticism I have often received, so discouraging the indifference of the Society to nearly every practical suggestion I have ever made, and so conscious am I

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of my own ill success as an entertaining lecturer. I should have resigned months ago, except I felt it might injure the Society still more to be left so soon again without any regular lecturer."[123]. While he indicated that "I wish my resignation might take effect January 1, 1892," Coit stopped short of a permanent and irretrievable break, when, with a presumption he had earlier discounted, remarked that "I shall remain in London, and should be glad to lecture for you occasionally after my return from America next June, if you should have any difficulty in finding lecturers."[124]. He closed his letter on the poignant note that "I would rather be one of you as a member than be the minister."

Given the substance and context of his letter Coit drastically altered the circumstances. By personalizing the issues he distorted them. In submitting his resignation he confronted the Society with a challenge so radical as to bring to the surface all the latent antagonism his programs and methods had generated. What is more, he narrowed the ground between friend and foe to such an extent that he precipitated a constitutional crisis. Who, in fact, would control the Society?

At its meeting on September 17, and following serious discussion of his letter, the Committee indicated that "the ground taken differing somewhat from the Chairman's impressions after his recent interviews with Coit, it was considered that some means should be taken to hear the views

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of Dr. Coit before coming to any decision regarding his communication."[125] The Committee, thereupon, invited Coit to meet with them on September 22," or on the first subsequent date that may be convenient to him."

At the meeting on September 22 Coit expanded upon several of the points raised in his earlier correspondence to the Committee and reflected upon the nature of his own appointment and tenure. His testimony to the Committee begs comparison with his farewell address. In a forthright and less combative mood Coit "thought it was very unfair that the Society should have elected him after hearing only four discourses, and annual re-election of the minister would have been more expedient." He reiterated his conclusion "that many members of the Society were greatly dissatisfied with his work, for he had been practically told so by members whom he considered able to judge." Further, he indicated "he was unacquainted with the members of the Society but thought persuasion would enable him to become one of the Committee, and he saw no other way to either get-acquainted with the Society or to get the things he wanted done." He complained about the "response to his wishes and as far as he could tell his projects were not even seriously entertained. "One such project, The International Journal of Ethics, received little if any support and he "even suffered pecuniary loss in consequence." It seemed obvious to him that "the things he cared for the Society did not."

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If it was only "a personal question he deferred it, but lately there appeared a danger that the Society would suffer, and then it seemed to him his duty to go. . .He now saw that the mechanism of the Society would not be changed and there was not any caring for the special features of an Ethical Society or any appreciation of the international aspect of the Ethical movement."[126].

Coit brought up "the moral instruction of the young . . . and the poor support the Sunday School received from the members." When pressed about his resignation Coit replied by saying "he wished to place the Society in a free position." When asked "if his exclusion from the Committee was the chief reason for his action he said yes it was, because it was only by that method that he could talk out the things he wanted. He knew the Nonconformist practice of excluding the minister from its business and thought it bad."[127]. The meeting closed with the resolution, which passed unanimously, "that Dr. Coit be requested to communicate in writing to the Committee what alterations he considers essential in the constitution and methods of the Society if he is to retain his present position."[128].

On September 27, in a tersely worded letter to the Committee, Coit set forth the terms by which "I could continue in my present capacity at South Place. But so improbable does it seem to me that all the points I mention should be heartily accepted (and yet so necessary do they

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appear to me), that. . .I have sent in what is practically an unconditional resignation."[129] Whereas Coit presented only several proposals at the June 2 meeting he now expanded the conditions to eight. In addition to becoming ex-officio member of all committees he requested a change of title from Minister "to some other having no odour of dissent clinging to it," (his choice being that of Lecturer), and a speaking schedule of not more than six months in a year (previously, this was to apply only to the year 1892). Preoccupied as he was with liturgy, he wished the choir "be no longer allowed to sing anthems involving supplication and worship or implying belief in immortality."

Given the financial problems his activities caused he wanted the monthly soirees abolished and in their place "there be held a business meeting. . .to discuss specific measures of reform in the character, methods, and work of South Place." To this list Coit added two cherished goals, "an Ethical Sunday School, somewhere in London," supported by the Society, "financially and morally," and affiliation with the American Union of Ethical Societies, "preliminary to the establishment of an International Union of Ethical Societies."[130] In effect Coit seemed less concerned with altering the constitution of the Society than in replacing it. Taken together, his statements of September the eighth and the twenty-seventh represented a clear and direct challenge to the historical tradition of South Place while

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threatening to impose what amounted to an ethical dictatorship. In a measured response which bore the signs of his frustration, the Chairman of the Committee noted that while "we are all anxious to meet Dr. Coit in a conciliatory manner. . . some conciliation was due to us."[131.]

The long-awaited meeting of October 20, now charged with excitement, took up Coit's letter of September 8, with the Minister present. Despite arduous discussion, it appears that many members wished to avoid "a revolution in our midst," and the meeting ended with a resolution expressing the desire of the Society for Coit "to continue his ministry here." Buoyed by the results, Coit, on October 29, addressed a circular to the members in which he expressed appreciation for the vote of confidence and frankly stated that "inasmuch as a very large majority of the members have, without doubt, declared their sympathy with me and with the teachings which I attempt to set forth, I therefore heartily desire to remain in my present position."[132.]

Despite this admission, Coit continued to insist that "certain changes in the constitution and custom of the Society must be made," and he refused to yield on the central demands presented in his letter of September 27. With an air of confidence he indicated that "I no longer feel hesitation in pressing my proposals upon the consideration of the Society." Leaving very little room for

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negotiation Coit told the members "I do not say that every change I suggest should be accepted in the exact form in which I suggest it; but the acceptance of some real equivalent to each proposition will be necessary, in order that I can withdraw my letter of resignation."[133.]

The circular proved almost as divisive as the original proposals. The Committee, incensed by Coit's position, refused further discussion, and, at its meeting on November 1, entertained a motion to accept his resignation, which they immediately withdrew." After discussion, followed by divisions protracted through two meetings, the proposals . . .were substantially accepted, with the exception of the suggested change of designation, which Dr. Coit waived on hearing that the terms of the trust deed possibly precluded the employment of another official title than that of Minister."[134.]

In terms of a final resolution to the crisis, the only remaining obstacle was the fact that "the admission of the Minister to the Committee required . . . ratification by a two-thirds majority in a meeting summoned specially for the purpose."[135.] On December 1 Coit withdrew his resignation "in the firm hope that a majority of the Society will by their vote authorize me to attend the meetings of all committees, with the right to take part in discussions."[136.] While the hope had "an uncertain ring" to it, there were those who saw in Coit's letter an end to this "prolonged and

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painful controversy."

The members were to vote on two separate questions: "that it is desirable that Dr. Coit be ex-officio a member of all committees in this Society. . .and that Dr. Coit be invited to attend the meetings of the Committee and Sub-Committees of the Society."[137]. A separate meeting was scheduled on each question, both of which took place on December 15. "Both resolutions were negatived."[138].

On December 20, Coit, embittered by the outcome, submitted his unconditional resignation. "On account of the sentiments expressed by my opponents at the last meeting of antagonism to the Ethical movement, an antagonism which they had seen fit to conceal for the most part at previous meetings, I hereby tender my resignation as Minister of the South Place Ethical Society. . . to take effect January 1, 1892."[139]. Because he saw the vote as a rejection of the Ethical movement Coit excluded any possibility of a future relationship with South Place, either as "a worker in its ranks" or as an occasional lecturer.

What led Coit to pursue a course of action fraught with so much risk? To some extent the seeds of his problem lay buried in the original assumptions Coit made when he accepted the appointment, a circumstance somewhat reinforced by both Conway's support and the Society's response to it. A crucial point in those assumptions, while a sincere expression of his position, was Coit's insistence that South

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Place become an Ethical society. He accepted the Society's invitation as a measure of their good faith without any real knowledge of the actual misgiving his condition produced. Be that as it may, Coit's defeat was primarily the result of the authoritarian manner in which he dealt with the complex issues and relations of the Society. It could even be said that, for the most part, Coit never fully appreciated the complexity of the situation he inherited. He came with an established agenda which he presumed to impose upon a Nonconformist institution and in ways that denigrated its traditions and created resentment among the members. And, in the final analysis, "he had been found too autocratic for members able and accustomed to manage their own affairs."[140].

In An Appeal to the Members of the South Place Ethical Society, published privately after the close of the year by "those who dissent from the present trend of things," the authors reflected on the "deep-seated causes at work." Alarmed at the fact, now fully exposed, "that our Society should be split into two hostile camps of almost equal strength," they concluded that the object of this dissent was Dr. Coit and "the methods he has adopted in his relations with the Society."[141].

The Appeal was an attempt at self-evaluation, and, in the general context of events, represented a studied response to Coit's communications with the Committee,

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especially his testimony on September 22, 1891. It was also an effort to explain and justify the decision taken with a view toward ameliorating "all differences in warm and sustained support of the Society." In reviewing the decision to invite Coit to become its minster the authors of the document admitted "the choice was made. . . (without) the precautions which might have been natural in the case of one who had been heard on four occasions only."[142] They conceded that "the change of name. . .was a shock, and an unwelcome stipulation. . .and. . . the change was effected without the careful consideration so grave a matter required, yet it was made cheerfully and generously."[143] Prominent in these decisions "was the valued opinion of one who had ministered to our intellectual and moral needs for so many years."[144]

The remainder of the document was highly critical of Coit and "the methods" he employed. "Dr. Coit's methods . . .were so utterly foreign to those our society was habituated to, that it was clear. . . that nothing short of a revolution in our midst would be the result of forcing them upon us."[145] Added to this was the constant complaint that during his tenure Coit failed to provide the members with "a clear account of what kind of work he thought it would be well and profitable for them to undertake."[146] The changes he proposed came so quickly and with such abrupt force that members had little time to absorb them.

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Moreover, the work involved proved burdensome to the Committee and resulted in "numerously attended meetings" following Coit's arrival. As time passed the Committee became more resistant to his demands for change, and yet . . .they refused to allow the minister to attend committee meetings."[147]. Their resistance grew, "stiffened by the fact that many old members had begun to leave, complaining that their aesthetic sense of worship as appropriately marked by a decent plainness and simplicity was offended by the elaborate rituals that Coit was introducing, and that they thought the important thing should be the lecture, not the liturgy of the service and the congregation's charitable activities."[148].

Speaking of the uncertainty created by this turn of events the authors of the Appeal noted with regret that "had Dr. Coit taken the members into his confidence, and given them an opportunity of forming a judgement on his plans and methods, this uncertainty might have been dissipated."[149]. In an unsigned letter to Moncure Conway, written on November 21, 1891, one member of the Society left his impression of Coit's relations with those at South Place. "The universal experience is that people get on well with him until they express a difference of opinion and that, after they have done so, they never can get near him again. He is so keenly sensitive to criticism that it invariably transmits itself in his mind to a personal affront, and is regarded by him as

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proceeding from personal dislike of him and from a spirit of opposition and obstruction."[150].

When Coit proposed that South Place affiliate with the American Union of Ethical Societies in October, 1890, the Society refused. Shortly thereafter Coit left for the United States where he attended the Convention of the Union of Societies for Ethical Culture, "and to which he was the bearer of a sympathetic message from the Society."[151]. Upon his return Coit insisted upon this affiliation and made it one of the proposals he laid before the Committee on June 2, 1891. In the Appeal the authors accused Coit of precipitating action without providing "adequate knowledge or consideration," citing this demand as a case in point. "No one knew anything about it beyond. . .a list of objects and rules circulated just before the step was taken."[152].

While his work at Leighton Hall was not a major issue, Coit's attitude toward it in relations with the Society caused resentment. According to the Appeal Coit informed one General Meeting "that his chief enterprise at Leighton Hall was his own affair, with which South Place had no more concern than it had in a class a member was going to undertake at Toynbee Hall."[153].

Could it be that Stanton Coit, perhaps encouraged by the reunion with his American colleagues, felt that ample time had elapsed and the moment was now at hand to make South Place a full-fledged Ethical society? The nature of

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his demands to the Society certainly suggest this, as they approximate the conditions which existed within the American Union. If so, Coit's open disregard for the historical traditions of South Place, his failure to ingratiate himself to its members, and the single-minded drive with which he pursued this objective made the ideal he proclaimed too costly. In the end the personality of the man overrode the type of society he wished to establish.

In a larger context the Ethical movement in England, while it appeared fertile ground for organization, was just beginning to coalesce. As subsequent events demonstrated it "had no centralized system and showed no signs of wanting any. It represented a confluence of important currents in the national life, and it was marked by variety in philosophy and in group expressions."[154] Coit's hope to unite these currents into "one vast Society for Ethical Culture" and so become "the national church" remained a dominant theme of his future activities, but South Place hardly seemed the appropriate platform from which to launch such a mission. His cultural perceptions and peculiar outlook led him to entertain ideas which failed to discriminate between private belief and public reality.

As the new year dawned Coit left South Place, "taking with him the young and ardent." In the weeks and months which followed "those who had been among his admiring listeners at South Place chapel were consequently eager to

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found a new spiritual home where his conception of the ethical gospel would be perpetuated and where his voice might be heard."[155.] On January 31, 1892, "some 50 or 60 like-minded men and women met at Leighton Hall. . .and unanimously agreed that a Provisional Committee should be appointed to enquire and report upon the feasibility of starting an Ethical Society in Central London."[156.] This gathering met again on February 21 and resolved to open a subscription list "for the purpose of founding an Ethical Society in the West End, and that in the event of 500 pounds being subscribed, another meeting of those interested be called. . .to make final arrangements."[157.]

Four months later, on June 26, "the West London Ethical Society came formally into being."[158.] This same meeting also entertained a resolution "that the Committee be authorized to negotiate with the London Ethical Society with a view to ascertaining and reporting if an amalgamation of the two Societies were desirable."[159.] This step represented, for Coit, the closing of the circle which started six years ago with the establishment of the first Ethical Society in England. A long and complicated process ensued, and for a year or more, the two societies operated as the London Ethical Society. However, two years to the day of the initial resolution proposing amalgamation, the arrangement collapsed and each Society again became a separate entity. Coit was in America at the time, having

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accepted the position of headworker at the newly formed University Settlement Society of New York. He remained there from December, 1892 to April, 1894, and upon his return resumed the position of lecturer to the West London Ethical Society. During the ensuing years "Coit spoke to the various ethical societies and Labour Churches, and tried to persuade them to join the ethical movement."[160.]

At the conclusion of its discussion of the eventful year which passed, the Annual Report of the South Place Ethical Society announced, "with great satisfaction," that Mr. Conway has consented to resume his old place for six months, commencing the first Sunday in October,"[161.] In the opinion of the Committee "there is no one else likely in so great a degree to restore peace and union."[162.] During the crisis members at South Place had kept him well-informed of the fateful turn of events. With a touch of irony Conway accepted the invitation to return on one condition, "which was readily acceded to," namely, that he occupy the platform for only five months during the year. He remained for five years. In his farewell address to the Society, delivered on June 27, 1897, Conway, in subdued fashion, assured his friends at South Place that "your leader will come. You will find someone to voyage with you."[163.]

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Notes

Chapter Six

1. Samuel Kerkham Ratcliffe, The Story of South Place, (London: Watts & Co.,1955), p.1

2. ibid; H.J. Blackham, "Further Thoughts on South Place: From Unitarianism to Ethical Humanism," New Humanist, Volume 96 No. 4 (Spring, 1981), p.13

3. Mary Elizabeth Burtis, Moncure Conway, 1832-1907, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1952), p.93

4. Moncure Conway, Autobiography: Memories and Experiences of Moncure Daniel Conway 2 Volumes, (London: Cassell and Co. Ltd., 1904) 1:389-90

5. ibid, 2:40-41

6. Blackham, op cit

7. Ratcliffe, op cit; Burtis, op cit.

8. Burtis, op cit.

9. Arthur H. Nethercot, The First Five Lives of Annie Besant, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), p.59

10. Conway, op cit., 2:35-36

11. ibid

12. Moncure Conway: Addresses and Reprints, 1850-1907, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1909), p.xi-xii. From an unsigned introduction.

