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**Towson Journal of Historical Studies, 2016 Edition**

**2016 Editorial Collective**

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## Note From The Department Chair

It is a pleasure and privilege to recognize the commitment and work of the many students and faculty who have contributed to the publication of the 2016 Edition of the *Towson University Journal of Historical Studies*.

Since the first edition of the *Journal* appeared in the Spring of 1998 under the initiative and leadership of student-editor of Ms. Shannon Stevens. The Journal has continued as a highly successful student-centered enterprise. The energy, direction, and, most importantly, the essays themselves, all come from Towson students, especially those who are members of the History Honor Society, Phi Alpha Theta, Theta Beta chapter. The success of the student efforts is clearly reflected in the awards and recognition that the Theta Beta chapter has received from the national offices from Phi Alpha Theta.

Faculty have played a key role in assisting, advising, and mentoring Towson students with the journal. Dr. Karl Larew provided critical support for the launch of the journal and the continuing hard work and dedication of the Theta-Beta Chapter Faculty Advisors, Dr. Nicole Dombrowski-Risser and Dr. Benjamin Zajicek, and of journal faculty advisor, Dr. Tunde Oduntan, have helped maintain a strong record of accomplishment for the journal.

Working together, students and faculty, have realized an important achievement, one that reflects well upon the Department of History and Towson University, but that most of all, makes evident the intelligence, writing skill, and determination of Towson students. Congratulations on the great success of your efforts!

**Ronn Pineo  
Professor and Chair  
Department of History  
Towson University**



## Note From The Editors

As editors of the 2016 Towson Journal of Historical Studies, we committed to produce the best quality journal to date. Not only does this edition coincide with the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of our university, our sponsoring association, Phi Alpha Theta has enjoyed a remarkable year of reigniting students' passion for historical study. The challenges we faced in producing this edition were far outweighed by the overwhelming support from both students and faculty. In this edition, authors present a qualified body of work on a wide range of themes in history. We offer you articles that include an exploration of the lives of working class children in New York City tenements, an analysis of the foreign roles of a United States Commodore, and a book review on Galileo's science. The diversity of ideas displayed within these pages is a testament to the scope and quality of scholarship engaged by students of history at Towson University.

The first article by Jeremy Brown is an unapologetic interpretation of the life of John Humphrey Noyes. In "The Rise and Fall of John Humphrey Noyes and the Oneida Community," Brown offers a glimpse into the rise of religious fanaticism in nineteenth century America through the scope of Noyes' life. Noyes' religious ideology in an era of free love offers a scathing view of human sexuality and loneliness. Brown depicts the Oneida community as an antithesis to Christian values of the time.

Matthew Prevo suggests that prior to the Meiji Restoration in Japan, Japanese isolationism was overcome due to the persistence and admiration of Commodore Matthew Perry. While "The End of *Sakoku*: How the Cutthroat Diplomacy of Commodore Matthew Perry Unlocked Japan" credits Commodore Perry as an individual actor, it also provides a historical perspective on the development of the United States' international diplomacy. As America was rapidly industrializing during the nineteenth century, expansionist ideas permeated beyond the borders of the United States. The Commodore's gusto and demand for respect from the Japanese opened an opportunity for trade and foreign relations which opened Japan up in profound ways.

Continuing on from Prevo's analysis, Nathan Painter uncovers the origins for government support and legitimization of State Shinto. His "Shinto Transformation and Government Support in Meiji Japan" demonstrates the

implications of change in Japan—less than two decades after Perry’s arrival—as Shintoism began to change with the growing influx of foreign social and political ideas. Restoring political solidarity under the emperor of Japan, a key aim of the Meiji elite, was one way in which Shintoism sustained its relevance in a rapidly modernizing age. The support which the Japanese state lent Shintoism helps to partly explain Japan’s transformation from a feudal state into a modernized industrial force, with implications looking forward to a series of wars and crises in Asia by the late-nineteenth and early to mid twentieth century.

Samuel Clemens, better known by his pseudonym, Mark Twain, is an American literary treasure. His works, notes, and autobiographies remain a staple of American culture. Though Twain lacked a formal education, Paris Thalheimer attributes the success of Mark Twain to the various women in his life in the essay, “The Education of Samuel Clemens.” Thalheimer’s article is significant because it depicts the roles and influence of women as Twain’s teachers and inspirations.

Brittney Smith draws upon Thomas Jefferson’s writings in her essay, “Jefferson and the Women Who Loved Him.” This article humanizes the founding father as a man whom women had a major impact on. She explores the death of his wife, and his subsequent relationship with various women, as a way to better understand Jefferson. Smith argues that seeing Jefferson in this context is a better way to evaluate his progressive legacy and historical significance.

This contrasts starkly to the working-class children of New York City during the nineteenth century as rapid growth and industrialization created unstable conditions for the children of New York City. The freedoms which children enjoy, such as sanitary living conditions, were something immigrant families could not afford. Shelby Zimmerman explores these conditions and the debates over reform in “‘The Streets Were The[ir] True Homes:’ Working Class Children in New York City at the Turn of the Century.”

James Trimmer’s book review of Galileo, Bellarmine and the Bible provides historical roots to contemporary debates on the religious and ethical backgrounds of science. Galileo Galilei is considered a father of astronomy, and his literal view of the solar system sparked debate in the religious community. James Trimmer reviews Richard J. Blackwell’s attempt to bridge the gap between the Catholic church, and scientific pursuits in the Early Modern Period.

These articles provide a glimpse into of the historical scholarship at Towson University. Access to these works would not have been possible without the assistance of the Towson University’s History Department. We greatly appreciate the contributions our faculty advisor, Dr. Oluwatoyin Oduntan, who guided us throughout this process. Also, we are grateful to Dr. Erik Ropers who

provided us with his editorial experience. We thank all of our faculty editors who volunteered their time in order to review submissions. We thank the Theta-Beta chapter of Phi Alpha Theta, who supported us by providing the use of their facilities. Lastly we thank Felicity Knox for her help in the University Archives.

In editing this journal, we were privileged to review some of the best work that Towson's history department had to offer. Below, is a collection of the essays for this year's edition.

### **Towson Journal of Historical Studies**

#### **Co-Editors**

Matthew Moriarty  
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# **Feature Articles**



Jeremy Brown

## The Rise and Fall of John Humphrey Noyes and the Oneida Community

In the year 1886, John Humphrey Noyes passed away at the age of seventy-three. He had lived in exile in Canada to escape from his past. After spending the majority of his life leading a people who simply desired a sense of community in their lives, John spent his final days in solitude, separated from everything he had created. His body was brought back to the United States and buried in Oneida, under the very dirt he had built so much upon. A funeral was held which a majority of the community attended. Once the funeral had come to an end and all the people returned to their homes, there was but one child who stayed behind at the tombstone. In time she headed home where she opened her diary and recounted the day past. "Aunt Harriet and Mother Noyes left in good spirits and I heard Auntie say that it didn't seem a bit like a funeral."<sup>1</sup>

The story of Noyes and Oneida demonstrates what kind of power one man can own if he convinces a following that he possesses the will of God. The Oneida Community was a utopian community in a period of American history when radical religious and sexual experimentation was the main stream. However, when these experiments become stale and exposed for the fallacy that they were, such communities shimmered and died. This was the rise and fall that the Oneida Community experienced. Led by John Humphrey Noyes, Oneida practiced free love, and believed in perfectionism.

Alongside the Second Great Awakening of the early part of the nineteenth century, developed many bizarre practices and the utopian communities. The revivals attracted huge waves of people while also stunning the larger population.<sup>2</sup> Some large congregations created utopian communities typified by radical religious experimentations led by prophets claiming divine authority. David S. Reynolds states, "The decades after 1812 saw a surge of self-styled prophets claiming special revelations from God."<sup>3</sup> Just like many others, Oneida underwent an extreme makeover from 1848 up until 1881, under the leadership of Noyes. From the onset, he gave it the steady foundation that attracted so many people to join and participate in the community's strange way of life. However, the foundation was built upon a stack of lies, which once exposed caused the community to abandon him and his ways.

Finding information on John Humphrey Noyes can be challenging. He wrote a great deal of books and diaries, which should be the basis of an abundance of wealth and knowledge about who the man was. However, the congregation he

founded burned and destroyed virtually all of his writings during the mid 1940s. Our best source of information on Noyes comes from his nephew, George Wallingford Noyes, who reproduced many of the documents.<sup>4</sup> It is believed that members of the Oneida Community (subsequently embarrassed by their former lifestyle) were the ones responsible for this destruction, and were possibly still on the lookout for more documents.<sup>5</sup> George encountered much trouble trying to publish the books he had prepared based on his uncle's writings. This is partly because Oneida developed into a thriving business community around a company that produces goods such as silverware to this day and it had many wealthy and influential individuals. As George was writing his books, the company gathered lawyers to argue that they owned the rights to everything John wrote. The company argued that they could stop publication of anything he wrote as it would "destroy or impair the good-will connected with its business."<sup>6</sup> Life in the Oneida Community was surely bizarre, to say the least, so it is no wonder its members would want to deny any telling of their bizarre past.

John Humphrey Noyes was born in 1811 to John and Polly Noyes in the state of Vermont. They had a large family, practiced their religious beliefs regularly, and everyone worked in the family business. Noyes' father was a church minister, and the son grew up following after him. There are legends about the Noyes family, such as that the father, like many generations before him, was so bashful that he could not speak to young ladies, and chose to only propose to cousins.<sup>7</sup> This continued a tradition of marrying within the family and indeed considering romantic involvement outside of the family a "sin."

Noyes became freed from "sin" early on in his life. According to Reynolds, "the shy, red-haired Noyes had experienced a conversion ... that led to his conviction that he was totally free from sin."<sup>8</sup> He started to branch away from his peers around this time by claiming that he could not sin along with them. His extreme views led to him being shunned by his friends and even his family. He was exiled from school, his friends, his church, and even his family.<sup>9</sup> At this point he had two choices: conform to his peers, or further develop his beliefs and gather a following. He took the latter option, eventually culminating in the creation of the famous community in 1841.

The Oneida Community, located in the state of New York, was the crowning achievement of Noyes. A following gathered around him which he singularly led. Life in the community was just the way Noyes had imagined it. Everyone engaged in the free love he had been preaching, and just like most leaders Noyes led by example. Life was not ordinary in the thriving community, until things began to crumble before their leader's eyes. What was life like in Oneida when it thrived?

The Oneida community housed hundreds of members whom were participants in the teachings and way of life preached by their leader. Why would people

leave their normal lives in the first place to participate in such a strange place? There was nothing entirely “normal” about the way these people lived, so why give everything up and join? “More precisely, I suggest, that in the case of Noyes and Oneida, the desire to retreat from the dominant social order represented less an urge to be free from the forces of social change than it did a wish to impose order on a world many saw as spinning out of control, even beyond comprehension”.<sup>9</sup> This was a time in American history where things were not wholly calm and easy. It is not shocking that some people simply desired the support system a community offers. While their practices may have been outlandish, it was just what some people may have needed at this period.

How was it exactly that complex marriage worked in his community? John Humphrey Noyes, the man that was allegedly too shy to talk to the girls that lived in his hometown, was asking everyone to have sex with one another. Of course this is simplifying things quite a bit, as there were much deeper reasons behind this practice. Earlier, it was mentioned that Noyes had been saved and therefore believed he was incapable of sin. This idea would evolve even further throughout the years. Noyes argued that if he and his followers had truly been saved, then they were essentially living in the kingdom of heaven on earth. Noyes believed that it was a selfish human act to love one and only one person. If they were to be better than the average man, then they needed to love everyone equally. As he saw it, “when the will of God is done on earth as it is in Heaven, there will be no marriage. Exclusiveness, jealousy, quarrelling have no place in the [heavenly] marriage.”<sup>10</sup> The members of the community were all one giant family. Noyes pursued his ideas down some even stranger roads with it. It is not all that crazy to want to love everyone equally however, Noyes was not the perfect saint that his people were led to believe him to be. While he may have had his explanations for the various sexual practices he advocated for, he could not convince or deceive his followers forever.

In the writings that can be recovered, Noyes discusses his concept of male continence and how he believed it would change the human race.<sup>11</sup> What exactly was male continence? The basic concept was that the men of the community were taught and trained to not ejaculate during intercourse.<sup>12</sup> This was a crucial function for the community, as they needed some form of contraception to avoid numerous pregnancies. While this yet again paints Noyes as considerably odd, he found a way to defend the teaching of male continence by tying it with his religious beliefs. He defined not ejaculating as, a pure, emotional, and spiritual experience.<sup>13</sup> As his nephew explains, “the real meaning of this objection is that Male Continence is an interruption of a natural act (...) must there be no halt in this natural progression? Brutes, animals or human, tolerate none. Shall their ideas of self-control prevail? Nay, it is the glory of man to control himself, and the Kingdom of God summons him to self-control in all things.”<sup>14</sup> It was not necessary for the sex to be enjoyable as it was a spiritual experience above everything else.

Noyes had to ensure that all members of the community participated in male continence for their whole way of life to run smoothly. This required an odd training regiment that everyone in the community participated in. The older members of the community were responsible for helping the youngest learn and practice male continence.<sup>15</sup> Along with this, Noyes took it upon himself to initiate the youngest girls into the community.<sup>16</sup> This is where things really start to look the strangest for him. Noyes always had some sort of made-up reason as to why he did certain things; yet it is difficult to find any real support for why this was necessary. He was the closest thing to God in the community, so what he said is what was done. He was the one in charge after all, giving him every opportunity to fulfill any desire he may have had.

Male continence was not one hundred percent effective. There were still a number of accidental pregnancies, as would be expected for a community that had the sexual practices that Oneida had.<sup>17</sup> Often times it was hard to determine who the father was until the child was older, with the best case being that the child eventually resembled the father. Children experienced a strange upbringing in the community. The community was all one giant family, meaning the children belonged to everyone. A mother would give birth to her child only to see it taken away to be raised with all of the other children of the community.<sup>18</sup>

Taking a child away from a parent, especially a mother, is extremely difficult. One of the more outlandish things the community did was to prevent children from owning dolls and other toys. In some cases they would even burn all the dolls to ensure the children would not become attached to them.<sup>19</sup> This was a common occurrence in Oneida, with there being multiple accounts of mothers resisting having children taken from them.

Along with the strange treatment of children was the strict rules regarding exclusive relationships. "The catch was just how these 'free' sexual relations were to be regulated. Here, just as in his demand for loyalty to his leadership and to his perfectionist religious beliefs, John Humphrey Noyes was the ultimate referee. His demand for ultimate control over their sexual lives was perhaps his followers' most significant test of total loyalty".<sup>20</sup> Of course the free love was the most critical characteristic of the community, and it was necessary for the people to continue their lifestyle. However, humans will always be human, so every now and then a couple would grow affectionate for one another and attempt to be exclusive. This was frowned upon in Oneida, and once discovered would be eradicated in a timely manner. Loving one person was selfish, and Noyes made sure that his rules were enforced. It was a big deal when people got caught, it could tear apart the whole foundation Noyes had established.

Another characteristic of the Oneida Community was the idea of Bible Communism. The concept was essentially that everybody was to share everything in the community. This was one of the theories that extended to

complex marriage and reinforces the idea of multiple sexual partners, however it had far reaching effects outside of this. Bible Communism affected everything in the people's lives from the sharing of jobs to the raising of children. He believed that Bible Communism was yet another method of living the ideal way in the kingdom of heaven on earth. "Formal community of property is not regarded by us as obligatory on principle,' he observed, 'but as an expedient... We are attempting no scientific experiments in political economy, or in social science, and beg to be excused from association in the public mind with those who are making such experiments.'"<sup>21</sup> Everything they did in the community was for spiritual purposes. Noyes made sure that nothing they did was misunderstood as anything other than this.

Not everything inside of Oneida was religion and sex. The one aspect that has lived on to this day has been their distribution of silverware. The production of silverware began in the year 1877 and still continues to this day. There is no clear reason as to why this specifically became the commodity they would become famous for, as it is a rather random factor when looking at the community as a whole. They needed to make money somehow so there were a variety of goods produced throughout the time that complex marriage was prevalent in Oneida. They wove silk thread as well as made silverware.<sup>22</sup> Silverware was the commodity that prevailed and lived on long after Noyes, and his time in charge. It was also one of the factors that contributed to Oneida eventually abandoning Noyes as their leader. There are several aspects that lead to Noyes eventually being abandoned, which will be covered soon. Originally however, the production of goods gave the community a source of income and helped create sustainability for their way of life. It became so lucrative that the people would stick together after abandoning complex marriage in order to pursue more business ventures. The craft evolved into the Oneida Community Limited.

Thomas Guiler examines this choice of name for the company. This is the very company that attempted to keep George Wallingford Noyes from publishing his works. It evolved directly from the group of people that followed John and his teachings, and any association with the old community could risk their future business ventures. According to Guiler "this choice of wording signified a change in structure and ideology. It was a new, limited, type of community, and a break from its Utopian and collective heritage... this company name acknowledged its heritage and embraced its present."<sup>23</sup> For years there had been business in the community, but the people did not truly make individual gains from the booming industry. Just like the sharing of lovers there was a system that promoted communal sharing of property, on top of not receiving any type of wage for their work. Instead, they were provided " 'room, board, clothing, education, and entertainment from the common fund."<sup>24</sup> Possession of items would have fallen under the category of selfish desire. With Noyes constantly preaching the selflessness worthy of God and heaven, making some form of gain for working would have been seen as inappropriate and ungodly.

How was it that Noyes was capable of gaining a following at all? His community was so bizarre that one would expect people to have avoided it. On the rare occasion that someone stopped by to see how life was on the inside, Noyes was more than capable of convincing them of just how exceptional their way of life was. Such was the case of James William Towner who took issue with the community and their way of life. Towner himself had been part of another free-love community west of Cleveland in which there was no religion attached to a free sex way of life, it was just sex. However, Towner abandoned his former life and was on a mission to escape from his old ways. He had repented for his sins as a free-lover; but then he decided to take a visit to Oneida.<sup>25</sup> After several visits Towner and his wife decided they wanted to join the community, but Noyes turned them down. After several more attempts to join the community, they were finally accepted. "Thanks to the teachings of Bible Communism and the inspiration of the Oneida Community," Towner wrote, he 'had become so filled with the idea that only as a means of glorifying God is sexual intercourse permissible, that I have come to hate and abominate even the virtues, as well as the vices, if I may speak, of my former sexual life of passionate indulgence, as of the devil himself.'"<sup>26</sup> This was exactly what Noyes needed to hear, so he let them in. Towner brought with him his entire family, including half a dozen relatives, to live in Oneida. On top of this he paid a dowry of \$14,000.<sup>27</sup> Noyes knew just how to get what he wanted. Noyes knew to squeeze as much as he could out of him before he let Towner join them. By the end of it, Noyes's wallet was just a little bit heavier than it was before.

In order to begin to unravel the insanity behind Noyes, one must first take a step back and look at the state of religion in America during the time period. David S. Reynolds' book, *Waking Giant*, details the revivals that spread like wildfires across the United States during the nineteenth century. It also offers, an in-depth look at religious figures and various utopian communities that Noyes joined. His description affirms Alexis de Tocqueville's statement that "America is . . . the place where the Christian religion has the greatest real power over men's souls."<sup>28</sup> There are many direct accounts of people describing the violent dancing and horrific shrieks and cries that the individuals involved would engage in. "Frances Trollope witnessed a revival with mingled fascination and disgust. She watched as a hundred people near the preacher, mainly women, uttered 'howlings and groans, so terrible that I shall never cease the shudder when I recall them.' They made 'convulsive movements' and soon were all lying in various positions on the ground."<sup>29</sup> Revivals were the dominant form of outlandish religious expression before the utopian communities and paved the way for Noyes, and other individuals claiming to have the "absolute truth" as a way to gather a following and engage in all the dark fantasies stored in minds. It was under the guidance of God after all, so what was there not to trust?<sup>30</sup>

The Oneida Community had its own newspaper called the *Oneida Circular*, which discussed anything ranging from God, life inside the community, and

business. The one common theme of the paper was that just about every single issue begins with a piece called "Home-Talk by J.H.N." In the August 4, 1873 edition Noyes wrote an article titled "Faithfulness". In the October 13, 1873 edition his article was titled "God's Contentment". On December 8, 1873, his article is titled "Provoking to Love". In this he writes: "We should not be ashamed to let others know we want their love ... Love generally waits to be asked, and does not bestow itself on indifference or the appearance of indifference; and yet there are many who desire to be loved very much."<sup>31</sup> At first glance, this is a wonderful piece about love between people. However, after learning more about Noyes and the many different women of his life, it is impossible not to read between the lines and see a sad story of loneliness.