13. Warren Sylvester Smith, The London Heretics, (London: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1968), p.104

14. Susan Budd, Varieties of Unbelief: Atheists and Agnostics in English Society, 1850-1960, (London: Heinemann, 1968), quoted in John d'Entremont, Moncure Conway, 1832-1907, The Fifty-Eighth Conway Memorial Lecture, December, 1977, (London: The South Place Ethical Society, 1977), p.19-20

15. Conway, op cit., 2:

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16. Moncure Conway, The Centenary History of South Place, (London: Williams & Norgate, 1894), p.184

17. Burtis op cit.

18. ibid, p.204. The author did not elaborate on this remark, but the two men were acquaintances and Adler had spoken at South Place.

19. Smith, op cit, p.118

20. Conway, Autobiography, 2: 394.

21. A.L.S. Conway Collection, Columbia University; quoted in Smith, op cit., p.118-19

22. ibid

23. The Annual Report of The South Place Ethical Society, 1886, p.4

24. Ratcliffe, op cit., p.55.

25. The Minute Books of the Committee, The South Place Ethical Society, Meeting of May 13, 1887. Hereafter referred to as Minutes.

26. ibid

27. Minutes, June 10, 1887

28. Minutes, July 15, 1887. Why Coit at first refused the invitation and then reconsidered we may never know. More interesting, though, is whether Coit knew of the initial discussion between Adler and Conway at the time it occurred and which resulted in the latter's suggestion to South Place. The invitation sent to Coit came "at the instance of its retired minister," and for the purpose of considering him as a possible successor. (Spiller) If he did not know this at the time his refusal may have been an impulsive reaction to what Coit regarded as deception. The decision of the Society on May 20 brought an almost immediate response. A longer period of time elapsed between the reply and Coit's letter indicating he would come. What role, if any, did Adler or Conway play in Coit's decision? From a different point of view, Coit's refusal may have been due to the extensive activities of the Guild which made a trip abroad in the fall uncertain.

29. Gustave Spiller, The Ethical Movement in Great Britain, (London: The Farleigh Press, 1934), p.24

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30. Minutes, September 9, 1887

31. Spiller, op cit.

32. Stanton Coit, "Ethical Culture as a Religion for the People," quoted in Spiller, op cit

33. Minutes, September 30, 1887

34. Stanton Coit to Elizabeth Coit, November 6, 1887. I am indebted to Mr. Kenneth Ferris of the British Humanist Association for the remnant of this letter.

35. Stanton Coit to Percy Hickson, November 23, 1887, The Records of the South Place Ethical Society, (London: The South Place Ethical Society, December, 1887)

36. ibid

37. ibid

38. Stanton Coit, "My First Acquaintance With the Ethical Movement," The Ethical World, March 16, 1907, reprinted in Spiller, op cit, p.179

39. Moncure Conway to My Friends at South Place, November 23, 1887, The Records of the South Place Ethical Society, (London: The South Place Ethical Society, December, 1887)

40. ibid

41. ibid

42. ibid

43. ibid

44. ibid

45. ibid

46. ibid

47. ibid

48. ibid

49. ibid

50. ibid

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51. ibid

52. Minutes, December 9, 1887

53. ibid

54. Minutes, February 16, 1888

55. Minutes, February 24, 1888

56. Minutes, March 23, 1888

57. Minutes, April 12, 1888; Annual Report of the South Place Ethical Society, 1888, p.3

58. Minutes, August 13, 1888

59. Ratcliffe, op cit., p.55

60. The Ethical Record, Volume 1, No.2, July, 1888, p.53

61. ibid

62. ibid

63. ibid, p.54-55. The second lecturer was Salter.

64. ibid, p.55

65. ibid

66. ibid

67. ibid, p.56-57

68. ibid

69. ibid

70. ibid, p.58

71. ibid

72. Stanton Coit, The Ethical Movement Defined, (London: The Union of Ethical Societies, 1889), p.2. Reproduced in the Ethical Record, Vol. 2 No. 3, 1889, p.157

73. ibid

74. Howard B. Radest, Toward Common Ground: The Story of The Ethical Societies in the United States, (New York: Frederick Unger, 1969), p.86

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75. The Ethical Record, Vol. 1 No. 1 April, 1888, p.59

76. The Papers of Felix Adler, Folder 217.0 (Stanton Coit), Columbia University

77. H.J. Blackham, Stanton Coit, (London: The Favil Press Ltd, 1948), p.14

78. Harrison Graham Lowry, The Social Settlement and the Search for Community: The Neighborhood Guild in New York, unpublished MA thesis, University of Wisconsin at Madison, 1968, p.71-71

79. Joel Porte, ed., Emerson in His Journals, (Cambridge: The Belknap Press, Harvard University, 1982), p.383 Writing in March-April of 1848, Emerson observed that "the facile Ameican shed his Puritanism when he leaves Cape Cod, runs into all English & French vices with great zest & is neither Unitarian, nor Calvinist, nor Catholic nor stands for any known thought or thing; which is very distasteful to English honour. It is a bad sign that I have met with many Americans who flattered themselves that they pass for English. Levity, levity. I do not wish to be mistaken for an Englishman, more than I wish Monadnock or Nahant or Nantucket to be mistaken for Wales or the Isle of Wright." p.382-83

80. Spiller, op cit, p.180

81. Spiller, op cit.

82. Budd, op cit, p.225

83. ibid

84. Papers of Felix Adler, Folder 217.0 (Stanton Coit), Columbia University

85. ibid

86. ibid

87. ibid

88. Budd, op cit. That Adler recommended Coit to Conway does not disturb the arguments presented here, nor does it reach beyond them. Adler "was active in the training of young leaders" and it seemed only natural that Conway explore all avenues in an effort to help his friends at South Place. (Ratcliffe, cf. note 24). Lowry's assertion that Adler sent Coit to South Place

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seems to me to overstate the actual circumstances, and, therefore, is untenable. While Adler, too, saw the international dimension of Ethical Culture as important it is difficult to believe he shared the views expressed by Coit in his farewell address. The misgivings Adler entertained about Coit's acceptance, and which inform his later interrogatives, appear to stem from his belief that this was not the right opportunity for Coit, nor did it come at an appropriate time. Notwithstanding the obvious theoretical differences which developed in the relationship between Adler and Coit, one troubling aspect about Budd's explanation is the extent to which they appeared serious enough at this time to force an open break. Has Budd drawn the strength of her argument from the more serious and open differences which later arose between Adler and Coit and attributed them to this earlier period, thereby shifting the ground to explain Coit's decision, while, simultaneously, lending greater credence to Adler's recommendation than seems justified? In the final analysis it was Conway who engineered Coit's appointment, and there was considerable distance and a number of factors to consider, from both sides, before the decision. Moreover, Adler evidenced a high regard for Coit's work at the Guild which proved a valuable example of the kind of social reform advocated by the Ethical Culture Society. As demonstrated elsewhere, Adler was a strong supporter of the Guild from its inception and the influence acquired by Coit did have its advantages for the Society. It is certainly possible that Adler believed Coit had a much brighter and surer future in America than anywhere else. This aspect of the situation also serves to counterbalance the differences of principle which existed between Adler and Coit.

89. Ratcliffe, op cit.

90. The Annual Report of the South Place Ethical Society, 1888, p.3

91. Budd, op cit, p.226

92. The Annual Report of the South Place Ethical Society, 1883, p.3

93. ibid, p.5; Spiller, op cit, p.30

94. Annual Report, SPES, 1888, p.5

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95. Annual Report of the SPES, 1889/90, p.6. The reporting period was lengthened to fifteen months "by the extension of the work undertaken by the Society of late years, much of which is chiefly carried on during the winter months." And, following from this, "provision was made for the appointment of more than one secretary." p.3-4

96. ibid

97. Spiller, op cit, p.31

98. Minutes, May, 1889. Rule 4A

99. Radest, op cit, p.109

100. Budd, op cit, p.225

101. The Echo of London, April, 1889

102. Stanton Coit, Neighbourhood Guilds: An Instrument of Social Reform, (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co., 1891; reprint ed. Arno Press, 1974), p.13

103. The Star, November 19, 1890

104. The London Daily Telegraph, September 25, 1891. In a letter to Jameson dated May 10, 1889, Coit indicated that "I have been studying the social movements among the poor of London and I have done some personal work in helping others, but I hope next October to live again among the poor as I did in New York, and to see if I cannot make a still more valubale experiment." Stanton Coit to J. Franklin Jameson, May 10, 1889, J. Franklin Jameson Collection, Box 72, File 375, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.

105. The Pall Mall Gazette, August 13, 1890

106. ibid

107. Coit, Neighbourhood Guilds, p.13-14

108. The Manchester Guardian, November 18, 1890

109. ibid

110. The London Daily Telegraph, September 25, 1891

111. ibid

112. The Manchester Guardian, November 18, 1890

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113. The Echo of London, December 7, 1891

114. Minutes, September 9, 1890

115. While the Minutes of this meeting do not appear in the records of South Place, the Society did not join the Union. The reference is to the American Union of Ethical Societies.

116. The Ohio State Journal, December 3, 1890

117. ibid, December 13, 1890

118. The Annual Report of SPES, 1891/92, p.5

119. Minutes, June 9, 1891

120. Annual Report, 1891/92, p.6

121. ibid

122. ibid

123. ibid

124. ibid

125. Minutes, September 17, 1891

126. Minutes, September 22, 1891

127. ibid

128. ibid

129. Annual Report, SPES, 1891/92, p.7

130. ibid. Quotations come from the letter.

131. Minutes, September 29, 1891

132. Annual Report, SPES, 1891/92, p.8

133. ibid

134. ibid, p.9

135. ibid

136. ibid, p.10

137. ibid

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138. ibid

139. ibid, p.10-11

140. Blackham, op cit., p.14

141. An Appeal to the Members of South Place Ethical Society, London, 1891, p.4

142. ibid, p.5

143. ibid

144. ibid

145. ibid, p.6

146. ibid, p.5-6

147. Budd, op cit., p.226

148. ibid

149. Appeal, p.7

150. Special Manuscript Collection, Moncure Conway, South Place Ethical Society, Columbia University

151. Spiller, op cit., p.32

152. Appeal, p.8

153. ibid

154. Horace L. Friess, Felix Adler and Ethical Culture: Memories and Studies,ed. by Fannia Weingartner, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), p.113

155. Spiller, op cit, p.61-62

156. ibid, p.62

157. ibid

158. ibid

159. ibid

160. Budd, op cit, p.226

161. Spiller, op cit, p.33

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162. ibid

163. ibid

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CHAPTER SEVEN

Much had happened to advance the reformer's work since Stanton Coit left New York. "He had planted the idea in American soil and it had taken root."[1] In September, 1889, Vida Scudder, Jean Gurney Fine, Helen Thayer, and "other young alumnae of Smith College," several of whom had worked with Coit at the Neighborhood Guild, established the New York College Settlement on Rivington Street. One week later, in Chicago, Jane Addams and Ellen Gates Starr moved into Hull House, destined to become the most famous representation of settlement house work in the United States. And, in 1891, William J. Tucker, later president of Dartmouth College, opened Andover House, with Robert A. Woods as headworker. Moreover, Woods' book on English Social Movement appeared in the same year as Stanton Coit's Neighbourhood Guilds and provided the growing movement with the first fruits of an experiential literature.

If these developments reflected the success of the idea the bracing effect created by the organization of the University Settlement Society of New York marked a turning point in the experimental stage of the work begun by the Neighborhood Guild. Geographically and politically, this decision "to establish in the poorer parts of the city, institutions similar to Toynbee Hall and the University Settlement in London," solidified the position of New York

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as the center of that idea and whose supporters now summoned the resources necessary to make it a viable institution, an important prerequisite to its growth as a national movement.

The plan first came to light at an"informal meeting" held on April 17, 1891, at the home of John B. Pine, a distinguished lawyer and Columbia University graduate, and attended by a small group of prominent men drawn from the commercial and intellectual circles of the city. As a second meeting on April 24, which drew upon a wider orbit of interest," a committee of four was chosen to take further steps toward effecting an organization."[2.] Its members included Pine, Abram C. Bernheim, a lawyer actively involved in municipal reform and whose initial efforts proved crucial to the organization of the Society, John McG.Goodale, who succeeded Stover as headworker at the Guild, and Joseph B. Gilder, the editor and publisher. After several meetings the committee "decided to issue a call for a conference at the Buckingham Hotel on Thursday, April 30, of college graduates and others presumably interested in such a work as was proposed."[3.]

Word of the plan spread rapidly and the conference drew a stellar audience whose participants generated a lively and informative discussion of the benefits such a society would convey. P.J. Mosenthal, an alumnus of City College and an ardent supporter of the idea, "gave a brief account of the work done at Toynbee Hall" while Mr. Goodale provided an

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overview of the activities at the Neighborhood Guild. Felix Adler renewed his support of the Guild, "especially in its recognition of the importance of the kindergarten in social reformatory work." E.R.A. Seligman of Columbia expressed his belief that "such settlements as were proposed tended to overcome the prejudice of the working class against cultivation, by showing that students of political economy are solicitous to learn not only what is, but what ought to be."[4] Those unable to attend in person sent messages of support.

> The receipt of a letter from President Gilman of Johns Hopkins, expressing interest in the proposed Society, was reported; and letters of regret at inability to attend were read, from President Low of Columbia, President Eliot of Harvard, Bishop Potter of New York, Mr. James W. Alexander, President of the Princeton Alumni Association; the Hon. Charles S. Fairchild, Mr. Oswald Ottendorfer, proprietor of the Staats-Zeitung; President John J. Knox, of the National Bank of the Republic; Mr. Elihu Root; Mr. Hamilton W. Mable, Editor of The Christian Union; Prof. J.C. Schwab of Yale; Mr. Daniel G. Thompson, and Mr. Frank L. Babbott.[5]

At the conclusion of the conference, on the motion of A.C. Bernheim, it was resolved "that it is the sense of this meeting that we organize a University Settlement Society, and that a committee be appointed by the chair to prepare a plan of organization, and a circular letter, to be submitted at an adjourned meeting."[6]

Work on the plan of organization took as its starting

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point the existing structure of the Neighborhood Guild, with the object of securing and broadening those activities already established. Consistent with the settlement house idea which served as their model, the Society viewed its main purpose

> to bring men and women of education into closer relations with the laboring classes in this city for their mutual benefit, and to establish and maintain in the tenement-house districts places of residence for college men and others desirous of aiding in the work; with rooms where people of the neighborhood may meet for social and educational purposes.[7].

At the Neighborhood Guild reaction was predictable and conclusive. Renewed by the promise of both organizational and financial support the University Settlement Society Bulletin for January, 1892, announced that "those engaged in the active work of the Guild have associated themselves with the Society, and the Society has undertaken to maintain and extend their work with the hope that it may not only be rendered more effective in its present particular locality, but that its influence may ultimately reach to all parts of the city by the establishment of other Neighborhood Houses."[8].

While the Society wished to make the work of the Guild more effective, it also harbored ideas on how best to accomplish this, which some on Forsyth Street associated with a distinctly institutional outlook. In the same issue of the Bulletin which expressed the fulsome hope of better

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times ahead was the admonition that "the task of doing good to the population of this city, or any part of it, while the effort to accomplish it rests upon deep human sympathies, is purely scientific, and it is impossible to tell by any a priori reasoning what is the best method to adopt."[9] Furthermore, it had become evident to those engaged in settlement house work in New York, that while "the experiments in London and in other foreign cities teach us much," the different conditions here and abroad exposed the peculiar character of the social problems, and, consequently, made "their hard-earned knowledge of only general value to us."[10] After five years the settlement house in America had acquired a genuine institutional presence, and, henceforth, would chart its own course.