Noyes used his mantle and position of authority to create his own sort of fantastical world where he could rule as he pleased with no one to tell him he was a mad man. It was frankly the perfect situation for him as his teachings wound up reaching an audience that accepted them. He may have had decent ideas, such as his concept of perfectionism, but based under his spiritual beliefs alone. Noyes possessed the power to do as he pleased was by shrouding himself with God's will, and with the idea that God approved of his beliefs.

Free love was not always a part of the doctrine that Noyes would teach followers. It naturally arrives based on Noyes's relation with a woman by the name of Abigail Merwin. She was a beautiful woman who really captured the attention of Noyes to the point of him creating the entire Oneida Community based off of his experience with her. Merwin was one of his original followers far back before even the founding of the Oneida Community and he may have discussed some of his religious concepts and ideas with her. It is not clear however how much she influenced the making of Oneida.

Noyes became obsessed with Merwin during their time together in 1834, and he soon began having visions of her. George Wallingford Noyes describes one of these visions, "But his vision of her in New York was too great an obstacle. At length in the course of a second series of trials at Prospect he saw her 'clothed in white robes,' and by the word of the Lord she was given to him."<sup>32</sup> From a more modern perspective of this account, Noyes sounds completely obsessed with Abigail Merwin to an eerie point. He envisioned Merwin as a gift from God.

After having his vision of Abigail Merwin, Noyes pursued her in the same manner that he would pursue women of his Oneida community many years later. The word "interview" has been used mostly to describe the actual act of sex in the Oneida community. In *Confessions of John Humphrey Noyes*, he claims he asked and was granted an interview from Abigail Merwin, but it is not entirely clear how he intended to use the term in this instance. "She was under conviction and wished to have an interview with me."<sup>33</sup> While it is not obvious just what is

meant here by “interview”, it sounds similar to interviews that became common in the Oneida community, which meant sexual encounters.

Noyes was obsessed with Merwin and was consumed by the thought of sex and strong desires. His close relationship with Merwin did not last long, and neither did it fulfill his appetite. She left Noyes and married another man, all within a very short amount of time. Why would she react so strongly to Noyes after fulfilling his request for an “interview”? If the interview is assumed to be of the sexual kind that is found in Oneida, then this strong reaction suddenly appears quite logical. It can be awkward the morning after a one-night stand, and sometimes people never speak to one another ever again. Noyes was ahead of the curve in this sense, he appeared to have been scaring off women all the way back in the nineteenth century. Merwin ran off to the comfort of another man who was not nearly as odd as Noyes was. This demonstrates that the sex with Noyes and indeed in the Oneida community was not always heavenly or able to secure perpetual attachment. His aversion to marriage may also have evolved from his frustration.

His frustration with Merwin is revealed in a letter now known as the “Battle-Axe Letter” which he wrote to his friend David Harrison on January 18, 1837. In this letter he wrote: “when the will of God is done on earth as it is in heaven there will be no marriage. Exclusiveness, jealousy, quarrelling have no place at the marriage supper of the Lamb”.<sup>34</sup> It does seem rather convenient that Noyes would come up with this concept directly after his relationship with Merwin came to an end. His entire worldview changed in response to his obsession abandoning him. She was more than the world to him, and now Noyes had to sweep up the pieces of his life and try to figure out what to do next.

Noyes’s friend held onto the “Battle-Axe Letter” and sent it out to be published, stirring up quite a controversy. The general public had some strong reactions to his opinions as they were being thrown into the world for the very first time. Several different papers and journals wrote some opinions about his letter and offered their own interpretations on it as well. Noyes took issue with several of these written articles and wrote back to the papers his letter was featured in. *The Putney Community* features several different writers’ interpretations of what Noyes had cooking in his head, but none seemed to get it quite right according to Noyes. He wrote back to a great majority of the papers and attempt to clarify his beliefs and what it was he meant in his “Battle-Axe Letter.”

Yet another turning point in the evolution of Noyes’ philosophy was in his relationship with yet another woman. At this point the Oneida Community has been established, so he had been preaching his belief on complex marriage and how loving one person was unacceptable, and impossible in God’s kingdom of heaven on earth. In spite of all of this, he was engaged in an exclusive relationship of his own with Mary Cragin, who was a depressed girl, and had

contemplated suicide.<sup>35</sup> Perhaps for this reason, she was just the girl to fulfill his desires. She once wrote this regarding her evil nature that “every evil passion was very strong in me from my childhood, sexual desire, love of dress and admiration, deceit, anger, pride.” She wrote further, that to her dismay, even after declaring her freedom from sin she had found, “these former lusts returning.”<sup>36</sup> It seems all too fitting that he would find himself infatuated with a girl who had problems such as these.

Noyes seemed to convince himself that his urges were actually inspired by God. According to Spencer Klaw, whatever feelings of guilt he had were interpreted as some message. “It came two months later, on a warm evening in May, when Noyes was seized by a desire for Mary Cragin so urgent, and so unadulterated by any feeling of guilt, that he concluded it must be inspired by God.”<sup>37</sup> Around here is the point where Noyes appears completely convinced that he truly is a messenger for God. A truth ‘that’ he became wholeheartedly convinced of to the point where anything he feels or believes must indeed be messages sent by God.

Noyes did not begin his break from traditional religion with his sexuality. Rather he added, binge-drinking to his conception of the adaptability of religion. “Like others of his upbringing, he had regarded the use of intoxicating liquors as a sin. In Putney, for the first time, he learned that no rigid code could guide one through the diabolical zone of experience in which he was tossed. John Noyes drank ardent spirits, not to defy others, but to defy himself, to eradicate that ingrained habit of legality inherited from generations of Puritan ancestors.”<sup>38</sup> Yet this was another example of Noyes adapting his teachings through religion, and justifying it by claiming he is doing some sort of higher learning that the rest of his peers simply could not understand. Time and time again he defended himself by claiming he knows some secret that God told him. He was on a sort of grand journey that people plainly cannot seem to understand. There are plenty of examples of Noyes going on rebellious outbursts, only to try and rectify his actions by integrating his actions into his newest doctrines. There are all too many instances of this. Just as he reacted to his relationship with Abigail Merwin, he integrates his actions into his teachings.

All of Noyes’s experimentation with religion and his “interactions” with God eventually shaped formation of the Oneida community. Even when he had established himself as the head of the community and had a set of guidelines with which the people were to follow, he remained hypocritical; teaching people “truths” which he himself was above. For a man who preached free love, he sure engaged in exclusive relationships quite a bit. As has been covered previously, Noyes was quite fond of Mary Cragin

and desired to have her all to himself. While practicing their exclusive and secret relationship together, Noyes continued to preach the sin of exclusiveness to his followers regularly.

Noyes taught his followers that sexual love, within the sheltering confines of complex marriage, was a holy ordinance – a means of bridging the lovers closer to God. He insisted that no one was fit to enter into complex marriage who still felt any guilt about committing what the world would regard as the sin of adultery.<sup>39</sup>

He preaches things such as this in the midst of his relationship with Cragin. He continuously tried to sell to everyone that he knew some brand new way to practicing Christianity, yet time and time again he did not live by his own word.

Noyes's authority finally began to decline in the 1870s, around the same time the Comstock Law was passed. Anthony Comstock was a leading advocate against the distribution and use of contraception, and the practice of male continence was considered contraception. Comstock had been on his own personal crusade travelling the country to secure the arrests of publishers and sellers of obscenity.<sup>40</sup> He proceeded to Washington, DC, where he planned to introduce a bill to congress and make his campaign a national law. Clinton Merriam was a United States Representative from New York, and at a previous session of Congress sponsored a bill that would forbid the sale and manufacturing of obscene material.<sup>41</sup> This was just the man Comstock needed to befriend if he were to continue his mission. The bill would be introduced to Congress however, it moved at a not-so-surprisingly slow pace.<sup>42</sup> After plenty of the typical drama that Congress is known for, the bill passed. Comstock was appointed a, "special agent to enforce the law," by the Postmaster General John Angel James Creswell.<sup>43</sup> This law had ripple effects felt throughout the United States, and Oneida was no exception.

At this point however, Noyes had already seen his authority within the community fading. The cumulateness of business and financial independence, which made some members resist his control, anger at his obstruction to exclusive unions, and protests from mothers resisting the loss of their children added up. Younger members were leaving to pursue college, while even the older members – who had never truly been tempted by freethinking – now were beginning to doubt the legitimacy of Noyes's teachings.<sup>44</sup> The new Comstock Law knocked a deadly nail to set the true end in motion.

Harriet Worden, a key member of the Oneida Community, was one of the many to begin losing faith in Noyes and his doctrine. Worden was an editor of the Oneida Circular and had even had a child with Noyes. She wrote this to a friend: "It is very curious ... that often & often I have wondered to myself ... if I have

chosen the true life; or if after all I was ... devoting my energies to a mistaken doctrine." She went on to confess that, "sometimes my personal ambition has made me picture to myself more scope & liberty outside; and ... I have pictured a home of harmonious family relations, without the interference of others."<sup>45</sup> Even the most prominent of figures in the community were losing faith in Noyes and his way of life. With a little outside pressure, the whole place would come crashing down on top of him. With a little nudge, Anthony Comstock did just that.