As the year 1892 drew to a close the University Settlement Society Bulletin recognized, "for the first time in the history of the Neighborhood Guild, the beginning of a season's work with the definite promise that the two chief requirements of success are present."[11] This enthusiasm was, in part, the result of reorganization, as "the financial prospects of the Settlement Society are better than they have ever been."[12] Yet, as important as this item was, especially in light of the Guild's recent experiences, much of the expressed optimism derived from "the engagement of Dr. Stanton Coit as headworker." Coit's impending arrival generated considerable hope for such

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developments "as can come only under the direction of the mind that conceived the idea."[13] In its announcement the Bulletin indicated that "Dr. Coit has consented to come to New York in December and remain for at least six months in charge of the Forsyth Street work. The hope is that his six months' supervision and inspiration may be renewed each year at least, until men are found to succeed those who have been carrying on the work for the past few years."[14]

While the incorporation of the Guild into the University Settlement Society resulted in a much stronger organization, it did not necessarily produce a happier situation. Stover decried the sudden turn of events and regarded the Society with the same disdain he expressed for charity organizations in general. When Goodale left James K. Paulding sought to maintain the activities of the Guild until more permanent leadership was in place.

It appears that the Society initiated the move to bring Coit back to New York, motivated largely by the need for an experienced hand capable of reinvigorating the Guild. Coit's availability seemed fortuitous while the tentative nature of his appointment revealed more about present uncertainties, both in London and New York, than any perceived risk connected with the decision.

It is very likely Coit knew about the problems experienced by the Guild, and, when considered in the light of his own attachment to the work on Forsyth Street, this

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strong personal sentiment and concern for its future must have weighed heavily in the decision to return. Moreover, the status of the West London Ethical Society appeared secure, thereby allowing Coit the freedom to accept the offer for a short period of time. While no one could predict the long term outcome of its recent union with the London Ethical Society, it seems likely from the careful wording of the announcement that both sides realized a serious incident involving the fate of the West London Ethical Society would require Coit's presence in London. Given its present disposition Coit's experience and familiarity with the work at hand appealed to the Society, anxious to become a permanent force in support of culture and character, and without evoking the radicalism of recent years.

Prior to Coit's arrival the Society leased additional space at 26 Delancy Street, "just around the corner from No. 147 Forsyth Street." The building, known as Lafayette Hall, had "several very large rooms," which members believed would "serve the Society's purposes exceedingly well."[15] What seemed equally important to the settlement house staff was the fact that this building also flourished as a meeting place for a number of different organizations. "The Society thinks, from the fact that its house is the place where so many young men congregate, that it will be able soon to make itself better known in the neighborhood, and to extend its

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influence there, and to attract the neighbors into its clubs, societies and classes."[16].

While seeking to consolidate and expand its work members of the Society came to recognize that the extent of influence the settlement exercised in the neighborhood stood in direct relation to its physical facilities. Occupying a cluster of rooms in make-shift surroundings was, hopefully, only a temporary condition. If valuable work had been done under very difficult circumstances, the new practical sociology taught that "it is now universally recognized as the best economy to provide the best possible apparatus."[17]. Drawn to the efforts expended in these social laboratories. "philanthropists are vying with each other in providing thoroughly equipped buildings for the investigation not only of the physical sciences, but latterly of psychology and the social sciences."[18]. There was little question that the University Settlement needed "a proper building on the East side, to take the place of the utterly inadequate one in which Dr. Coit began his work several years ago in the infancy of our fast-growing science."[19].

Inspired by the confidence with which many viewed the new science, James K. Paulding, then head resident, convinced a university man, Raleigh C. Gildersleeve, to prepare modest plans "on which we intend to build." The University Settlement Society Bulletin for December, 1892, devoted six pages to the "proposed new social laboratory and

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dormitories for teachers and students." Convinced that "the study of society, like that of nature, has passed the time when. . . it could be profitably pursued mainly through books, and also the time, if there ever was one, when it was thought economical to study with defective appliances, . . . the Society now feels justified in appealing to the philanthropic to give its workers better ones."[20] While they embodied the promise of the social sciences, the drawings for the new building were undertaken at this time in the hope "that some wealthy philanthropist will seize the opportunity to perform this service to mankind, and connect his name and the power of his example with the institution."[21] Sponsorship was the key to expansion and "the best possible apparatus." While such blatant public relations did not evoke an immediate response, within a few years James Speyer, a prominent businessman, took up the challenge, and, in 1898 the University Settlement Society moved into its new social laboratory at 184 Eldridge Street, which has ever since remained its permanent quarters.

For all its verve and optimism the work of the Guild faced serious problems. Robert Ashworth, a resident at the settlement during the depression year of 1893, later recalled that Dr. Coit and I "were the only residents. We lived on Forsyth Street in a three room tenement, and carried on the activities of the settlement in a converted saloon, at 26 Delancy Street."[22] There was terrible

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overcrowding. "In the three room apartment on the opposite side of the floor upon which we lived, there was a family of five, and I was told that they took seven boarders." Recounting the long hours and poor pay, Ashworth disclosed that "I never arose so early in the morning or went to bed so late at night that I could not see through the uncurtained windows of the tenements across the street the figures of men, women and children bent over their sewing machines or handwork."[23].

Coit's arrival stimulated action and his presence, in the words of Ashworth, "dignified every situation with which he was associated." He retained "a delicate, sensitive, not to say fastidious temperament, amid surroundings that were, to say the least, not always comfortable or congenial."[24]. William Leiserson, who worked at the settlement during this period, recalled Coit's efforts to relieve the strain felt by this working class neighborhood. In the wake of growing unemployment "he was friendly to trade unionism. He attempted to popularize in this country organizations like the British friendly benefit societies. He experimented with a co-operative dairy and tried to start a consumers' co-operative movement. He brought from England the ideas of the Christian Socialist Movement, and the methods of the Fabian Movement."[25]. All of these schemes "he connected with the social movements then existing in this country, and the Settlement became a center of economic and social

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reform."[26] While the University Settlement Society sought to chart its own course, the ideas proffered by Coit still drew heavily upon British experience.

While individual programs addressed particular needs Coit soon concluded that conditions on the Lower East Side required a broader approach, a single platform capable of generating support for an integrated plan of action. In February, 1893, Coit organized the Tenth Ward Social Reform Club which he viewed as "a comprehensive movement for the betterment of the condition of the poor."[27]

The Club adopted a far-ranging agenda consisting of ten sections of work which represented specific measures Coit sought to introduce into the Lower East Side. To elevate life in the Tenth Ward he proposed "a public bath, with hundreds of private rooms and two large swimming pools; a public laundry, a park and children's play ground, public lavatories in every street, an anti-filth society, a people's palace, containing billiard and pool tables, reading rooms, a theatre, dancing hall; a sick benefit society, co-operative stores, public kitchens, and to mutually protect each other against sweators and unjust exactions of employers."[28] For financial support Coit looked to "appeals to special societies. . .to wealthy men, to municipal and State authorities and to the people of the Tenth Ward themselves."[29]

While the entire scheme was vintage Coit, the Guild

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idea applied to the entire Lower East Side, his reform program actually represented a significant advance upon the work of the Guild and indicated the extent to which he had outgrown earlier positions. As his relations with the Neighborhood Guild Association indicated, Coit had shed his predilections about accepting uptown support, though he retained his original belief, shared by Stover, that the people themselves would support projects they wanted. Of special value was "the patronage of the University Settlement Society," among whose officers were Seth Low, Oswald Ottendorfer, Carl Schurz and A.C. Bernheim." Speaking about the Club to a reporter from the New York Herald, Coit indicated "that from past experience in London and elsewhere it was based upon a thoroughly practicable idea and was sure to succeed."[30].

During his years in London Coit had studied the work of the County Council and the extent to which public pressure led political candidates to pledge their support for certain municipal measures. This tactic impressed Coit and he now sought to apply it indirectly through the agenda of the Tenth Ward Social Reform Club.

Viewed in a broader historical context, one more closely attuned to the American reform tradition, Coit's program represented the kind of plan which sought to reshape and redefine community life, work life and leisure. It was an early and rough example of the kind of manifesto which

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characterized the Progressive era. Heavily weighted with municipal projects, Coit's program rested on those basic assumptions which later reformers took for granted, namely, a more active role for the state in regulating social welfare and the need for cooperation between the public and private sectors. As time passed competing ideologies developed alongside different agendas but the essential design remained the same, spirited as it was by the theories of the social sciences. To some, Coit included, the pattern appeared socialistic, but this was the direction reform in America assumed during the 1890's. It rested upon the expectations and strategies of a coalition politics which stood ready to challenge both the historic role of the state and the traditions of free enterprise.

If Coit's municipal program generally received a sympathetic hearing in the press, public officials gave it little attention. Several weeks later, he announced that the Tenth Ward Social Reform Club intended to petition the Mayor and the Board of Street Openings for "some of the annual appropriation of one million dollars for small parks in the city."[31] Coit proposed to use the money to buy "the rear or interior tenement-houses of each block, and then to convert the heart of each block into a small park . . . These parks, connected by gateways, would form a large meandering park as it were, for promenading throughout the tenement-house district."[32]

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While the idea seemed original the dimensions of what Coit proposed were, politically speaking, untenable. The cause of children's play and park areas first received serious attention in 1887, spear-headed by none other than Charles Stover. It was Stover who wrote the 1887 law which "permitted the city to spend up to one million dollars a year for the establishment of small parks and playgrounds."[33] And, with the support of Jacob Riis and Mayor Abram Hewitt, "Stover launched the New York Society for Parks and Playgrounds in 1891." While the Society did succeed in convincing City Council members to erect a park on the site of "the infamous Mulberry Bend slum on the Lower East Side," efforts to create "a network of fully equipped, supervised playgrounds in the poorer sections of the city failed, and the funds remained unspent," which made the law, for all practical purposes, a dead letter. What doomed this cause, almost from the outset, was the fact that most City Council members "were dubious about the necessity of organizing children's play and about the rights of government to do so."[34] None of the "ear-marked funds was spent by the city until 1901."[35]

Constitutional questions notwithstanding, it was the complexity of life in the poorer sections of the city which led most politicians to take a rather dim view of reform programs aimed at improving life on the Lower East Side. The census of 1890 listed the population of the Tenth Ward

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as 57,514, an average of 522 people per acre. The estimated population in 1893, based on the police census, had risen to 67,730, and among whom there existed a death rate of 23%.[36.]

Of the ten sections of work originally proposed by Coit only the Anti-Filth Society actually became a reality. The object of this Society "was to cleanse the houses of the ward of anything that was obnoxious, such as dirt vermin, and to get the inhabitants to desire and create for themselves more wholesome and better surroundings."[37.] According to Charles Stover, who took charge of the campaign, "the scheme was, to say the least, unique. To the best of our knowledge we were the first persons in the field to do this particular kind of work."[38.] While frequent visitations led to some renovations, the time and effort expended, even when reinforced by "the proper authorities," often resulted in frustration. As Stover readily conceded, "if the tenant is unwilling to do his duty and the housekeeper, who was responsible for the public part of the building, is not sufficiently determined in compelling him to do so, he will have to do it himself or leave it undone, which unfortunately is frequently the case."[39.]

The alternatives to this method were few. "The Board of Health, through its inspectors, average scarcely more than one visit a year to each tenement house."[40.] Until such time as the number of these officials increased, "the work must be done, however imperfectly, by volunteers or go

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undone."[41] But, as Jacob Riis pointed out, "it is very hard to get volunteer visitors to do the work. . . harder in New York than anywhere else, because of the intensity of our life and the tremendous struggle to keep afloat in the crowd that pushes all other cares and concerns aside and out of sight."[42] Despite the hardships it encountered the Tenth Ward Sanitary Union demonstrated remarkable buoyancy when it reported that "from February 15, 1893, to March 1, 1894, one hundred eighty-three tenements were visited. . . which represent twenty-five hundred families."[43]

In spite of these efforts and the good they accomplished, the real problem was the tenement itself, "an evil that undoes much of the good done by all the agencies of rescue and reform."[44] The problem of housing was acute and growing worse. It had been so for the last fifty years. Real estate values combined with the rush of immigrants kept space at a premium. "No opportunity was overlooked to facilitate the most economical and compact housing of the immigrant population. To the improvised tenements that had been carved out of private dwellings were added the front and rear tenements and, finally, the dumbbell-style tenement of 1879."[45] The Lower East Side "became the special domain of the new dumbbell tenements, so called because of their shape."[46]

> They are great prison-like structures of brick, with narrow doors and windows, cramped passages and steep rickety stairs. They are built through from one

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> street to the other with a somewhat narrower building connecting them . . .The narrow court-yard. . . in the middle is a damp foul-smelling place, supposed to do duty as an airshaft; had the foul fiend designed these great barracks they could not have been more villainously arranged to avoid any chance of ventilation. . .In case of fire they would be perfect death-traps, for it would be impossible for the occupants of the crowded rooms to escape by the narrow stairways, and the flimsy fire-escapes which the owners of the tenements were compelled to put up a few years ago are so laden with broken furniture, bales and boxes that they would be worse than useless. . .The drainage is horrible, and even the Croton as it flows from the tap in the noisome courtyard, seemed to be contaminated by its surroundings and have a fetid smell.[47].

If the work of the Anti-Filth Society seemed, at times, almost futile, the experiences of settlement house workers and their volunteers provided much of the essential data employed by the Tenement House Commission, authorized by the State Legislature, and so represented a genuine contribution to efforts at reform. Having grown all too familiar with refuse-laden sinks, unrepaired plumbing, backyards overrun with closets and strangled by clothes-lines, Stover concluded that "many of the existing evils could be remedied without much difficulty if the laws were properly enforced."[48].

While enforcing the existing laws proved burdensome, especially on the lower East Side, the addition of new laws often taxed the limited resources of the Settlement with the

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result that reform become a victim of the "struggle to keep afloat." Recent changes in the law prohibited "the employment of garment-workers not merely in dwelling rooms, but also in any part of a dwelling house."[49] With the practices of sweat-shop labor widespread and growing worse the new law led to the establishment, on the East Side," of a number of buildings intended exclusively for shops. This effort to distinguish between living space and work-place became the center of concern for the Settlement's Anti-Sweating Section, organized in April, 1893.

Volunteer workers, in conjunction with "officials of the Jewish Tailor's Union and the Knee Pants Makers' Union, who supplied addresses of sweaters," undertook the immense task of enforcing compliance with the new law. "The process adopted consisted of a visit, a warning, and a report to the factory inspector. . . To avoid charges of blackmail, visits were always made by two persons together."[50] With all too few visitors, and these, working infrequently, the results demonstrated again the problem of using volunteers to enforce compliance with the law. After one year, but with only three visitors who devoted any reasonable amount of time to the inspection of these buildings, "factories were moved from dwelling houses in twenty cases, and dwellers were moved from factory houses in two cases."[51]

In its report to the Council of the Society in March, 1894, the Section indicated that "the evidence is, then,

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that to make a sweater evacuate a dwelling house, costs in volunteer effort the work of two persons (not experts) for about one and one-half hours."[52] As an integral part of its work the Section frequently investigated the age of some of the children employed, sought to prevent overcrowding, "and, with the co-operation of the Anti-Filth Section, to secure cleanliness."[53] That the visitors found no collusion between sweaters and factory inspectors may have been the clearest indication of the problems confronting reform.

While volunteer workers sought to ameliorate conditions in both the tenement-house and the sweat shop, Coit set about to attack "the foolish extravagance" endured by the consumer at the hands of retail trade. With the assistance of "the ladies of the College Settlement," Coit launched a co-operative dairy, an experiment which began in June, 1893, and lasted several months. With the obvious intent of providing dairy products "at figures barely above cost price," Coit also sought to educate the residents of the neighborhood to the advantages of co-operation, an idea which "had never thrived in America as it has in England and Scotland."[54] During its short-lived existence the co-operative appeared only marginally successful despite the fact that receipts increased steadily from June through September. However, by fall, economic conditions worsened and the experiment, such as it was, yielded to the stress of

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hard times brought on by the depression of 1893-94.

While deeply engaged in efforts to solidify the work of the Tenth Ward Social Reform Club, Coit, nevertheless, found time to lend his voice and growing prestige to Dr. Parkhurst's fight against prostitution on the Lower East Side. Charles Henry Parkhurst first announced his law and order campaign in March, 1893, with plans to organize a City Vigilance League comprised of an extensive corps of supporters distributed throughout the city. At the time Parkhurst indicated that "an active member of the League in each of the 1,137 election districts in the city would keep his eye on every saloon, gambling den, disorderly house, and other place where the unwary might be beguiled."[55].

What inspired this citizens' movement was Parkhurst's conviction that "the laws are not enforced, that the authorities are in collusion with lawbreakers, that vice and crime are protected for the money that they pay for protection, and that public officers should be made to enforce the laws instead of permitting their violation."[56]. The entire scheme "called forth no end of criticism." In October Parkhurst wrote to Mayor Thomas F. Gilroy, protesting against the inactivity of the Police Commissioners. A particular target of this communique was Captain William S. Devery of the Eldridge Street Police Station who seemed to discount any knowledge of disorderly houses on the Lower East Side. This brought a hue and cry

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from some of its residents.

In letters to the city papers Coit protested "in the name of all that is decent and of good report, against the outrage which the police authorities of this city have practiced against the public conscience. They have denied the existence of disorderly houses in our district."[57]. Exercising the voice of the public citizen, Coit joined the battle.

> It must have been that Captain Devery did not know that there were any residents of his precinct moral and intelligent and plucky enough to speak out. He thought he had only the Parkhurst Society to deal with . . .Captain Devery could not have realized how astonishing his statement would appear to the residents of the University Settlement. Why in the streets about here where I live traffic in vice is as open as the day. It flares and flaunts itself in the face of honest men with an impudence which seems to say: We know we're safe, we have arranged that; no one dare molest our work of corrupting the young men in Captain Devery's precinct.[58].

In the midst of what had now become a public controversy Coit brought the full weight of the University Settlement Society in support of Parkhurst's campaign, and, by virtue of that, the man himself. To a reporter from the New York Herald Coit indicated that "if Dr. Parkhurst does not succeed we propose to take a hand in this fight and keep it up until the neighborhood is purified. . . We shall not ask the police for any evidence, but will get it ourselves and then demand that the places complained of shall be

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closed and kept closed."[59] On November 29 the Grand Jury returned four indictments against Captain Devery.

The issues which engaged Coit's attention, housing, poverty, vice and unemployment, became the stock in trade of settlement house work. While to an increasing extent the problems of the city became those of the neighborhood, these individual areas underwent such dramatic changes over a short period of time that solutions became ever more difficult to manage. Nowhere was this more evident than on the Lower East Side. During Coit's absence the German and Irish population moved outward and upward, replaced by Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe. "Drunk with the vision of liberty, restless minds fumbled with wisps of socialism and anarchism, positivism and the religion of humanity, Ethical Culture, and a medley of social ideals that promised a key to the universe. Emptied of the religious securities of their fathers, they inhaled the bracing vapors of ethical and intellectual controversy. Devoutly they clutched for the hope of modern ideas and the promise of a regenerate society."[60]

To accommodate this new passion for life the University Settlement established "the first all Jewish boys club . . .in November, 1893."[61] Drawn from the Tenth Ward, the boys of the SEI, "mostly born abroad, of greenhorns recently off the immigrant ships, . . . came to have the position and prestige of the OIF."[62] These two clubs, "originally under

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the leadership of Stanton Coit, were the mainstay of the University Settlement's early years."[63] The SEI started slowly, with only a handful of members, "but this group acted with such effect that in a few months it had a membership of thirty. It took its name and motto directly from Coit's Guild, the three letters standing for Social Educational Improvement, perhaps the highest condensation of the moral values which characterized Coit's Comteist, Emersonian and Adlerian systems."[64] If the boys embraced Coit's ethical idealism the name they chose likewise advanced the cultural identity of the group. As one settlement house worker shrewdly observed, "Among Hebrew boys there is a strong tendency to hypocrisy in the choice of names and objects for their clubs. Learning and culture command public admiration; therefore they wish it to appear that their club is an organization devoted to the development of intellect. Such a club had a more genteel standing than a mere athletic or pleasure club."[65]

Club members ranged in age from 14 to 18 as Coit sought "to organize on the Guild pattern a large and strong group of adolescent boys." To a greater degree "than any other club these boys were exposed to the full round of the leadership of the settlement; Coit, Adler, Stover, King, Miss Conway, Paulding, Miss Moore (the librarian) and (James B.) Reynolds, under whose leadership (1894-1902) the settlement reflected the corporate rather than the

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cooperative or utopian form of Guild."[66]. The double name, University Settlement-Neighborhood Guild, symbolized a radicalism, which, as pursued by Coit and Stover, "exercised a strong influence on everyone connected with the institution." However, as a group SEI cared little about ideology, "but exploited both factions for the values and satisfaction each offered."[67]. In the words of one member, Elias Lowe, who became a professor of paleography at Oxford and later returned to America and joined the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton, "friendship and ideals, that sums up what I got from my five years connection with the Guild."[68].

For this determined and ambitious group of young men the University Settlement was an opportunity "to participate in educational activities spiced with collegiate sauce." It had value "to a community that cared for learning."[69]. This was the fire which activated the Jewish middle class. "Held down for centuries. . . on coming here (they) had opportunity and skyrocketed into prominence. As they did not think much of trade or labor in comparison to professional status parents and children united. . . into the learned group."[70].

In the short span of eight years the members of SEI took full advantage of every opportunity to participate in the activities of the settlement as well as to associate with the adults "who planned and supervised its programs."

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From 1893 to 1901 SEI "had a membership of about forty boys, more than half of whom not only acquitted themselves handsomely in the vocations they elected, but contributed substantially to the welfare of their country, their city and their ethnic group."[71] Mary Simkhovitch pointed to the fact that

> All the SEI boys went to college . . .These boys became great enthusiasts and the virus of the early settlement residents became still more powerful when transfused into the newly arrived Americans. The settlement's hospitality was enlarged by bringing to the homes of settlement board members the young people of the clubs. . . Henry (Moskowitz) became a welcome visitor at the homes of many American liberals. Dr. Felix Adler was especially attracted to Henry's outgoing personality. Out of this friendship came the Down Town Ethical Society on Madison Street. Three of the SEI boys turned the Down Town Ethical Society into the Madison House in 1899. Thus, what the University Settlement had begun, was carried on by the boys to another stage of development. The old American liberalism, deepened and enlarged, entered its second stage. Democracy became naturalized in this soil and America began settling down in the tenement districts of New York.[72]

According to its constitution "the purpose of the club . . .was to instruct members in the principles of our government, to promote a feeling of brotherhood among members, and to be benevolent."[73] Their regular meetings were of a high order and generally included "a debate upon a topic of the day. The boys did a good deal of research on a par with that of high school or college students."[74] Their

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club paper benefitted from the talent already at work. "One issue in script was illustrated by Jacob Epstein," whose exhibitions in London made him a world famous sculptor, "and most of the literary text was written by Max Marcin," who became a well-known American playwright. "Some meetings took the form of entertainment. Sketches consisting principally of Jew Jokes were enjoyed heartily."[75.]

Jacob Epstein was "a vigorous, excitable, boisterous and dominating boy" who loved projects and parades. According to Albert Volk, "who lived next door to Epstein on Hester Street," and for more than thirty years was the city's chief wrecker, Epstein "discovered a dealer with a stock of Swiss military helmuts, which could be purchased at five cents apiece. A group of children acquired these and Epstein deployed them and led them on parades and forays into adjacent streets."[76.] During 1892 and 1893 "the most dramatic thing going on in the neighborhood. . . were the Art exhibits. It was advertising of a high order and without doubt Epstein had a look and made himself known. He was then twelve or thirteen years old."[77.] It was Epstein who introduced Bernard Gussow to the University Settlement. Gussow subsequently moved to Paris where he became a renown American painter. He later recounted that

> All my fellow members of the SEI club, in thinking of the University Settlement, invariably think of it as the Guild at 26 Delancy Street. We think of it affectionately; we think of it respectfully; we think of the old

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> building, the Assembly Room with its low ceiling where at sociables the really bashful, though apparently scornful, youths would group in or near the doorways; the girls were at the other end; we think of the gym, back of it; we think of the Library upstairs with Miss Helen Moore enshrined, the hushed little Reading Room and the earnest faces of the readers; the girls' room at the top of the one little stairway (Miss Renard's domain); the boys' rooms at the top of the other little stairway (their own domain, I guess). It was a pleasure to come to, a privilege to stay. . . Then we had to get out, we had to leave No. 26 it appeared, into a great new building with big rooms, wide stone staircases, many more stories, roof-garden, immaculate walls, big windows. The building was imposing, but there was a little chill in it. We scuttled to the smaller rooms, we huddled in corners in groups; we talked loudly and cheerfully, but it was chilly. Then one of the boys went; then another; a third; it seemed natural. They went out into the world to take up their work. Finally the SEI Club went.[78]

James K. Paulding, that "most amiable, permissive lover of liberty," once remarked that "some of the most delightful hours of my residence in Forsyth Street were passed in the company of these young people."[79] In his autobiography, Jacob Epstein characterized Paulding as "a man of fine literary discernment. . . who was in the habit of reading to four or five of us boys on a Sunday morning and this was my first introduction to Conrad."[80] What impressed those who came to know them well was the fact that "in ability, intellectual power and drive," the SEI group "were the equal of the residents." Hamilton Holt noted "that the club was

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as civic oriented as his classmates at Yale and more passionate intellectually."[81] What these aspiring youth looked for were "the influential people. . . seasoned adults with resources and know-how to illuminate a path and to help them make contact with the new world on which their eyes were set. What they wanted. . . was access to opportunity, education, jobs, help over humps, a shoulder to cry on. The shoulder meant someone to whom they could unburden their hopes, fears, ideals, frustrations and tragedies, and who would give practical help."[82]

What the Settlement gave them was "the feel of the American Anglo-Protestant customs and manners. They wanted to be Americans and Jews. As intellectuals some were meeting the same challenge and loss of faith as Protestant college men, and were ready to jettison the old for opportunity to participate in the institutionalism of America, its law, medicine, education, political and economic activities, and particularly its social expression."[83] To a large extent, and in a manner that commanded respect, this group reflected the time and space in which they came of age, and, with excitement and anguish, wrung success out of turmoil. "No other district in New York sensed the agitation of its life rhythms so sharply or harbored aspirations so out of joint with its tenement mileau."[84] In the process, SEI enhanced the development of the Guild idea. If Coit's experiment "was hammered out and

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leased on the German-Irish population, its form was developed by the Jews."[85.]

If the boys of SEI thought of the Guild as 26 Delancy Street the reasons lay in their acquired affection for its peculiar interior design, which sheltered so many fond memories, and the spirited people with whom they came in contact. Though the Guild "was, in effect, a male affair," young women volunteers from uptown paraded through the place almost at will, their contributions generally welcomed by Coit, if no one else. In fact, many of the ladies who made their presence felt during these years actually arrived before Coit's tenure began.

Winifred Holt, the blind daughter of Henry Holt, the publisher, came in 1892. "Her folks were afraid for her, and sent a boy to take her downtown and back."[86.] She led the Order Club, "described by Paulding as dis-order." Only nineteen, "she wanted to give people a chance. Her theory was everyone is alike and could move up if they desired. These were bright children, so give them a chance."[87.] Following her work at the Guild she "started the New York Association for the Blind, whose headquarters were called the Lighthouse."

It was Miss Holt who brought Winifred Buck to the Settlement. Upon her arrival Miss Buck worked on Forsyth Street where she took charge of the Potomac Club, a group of young boys. In the afternoon the boys "came into the

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basement and had a half hour of loud talk and exercise." In explaining this procedure to a disconcerted resident, Miss Buck pointed out that the boys were "just out of school and needed to let off steam."[88] Unwilling to push this argument too far she then resorted to "chords on the piano," after which the boys "drew up chairs and began the business meeting." This was followed by a literary discussion. As they generally had the use of two rooms, one group "would be rough-housing while the other met." It was at the University Settlement that Miss Buck gained the experience, which, in later years made her an authority on the club movement. In the course of her work with boys and girls she became convinced "that games and gymnastics (and eventually the business meeting) are the only kind of amusements which are appropriate to an organization whose object is social development."[89] Following the lead of Jacob Riis, Miss Buck helped to convince the Board of Education "to allow the school buildings to be used for recreative as well as instructive purposes. In 1897 six clubs were established in a public school in the famous Tenth Ward. . . and for two years and a half these clubs were run at private expense."[90] When it became obvious that "there was a great demand for such accommodations as the public schools afforded, and that the school property was not endangered by the presence of the clubs, the Board of Education readily undertook the expense and responsibility of continuing (on a

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much larger scale) the work which had been unofficially inaugurated."[91.]

Louise Waterman also arrived in 1892 and initiated a program with little girls, sewing for others. She taught art and managed Christmas festivals. A member of the Ethical Culture Society her ideas fit nicely into the Guild program. While at the Settlement she met Stephen Wise "who soon discovered that Louise shared many of his own social ideals. Steadily he courted, visiting her during working hours at the Settlement or during her evenings of painting in the studio at home. On the last day of 1899 Louise promised to marry him."[92.]

Pauline Arnoux MacArthur "met Coit in Amherst and knew about his work." She attended college with Paulding and Goodale, who sparked her interest in the Settlement. She was the daughter of Judge William H. Arnoux, then a member of the Supreme Court of New York. As her father was also counsel to Steinway & Co., and being a pianist herself, Mrs. MacArthur arranged concerts for the Settlement kindergarten and organized the Thursday Musical Club. Henry Holt referred to her as "a real saint." Her thoughtfulness and generosity knew no bounds.

In June of 1894 the MacArthurs rented a small cottage in Mt. Pleasant, "a cool spot on the New Jersey coast," and in a letter to James B. Reynolds offered to provide "a weekly or fortnightly outing to four Guild boys at a time,

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ages 8 to 14." While on one of these outings Max Schlamjack and Jacob Epstein described their experiences to Reynolds.

> Of fun there is no ending out here, bathing not to be beaten anywhere and the treatment is excellent. We go fishing, crabbing, row boating and everything else. Sunday, Mr. MacArthur hired a sail boat and took us out for a sail. The air here is delicious.
>
> We are treated by Mr. and Mrs. MacArthur not like a pack of charity for whom they are doing a great thing, but like visitors whom they have invited to stay with them.[93]

As the years passed Pauline MacArthur broadened her efforts on behalf of the less fortunate, without ever regarding them as such. Long after the outings at Mt. Pleasant "she aided in the establishment of camps for underprivileged children near Montclair, New Jersey, . . . and introduced music into this state's prisons." For her work "in connection with propaganda on behalf of the Allied cause," Mrs. MacArthur received a commendation from Marshall Foch.[94]

While the Guild was essentially a male sanctuary, a quality historically preserved at the University Settlement Society, the contributions of these women proved invaluable to its success, not only in what they visibly accomplished, but for the social balance they provided. Though uptown ladies working downtown, these women were, more importantly, representatives of a new generation and possessed many of the characteristics which came to be associated with it.

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While a "liberal education" failed to prepare women for a particular role in society, leaving many to question their own usefulness, it did provide them with a different mental outlook, encouraging expectations many eventually found it necessary to satisfy. Educated but with few genuine opportunities, this first college-bred generation of women sought different roles in which to apply the stereotypical female virtues as well as develop the administrative abilities and creative prowess to advance their own position in society. One area of interest accessible to women and which satisfied their own demand for a meaningful and worthwhile purpose in life was the settlement house movement.

The position of women was an issue drawing closer to the surface of American society. Moreover, the concerns raised by women were not theirs alone, for the position they held intersected American life at every level. Few men gave voice to these concerns but one who did was Stanton Coit. In an address before the Society for Ethical Culture in Carnegie Music Hall on March 18, 1894, he spoke directly about the emancipation of women. Declaring that "women are mentally and morally inferior to men," Coit told his audience of fifteen hundred people that this condition "was due to her education and not to any inherent defect."[95] Speaking on the subject of "A Larger Liberty for Women," Coit emphasized that "the development of women's liberty was

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a most serious problem and that the purity of politics and the family and the abolition of poverty were interwoven with it."[96].

The blunt impact of his address produced a minor convulsion and in a subsequent interview, which appeared in the New York Sun, Coit made a valiant effort to clarify his own position and establish the seriousness with which he viewed this issue. "In the first place," said Dr. Coit, "the subject of women has not really been seriously taken up since John Stuart Mill's book on The Subjection of Women appeared. It has been agitated by groups of people who were interested in some special feature of the question. . . but the whole subject has not been taken hold of with serious effort."[97]. To reinforce his original point Coit insisted that "the great trouble is in the training of women. . .it is the education which is at fault."