With the newest law introduced by Comstock, outside forces were beginning to creep up on Oneida and demand a stop to their way of life. As the pressure mounted, it was finally demanded that Noyes be arrested in several paper headlines from the area.<sup>46</sup> With the flames higher than ever, Noyes concluded he needed to run. "The following night Noyes crept downstairs in his stocking feet and began the panicky flight to Canada from which he was never to return."<sup>46</sup>

Noyes lived out his last days in Canada, where he passed away on April 13, 1886.<sup>47</sup> Thus came the end to the strange life of John Humphrey Noyes. While he was a strange man indeed, he was a passionate one as well. As I have gone through my research on this man, I have struggled to conclude just what it was that went through his head. Did he at any point really believe God had chosen him to spread his message? Was he a sociopath using religion to shroud his devious tendencies? Maybe he was none of these, or maybe he was all of these or maybe he was just a product of a historical moment. He was a courageous man, and he was a passionate man. He was courageous for never being afraid of sharing his ideas with others, no matter how outlandish they were; and he was passionate in his love and adoration for his lovers and for the people of his community. He was also a very charismatic and capable leader. Above all else, the sad truth is that John Humphrey Noyes was a lonely soul. As much as he loved and cared for people, albeit in his selfish conceit, he was abandoned time and time again. Whether it was Abigail Merwin or the entire community he created, he never was capable of holding on to the ones he cared for the most. Noyes believed above all else that in heaven, everyone loved everyone. While he may have chosen to demonstrate this sexually, it is a comforting concept to go somewhere full of love, where there is no war or poverty, or hate; where there is sharing, and love and compassion. These are the ideas that humanize Noyes and make him such a fascinating individual. There is hardly ever a hint of black or white when it comes to his character, but rather a rainbow of grey. With everything he believed and preached, I just hope he got one thing right about the other side: that its a place where love is contagious and all encompassing.

**Jeremy Brown**

**Class of 2017**

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Matthew Prevo

## **The End of *Sakoku*: How the Cutthroat Diplomacy of Commodore Matthew Perry Unlocked Japan**

In the prefatory note of his official Journal, Matthew Perry wrote that his greatest hope was to be able to tell the story “in such a manner as would not only present a true picture, but also keep alive the interest of the reader.” The commodore’s scrivener, who remained unidentified, had this to say about the man:

Though half a century has gone by I remember the commodore as well as if I had seen him yesterday. A tall fine-looking man, he belonged to the type of old sea-dog that has passed away. Capable of using strong “cuss words” under provocation, he was fond of his grog, and partook of the flowing bowl with a freedom that was considered becoming to a gentlemen of the old school . . . At the same time, he was a man of considerable learning, with a decided taste for literary pursuits, and during the expedition to Japan he kept a very elaborate and comprehensive journal, on which he would do some work every night.<sup>1</sup>

One of the main primary sources useful for analyzing the Japan expedition is the Commodore’s personal journal, from which this statement was taken. The commodore was a man unlike any other. By his actions alone, the nation of Japan opened to the west. His defining qualities, listed above, are a great part of what made him successful in his endeavors.

The end of Japanese Isolation, or *sakoku*, had profound impacts on a global scale. The Treaty of Kanagawa between the United States and Japan would unlock the nation, and it was followed by similar conventions with the United Kingdom, Russia and France. It led to the popular shift in support from the Shogun to the Imperial court in Kyoto, the Meiji Restoration, and eventual modernization and Pacific expansion of the Japanese Empire. Matthew Perry’s 1853 expedition to Japan had significant consequences on Japanese and American industry and business. Perry was simply the right man for the job, in which his methods were superior to those who had failed before him. Commodore Perry’s cutthroat diplomacy combined with his knowledge of Japanese customs and the Japanese fear of the American ‘Black Ships’ played a role in the submission of the Empire. Aside from playing a role in the opening of Japan to the West, his

expedition was critical in creating US-Japanese diplomatic relations, elaborated on in the Treaty of Kanagawa. It also established and regulated trade between the two nations, supplying Japan with American industrial goods, facilitating the modernisation of the Japanese Empire both militarily and commercially, while bringing about the Meiji Restoration.

As an island nation, Japan had a long history of isolationism, in which the phrase *sakoku* meant “locked country.” It was used to describe the policy of isolation that prevailed in Japan for hundreds of years. Starting in 1603 with the victory of the Tokugawa Shogunate after one hundred years of civil war, a number of edicts were passed which restricted travel in Japan and forbade leaving the country. These acts also prohibited foreigners from entering Japan for trade and other purposes.<sup>2</sup> In 1542 on the small island of Tanegashima, a small band of shipwrecked Europeans made first contact with the Japanese. By the early seventeenth century, European influence had spread across Japan in the form of Catholicism, thanks to Jesuit missionaries eager to spread the word of God to this new land. In 1637, an armed struggle erupted between some forty-thousand Christian peasants and their *daimyō* [feudal lord]. One witness to the insurrection wrote, “The most astonishing fact is that even little girls behaved almost joyously in being beheaded as if welcoming death. This cannot be a normal state of mind but a result of the insinuating influence of their faith.”<sup>3</sup> This was the Shimabara Rebellion, and Japanese conversion to Christianity was troubling to the shogun. After the conflict had subsided, the shogun accused Christian missionaries of instigating the rebellion, expelling them from the country and placing a ban on the European religion.<sup>4</sup> Thus isolationism prevailed for two hundred years until the arrival of an ambitious American commodore: Matthew Perry.

Commodore Perry was certainly not inexperienced; rather, he had all of the right experience and knowledge for his particular mission. Perry gained valuable training and experience in his service with the United States Navy. At eighteen he was a lieutenant, at twenty five he was the commander of a schooner, a twelve-gun battleship. Perry saw service in the War of 1812 and the Mexican-American War. He even won the title of “Father of the Steam Navy” for his careful study and experimentation in adapting steam engine technology to successful use in naval vessels. By the time he received his final assignment, the expedition to Japan, he had been through forty years of service.

By the time the Tokugawa Shogunate had unified Japan, The United States was experiencing a national frenzy of “Manifest Destiny”, in which the public believed it was the moral obligation of the U.S. to spread democracy and liberty to East Asia, and in doing so, expand the United States trading enterprise. Indeed, it was a romantic notion to many citizens to travel to an alien land with hopes of establishing trade and diplomacy. Daniel Webster, the Secretary of State described it as a “great national movement” and “one of the most important

ever.”<sup>5</sup> If the Secretary of State was this enthusiastic, then surely the expedition was of great national importance. But Commodore Perry’s 1853 expedition to Japan was not the first American diplomatic mission to the island. In fact, the US government had made three prior attempts to contact Japan. In 1846, Commodore James Biddle was denied access to the interior and was turned away, and in 1848 Commander James Glynn entered Nagasaki harbor with the intention of rescuing fifteen American seamen from a wrecked whaling ship, succeeding only after threatening to fire upon the city walls. The need to secure the safety of American whalers shipwrecked in Japan was also a significant factor in influencing the U.S. to enter diplomacy.<sup>6</sup> Perry had made one unsuccessful attempt to infiltrate the nation, in 1853. But he was turned away in Edo harbor. So, after several unsuccessful attempts, the United States sent Commodore Perry back in 1854.

Why did Perry succeed where others before him had failed? Considering the case of Commodore Biddle in 1846, one can see how his failures in command and tactics obviously differed from Commodore Perry. Acting under orders from the Federal Government, Biddle set sail for the port city of Uraga with two ships. Biddle was under orders from the government to do nothing that could excite hostility or any feelings of distrust between the U.S. and Japan.<sup>7</sup> His mission was to ascertain the status of ports in Japan, so as to prepare for and commence trade. Biddle’s first mistake occurred when first entering the harbor. He dispatched a letter to the Japanese government, and a reply was received, requesting that Biddle come aboard a Japanese “junk” vessel, to negotiate with officials. He approached the vessel unexpectedly, surprising the Japanese on board. When stepping aboard the ship he was pushed by a Japanese sailor, sending him falling back to his own ship. Things quickly escalated in which the commodore called for his interpreter and ordered the man to be seized and thrown on board the Columbus, whereby Japanese officers expressed deep apologies and said they would have the man punished. Things could not have been going worse for Biddle, when, they presented an official letter declining any notion of trade and demanding the American vessels return home immediately. Biddle accomplished nothing in Japan, though; his efforts allowed later Americans like Perry the chance to succeed where he had failed.

### **The Perry Approach**

Perry was successful where others had failed, because he possessed certain qualities that made him both respected and feared by the Japanese. He practiced a heavy-handed diplomacy, and did not bother with common formalities or politeness. He had carefully studied previous encounters between Japanese and European ships, as well as the Edo Bay and areas surrounding Edo in an effort to prepare. Lastly, the technological advances of the United States gave Perry an edge, and he utilized Japanese fears of the American “Black ships” to force their hand and enter the harbor.

Commodore Perry was indeed a commanding personality. In fact, the Japanese called him, “The Lord of the Forbidden Interior” because he was the only man able to successfully penetrate the thick walls of Japanese seclusion.<sup>8</sup> From the beginning, Perry was determined to prevent his journey from being another failed mission. From his own personal journal, he writes:

I was to adopt an entirely contrary plan of proceedings from that of all others who had hitherto visited Japan on the same errand: to demand as a right and not to solicit as a favor those acts of courtesy which are due from one civilized nation to another . . . In pursuance of these intentions I caused the crews to be thoroughly drilled and the ships kept in perfect readiness as in time of active war.<sup>9</sup>

Clearly this was not to be another failed mission. Commodore Perry was adamant in his will to succeed where others had failed. And he would achieve his success by any means necessary. Another way in which he commanded respect from the Japanese was by only conferring with officials of high ranking in the empire. He refused to see both the lieutenant governor and the governor of Uraga on his first voyage, referring them to his own lower officers. In doing so, he was sending a message to Japan, that he was to be respected and treated with dignity. And that he would not settle to meet with any low ranking Japanese, rather insisting to meet with officials with real power. In effect, Perry hoped that the more exclusive he appeared, the more respect he would command from the Japanese people.<sup>10</sup>

Matthew Perry did not come unprepared for his second voyage; his intent was to learn as much as he could about Japan so as to prepare for the imminent confrontation. He had been carefully studying Japanese military tactics and geography in order to gain an advantage. He made observations on the areas surrounding Edo Bay, detailing rivers and bluffs that empty into the bay. Perry possessed the most accurate charts and maps of his day, which detailed the many islands and waterways of Japan. He was, in truth, a scholarly man, whose methods were unique and probably the reason he was successful in his mission. He thought that a commodore should be a learned man and “ought to be behaving in the spirit of the age and according to science; to observe, study, measure, count, estimate, sample and record in the service of knowledge and for the entertainment and instruction of all.”<sup>11</sup> So he was not simply a man of military might, but a man of science and reason as well. His careful instruction of his crew probably contributed greatly to his success. Being able to command a ship is one thing, but being able to command a nation is another.