Unlike men, women are not allowed to develop their own individuality. Pointing to the end result of this differentiated upbringing, Coit remarked "it isn't strange that at present a woman's sole object in life is matrimony. How else is she to make a living? I think that women should become workers." Assuming a woman marries at twenty-five, as Coit believed "she ought not to marry earlier," and one allows fifteen years for child-rearing, "the woman is then 40, her children are in school, and she is free during the day. She is riper in mind and experience and is more fitted

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then ever before to perform valuable service in industrial and civil affairs. From that time until she is 70 she should be a worker."[98].

Turning to her role as mother, Coit maintained that "when a woman is rearing children. . . she is performing a civic function, just as much as the school-teacher or the instructor who trains the soldiers and sailors of the country." Moving his argument to its logical conclusion Coit admitted "if that is the case, why should she not be paid for her services and care taken to see that they are properly done? It would result in the rearing of the better men and women, as well as the payment of that unpaid class, the mothers."[99].

If the cutting edge of his own cultural moorings helped to shape his remarks, Stanton Coit proposed a radical change in the education of women while he revealed an equally dramatic perspective about their role and function in American society. By calling for women to become workers Coit did not rule out the aspirations of those drawn to a college campus rather than an industrial factory, nor did he offer salaried motherhood in place of professional careers. Coit's larger objective was to proffer ideas aimed at challenging present thinking about the environment in which women came of age.

Some years later, in his introduction to an edition of John Stuart Mill's The Subjection of Women, Coit noted

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ruefully that "the supreme disability which caused Mill to use the words subjection and slavery has not been removed . . .women as a sex are to-day subject to men as a sex."[100.] While that characterization applied, in the main, to the work of the University Settlement, it seemed less offensive under Coit's influence. The large role assumed by women in the growth and development of the settlement house further muted its impact, if it did not relieve them of this "supreme disability."

If women remained a subject class Mill acknowledged, as early as 1869, that their influence had expanded in at least two areas of life, "its aversion to war, and its addiction to philanthropy."[101.] While he considered both "excellent characteristics," Mill, nevertheless, expressed concern that "in the particular applications the direction it gives to them is at least as often mischievous as useful. In the philanthropic department. . . the two provinces chiefly cultivated by women are religious proselytism and charity . . .As for charity, it is a matter in which the immediate effect on the persons directly concerned, and the ultimate consequence to the general good, are apt to be at complete war with one another."[102.]

Demonstrating they were more useful than mischievous, it was their "more lively interest in the present feelings of persons" which drew women to the settlement house movement. And, once situated, they confirmed Mill's notion

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that "women's thoughts are thus as useful in giving reality to those of thinking men, as men's thoughts in giving width and largeness to those of women."[103].

If the ultimate outcome of this personal interaction proved gratifying, its immediate consequence only heightened the tension surrounding women's place in society. To ameliorate their condition American women began to extend the province of philanthropy beyond the domain of church, school, and home "in the search for areas in which to exercise individual moral obligation and in concern for the impact of industrialism on the lives of others."[104]. Drawing support from the ranks of middle and upper-income groups, they organized the General Federation of Women's Clubs. Begun in 1890, this national organization soon turned cultural pursuits to the more rigorous task of political activism. Many among their number could easily relate to the passionate cry of Vida D. Scudder who lamented, "cleavage of classes, cleavage of race, cleavage of faiths! an inextricable confusion. And the voice of democracy, crying aloud in the streets: Out of all this achieve brotherhood! achieve the race to be."[105].

Here was both an expression of frustration with the present condition and the war cry of reform politics. Inspired by the problems of the neighborhood, which increasingly reflected the state of the nation, the reformer challenged the preferences of a divided citizenry and its

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government for order and hierarchy over democracy and equity. The unrelenting growth of industrialism intensified the voice of democracy, not on behalf of women alone, but in the name of all members of the community. At issue was the moral obligation which so often spoke to the conflict released by political decisions between "the immediate effect on the persons directly concerned, and the ultimate consequence to the general good."

The most dramatic example of this conflict was the financial panic of 1893 which "rapidly assumed the larger proportions of an industrial and business depression."[106] Lasting nearly four years, the depression proved one of the longest and most severe in the economic history of the country, raising the spector of moral obligation less as a matter of charity than what reformers and unemployed alike viewed as the social justice necessary in a democratic society. The Commercial and Financial Chronicle fixed the point at which the panic began, and set the tone for what followed, when it declared

> The month of August will long remain memorable. . . in our industrial history. Never before has there been such a sudden and striking cessation of industrial activity. Nor was any section of the country exempt from the paralysis. Mills, factories, furnaces, mines nearly everywhere shut down in large numbers, and commerce and enterprise were arrested in an extraordinary degree. . . and hundreds of thousands of men thrown out of employment.[107]

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The sudden decline of commerce and enterprise owed much of its sting to the politics of money and the tariff. The legislative compromise of 1890 had proved a disaster. Supporters of the Sherman Silver Purchase Act had argued that "an increase in the money supply would lead to higher prices and an economic upswing, easing pressures which had existed during much of the period since the 1873 panic."[108] Moreover, the rise in federal receipts, the result of protective tariffs, had produced a surplus many considered intolerable. Manufacturers and members of the financial community, who led the fight to secure the McKinley Tariff, had insisted that "higher prices for finished goods would also mean larger bills for raw materials and labor."[109] Exports would suffer and "the domestic market itself would be threatened unless tariffs were raised to new levels."[110] At issue was the fate of industrial organizations as well as the future of farmers and workers.

Compounding the fear which accompanied passage of this legislation was the default of Baring Brothers in November, 1890. Victimized by the "Argentine craze," for which it had served as the bellwether, Baring Brothers, a major investment house, "regarded in England almost as an impregnable institution, like Gibraltar and afternoon tea," caused waves of anxiety on Wall Street, heightening awareness of the extent to which American expansion depended on British capital.[111] The sharp reaction on Wall Street

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came to an abrupt end when the Bank of England moved to support the London market.

Though the panic was of short duration English investors began to liquidate securities and convert to gold, with the result that the outside flow of capital virtually ceased. This put a strain on the international economy which began to contract. If the panic of 1890 was a financial one, "it was in fact only a curtain raiser to what was to follow."[112]. With the Treasury directed to purchase 4.5 million ounces of silver a month at the market price, and redeemable in gold or silver at the holder's option, the United States now pursued a double monetary standard. "Little silver was used within the nation's boundaries, while foreigners refused to take anything but gold."[113]. The great American drama of inflation had taken hold.

Despite record harvests and grain exports in 1891, the outward flow of gold continued. And, as prices rose, so did wages, owing to more dollars in circulation. European nations lost confidence in the American currency and predicted financial collapse. As expected, the McKinley Tariff reduced custom duties and all but wiped out the surplus. Of paramount concern was the ability of government to maintain the legal limit of 100 million in gold reserves.

If the year proved dreadful, "the early months of 1893 had given no clear warning of impending financial disaster."[114]. Then, a steady succession of bad news began

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to take its toll. On February 25 the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad went into bankruptcy and "Wall Street experienced its biggest volume of trade ever." Two months later, on April 18, Thomas M. Barr & Co., a leading coffee dealer, went under, taking many smaller firms with it. Confidence began to erode. Three days afterward "gold reserves finally fell below the 100 million limit. May opened with the Columbian Exposition in Chicago but the festive mood of the country had little effect on Wall Street. The market opened lower and continued its decline through mid-week when news came that "the huge National Cordage Company. . .was bankrupt." There followed a large selloff in the market, an event which the New York Times characterized as "A Great Day for the Bears on Wall Street."

The damage was both financial and psychological as the National Cordage Company represented the prototypical industrial trust. Panic spread and bank closures became commonplace. "Confidence and credit vanished; the economy sank in irretrievable collapse. . . a reflection of the nation's monetary problems."[115] Accordingly, President Grover Clevland ordered Congress to meet in special session on August 7, with the avowed purpose to repeal the Sherman Silver Purchase Act. In the interim Wall Street suffered through "poor earnings reports, tales of tight money, gold shipments, and the like," which only deepened the malaise caused by the failure of the Cordage trust.

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After a fearsome three week debate Congress repealed the Sherman Act and passed the Wilson-Gorman Tariff, a bill generally regarded as unsatisfactory by both farmers and businessmen, and which Clevland refused to sign. Yet, the efforts to supplant one legislative compromise with another did not have the desired effect. Repeal did not restore foreign confidence in the dollar nor halt the overflow of gold. And, most important, it did not help the economy to recover. "Except the Civil War, no crisis of the nineteenth century challenged America's political and economic order so profoundly as that of the mid-1890's. Never before had the economy suffered such deep, pervasive and sustained depression."[116].

As the financial capital of the country, New York, with its burgeoning population of working class immigrants, proved especially vulnerable to the cycles of disbelief, fear and anger generated by the depression. The impending threat to meagre savings and fragile jobs bred spontaneous reaction.

On August 1 the New York Times reported "at all of the savings banks in the city yesterday an unusual number of depositors wanted their money. More than three-quarters of these were women. . . At the east-side banks, where the depositors are mostly foreigners, the run was heaviest."[117]. While banks immediately invoked "the time-notice rule," they readily admitted that the moment "was ripe for a great panic

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among savings bank depositors."

By the middle of August, as the number of unemployed grew, there occurred "hunger demonstrations," which culminated in a large rally in Union Square at which Emma Goldman was a featured speaker. Much of this activity on the Lower East Side was the work of Russian and Polish Jews, dissatisfied with their poverty and infused with socialist ideas. To judge from news reports which daily monitored activities there, the entire area was "on the brink of a revolution." If the spirit of anarchy seemed pervasive so was the genuine suffering among the unemployed.

No sooner had the depression hit than Samuel Gompers, president of the American Federation of Labor, "applied to the municipality to help the unemployed and relieve their distress by making work for them."[118] The response of government officials was swift and predictable. "It is plain that the municipal offices have no authority to make work for anybody, any more than they have to give away the money of the taxpayers in charity, except through the authorized source and in the lawful ways."[119] If the government could not "make work," it would entertain completion of that already authorized by law. However, officials were quick to point out that "all the work which the authorities can lawfully put in hand at once does not amount to very much. . . It would not have a considerable effect in mitigating the distress of the unemployed, and it

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would be worse than worthless for this purpose if it were permitted to be made the occasion of forming a select and favored class of workers."[120] The lines had been drawn with subsequent pronouncements of deeply-felt beliefs respecting political economy and philanthropy accompanied by efforts to minimize the seriousness of the crisis.

As the year wore on the depression grew worse. Unemployment became rampant and intensified the poverty of those already at the margin. Unable to respond to the demands placed upon limited resources, churches and charity organizations formed the East Side Relief Work Committee, the purpose of which was "to give work to the unemployed, whose condition is known, and whose needs are carefully inquired into, and to do it in such a manner as not to interfere with the earnings of others."[121] In keeping with the general objectives of the Committee, of which he was a member, and to alleviate the strain on those for whom there was no work, Stanton Coit used the resources of the University Settlement Society to create paying jobs. He hired one hundred men to sweep the streets for a dollar per day. In cooperation with the Council of the Society and other charity workers, Coit took over "an unoccupied building on one of the east side streets" and turned it into "a busy manufactory. . . (where) nearly one hundred more men and women have been earning at least living wages making clothing for the Southern sufferers," victims of the cyclone

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which struck the South Sea Islands.[122.]

Its resources depleted "the Society needed more funds and sought to enlarge its field. With these ends in view Coit invited a number of prominent and wealthy citizens to a meeting on December 21 at the United Charities Building to discuss various plans."[123.] Seth Low, president of the Settlement Council, indicated that "this was only a beginning and that the rich men were expected to cooperate until there was not an idle man in the city from necessity." Emphasizing the severity of the present moment, Low urged on all employers "not to add to the volume of the unemployed except for the direst necessity. A very critical time has come upon us, and it will require all the better judgement of our citizens to meet the urgency."[124.]

Following Low's petition Coit then described the methods of work used by the Settlement and conveyed a bleak picture of life under the yoke of depression. "They had visited five hundred families in one block of tenements east of the Bowery. Forty per cent were out of work, and another forty per cent have employment only a part of the time. Nearly all had been out of work for months, and some since last spring."[125.] To reinforce the desperation of these people Coit indicated that "the pawn shops showed the effect of their poverty." While these places did "a rushing business up till last October, they are doing practically nothing now. The people have nothing left to pawn." Coit's

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investigation also revealed that "over $2,000,000 had been withdrawn from savings banks by the poor people. Moreover, the wages of those who still had work had been reduced from $10 to $3 to $1 per week. "At the conclusion of his remarks Coit noted that "all they will ask for is work. They will take nothing else."[126].

Other accounts of the destitution infecting the poorer sections of the city came from Mrs. Charles R. Lowell, the Rev. W.T. Elsing and Dr. Jane Robbins of the New York College Settlement. Jacob Schiff spoke "of the great good accomplished by private charities," while Felix Adler "offered a resolution appointing a committee to confer with the Mayor, seeking to have the city at once begin whatever legitimate work was contemplated." Echoing the sentiments shared by many throughout the city, Adler said, "the present stringency was merely an episode, and such work would bring about permanent improvements."[127].

Three days later, on December 24, Coit spoke before the Ethical Culture Society at Carnegie Music Hall, where he "made an urgent appeal for organization" as the best means of dealing with the present crisis. He told an overflow audience that "the worst calamity that could befall the city had happened to it during the four last months. Want, hunger, idleness and suffering are oppressing the poor."[128]. While he welcomed the actions of philanthropists Coit insisted that "the charity organizations of this city have

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not met with the real suffering of the deserving poor. If you were to go to the trade unions and the Hebrew organizations and get their list of sufferers, and then go to the charity organizations, you would find that at the latter places the names on your list were unknown."[129].

In an effort to define "What Shall Be Done for the Unemployed of New York City," Coit reaffirmed his belief that "the thing to be done was to give the able-bodied unemployed work." To the persistent question of how is this work to be done, and by whom, Coit replied, "we cannot expect much help from the great mass of employers, who are themselves in a precarious condition. There is but one instrument for such a work, and that is the city government. This alone can give the necessary work to the great mass of unemployed."[130]. Given his familiarity with the crisis at hand Coit proceeded to lay out six principles which

> to my mind. . .we must follow in an attempt to deal with the great hardships. First, in order to deal with this great mass of 100,000 unemployed, food and clothing should be given to the sick and incapable only, while work should be furnished to the wage-earners. Second, there must be organization and a method of giving devised. The amount of fraud is steadily increasing and kind-hearted people are daily giving to those who are not in actual need. Third, the unemployed of the country must be forbidden to enter the city. If we begin to dole out food and clothing and other cities do not follow our example, New York will be flooded with the poor of the country. Fourth, if the work is to be given, it must not be a mere disguised charity; it must be such as

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> the city really needs. Fifth, there should be an organized system of statistical bureaus. At present we have no idea of the extent of the suffering except as we get from guess-work. The foundation of the work of dealing with the poor is the knowledge of their real condition. Sixth, there must be as little waste as possible.[131]

Coit's suggestion that the city provide work for the able-bodied unemployed drew fire from several quarters. In a letter which appeared in the December 26 edition of The Evening Post he responded to those who accused him of "advocating anarchistic and socialistic measures." Disclaiming such inferences as "wholly erroneous," Coit defended his position. "What I have said to the unemployed people of the east side was, in substance, to advise them to appeal to the city to give them work; and I have recommended this course solely because I know of no other resource great enough to meet the present emergency." With so many now unemployed" they must work, starve, receive charity, or go to the almshouse. Trade work, paid for by private capital, is of all things to be desired. . . but it scarcely seems possible that private capital can supply the demand for work at the moment when it is most needed."[132] This being the case, Coit argued, "public works requiring unskilled labor remain as the only alternative capable of providing employment for a sufficient number of people to mitigate the present distress." To be effective, he continued, "the work must be provided at once, for during the next two months the

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suffering will be the greatest."[133].

Turning his attention to those whose plight he had made his own, Coit insisted "that the city is bound to support its pauper poor is a legally recognized duty." Rather than have the unemployed swell the ranks of those seeking relief, Coit urged that "the city should give employment and pay for work which it actually needs. Better that the money should be expended in wages than that it should be used for the maintenance of Blackwell's Island."[134].