The final factor that made Perry so successful was simply the reputation and might of the navy he sailed with. The might of the American navy was at an all-time high. And recently, sailing ships had begun the process of being

converted into steam-engine vessels. These ships spouted black coal-smoke and carried cannons with explosive rounds. To the Japanese, who were still sailing in wooden “junks” as the commodore called them, the American ships were an intimidating and utterly terrifying sight to behold. The magistrate of Uraga described them as “veritable castles that moved freely on the water.”<sup>12</sup> Clearly the fear of American ships was real, if the Magistrate of a castle-town was himself afraid of them. They were wary of foreigners and thought of Americans and westerners in general as being barbarians; uncivilized people who were prone to acts of violence. Ironically, the West held the same view of the Japanese. One Japanese poet, in 1818, laid eyes on a Dutch vessel and wrote “The Barbarian heart is hard to fathom; the Japanese throne ponders and dares not relax its armed defense. Alas, wretches, why come they to vex our anxious eyes, pursuing countless miles in their greed...? Crawling like gigantic ants after rancid meat. Do we not . . . trade our most lovely jewel for thorns?”<sup>13</sup> Here we see the mind of the average Japanese toward Westerners. The poet describes the barbarians as being greedy, traveling thousands of miles to plunder and deceive the Japanese. To this poet, Perry probably exemplified all of the traits of a westerner. Travelling far across the Pacific with forceful intentions to solicit trade and profit from the Japanese people. In short, Perry’s ‘Black ships’ that he sailed with struck fear in the heart of the Japanese and made it that much easier to seduce the nation and force diplomacy.

### **Kanagawa and its Fallout**

The commander’s intentions can be identified by letters of communication between himself and President Millard Fillmore. After several days of communication via letter, the Commodore had managed to secure a landing. On March 8, 1854, the flotilla was accompanied by an escort and docked at Yokohama, near the capital of Edo.<sup>14</sup> Negotiations began at the treaty house, which was built specifically for the American envoy, in Kanagawa. But before negotiations began, letters were exchanged in correspondence between President Millard Fillmore and the Commodore, as well as between the Commodore and the Emperor of Japan. The letter from President Fillmore and the Commodore to the Emperor is in particular interesting because it details the United States’ propositions and intentions for Japan, before the treaty was underway. Essentially, the letter to the emperor was meant to intimidate, warning that should Japan continue to act as though Americans were her enemies, a large force of warships would return to the Japanese coast. Perry, on behalf of the President, writes:

The President desires to live in peace and friendship with your imperial majesty, but no friendship can long exist, unless Japan ceases to act towards Americans as if they were her enemies . . . Many of the large ships of war destined to visit Japan have not yet arrived in these seas, though they are hourly expected;

and the undersigned, as an evidence of his friendly intentions, has brought but four of the smaller ones, designing, should it become necessary, to return to Edo in the ensuing spring with a much larger force.<sup>15</sup>

Here again we see Perry's commanding personality, but we also see the U.S. intentions. President Fillmore desired peace and commerce between the two nations, but he was prepared to achieve such relations with force if necessary. In 1854, the "The Convention of Kanagawa" treaty was negotiated, which established US-Japanese diplomatic relations and provided trade stipulations between the two nations.

Its lasting impact was so great because it effectively allowed for the Meiji Restoration and the westernization and modernization of Japan.<sup>16</sup> The many stipulations provided by the treaty favored the United States, but that is not to say it did not have consequences for Japan as well. Overall, the treaty maintained that there would be a permanent, lasting peace between the U.S. and Japan. It allowed for the building of two American ports, one at Shimoda and one at Hakodate. The treaty was very important to the United States, because it allowed access to Japanese coal reserves in the Pacific, which were needed to power American steam engine vessels. American businesses profited greatly from tariffs placed on goods imported to Japan. The treaty required that any shipwrecked American sailors be cared for and given food and shelter. The Japanese were not completely left in the dark, though. Article VIII of the treaty states, "Wood, water provisions, coal and goods required shall only be procured through the agency of Japanese officers appointed for that purpose, and in no other manner."<sup>17</sup> So the Japanese were given monopoly over the provisioning of American ships and their crews. To many Japanese, however, the treaty was unfair and favored the U.S. It was known as "The hated Treaty" by many Japanese.<sup>18</sup> Nevertheless, Perry achieved great success by gaining access to coal deposits and enabling the creation of American ports in Japan, which had a tidal wave effect on other western nations.

The modernization of Japan's military and industry is another significant result of Perry's voyage and the subsequent treaty negotiated. In a matter of a few decades, the Japanese military had transformed itself from armor-clad samurai wielding swords, to conscripted soldiers bearing machined rifles and heavy artillery. Japanese ships went from wooden sailing ships powered by the wind and large rowing oars, to large steam-powered juggernauts. Japanese citizens could traverse the island by railroad and communicate by telegraph. This could not have happened were it not for the Perry expedition. Certainly, the Japanese had access to western technology prior to 1854. They had begun designing matchlock muskets in the style of the Portuguese as early as 1542. But the rate at which they advanced technologically after 1854 far exceeded any growth in the history of the nation. The molding of Japan into a national Empire began with its technological advancement. From "Perry and Pearl" George Feifer

writes, “The Imperial Naval Academy’s establishment followed in 1856. Soon a western-style military school, sire of the passionately nationalistic Imperial Military Academy, took root, while interest in Western manufacture, especially everything promising military advantage, soared.”<sup>19</sup> The trade stipulations enabled by the treaty allowed for the modernization of Japan both militarily and commercially. The implications of all this, of course, is the eventual growth of the Japanese Empire into the Pacific, the military fanaticism that gripped the nation, and the war that broke out between the U.S and Japan in 1941.

When the “hated treaty” as it was called by the Japanese was signed, Japan was under control of the Shogun, Tokugawa Iesada. It was common knowledge to the Japanese people that they had been cheated by unfair trade regulations. And most of the blame was placed on the Shogunate, for accepting the treaty. George Feifer writes, “It began with Japan, when hundreds of feudal domains were welded into a single country . . . the successor Meiji state, established after the Shogunate had collapsed largely because it had submitted to Perry, became centralized, invasive, and given to relentless imposition of authoritarian indoctrination.”<sup>20</sup> In effect, Japan experienced a cultural and political revolution following the Perry expedition, in which the Shogunate collapsed and a new Empire was established.

The United States was not the only Western nation to profit from the opening of Japan. Three other prominent nations; The United Kingdom, France, and Russia, were all able to secure diplomatic treaties granting them trade access after Commodore Perry had broken down the wall of isolationism. In 1858, not long after the signing of the Kanagawa Treaty, France was eager to secure relations with the Japanese. Jean-Baptiste Louis Gros, commander of a French Naval expedition to East Asia was responsible for securing diplomatic relations. Under the “Treaty of Amity and Commerce between France and Japan” five new ports were to be opened to foreign trade, a system of extraterritoriality was established by which foreigners living within Japan were subjugated to their own laws, opposed to Japanese law. And import taxes were assigned and controlled by international agencies, depriving the Japanese from control of foreign trade. The French profited immensely from this treaty, and once again, the Japanese were given the short end of the stick.<sup>21</sup>

Before the French, the UK followed suit and established a treaty similar in fashion to the Kanagawa treaty. The “Anglo-Japanese Friendship Treaty” was signed in 1854. Now, Nagasaki and Hakodate were open to British, as well as American vessels for trade. In addition to this, Britain was granted the status of “most favored nation” by the Japanese. Unlike the later French, however, the British living in Japan were subject to local laws, unable to secure any sort of extraterritoriality clause in the treaty. The 1854 treaty was followed by a similar treaty in 1858, “The Anglo-Japanese Treaty of Amity and Commerce”. This treaty elaborated on the previous one, establishing formal trade relations and some

manner of extraterritoriality. However, like the other two treaties, this one again favored the West.<sup>22</sup> In 1855, another treaty was ratified, this one between Japan and the Russian Empire. It was known as “The Treaty of Shimoda”. This one, another ‘unequal treaty’ established diplomatic peace between the two nations, allowed for trade at the three ports of Nagasaki, Hakodate, and Shimoda, and it allowed for extraterritoriality or prosecution of Russian citizens in Japan by their own governments. Lastly, it established a border between the two nations as a line running through the Kurile Islands, ceding much more land to Russia than to Japan. This last clause is frequently cited as the cause of the ongoing Kurile Islands dispute.<sup>23</sup>

Until Commodore Perry arrived, Japan was effectively segregated from the western world. Perry was successful where many others before him had failed because he possessed qualities they did not. In the case of Commodore Biddle, who was too willing to compromise and submit to the Japanese, we see traits virtually absent in Perry. He was a commanding personality, stubborn and at the same time a scientific, learned man. The ‘Lord of the Forbidden Interior’ was famed for his gunboat diplomacy, and heavy-handed tactics, this combined with his knowledge of Japanese customs and military as well as the geography of Japan, and the Japanese fear of American ships, all to give Perry an advantage over the Japanese. The impact of the end of Sakoku was immense and far-reaching. The convention of Kanagawa was a direct result of Perry’s expedition. It allowed for the growth of American business overseas, the modernization of Japanese military and industry, and eventually the Meiji Restoration and the growth of Imperial power. The convention of Kanagawa also had a tidal wave effect on other Western nations. It was followed by similar conventions with France, Russia and the U.K. To conclude, Commodore Matthew Perry was a master diplomat and sea-captain, whose legacy continues to this day. And whose actions created an echo throughout history, transforming a nation and a people.

**Matthew Prevo**

**Class of 2017**

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Nathan Painter

## Shinto Transformation and Government Support in Meiji Japan

Shinto is still, in a manner of speaking, the soul of Japan, and even young Westernized Japanese who take no part in its manifold ritual, are conditioned, as their parents and grandparents were, by its fundamental characteristics.  
– Nagai Shinichi, *Gods of Kumano*<sup>1</sup>

In under one hundred years, Japan underwent a transition from feudal traditionalism to fascist imperialism. Once an agrarian society focused on a long antiquated isolationism, it rapidly became an industrial and military superpower with an empire that spanned the Pacific rivaling European empires. How had Japan accomplished such a remarkable feat? To what does Japan owe this success? Understanding the answers to these questions requires an understanding of the historical, political, and cultural contexts of Japanese society during the latter half of the Tokugawa Period (1603-1868). Japan's success lies in its resourceful leap out of feudalism towards modernity and industrial prowess; their strategy: establish a single unified national identity. Japanese identity had not always been the cohesive entity it is today. In fact, it is quite a modern conceptual development when placed in the grand scope of Japanese history.<sup>2</sup> However, its origins date back further, to the religious and mythical heritage of Ancient Japan in the Jōmon Period (14,000–300 BC). The religion of Shinto was a highly influential way of thought that was at the forefront of shaping many aspects of Japanese culture. “An animistic folk religion,” its basic premise was formed from the belief in the “presence of sacred beings—gods and spirits—in nature.”<sup>3</sup>

Shintoism became closely associated with the Japanese Emperor, who was believed to be of divine origin, giving strength to the Japanese sense of ethnic ‘superiority.’ An indigenous religion, Shintoism had long permeated Japanese society, going through periods of growth, decline, reconstruction, as well as promotion. Japan, as an island chain, left it geographically isolated from the rest of the Asian continent; it was “close enough to allow sea journeys,” but “far enough” to make those journeys “perilous.”<sup>4</sup> This limited contact caused the Japanese to have “an ambivalent sense of their relation to the cultures of the Asian continent,” being both “proud of their Chinese inheritance and defiantly assertive of an independent identity.”<sup>5</sup> This situation gave strength to the

indigenous Shinto to support a developing Japanese identity which managed to survive “Sinification” – i.e. the heavy influence of Chinese culture. Shinto stressed the importance of one’s allegiance to and identity with “the group,” which could be family, clan, or community. This emphasis on the collective reinforced the sense that each individual had a duty to act in the best interest of the group, strengthening the power of each group’s leader. This led to an “us versus the” mentality – or an “in-group” vs. ‘out-group’ – that caused divisions between groups, whether the groups were defined by family, region, or nation. Divisions appeared between Japanese groups, as well as between Japan and outside groups. Eventually, the perception of “us versus them” acquired a dichotomous “superior” vs. “inferior” outlook, with those in the “in-group” seen as superior.<sup>6</sup> However, as Japan was a heavily forested and mountainous country, interaction between regions was limited. The rough terrain, coupled with Shinto’s tendency to foster a superiority complex, made it difficult for political power to be centralized – geography separated the groups, which led to regional identities developing, which resulted in conflicts. It was only when Japan was unified and the idea of the nation promoted as the only “in-group” was Japan successful in making a single identity. As Andrew Gordon stated: “the notion of ‘Japanese-ness’ [was] an identity cobbled together in the face of a resistant geography.”<sup>7</sup>

This geographic isolation played a role in contributing to the social unrest during the Tokugawa period, which lasted from 1603 – following the conquests of the “Great Unifiers” – to 1868.<sup>8</sup> The late Tokugawa (or Edo) period saw an erosion of centralized power for the regime, while at the same time, the economic conditions of the social classes became unbearable as the fixed stipend given to daimyo and samurai became increasingly worthless. The “sacred” hierarchy of the social classes prevented social mobility despite the system’s dwindling utility and relevance.<sup>9</sup> *Daimyo* and the samurai relied heavily on taxing the agricultural peasants, but as the cost of living for the nobles and samurai increased, and famine decreased the supply of crops, higher and higher taxes were needed sustain the system.<sup>10</sup> This severely impoverished the peasants and led to starvation and malnutrition. Meanwhile, the wealthy merchant class – the lowest class in the social hierarchy – continued to accumulate wealth which was then loaned to other classes; the samurai needed to maintain the image of their traditional warrior heritage in society, which proved expensive.<sup>11</sup> After decades of social discontent, economic inequality, international pressure for trade, and a weakening central government, the Tokugawa regime collapsed with the Meiji Restoration in 1868, which sought to restore power to the Emperor. With the rise of the Emperor, the Shinto myth of his divine origins also resurfaced and was used to legitimize the Emperor’s claim. Thus, Shintoism became an integral part of the government’s efforts to advance in accordance with their vision: to advance into the future as a world super power.

This essay focuses on how the Japanese government of the Meiji era (1868-1912) promoted its own version of Shintoism (State Shinto) in order to increase nationalism, the identity of the nation-state, and the overall support for the Emperor and his claims to legitimacy. Drawing on Shintoism's history and spiritual developmental background, this essay also shows how Shintoism's beliefs evolved during the Meiji period and post-Meiji periods to include those of ultranationalists, anti-Buddhists, and traditional fundamentalists. The government, bent on establishing a uniform Japanese culture and common identity, used Shintoism to help justify their claims of ethnic and national superiority for the purpose of unifying Japan. However, the government exerted an influence over Shintoism by exploiting its inherent ethnocentrism, thus fostering the revival of ideas from earlier National Learning fanatics. Religious traditionalists cried for a reactionary return to Japan's "glorious" – and gloriously romanticized – past of moral purity. Ultimately, the government (through its use of Shintoism) and Shintoism (through its focus on the Emperor) both embraced the concept of purification, especially of the nation, and applied it to different aspects in society to further their own agenda.

### Shinto's Way of the Kami

To understand how Shintoism might have changed in post-Tokugawa Japan, we must first understand what Shintoism is; in essence, we must retreat to an earlier image in the Japanese tapestry, the very fabric of which is that of time. Shinto, the indigenous religion of the native Japanese, predates the emergence of other religions, such as Buddhism, and philosophies, such as Confucianism, which were imported from China; however as Kuroda Toshio notes, the term "Shinto" was not used to distinguish Shinto as its own religion until recently.<sup>12</sup> Joseph Kitagawa suggests that Shintoism started out as a view "derived" from the everyday experiences of the Japanese people "in the context of their own islands."<sup>13</sup> Thus, Shintoism evolved as a belief system, as well as an "identity."<sup>14</sup> Unlike other religions, Shinto is neither monotheistic nor polytheistic – it also does not "regard an omnipotent logical principle as identifying itself with the universe" – but it "sees [the] divine [...] as living reality self-creating itself as the universe."<sup>15</sup> Essentially, Shinto is another reading of the kanji (神道) which translates to "Way of the Gods."<sup>16</sup> The understanding of these words, or rather concepts, from the original Japanese is important. *Michi*, the second character, means Way (i.e. the religious teachings, as well as the ritual customs), while *kami*, the first character, is often thought of as Gods; however, the literal meaning of *kami* means "that which is higher," or "superior" so it has also taken on a secular meaning.<sup>17</sup> It is because the definition is vague that Shintoism can be understood to embody the concept of "worshiping those higher than oneself;" suggesting the reason behind such practices like paternalism, and ancestor/emperor worship. Anything, whether it be plant or government official – if perceived superior to the self – could be worshipped as *kami*.<sup>18</sup> Another important concept was that of the *uji* (部), which was known as "the primary [...] unit" of

society and was the basis for the “territorially based cluster of lineage groups sharing the same tutelary ‘*kami*’ (trans. as ‘clan’).”<sup>19</sup> The head of the clans were like “chieftains,” who claimed to have authority “derived from cultic prerogatives given [to] him by the *kami* of the *uji*.”<sup>20</sup> This tradition of clans is perhaps a precursor to the later tradition of regional lords in Japan, or at least might be relevant justification for the practice. As an identity, Shinto likely contributed to the development of the people’s sense of allegiance with particular *uji*, as it is evident that the Japanese identified with an “in-group” and saw outsiders as part of the “out-group.”