Confronting his critics, Stanton Coit emphatically denied their charge. "I have not advocated state socialism, but I do urge that in the present emergency, and as a temporary expedient, the city should give work to the unemployed upon half-time and half wages, sufficient to afford the means of sustaining life without offering an inducement to the continuance of the work when conditions of business will permit a return to ordinary trades."[135].

Throughout the month of December Coit's high visibility and forceful commentary received favorable support from the press. While he had galvanized the forces supporting philanthropic activity, his advocacy of a larger role for the city had shifted the burden of response to the municipal authorities, thereby exerting pressure on the growing controversy surrounding the question of the work ethic v. relief. Stanton Coit had become a major figure on the landscape of the city.

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On December 29 Mayor Thomas F. Gilroy, in an effort to calm the growing agitation, announced that "as soon as the appropriations for 1894 are available I shall call the heads of the various city departments together to arrange a systematic plan whereby public work may be undertaken with all possible speed for the purposes of providing employment for as many men as possible who are now out of work."[136.]

At the University Settlement "callers were coming . . .to apply to Dr. Stanton Coit for assistance." One report indicated "at least 1,000 daily apply. . . They crowd the room where the names are taken and the street outside until the policemen complain that they obstruct travel, and the order comes, clear them away; we can't attend to them all."[137.] In an effort to assure that assistance went to the most needy, and to limit the incidence of fraud, "men are at work constantly investigating the cases. . . To every address taken. . . only about one-fifth are found deserving. Some of them come again and again. . .Six men are employed on the investigating committee, and ten times that number could hardly accomplish the work."[138.]

Confronted by this industrial army of displaced workers, who required help neither he nor all of the other private agencies together could provide, Coit continued to emphasize "the great need, not the relief." One suggestion he received and put forward addressed those "who may have repairing, decorating, or any kind of work around their

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houses to be done. Tell them not to put it off until Spring. The weather is mild enough for any kind of varnishing, cementing, painting, or carpentering work."[139].

Ever conscious of the rhythm of life in the neighborhood, Coit remarked that "the 1st of January is coming, when the people are liable to be evicted for non-payment of rent." As reported in one newspaper account "Dr. Coit's idea here is not to pay it, but to make the miserable sweating-house keepers and middlemen wait or go to the wall. The people are just as destitute if the rent is paid, and the landlord received the real benefit. If they are actually put out they can then be helped."[140].

No sooner had he made the landlord hostage to the condition of the poor than Coit again felt the press of criticism. The Real Estate Record and Builder's Guide asked "why the landlord should forego his rent more than the baker the price of his bread or the butcher and tailor the market value of their commodities. Wherein are these cases different? Charity undoubtedly should be enjoined upon all men at times like these, but why more upon the landlord than upon others?"[141].

In what had by now become a predictable pattern of challenge and response, Coit wrote to the editor of The New York Times. Claiming the original report misleading, he worried that "a reader might infer that I recommend tenants not to pay their rent. Nothing could be further from my

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mind. I simply said that with the money given me to relieve the starving, I will not pay back rent." In an effort to align his own present position with the accepted practice at other agencies, Coit remarked that "it is the custom of the Charity Organization Society, so I understand, never to pay back rent."[142]. Acknowledging its practical implications Coit sought to modify his original statement, fearing that "some reader. . .seeing such a very remarkable statement as coming from me, might, and wisely, hold back financial support from the relief committee of which I have the honor of being a member."[143].

Amidst the tumult of activity at the settlement and his penchant for public controversy Coit remained sensitive to the attitudes and needs of the trade unions. During the last week in December "a committee of fifteen, representing seventy-two labor union organizations. . . called upon Mayor Gilroy. . . to urge upon him the necessity of the city providing work for the unemployed."[144]. They chose Coit as their spokesmen.

Given the opportunity to speak with the Mayor directly, Coit "made a long address. . . in which he assured him that the labor unions were confident that he would do all in his power to aid the unemployed. He asked that the city should give all the work it possibly could. . .and thought that it might be well to keep unemployed men from other cities out of New York. He said that the labor unions could not ask

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for charity, but they wanted work."[145].

When Coit asked what the city could do "the Mayor finally interrupted and said that it would be impossible to answer all his questions off-hand. He would answer them if they were submitted in writing." In a short speech of his own Gilroy "promised to do anything within his power, and within the law. . . The chief problem, he said, was in providing work for those who had been turned out of factories and shops." The Mayor indicated that he did not think it necessary to keep the unemployed of other places out." In a remark Coit must have found ironic, Gilroy "believed that generous-hearted New York would do its best to provide for all within its limits."[146].

Despite the political rhetoric issuing from the Mayor's office, all efforts to induce the city to initiate public works accomplished nothing. Then, in February, 1894, 20,000 workmen gathered at Madison Square Garden for an unemployment conference sponsored by the labor organizations of the city and chaired by Stanton Coit. "There, Dr. Felix Adler, Seth Low, Dr. William Rainsford, Samuel Gompers, and Daniel DeLeon discussed public works projects as palliatives for the acute distress, but without effect."[147]. It was the largest such public gathering held during the winter of 1893-94, and a clear indication of the enormous suffering experienced throughout the city. Some viewed the conference as a signal effort to intensify pressure on the city in the

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wake of massive unemployment.

Several days later Coit met privately with a reporter from The New York Sun. "He was the picture of contentment as he talked of the millions that should be spent and of practical charity." Buoyed by the Madison Square Garden meeting, Coit emphasized the responsibilities of state and local government "when able-bodied men cannot find work, as is the case at present." Referring to the on-going debate generated by the crisis at hand, and, in an effort to allay the suspicions cast upon his ideas, he indicated that "students of social science seem now generally to agree that if there are public improvements that are needed and that ought to have been done before, these may legitimately be expedited six months or a year or even more."[148].

In an effort to draw out the logic of his own position Coit went on to say "the principle is that the municipality should construct its public works not in times when private industry is booming, but in periods of depression. At such times labor is cheaper, and, in the second place, the opening up of works on a large scale. . . helps to set the whole of industry in motion and thus to shorten the panic of the capitalists and the pitiable misery of the people."[149].

What Stanton Coit recommended was the expenditure of $20 million "to be put into the pockets of the workingmen as wages." Once revitalized, the working people will have the money necessary "to buy all the commodities of life, and the

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capitalists, anticipating this, will begin to prepare for the new demand." If Coit saw public expenditure as a stimulant for the depressed economy, he did not believe it would "make the people in any case dependent upon State aid. Private industry will be sure to draw back the working people the moment the crisis is over, and, should it fail to, the State can resort to the method of half-time, which will constrain the workmen to seek private employers with a full week's work."[150]. Moreover, Coit pointed out, "it will be impossible for industry to revive short of a twelve month, unless, throughout the country, local authorities follow the policy recommended by the organized labor of New York City."[151].

With respect to that policy, Coit went on to explain that at present delegates from one hundred labor organizations are now beginning to circulate petitions, the main objects of which are:

1. to build underground railroads adequate to the needs of the people, to be owned and operated by the people.

2. to build all the docks and wharves of the city of iron and granite.

3. to construct in every Senatorial district large public baths, with swimming pools for men and for women, and private baths with all modern conveniences.

4. to construct underground water closets and lavatories at every fourth street throughout the tenement house districts.

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5. to erect in every Senatorial district a public hall for use of the people, with rooms for labor intelligence bureaus attached.

6. to build as many new schoolhouses as the child population requires.

7. to tear down the rear tenement houses throughout the tenement house districts, and to convert the backyards into interior parks.[152]

Among the proposed projects were several items which appeared in the original agenda of the Tenth Ward Social Reform Club, whose underlying purpose exhibited many of the same qualities, albeit on a smaller scale, as these petitions. Such proposals struck at the very armor of classical liberalism and Coit's presumptions offered little consolation to those who feared that, once begun, the enactment of public works would establish a precedent of devilish proportions. What proved even more alarming was the scale of activity presently under discussion. Yet, the issue here was more than a matter of economic theory, state intervention v. laissez faire, but the broader implications for political control. Implicit in his position was Coit's attempt to create a more fluid situation, on the assumption that it would produce a labor-based coalition with which to challenge the Tammany machine, and so make it possible to alter and redefine community and work life, with the ultimate consequence being a redistribution of wealth and power.

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Prepared to take full advantage of the opportunity at hand, Coit told the Sun reporter "nothing will so purify the politics of New York City as that the city Government shall be forced to be responsible for such gigantic undertakings as these mentioned. Once let the great work be started, and any political party that proved itself unworthy of the trust would be killed forever."[153]. With his own idealism in full bloom Coit felt certain that "the working people mean to make this question of public works an issue at the polls. The petition which our men are circulating is, in reality, a plan of direct legislation, and men and parties will stand or fall as they further or hinder the demands."[154]. With a dash of political panache Coit struck the final note. "As I told Mr. Croker recently, the working people are aroused as they were in 1886, and it means that 70,000 voters will leave the regular party ranks if these things are not attended to. It has come simply to a question of the solidity of labor as opposed to the solidity of the machine."[155].

One aspect of this impending struggle, which Coit did so much to provoke, was the extent to which it heightened political factionalism, reflecting fundamental disagreements over public policy. And, few questions proved more divisive in this regard than whether to "encourage or repress the organization of labor unions (and) to increase or restrict the municipal services to the poor."[156]. Discontent forced

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men to look more closely at the extension of government activity in its behalf, and Stanton Coit had become its most vigorous spokesman. As the zealous reformer he was, Coit attacked the prevailing mood which denied that "interest group conflict. . . over municipal policy could be legitimate, or ought to be the object of serious inquiry."[157].

With his attention focused on political discussion, Coit's remarks about practical charity very nearly got lost. The distress and suffering of that terrible depression winter of 1893-94 exposed the strengths and weaknesses of private charities in a way they had never experienced, and put to the test the traditional assumptions about the role of relief in an industrial society. In response to a question as to whether he thought private charities properly conducted, Coit said: "O, dear no; I should say not. They don't come up to my idea at all." Drawing upon his own experience and parlaying the lessons learned from the present crisis, Coit reaffirmed his belief that "a census of the unemployed. . . ought to be taken every week." Anticipating the question, Coit mused, of what value is the census that has just been taken three weeks from now? There may be twice as many unemployed then, or there may not be half as many. A weekly census is the only scientific way."[158].

With the conviction borne of practical experience Coit

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then put forward his own idea of how these organizations should function. "I would have all charity distributed from centres, and all charitable centres regulated by the city Government. I would have each society keep a record of all that it does, and I would have it do all that it does under a license. Any violation then should result in the revoking of its license."[159] To ease the problems attendant upon the distribution of relief Coit indicated that "the city should be divided into districts, and each charitable centre should be responsible for its district only, and under no circumstances should it be permitted to relieve any one outside of its own district. Then it should make a report to the city each day of every one it has helped."[160] With respect to "these city works," which he believed "in time will be started," Coit suggested that "the people in the neighborhood only should be employed. A residence in the city should be requisite to employment."[161]

Stanton Coit's final thrust at these issues came with the publication of his article, "Necessity of State Aid to the Unemployed," which appeared in the May, 1894, issue of the Forum. In this piece Coit attacked the present system of relief, philanthropy and preventive charity, and sought to defend his own position on public works against the charge of socialism.

Decrying a process he believed turned citizens into paupers Coit emphasized that "while the bounteous relief

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this winter, in food, clothes, and coal, may have diverted thousands from the gateway of the prison, it has only been to lead them straight to the door of the almhouse. . . There is only one wise method of bringing relief to the able-bodied unemployed, giving wages in return for work."[162].

Maintaining that relief is not for those capable of honest labor he stressed that "it is an axiom of charity that such relief should be administered only to incapables in mind or body, the aged, invalids, and little children." And, as "there have been no more incapables than usual . . .all that has been needed or been wanted (except now so far as false charity has corrupted character) has been compensation for toil useful to the community."[163].

If relief, supported by private philanthropy, proved inadequate so, too, was the suggestion that individual employers could ameliorate the acute distress of the working class. The experience of the winter clearly demonstrated "that private employers have neither work nor wages to offer; if they had, we should not be confronted with the problem of the unemployed." It was a vain plea to urge, as a number of prominent men did, employers "to retain their workmen and to continue to manufacture articles if the immediate market did not require them. Not one employer in a thousand could be foolhardy enough to court bankruptcy."[164].

The only alternative "that could be offered by private

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enterprise would be distinctively relief-work, conducted by philanthropic committees, and supported by private donations." And, as Coit's own experience with the East Side Relief Work Committee indicated, "such efforts must be totally inadequate." For Coit, "the chief benefit of the relief-work done under the Citizen's Committee. . . would be the moral that private philanthropy cannot provide work in any degree proportionate to the demand, anymore than private employers can."[165].

Though it was a critique borne on the wings of crisis, Stanton Coit sought to express the inherent weaknesses of a system which relied on voluntary organizations, private philanthropy and preventive charity in the face of massive suffering and unemployment. In his opinion, such measures, weighed against the needs of the city, had failed. This being the case, he asked, "what then, is to be done?"

In his response Coit used the very arguments he had employed against the system of relief work to support a program of public work. "There is in each city in the United States one employer who is rich enough to pay the wages, and who has enterprises enough . . .to provide work for all the unemployed until trade revives. This employer is in each case the municipality itself. Here, then, is the solution to our problem."[166].

While putting forth his solution Coit used the occasion to criticize those he felt could have made a stronger effort

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to encourage that serious discussion necessary to its adoption. He took note of the fact that "the first committee appointed by President Low to wait upon the Mayor to inquire whether the city would do anything, after calling once and being received politely, was dissolved." With some disdain he viewed Henry George as having "of course no other suggestion to make than the single tax." Turning to a recent article by Josephine Shaw Lowell, he welcomed her "clear recognition" that "municipalities, although not justified in spending money raised by taxation in any unnecessary works, or for the benefits of individuals, may well take into consideration the actual condition, and expedite works which are necessary and which have been decided on for the benefit of the community."[167] Despite her begrudging support, it rankled Coit that she did not include this "important sanction" in the body of the text, choosing instead to confine it to a footnote.

Seeking to cast as wide a net as possible, Coit, nevertheless, called attention to the fact that "there is only one class of the community whom there is no hope of convincing. They are the social dogmatists, who love their theory better than they love human beings."[168] It was against these elements, as well as those who needed the conviction drawn from strong argument, that Coit now took up his defense against the charge of socialism.

That charge had appeared in many forms since Coit first

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issued his call for "wages in return for useful work." The most critical of these was the proposition that such a scheme "is the entering wedge of socialism, the beginning of the downfall of our middle-class republic. Men who advocate this method and agency for relieving the unemployed, it is declared, have an ulterior object, remote from helping the hungry; they wish somehow to bring industries under government control, so that it will be easy to seize them."[169]. From both an ideological as well as an economic point of view, state aid appears as a deux ex machina, an unwarranted intervention which threatens to change the course of events.

From the political side came the argument that "no judicious, honest man, but only a wild dreamer, would, at least in New York City, put into the hands of the present corrupt government the opportunity of feeding 80,000 starving families."[170]. Given the current system by which the city allocates money intrusted to it, Coit wrote, "for each mess of pottage in the shape of wages on expedited works, each man would have to contract to sell his birthright of a free vote to the labor expert. After that, we could not possibly eject Tammany next autumn."[171].

Coit responded to these arguments by employing "the analogy between our present industrial crisis and the great Lancashire cotton famine of 1861 to 1865." He did so not for political purposes but "to make comparisons and

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inferences scientific." It was less a socialistic position than an economic and sociological one.

Calling attention to the swiftness and magnitude with which each crisis occurred, resulting in massive unemployment, Coit emphasized the temporary and accidental character of these events, a point he considered essential to the credibility of the analogy itself. In this way he hoped to defuse the misguided notion, frequently attributed to socialists, that the present condition "is due to permanent forces inherent in the very nature of the industrial system, . . . a part of the regular army of the unemployed." Applying this notion to the present situation, Coit challenged its validity." It is believed that trade is never going to revive, never going to draw back into its ranks the extra number of men who in previous winters have had employment, and now perhaps for the first time are forced into idleness?"[172.]