Kato divided the history of Shintoism into three periods, the first of which he described as being the “lower nature” period.<sup>21</sup> In early Shinto, the people saw everything as having a soul, or spiritual conscience.<sup>22</sup> At first, the object itself was “deified,” such as the “physical fire,” before Shintoism evolved towards worshipping the “spirit [...] residing” within the fire; Kato explained this as evolving from animatism into animism.<sup>23</sup> With objects beginning to develop their own spirit within, gods and goddesses began to emerge. The myth about the Goddess of the Sun, the God of the Moon, and the God of the Rainstorm (the “Divine Trio”) came about and transitioned the religion into polytheism – the second period in its history.<sup>24</sup> In the “higher nature” period, the mythology gave the deities of this “pantheon” complex relationships with one another.<sup>25</sup> As the story goes, the Sun Goddess quarreled with her brother, the Rain God. The Rain was violent, and the Sun hid from him, so the world went dark. Then the “Eight Hundred Myriads of Gods” held council in the Milky Way and brought back the Sun, banishing her brother to earth.<sup>26</sup> Within the same nature period, it was believed that the Sun Goddess sent her grandson to earth to rule over the Japanese, making the royal lineage divine and fusing the religion with the government until modernity.<sup>27</sup> It was most likely from this tale as well as the Tale of *Izanagi-no-Mikoto* (who washed himself after returning from the Land of the Dead), in addition to the belief in spirits within objects that “the hydrolatry of the ancient Japanese thus originated;” for “seas, rivers, wells, fountains, and hot springs” and the use of water in general became increasingly important to Shinto ritualistic practice.<sup>28</sup> The ritual washing of the body with water with prayer (*misogi harai*) emerged from this concept of “(physical) purity” and the need to cleanse one’s own body.<sup>29</sup> As Joseph Mason explains:

Purity is achieved through] constant effort. [One might] become impure through lack of experience... [Within Shinto,] purity is not a mechanical process automatically preserving [the] divine spirit in a state of machine-like innocence. Purification must be earned; it is an ever-present ideal to keep the self-conscious mind from lingering in debasements... Purification ceremonies [reinforce the idea that one] must ever remind [their] self-conscious self that impurities retard spirit’s earthly self-development... Shinto is preparation for life; religions are preparation for death.<sup>30</sup>

This explains why water, and the act of washing the body, helped emphasize the need for purification within one's life. In the third and final historic period, Kato describes Shintoism as taking on cultural, intellectual, and ethical perspectives. He explains that "when progress is made in the civilization of a nation her religion advances in the intellectual and ethical sense of the term, and thus from nature religion arises culture religion or ethic-intellectualistic religion."<sup>31</sup> In terms of ethical acquisitions, the concept of "purity" expanded to include a "mental" element, in addition to the "physical." To achieve purification of the mind (*Senshindo sakk*), one should be sincere (i.e. virtuous). "If a man is truly sincere in mind he will be sure to succeed in realizing a communion with the Divine," for sincerity means "purity of heart."<sup>32</sup> Sincerity would lead to being morally righteous, which would please the *kami*.<sup>33</sup> In the Meiji period, the concept of purification would acquire yet another element to its meaning: the purification of the "collective," or better put, the "nation."

Within Shintoism, there was the "inner" meaning (*matsuri*, meaning "ceremonials or rituals," from *matsurau*, meaning "to serve the *Kami*"), the "outer" meaning (*matsuri-goto*, meaning government), and a unity between the two (*saisei-ichi*, meaning "unity of religion and government").<sup>34</sup> Kitagawa argued that the "inner" meaning, like the ritual use of water, was rooted in Japanese tradition, as seen with Kato's examples from mythology.<sup>35</sup> The "outer" meaning, Kitagawa argued, was changed due to a heavy influence of Buddhism, Confucianism, and "Sino-Korean civilization."<sup>36</sup> Indeed, as Hori Ichiro discusses this point in his book, *Folk Religion in Japan*:

Ethical, magical, and religious elements were blended [and] reinterpreted [...] into Japanese religion as one entity [...]. They intermingled so completely that they lost their individual identities... Confucianism and Shinto have borrowed Buddhist metaphysics and psychology; Buddhism and Shinto have borrowed many aspects of Confucian theory and ethics; and Confucianism and Buddhism have adapted themselves [to Shinto].<sup>37</sup>

Hori's main point was that these traditions "blended" together over the generations to the point where they were inseparable, although, as we will see below, many Shinto radicals thought that they were separable. Early Japanese emperors copied the Chinese, and also emulated their "clan" *uji*, which allowed them to justify their authority by connecting it to their clan's *kami*.<sup>38</sup> This system of emperor worship developed because Shintoism allowed for it. Shintoism was considered a theanthropic religion, which meant that it saw "divinity [within] man and nature" as opposed to the Western-style theocratic religions which saw "divinity [...] above man and nature."<sup>39</sup> For in Shinto, "Gods alike with men are

subject to natural law and cannot escape from it.”<sup>40</sup> When humans died, they were easily deified and revered, especially if they were the best at their skills, be it in fighting, ruling, or being morally just.

### A Nationalist Conspiracy

During the Tokugawa period, the shogun regimes worked to diminish the emperor’s claim to divinity in order to advance their own claim to power. Shinto was nevertheless supported by the Tokugawa regime, which had also grown increasingly anti-Buddhist.<sup>41</sup> The National Learning School (  *Kokugaku*) originating from the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries with the intention of purifying Japanese culture of Buddhist and Confucian influence through the study of traditional Shinto thought.<sup>42</sup> The scholar Motoori Norinaga (1730-1801) led the movement, and emerged as one of the leading influences from the National Learning School. With the collapse of the Tokugawa government in the mid-1800s, Shintoists, particularly those from the National Learning School, saw their chance to ally with the pro-Meiji imperialists. Meiji reformers “had originally planned a return to the ways of the fourteenth century but [were] ultimately persuaded by the Shintoists to ‘go all the way back to the time of [the first legendary emperor] Jimmu.’”<sup>43</sup> These Shintoists wanted to return to the past because they hoped it would “harmonize the ‘inner’ and ‘outer’ meanings of Shinto.”<sup>44</sup> In an attempt to find that harmony, many National Learning followers held office from 1870 to 1884 in the early Meiji period, giving them the chance to conspire with nationalists and advance the values of their reactionary Shinto.<sup>45</sup> The Meiji government made Shinto the national and state religion, giving birth to what became known as “State Shinto.”<sup>46</sup> This new Shinto sect was an “official creed loosely based on Shinto” which “authorized Shinto priests to create a network of preachers to spread it to the populace.”<sup>47</sup> But because the “creed” lacked a place in people’s religious lives and “was composed of platitudes about obeying authority and revering the emperor, the people found it incomprehensible and its priests ludicrous.”<sup>48</sup> While “preaching, funerary rites, and obvious religious activities were not allowed within State Shinto,” State Shinto did do a remarkable job at “utilizing the national and local governments, the public educational system, and the army and navy to propagate the Shinto version of ancestor-worship, the emperor cult, and patriotic morality.”<sup>49</sup>

However, the declaration of Shinto as the state religion “ironically backfired” and was met with immediate criticism by Buddhists and “Western diplomats” who advocated religious freedom.<sup>50</sup> Their pressure was enough that “very limited religious freedom was guaranteed by the Constitution of 1889.”<sup>51</sup> It was also because of this pressure that the government moved to ‘declassify’ State Shinto as a religion because the Shinto-oriented government still wanted to allow Shinto beliefs and values to exert influence through these bureaucratic outlets. This relates directly back to the growing sense of nationalism sweeping

across Japanese culture during the time. As Sandra Wilson argued, Japanese nationalism was a special case compared to other historic examples, for their sense of nationalism did not arise from a desire for independence from a colonial superior, nor did it develop entirely on its own.<sup>52</sup> Japanese nationalism developed quite late compared to European nationalism, and because the government wanted to modernize, it knew it had to insert nationalism into the minds of the people in order to unite the country – create a common Japanese identity; thus, the government used tactics like compulsory education and conscription to strengthen people’s belief in the “nation.”<sup>53</sup> The government’s establishment of State Shinto can be seen as yet another measure taken to foster the nationalistic spirit of the people, because by imposing it in the schools, or rather, allowing it to exert its influence, it helped establish a uniform standard in religious thought in an attempt to bring together the regional variations for nationalistic purposes. This is similar to how Japan standardized the Japanese language and imposed it in schools in Japan (as well as in colonies, such as Okinawa) in order to spread their influence and create a homogenous Japanese culture.<sup>54</sup> It was an assimilation tactic used to strengthen the culture and nation, giving the people a sense of national superiority as well as ethnic superiority; it gave the people a single *uji* with which to identify. In 1870, the government began to reemphasize the tradition of ‘emperor worship’ for fear the lords might fight for power.<sup>55</sup> They needed a way to legitimize Meiji imperial rule, and stressing the divinity of the emperor along with the cultural heritage and ethnic superiority of the Japanese was essential for eliminating internal struggles. As Tokutomi Soho insisted in 1927:

Nothing is more urgent for the long-term future of Imperial Japan than cultivating in the hearts of the people the idea of loyalty to the Imperial House as being central to all things. There must be encouragement of worship of the Imperial House and the nurturing of a spirit of loyalty to the sovereign and love of the country.<sup>56</sup>

Despite being written in the late 1920s, this comment perfectly describes the ‘nation-building’ attitude of the Meiji government and of the Shintoists. Because the government supported and pushed for State Shinto, Shintoism experienced an increase in conservative exclusionist zealotry (i.e. ultra-nationalism) – effectively, the nationalistic ideals flowed both ways. Such ideals are best seen in the writings of Hirata Atsutane (1776-1843), a follower of Motoori and a scholar of Christianity.<sup>57</sup> His disciples established a movement called “Restoration Shinto” which pushed the Meiji government for a return to the old Shinto tradition.<sup>58</sup> He once wrote:

All the world’s peoples refer to Japan as the Land of the *Kami*. [...] they say that we are all noble descendants of the *kami*, and in fact, they are not wrong. Our noble country was born from *kami*, uniquely blessed by the *Kami* of Heaven.