Using the subsequent restoration of the Lancashire mills to press his case, Stanton Coit argued that the assistance of the British government at the time "did not prove to be the entering wedge of socialism; or. . . the wedge stopped entering. No historian has inked his reputation by intimating that the action of Parliament and of local authorities. . .is a cause of the increase of socialism. As soon as the cotton trade revived, the men went back to the mills."[173.] With the analogy now in

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possession of his argument, Coit indicated that "we are constrained to infer that, except where the cases are different, the same results would follow or not follow here, which followed or did not follow there, upon the opening up of public works for the unemployed."[174.]

While he did not object to the maxims used for the dispensations of private charity, neither did he propose that public works serve as a normative solution. "Undoubtedly, public works by cities are no cure for the chronic lack of employment. Only on the ground that the malady is acute, unusual, and not to recur in many years, could anyone seriously advocate public works as a remedy."[175.] This had been his position from the outset.

Anticipating his critics Coit moved to enhance the usefulness of the analogy by calling attention to the fact that any number of municipal problems received consideration in Lancashire. "Town sewers and land drains were executed . . . by men who had previously earned their living within the four walls of some cotton factory." Applying this experience to New York City, Coit insisted that "the chief lesson is that public improvements, although calling into action only a few industries, would secure employment for all classes of workers, except possibly women; and even they might better do the light out-of-door work. . . that were better than to be fed in idleness by charity."[176.]

Municipal projects had long been among the most

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attractive and tightly controlled rewards of partisan politics. For Coit to insist that "factory hands can easily learn the work needed on public improvements" brought him face to face with one of the crucial issues responsible for the lack of serious debate over public policy. He addressed the issue straightway. "Once having an historical precedent which proves beyond a doubt that factory hands can easily learn the work needed on public improvements, we have answered forever one of the most frequently heard objections to employment by the city."[177]. How easily they learned was really not the point, as everyone clearly understood. Within the bosom of city politics there was no desire to accelerate the growth of trade unions beyond what they had already achieved, nor to expand the range and scope of municipal services over and above those available through charitable organizations.

If the need to retain control over city payrolls seemed crucial, it proved no less important than the regulation of state and municipal bonds. To the frequently asked question of how to finance the public works he advocated, Coit responded, by issuing state and municipal bonds. "Even if the poor had to pay the burden, it would not be so bad, if payment were distributed over thirty years, as to starve outright now. And if the burden were to fall, proportionately to their ability, upon the rich, then the financial question is easily disposed of."[178]. To

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strengthen his argument Coit was quick to point out that "the city has not yet reached its legal limit to the issuing of bonds by about fifty million."

Stanton Coit had set himself against the political establishment and it refused to yield, coveting the ground it had occupied for so long. The very idea of creating public works smacked of socialism, a perception bred in the American consciousness and unaltered by the claim that it did not represent nationalization. In the final analysis Coit reconciled himself to this fact with the admission that "a man may be a good socialist, and may be enthusiastic for these municipal improvements, and still honestly assert that this is not socialism. . . it is the neutral ground common to all classes of statesmen, who recognize that the good of the community is the end of the state."[179].

In his support of direct action by the state Coit challenged the very republican virtue which stood four-square in support of retaining private control over the means of production and keeping the government from interfering with the economy. And their recourse to the dominant ideology, now evoked by the municipal authorities, led Coit to attack "this sudden hunger and thirst after political righteousness, that demands it instantly, that would gladly pay the price of the extreme misery of hundreds of thousands of the innocent poor, rather than see it delayed beyond the next election." It is, he said,

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"prognostic of a near millennium."[180.]

As both reformer and agitator, moved by the plight of those who lacked power, Coit wistfully asserted that "there comes crises when we must use whatever instruments are at hand, however imperfect and rough."[181.] Yet, as Frederick Jackson Turner surmised at the end of the depression, "crisis alone need not spawn bigger government. It does so only under favorable ideological conditions, and such conditions did not exist in the 1890's."[182.]

In a reflective conclusion to his Forum article, one which said much about his own turn of mind, Coit divined: "It is, moreover, a fair question whether the way out of political corruption in America is not by the considerable increase of the responsibilities and functions of the municipal government. So long as politics is a mere by-play and episode in the lives and selfish interests of our citizens, it will be worth no one's time to purify it . . .Those put the cart before the horse who think that the power must only follow the purity."[183.] With his sense of right and good still intact, the ideological stirrings of his heart breathing the same optimism, Coit declared "purity will and must follow power. The latter gives the community a motive for demanding the former."

A commitment to work permeated the national psyche during the depression. Coit's plea for "wages in return for work" revived the Emersonian idea that the self in its

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infinite variety is the source of all good. The very character of work reflected the value of the individual and Coit never tired of using this argument to emphasize its importance as a countervailing force to the ideology and self-interest of the ruling caste. The industrial system created a new social and economic atmosphere and labor's changing position reinforced the central place of work in the American ethic. If the good of the community is the end of the state, Coit argued, the exercise of power cannot ignore the needs of its citizens. This was the rite of purification and the gravity of democratic politics. Coit's activities resounded with the impact of these convergent forces, at the University Settlement Society, as a member of the East Side Relief Work Committee, and on behalf of trade unionism. While the established order survived this confrontation, "the crisis of the 1890's, the last major battle in which the forces of classical liberalism won a clear victory, serves as an illuminating backdrop against which the crises of the twentieth century stand out in bold relief."[184].

In the heat of the battle Coit's activities did not always find a welcome reception. On May 8, 1894, Henry Holt wrote to James B. Reynolds, who succeeded Coit as headworker upon the latter's return to London, to inform him that Oswald Ottendorfer, editor of Staats Zeitung and a generous contributor to the Settlement, was "violently picht into

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Adler for Coit's vagaries." In that letter he referred to Coit's "rainbow chasing in the supposed behalf of the unemployed."[185] According to A.J. Kennedy "Holt followed Coit's and Stover's social and political maneuvers with lively, albeit, critical interest." During the period 1894-95 Holt "wrote a series of three articles on Social Discontent for The Forum in which he quoted opinions expressed at public meetings and held in the Guild. An article on Punishment of Anarchists and others, also published in The Forum, shows how uneasy the middle class community was made by radicals of deed."[186]

Stanton Coit returned to London in April of 1894 to resume control of the West London Ethical Society, whose compact with the London Ethical Society had broken down in June of the preceding year, a situation that led him to make frequent transatlantic crossings during that time.[187] There is no evidence to indicate that pressure from the Council, owing to his activities, hastened Coit's departure. This does not mean that members of the Council, or influential contributors, approved of his actions or the positions he took. Some, like Ottendorfer and Holt, certainly regarded Coit with disdain. From an institutional and social point of view the University Settlement Society did not encourage "radicals of deed." Yet, not everyone viewed Coit as dangerous. A more likely assumption is that the controversy which surrounded him made Coit's tenure

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rather fragile, and, with his presence now required in London, he seized the moment and departed.

Coit's departure marked the end of his life and work in America. Though he returned on numerous occasions it was always as a visitor. Henceforth, he would spend the rest of his time in England, where he continued to work at the Neighborhood Guild in Leighton Hall, Kentish Town, and resumed the leadership of the West London Ethical Society, afterward to evolve into the Ethical Church at Bayswater.

The role of Stanton Coit in the reform activities of the first settlement house serves as an enduring legacy to his presence in the America of the promised land. As "the Father of American university settlements he refocused the nation's attention on the importance of the neighborhood and worked tirelessly to improve community life, endowing it with an ethical spirit aimed at "the conscious organisation of the intellectual and moral life, of the people." His analysis of public relief, preventive charity and philanthropy accurately foretold the direction of social work in America. His advocacy of a larger role for the state presaged ideas which, in less than a decade after his departure, became a rallying point for a more progressive idealogy to which both political parties aspired. And, his support for trade unions recognized the intrinsic worth of labor while it signified their future importance in an industrial democracy.

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In keeping with those values to which he devoted his life Stanton Coit believed that the one sure foundation for democracy lay in the resolve with which men and women cultivated a delight for "what is good and an active impulse to defend it, to render it triumphant throughout society and in one's own conduct and character."[188.]

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Notes

Chapter Seven

1. Harold J. Blackham, Stanton Coit: Selections From His Writings, (London: The Favil Press Ltd., 1948), p.8

2. The Papers of the University Settlement Society of New York, Jacob Eisenger Collection, MSS 326 Series 1 Box 2, microfilm edition, reel 1, Council Minutes for April 24, 1891. Those present included John B. Pine and A.C. Bernheim of Columbia; Professor Frank J. Goodnow, who was then a member of the faculty at Columbia but represented Amherst, together with Frank C. Babbott; John McG.Goodale and George H. Cumming of Harvard; Dr. Clarence E. Beebe of Yale; Rev. W.T.Elsing of Princeton; J.H. Seymour of Williams College; Joseph B. Gilder who had graduated from the Naval Academy, and Charles B. Stover.

3. ibid

4. Papers, USS, ibid, Council Minutes for April 30, 1891

5. ibid

6. ibid

7. ibid, Certificate of Incorporation, March 4, 1892

8. University Settlement Society Bulletin, January, 1892, p.5

9. ibid

10. ibid

11. University Settlement Society Bulletin, December, 1892, p.11

12. ibid

13. ibid

14. ibid, p.12

15. ibid, p.35

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16. ibid

17. ibid, p.9

18. ibid

19. ibid, p.9, 11

20. ibid, p.8

21. ibid, p.11. In this instance Paulding cultivated ideas central to the Gospel of Wealth. In his essay, published in 1889, Andrew Carnegie insisted that "the rich must use their money in the manner which. . . is best calculated to produce the most beneficial results for the community." It became commonplace for Paulding and others to turn this advice to the benefit of the settlements and so empower their own work. It was the successful use of this strategy which furthered the expansion of the settlement house movement in America.

22. Robert Ashworth to A.J. Kennedy, Papers, USS, Jacob Eisenger Collection, MSS 326, Box 17, Series 5

23. ibid

24. ibid

25. William Leiserson to A.J. Kennedy, Papers, USS, Jacob Eisenger Collection, MSS 326, Box 17, Series 5

26. ibid

27. The New York Herald, February 5, 1893

28. ibid

29. ibid

30. ibid

31. The New York Evening Post, February 27, 1893

32. ibid

33. Dominick Cavallo, Muscles and Morals: Organized Playgrounds and Urban Reform, 1880-1920, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981), p.27, 28

34. ibid, p.28

35. ibid

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36. University Settlement Society, Report for the Year 1896, p.10, 11. The New York Times for August 13, 1893, reported that in the week just ended there were 886 deaths, 550 of which occurred in tenement houses. "Although the deaths were 57 over the number reported during the preceding week, they are 50 below the average for the corresponding week for the past five years." The principal causes of death were violence, heart disease and pneumonia, with diarrheal diseases common among children under five years of age. p.12. This report was typical of those which appeared during 1893.

37. Papers, USS, Jacob Eisenger Collection, MSS 326, Box 20, Folder 1, 2, Series 7

38. ibid

39. ibid

40. ibid. Report of the Tenth Ward Sanitary Union

41. ibid

42. Jacob Riis, "Special Needs of the Poor in New York," Forum, December, 1892, p.497

43. Papers, USS, Jacob Eisenger Collection, MSS 326, Box 20, Folder 1, 2, Series 7. Cf. The Report of the Anti-Filth Society.

44. Riis, op cit, p.500

45. Moses Rischin, The Promised City: New York Jews, 1870-1914, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962), p.81

46. ibid, p.81, 82

47. quoted in Rischin, op cit, p.82, 83. Also cf. Allen Forman, "Some Adopted Americans," The American Magazine, Vol. 9 (November, 1888), p.51, 52; Report of the Tenement House Committee of 1894, (New York, 1895), p.8, 12, 104

48. Papers, USS, Jacob Eisenger Collection, MSS 326, Box 20, Folder 1, 2, Series 7, Report of the Anti-Filth Society.

49. Lend A Hand, Vol. 13 No.3, March 1894, p.206. The law referred to here is the Factory Act of 1892

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50. ibid. Moses Rischin, pointing to "the horrors of the sweating system," called attention to the fact that "the sweatshops of the Lower East Side, in the shadow of Newspaper Row, aroused the indignation of the Tribune and the Sun and reminded Herald reporter Ida Van Etten of the slavery of the pharaohs. Writing in the Forum for April, 1893, Ida Van Etten addressed the impact of the new law on Jewish immigrants in the trades. "The exposure of the horrors of the sweating system was one of the important results of these strikes (of the early 1890's), and it led to the passage of the Factory Act of March 9, 1892, which, if enforced, would practically abolish the system in New York." (p.176) One of the trade groups that struck in January, 1890, were the knee pants makers. Morris Hillquit, "a representative example of those younger Jewish radical intellectuals who had come to America," described the knee pants trade at this time as "the sweatshop industry par excellence, employing about a thousand workers scattered through tiny tenement rooms all over the Lower East Side. The wages were fairly decent for the time, about six or seven dollars a week, on the average, but working conditions were quite bad, and abuses at the hands of the contractors were rife." Ronald Sanders, The Downtown Jews: Portraits of an Immigrant Generation, (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), p.93

51. ibid

52. ibid

53. ibid, p.207

54. ibid, p.204, 205

55. The New York Times, March 27, 1893, p.8. Also cf. Charles Henry Parkhurst, Our Fight With Tammany, (New York: Charles Scribner & Sons, 1895) and My Forty Years in New York, (New York: Macmillan, 1923)

56. ibid

57. The New York Tribune, October 25, 1893

58. The New York Tribune, October 25, 1893

59. The New York Herald, October 25, 1893. Parkhurst's campaign took a rather narrow view of prostitution. His single-issue crusade attacked the corrupt politicians, police officers, and ward bosses who profited from the vice trade. Implicit in Coit's

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support of this campaign was a broader definition of the problem, one aimed at the removal of obstacles to the purification of home and family. These views, while not mutually exclusive, reflected the divergent motives at work in municipal reform.

60. Rischin, op cit, p.150

61. Papers, USS, Jacob Eisenger Collection, MSS 326, Box 20, Series 7

62. ibid. All except Jacob Epstein

63. Mrs. V.G. Simkhovitch, Address delivered at a memorial meeting for Dr. Henry Moskowitz, April 4, 1937. Papers, USS, Jacob Eisenger Collection, MSS 326, Box 20, Series 7

64. ibid

65. Winifred Buck, Boys' Self-Governing Clubs, (New York: Macmillan & Co., 1906), p.98. Miss Buck was a volunteer at the University Settlement.

66. Papers, USS, Jacob Eisenger Collection, MSS 326, Box 20, Series 7

67. ibid

68. ibid. Also cf. Elias Lowe to A.J. Kennedy, September 4, 1937, MSS 326, Box 27, Series 11

69. ibid

70. ibid

71. ibid

72. Mrs. V.G. Simkhovitch, op cit

73. Papers, USS, Jacob Eisenger Collection, MSS 326, Box 20, Series 7

74. ibid

75. ibid

76. ibid

77. ibid. "In co-operation with the East Side Art League two years ago (1892), the Art Loan Exhibition was formed. This year (March, 1894) was of even more

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interest and the total number of visitors during the six weeks was 56,659 persons." Lend A Hand, A Record of Progress, Vol. XII, No. 3, March, 1894, p.204

78. Papers, USS, Jacob Eisenger Collection, MSS 326, Box 27, Series 10 and 11

79. Papers, USS, Jacob Eisenger Collection, MSS 326, Box 20, Series 7

80. ibid

81. ibid

82. ibid

83. ibid

84. Rischin, op cit., p.144

85. Papers, USS, Jacob Eisenger Collection, MSS 326, Box 18, Folder 13, 14, Series 6

86. Papers, USS, Jacob Eisenger Collection, MSS 326, Box 18, Folder 12, Series 6

87. ibid

88. ibid

89. W. Buck, op cit., p.69

90. Papers, USS, Jacob Eisenger Collection, MSS 326, Box 18, Folder 12, Series 6

91. ibid

92. ibid

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96. ibid

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116. Robert Higgs, Crisis and Leviathan: Critical Studies in the Growth of American Government, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), p.77

117. The New York Times, August 1, 1893, p.1

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118. ibid, August 23, 1893, p.4

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122. The New York World, December 22, 1893

123. ibid; The New York Times, December 22, 1893

124. The New York World, December 22, 1893

125. ibid

126. ibid

127. ibid

128. The New York Times, December 25, 1893

129. ibid

130. ibid

131. ibid

132. The New York Evening Post, December 26, 1893

133. ibid

134. ibid

135. ibid

136. The New York Times, December 29, 1893. Thomas F. Gilroy was the son of Irish immigrants who came to America in 1840. Educated "in the public schools and at the New York free academy," he became a printer who soon found his way into Tammany Hall and "in 1862 was appointed clerk in the comptroller's office." During the next thirty years Gilroy worked his way through the beaurocracy of New York, rising to become Commissioner of Public Works. While serving in that capacity "he introduced and perfected a system of subways for water pipes and wires, and was largely instrumental in causing the removal of overhead telegraph and telephone wires." A full-fledged Tammany man, Gilroy became grand sachem in 1891, a move which presaged his election as mayor the following year, at which time "he recieved a larger majority than had been given to any

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Tammany candidate." The National Cyclopedia of American Biography, (James T. White & Co., 1891; Reprint edition; Ann Arbor: University Microfilm, 1967), 3:260

137. The New York Times, December 29 and 30, 1893

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141. The Real Estate Record and Builder's Guide, December 23, 1893, p.793

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144. The New York Times, December 30, 1893

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148. The New York Sun, February 14, 1894

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150. ibid. Commenting on Coit's scheme for the expenditure of $20 million, The Outlook for February 24, 1894, raised an important but often neglected point. "It is not only unjust to Dr. Coit, but it is stupid, to confound this proposition with the proposition which sometimes emanates from French and German Socialists, that it is the business of the State to create public works for the purpose of giving employment to the unemployed." On the vital question of cost the editorial indicated that "it will be cheaper for the people of the city to borrow money at three per cent and build their own underground railroad than to invite capitalists to build it for them and pay them from five to fifteen per cent in dividends." p.354

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156. David C. Hammack, Power and Society: Greater New York at the Turn of the Century, (New York: The Russell Sage Foundation, 1982), p.309

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165. ibid

166. ibid. The basic idea put forward by Coit was not without precedent. As the Nation indicated, public works projects were undertaken in Boston (wharf improvement), St. Louis (Forest Park Lake), and Seattle (a central firehouse). "Committees intensified their sidewalk and road repair programs, and street-cleaning activities increased." The Nation, 57 (December 28, 1893), p.482 And, The Forum, in its June, 1894, issue declared that "the feasibility of providing industrial work for relief purposes on a fairly large scale has been successfully demonstrated." The Forum, 17, (June, 1894), p.497-504

167. ibid, p.279

168. ibid, p.279

169. ibid, p.278

170. ibid

171. ibid

172. ibid, p.280

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173. ibid

174. ibid

175. ibid

176. ibid, p.281

177. ibid, p.282

178. ibid

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182. Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Problem of the West," Atlantic Monthly, (September, 1896), p.296. Quoted in Higgs, op cit, p.78-79

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187. On the dissolution of the compact cf. Gustave Spiller, The Ethical Movement in Great Britain: A Documentary History, (London: The Farleigh Press, 1934), p.21 Mention of Coit's frequent transatlantic crossings appears in James F. Hornback, The Philosophical Sources and Sanctions of the Founders of Ethical Culture, unpublished doctoral dissertation, Columbia University, 1983

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ASSESSMENT ESSAY

Among the first generation of settlement house workers Stanton Coit occupies a unique position, one whose significance derives from his contribution to the political idea of organized neighborhoods and the form it assumed in late nineteenth century America. Of paramount importance in an assessment of Stanton Coit's place in history is the fact that his activities in New York during the winter of 1886-87 led to the development of the settlement house idea.

In the Neighborhood Guild one finds the principal ingredients which informed that idea, a new approach to community organization together with residency in the neighborhood, the most distinctive and identifiable aspect of settlement life. In less than two years his simple yet extraordinary decision, to live among the poor, gave new emphasis to the neighborhood as an organic force in urban life and shifted the attention of philanthropy away from general relief to specific causes originating within its borders.

If the Neighborhood Guild served as the model for the experimental stage of the settlement house movement, it was Coit who represented and symbolized the dominant ideological link between settlement house work and the Ethical Culture Society of New York. And, it was this bond, heretofore neglected, which reinforces the fact that the settlement

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house, as a national movement, originated in New York where its growth and development reflected those enduring characteristics which marked its institutional life. Viewed in this context the relative paucity of knowledge about his activities obscured Coit's importance and transferred certain proprietary claims to others.

Established by Felix Adler in 1876, The New York Society for Ethical Culture originally began as a Sunday lecture movement, similar in that regard to the free religious societies. But Adler saw clearly that "freedom in religion" had failed to generate those consecrating influences necessary to the moral life of man. And, he reasoned, if religion had lost its force as a governing principle for the individual, it then lacked the strength to regenerate society.

Adler believed that only the reformulation of religion could preserve and strengthen its place in man's life. By shifting "the ground of religion from theology to ethics," and displacing belief with experience, Adler's new faith rested on the power and inviolability of the moral law and the concomitant duty to apply it to the problems of an industrial society.

In this form Ethical Culture assumed the proportions of a civil religion. By proclaiming the dominion of reason over faith it sought to bridge the distance between politics and religion so as to chart a path of social reform.

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Conscious of the pluralism resident in American society as well as the ideals of republican culture Adler devised a system of natural ethics which emphasized the measure of man's self-worth as a necessary precondition to the attainment of those private virtues which defined character and conduct. A philosophy which also served as a religion, yet without the weight of a denominational church, Ethical Culture attracted those liberal elements of middle class society for whom Adler's early motto, "not the creed but the deed," conveyed at once both the moral value of social commitment as well as its unifying theoretical orientation. The moral sensibilities cultivated by Ethical Culture harmonized with the individualism at the root of republican society.

If Ethical Culture espoused morality without religious orthodoxy it, nevertheless, presumed the right, exercised by both Christianity and humanism, to establish a positive code by which to regulate thought and action. In the process it stripped away the formalistic basis of Judeo-Christian tradition only to preserve its virtues as principles of moral behavior. Devoid of an established ideology, Ethical Culture existed as a kind of eclecticism, but whose commitment to an applied social ethics placed it in the forefront of those progressive causes aimed at the reform of industrial democracy in America.

Drawing upon the Emersonian ideal of social power

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through direct action Ethical Culture reinforced the doctrine of self-reliance by joining it to a practical philanthropy which found its most expressive form in the work of the Neighborhood Guild. The strength it released came in large measure from the insistence that ethics and politics depend upon each other. In this instance social power found its perfect complement in a philosophy that required direct action. And, by adopting a strict non-sectarian attitude fused to an applied social ethics, the settlement house, in time, weakened the religious pattern which controlled so much of the city's charity and public relief work.

The Neighborhood Guild was an experiment whose exemplary and missionary character flowed from its moral sustenance and social activism. Yet, the Guild did not embrace either charity or public relief, and, in the beginning, avoided philanthropy. To Stanton Coit the individual's own potential for good became the basis for a new ideal of community. It was the Guild's role to organize that potential as one means of releasing the force necessary to collective action. For this purpose the organization of a club proved an ideal medium, and through its development Coit sought to balance the competing needs of the individual and the neighborhood. It became the centerpiece of institutional growth, soliciting the young on behalf of a whole range of problems and solutions, and whose educational

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first, to reflect a personal quest, separate and distinct from its later organization, and certainly far removed from the ultimate professionalism of social work, which symbolized the demise of the residential ideal. Those who settled in the poorer sections of the city came in search of a meaning to life, a desire to be useful in a noble enterprise, or to rediscover a faith lost. They came to believe, if only for a brief moment, that they could intercept society at some point and make it better. It was this sentiment, reinforced by voluntarism and personal commitment, that sustained the Guild, shaped its character, and fueled the growth of the settlement house movement.

Raised in the thriving metropolis of Columbus, Ohio, whose own growth exhibited the enduring power of republican ideals, Stanton Coit embodied many of the disparate elements which characterized civic virtue and philanthropy during the ante-bellum period. Imbued with a strong sense of community, Coit's own maturity reflected the value attached to native ability and achievement. The social fabric benefited from the democratization of local life as the nationalist spirit bristled with the call to honor civic and spiritual obligations. As described by one writer, "the antebellum era was the heyday of the benevolent volunteer, and personal service the leitmotiv of its ethic."[1.]

At Amherst Coit entered a world strongly supportive of these ideals and the general perceptions to which they gave

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rise. And, it was here that Coit encountered influences whose lasting significance can be measured by the direction his life assumed. During his years at Amherst Coit fashioned his own ethical idealism, Platonism marked out in practical Christian life, the preparation for which owed much to the mysticism of Emerson and the rationalism which emanated from his mother's spiritualism. In college he came under the influence of Julius H. Seelye who personified for him true character and conduct and who sought to endow his students with a "lively conscience and the sense of mission." It was Seelye who recommended to Coit the study of sociology which, at that time, "referred generally and rather loosely to an ethical science of society."[2] And it was at Amherst that Coit formed his lasting friendship with J. Franklin Jameson who embodied those very qualities he wished to achieve for himself. Unlike those who sought from Ethical Culture a new faith, "Coit's ethical idealism was formed and fixed before he went to meet and hear Felix Alder."[3]

The appeal which Ethical Culture had for Stanton Coit came in his own admission that "it was ethics and its concrete applications that attracted him. . . to help change the physical and social environment of men, so that it shall be more favorable to a truly human life."[4] It was this purpose that took Coit to the Lower East Side in 1886. And, in response to Adler's charge "to work among the poor," Coit brought a new dimension to Ethical Culture by making it an

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"urban industrial movement." While the Neighborhood Guild was not an official part of the New York Society for Ethical Culture this was a mere formality. Adler supported Coit's work from the beginning, and the assistance the Guild received throughout its history came primarily from the Ethical Culture Society. In a reference to his duties there Coit indicated to Jameson that "my chief work consisted in organising the Neighbourhood Guild in Forsyth St."[5].

If the Civil War all but shattered the notion of democratic service, the excesses of the Gilded Age and the problems of industrial America renewed the need for a fresh expression of civic and social responsibility. In his effort to realize "the conscious organisation of the intellectual and moral life of the people," what he termed "the crying need of our day," Stanton Coit recast the ideals of civic stewardship and created new opportunities for social action.[6]. It was Coit who first lay hold of "a neighborhood in the city for purposes of deliberate community reconstruction. . . who effectively adapted the English parochial concept, with its ecclesiastical suggestion, to American conditions."[7]. In an environment buffeted by economic and social change the particular ideal of community developed by Coit became itself coextensive with the neighborhood, and, in the opinion of one writer, provided "a vital alternative to revolution."[8].

The Neighborhood Guild was a radical institution for its time. Viewed as the first settlement house in America it

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represented a class conscious effort at social and political reform, whose presence in the midst of urban and industrial poverty, symbolized an ethical revolt within a democratic society. As such it became the repository of republican virtue as well as the practitioner of social control. While the Guild embraced, in somewhat mythical fashion, the entire population of a poor neighborhood it confronted practical problems with an experimental spirit worthy of its own resolutions. There was here some of the bias found in the concept of noblesse oblige, but transformed by new expressions.

The discipline, training, and perspective which characterized ante-bellum individualism now made self-reliance the fuse of collective action. If culture served as the cutting-edge of reform, its manifestation assumed proportions that were local, ethnic, and American. The Guild cultivated the possibilities resident in the assimilation of values, all the while striving for a "higher and broader life." In line with this egalitarian spirit social justice replaced charity as the Guild "sought to make its local scene in some sense a classic land."[9].

As envisioned by Coit the Neighborhood Guild attempted to prepare young people "to struggle for political and individual progress within the bounds of social order."[10]. According to Charles Stover, Coit's "prime endeavor here seems to have been not to model the Guild after Toynbee Hall, viewed

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as a University Settlement, but rather in accordance with his own ethical system, so to organize the people around the family, as the unit, as to originate forces of social regeneration."[11] It was Coit's intention to do for the children of the Lower East Side "what parents of wealth and leisure would do for their children."[12]

The educational programs initiated by Coit were not aimed at instructing a fixed human nature in a formal curriculum, but represented an attempt to adjust the whole person to the total cultural environment." A constant daily social atmosphere must supplement all merely systematic and conventional education."[13] In this sense Coit anticipated the later ideas of John Dewey whom he came to greatly admire. Moreover, his use of primary groups in the organization of the Guild presaged the future importance accorded them in the work of the Chicago School of Sociology.

Trained in philosophy Stanton Coit knew little about urban policy or family welfare, yet he proved to be an exemplary public steward, one who saw the need to rekindle the sense of community in the poorer sections of the city and so undertook the political organization of the neighborhood. And, in that capacity, he came to represent the pure reformer, free of any partisan political ties. His agenda for the Tenth Ward Social Reform Club, the leadership he provided to the East Side Relief Work Committee, and his activities during the Panic of 1893-94 challenged the municipal establishment to

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respond to the genuine needs of the community and its citizens.

Coit's activities seemed to anticipate what Richard T. Ely later characterized as "the needs of the city." In his own fashion Coit interjected both "a revival of religion" and "a renaissance of nationalism." Ethical Culture represented, in one sense, "a religious awakening which shall shake things, going down into the depths of men's lives and modifying their character."[14] And, Coit's emphasis on the neighborhood brought the force of nationalism to the streets of the city with the avowed intention that "society. . . must recognize the work we want done as the concern of the community, and must themselves do it."[15]

Despite his pioneer work Stanton Coit never belonged to that inner council of power whose members charted the course of the settlement house movement in America and regulated its internal politics. Nor was he influential in this respect in England. He left the United States at the precise moment when his ideas began to take root and grow. Except in the early stages of activity which led to the establishment of the New York College Settlement Coit had virtually no contact with other leaders.

Upon his return to the University Settlement at the end of 1892, for a period that lasted less than two years, Coit was, more often than not, embroiled in controversy, largely owing to some of his activities, especially in support of

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trade unionism. While other settlement workers tried to alleviate the acute problems growing out of the depression of 1893, none went so far as Coit who called for the expenditure of funds for public works projects. His strident position, welcome among the working classes, proved far too radical and led some men to consider him dangerous. The ethical democrat sounded too much like the socialist he was and Stanton Coit left New York to return to London. Consequently, the legacy of his contribution to the America of the promised land has suffered ever since.

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Notes

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Records of the South Place Ethical Society, London, The South Place Ethical Society

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STANTON COIT (1857 - 1944)

A Chronology of Important Events

1857	Born to Elizabeth and Harvey Coit on August 11.
1873	The death of his sister, Elizabeth, on October 15.
1874	He graduated from old Columbus high school and entered Amherst College in the fall.
1879	Graduated from Amherst College
1881	Coit makes his first acquaintance with Felix Adler and decides to join the Ethical Culture Society of New York.
1882	Coit begins graduate study at the University of Berlin to prepare himself for the role of lecturer in the Ethical Movement.
1885	Graduated from the University of Berlin with a PH.D in Ethics.
1886	Visits London and stays at Toynbee Hall from January thru March. Returns to New York in April Moves from uptown to 146 Forsyth Street on the Lower East Side.
1887	Coit formally establishes the Neighborhood Guild.
1888	He leaves New York to become Minister of the South Place Religious Society, afterward to become the South Place Ethical Society.
1890	Established the Neighbourhood Guild at Leighton Hall, Kentish Town.
1891	Coit's book, Neighbourhood Guilds: An Instrument of Social Reform appears in London and New York. He resigns his position at the South Place Ethical Society.
1892	Coit, together with followers from the South Place Ethical Society, organize the West London Ethical Society. He leaves London to become headworker of the University Settlement Society in New York.

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A Chronology of Important Events (Con't)

1894	Coit leaves New York to return to London and the West London Ethical Society.
1897	He becomes editor of the Ethical World.
1899	Coit marries Adela Wetzler.
1900	He publishes the essay, Dynamics of Democracy, which appears in the book, Ethical Democracy.

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