There is a world of difference between Japan and all other countries; in fact, there is no comparison. Japan is surpassingly blessed and clearly is the Land of the *Kami*. Even the humblest [person] in Japan is an actual descendant of the *kami*. Given this certain truth, I find it extremely regrettable that there are so many Japanese people who do not recognize the fundamental facts that this is the Land of the *Kami* and that they are the descendants of the *kami*.<sup>59</sup>

Even though Hirata lived before the Meiji period, he spoke with just as much nationalist enthusiasm as his later counterparts, as he was one of their major influences. The nationalism of the early Meiji period built on his work as well as others from the National Learning School and who lived in the late Tokugawa period. Hirata also wrote:

Japanese differ completely from and are superior to the peoples of China, India, Russia, Holland, Siam, Cambodia, and all other countries of the world, and for us to have called our country the Land of the Gods was not mere vanity... People everywhere refer to Japan as the Land of the Gods, whether or not they know why this is true.<sup>60</sup>

An arrogant man, indeed.<sup>61</sup> Essentially, he was claiming that everyone in Japan was a “living *kami*,” or perhaps even that Japan itself was a *kami*, with the Japanese its spirit. Hirata’s words evoke the same ethnocentrism that later Meiji imperialists would use later on. By stressing the nation’s superiority, he is also making a case for Shintoism’s superiority, saying that the Shinto ideas of *kami* are the truth, and that those who deny them are denying fact. There was even a “direct ideological” link found “between the classical National Learning theorists of the Tokugawa period,” such as Hirata, and the “Shinto ultranationalists” of “the twentieth century.”<sup>62</sup> Walter Skya defines *ultra-nationalism* as a form of religious nationalism, merging “fanatical religious faith [with] the nation-state.”<sup>63</sup> Just as in nationalism, it has the premise that there exists a unique nation with values inherently superior to all others, with the objective of the nation to achieve complete independence. However, ultra-nationalism “includes a powerful religious component,” which in this case, is Shinto.<sup>64</sup> These Shinto ultranationalist ideals can be seen in the works of Kakehi Katsuhiko. Kakehi was an advocate of totalitarianism, and his conceptions of totalitarianism were even compared to those of Nazi Germany. He had said that “the totalitarian leader is nothing more nor less than the functionary of the masses he leads” and is not “a power-hungry individual imposing a tyrannical and arbitrary will upon his subjects;” rather he “can be replaced at any time, and he depends just as much on the ‘will’ of the masses he embodies as the masses depend on him.”<sup>65</sup> But unlike the European manifestation of totalitarianism, Kakehi did not believe the Japanese emperor could to be “replaced at any time,” but was rather a god in human form.<sup>66</sup> The emperor did not have to give “electrifying speeches to the masses” – all of his charisma “resided in his whole imperial

being.<sup>67</sup> Because of this extremist view within the nationalist ideology, many ultranationalist Japanese considered the Nazi and Italian systems to be lesser “manifestations of radical Shinto ultranationalis[m]” because they did not have a well “developed national religious consciousness” that gave legitimacy to their leader.<sup>68</sup> These beliefs directly connect with Shinto as they show how the divinity of the emperor was used, especially by Kakehi, to justify the nationalists’ belief in their racial superiority above all others.<sup>69</sup> However, unlike Christianity and Islam, Shinto had “no scripture comparable to the Bible or the Qur’an,” so there was no clear way of unifying the numerous doctrines and teaching from the different Shinto sects.<sup>70</sup> This lack of organization and need for structure came to the forefront of the Shintoist debates during the Meiji period. Nevertheless, the Meiji government was able to use Shintoism, specifically State Shinto, to promote the nation and unify Japan. Those same efforts by the government also helped radicalize Shintoism, causing many to reject Buddhism and Confucianism.

### **Cleansing the Faith, Cleansing the Nation**

Despite what Hori pointed out about the complex history of intermingling that Shinto, Buddhism, and Confucianism underwent with each other (e.g. Ryobu “Dual” Shinto sect, which believed the sun-goddess, Amaterasu reincarnation of Buddha), Shintoists increasingly fought for superiority, while trying to distance itself from the others. For example, Motoori Norinaga “rejected the influence on Shinto of Buddhism metaphysics and Confucian rationalism” when he said: “The True Way of the Gods is totally different, dissociated from the teachings of Confucianism, Buddhism, or any other doctrine, having nothing whatsoever in common with them.”<sup>71</sup> Motoori was a man who preferred to “expend [his] efforts on studies of [his own] country, rather than waste it on matters pertaining to foreign countries.”<sup>72</sup> He led the way for Shinto “purists” with his rejection of Buddhism and Confucianism – a concept that would be picked up by the students of the National Learning. As for the government’s efforts, it separated Buddhism from Shinto by issuing an edict in 1868. The government supported Shintoism’s turn on the Buddhists, and Shintoists began a violent movement to “exterminate Buddha.”<sup>73</sup> In 1873, the Meiji government “removed the official ban against Christianity held over from the anti-Catholic Tokugawa feudal government.”<sup>74</sup> But in 1886, influenced by the Shintoists, the government brought back the ban on Christianity – the ban was harshly criticized, even by the Buddhists who knew they had to maintain religious freedom for their own survival.<sup>75</sup>

In the Shinto movement of the Meiji period, Shintoists, mostly from the National Learning School, pushed for there to be a “national” religion. Aizawa Seishisai, a pro-Confucian Shintoist, lashed out at Buddhism:

Our ancestral teaching has been muddled by the shamans, altered by the Buddhists, and obscured by pseudo-Confucians and second-rate scholars who have, through their sophistries, confused the minds of men. Moreover, the duties of sovereign and minister and of parent and child have been neglected and left undefined in their teachings. The great Way of Heaven and man are nowhere to be found in them.<sup>76</sup>

Here Aizawa compared the Buddhists with the corrupt money-driven sophists of Socrates' era, who preyed upon the ill-informed by offering to teach them philosophy and the 'truth' for a large sum of money. Along with this insult, he mentioned the esteemed traditions of Confucian hierarchy, arguing how Buddhist doctrine had always lacked the hierarchal essence that is emulated so well within Japanese society; because of this, he wanted cleanse Shinto of Buddhist influence.<sup>77</sup> Aizawa used the word kokutai to describe the national identity of Japan, arguing that the emperor was a manifestation of the saisei-ichi, the unity of religion and government – the balance between the 'inner' and 'outer' meaning. Aizawa goes on to offer his opinion on how Shintoism could become highly structured and hierarchical just like the government and society:

When [Western barbarians] plan to subdue a country not their own, they [...] preach their alien religion [Christianity] to captivate the people's hearts. Once the people's allegiance has been shifted, they can be manipulated... The people will be only too glad to die for the sake of the alien God. They have the courage to give battle; they offer all they own in adoration... The subversion of the people [is] taught as being in accord with the God's will. So in the name of an all-embracing love, the land is subjugated. Even though greed is the real motive, it masquerades as a righteous uprising. The absorption of the country and the conquest of its territories all are carried out in this fashion.<sup>78</sup>

Aizawa found inspiration from the hierarchal structures of western Christianity. To him, it was what made the West so successful. He was of the opinion that in order for Shinto to survive, it must organize into a highly structured hierarchy, while also rejecting Buddhist influences and returning to a traditionalist orientation. He wanted to legitimize Shinto by establishing a hierarchy and institutional body, giving it the power to officially exclude other doctrines, particularly those of foreign origin, and to "cleanse" the religion of "impure" sophists (i.e. anyone who had a conception of Shinto that differed from his). This illustrates the idea that the government and the ultranationalists also influenced Shintoist thought – Aizawa saw the hierarchal structure within Christianity, and accredited its order for the success of the West. He followed this by reasoning: should Shintoism organize like Christianity, it would give the government an excellent catalyst to impose on those that they conquer; the Japanese government would then have an easier time at assimilating populations. However, the movement to make Shintoism the state religion failed. In fact, Fukuzawa Yukichi, a key reformer of the Meiji government, had been highly skeptical of the movement, saying that:

Shinto has not yet established a body of doctrine. [...] Shinto has always been the puppet of Buddhism, and for hundreds of years it has failed to show its true colours... It is only an insignificant movement trying to make headway by taking advantage of the imperial house at a time of political change.<sup>79</sup>

The government had better success in declassifying Shinto as a religion and forming their own sect of Shinto – a more structured branch, intended to aid in the promotion of the nation. As the government moved to use State Shinto to unify the nation, Shintoists and ultranationalists could easily be seen as a single group. Those nationalists that considered their nation superior, desiring an imposed uniformity and a purification of the nation, used Shintoism; those Shintoists that wanted their religious tradition preserved and organized (i.e. “cleaned”), used the government along with the ideas of Japan’s ethnic superiority.

In the years leading up to the Second World War, the morals of Japanese society were questioned by traditionalists and nationalists who saw them corrupted by Western influences. Even though the government had allowed their State Shinto to influence the population through the military, the education system, as well as other government branches, many saw the government efforts as not enough. On September 1st, 1923, Tokyo was destroyed by the 7.9 magnitude Great Kanto Earthquake. The earthquake caused ¥6.5 billion worth of damage, “killed over 110,000 residents,” and left “2.5 million persons homeless.”<sup>80</sup> Immediately the religious and traditional ultranationalists took to blaming Western influence for corrupting the Japanese culture, claiming that the quake had been divine punishment from the Gods. Many believed that society had “experience[d ...] moral decay and social dislocation that manifested itself most prominently in Tokyo” because the city “had become a centre of hedonistic consumer culture, entertainment, decadence, political unrest, and labour agitation and a breeding ground for dangerous thoughts and questionable behaviour.”<sup>82</sup>

To them, Japan had lost its way because it had been trying to emulate the West – indulging in hedonistic materialism which drove a consumer based culture. They saw materialism and industrial capitalism as the two main evils that plagued Japanese society. To these commentators, the earthquake had been an “awakening call” used to warn the Japanese to correct their moral deviance.<sup>83</sup> The brothels, bars, and entertainment districts in Tokyo had especially been destroyed, as well as department stores (“the centre of consumer spending”), “restaurants, dance halls, cinemas, and theatres.”<sup>84</sup> Another trend in Japanese society at the time was that of the Modern Girl (*modan gaaru*) – and the Modern Boy – among the youth. The Modern Girl was a “glittering, decadent, middle-class consumer who, through her clothing, smoking, and drinking, [flouted] tradition” in a similar fashion to her Western counterpart of the time, the flapper.<sup>85</sup> She was “defined by her body” – most specifically “her

short hair and long, straight legs” – and her quest for “the physical pleasures of love.”<sup>86</sup> With women becoming sexually and vocationally liberated “from age-old traditions and conventions,” conservatives cried out for something to be done and scrambled to find a reason to eliminate these “moral deviants” that had dared challenge their traditional norms.<sup>87</sup> This outcry was strongest in the years following the earthquake, which conveniently was blamed on the “misguided” youth, materialism, and hedonism. In reality, “woman’s new place in public as worker, intellectual, and political activist threatened the patriarchal family and its ideological support, the deferring woman who was presented in state ideology as the ‘Good Wife and Wise Mother’” – to conservatives and fundamentalists, the Modern Girl “was a [major] threat.”<sup>88</sup> After the earthquake, Fukasaku Yasubumi and the other commentators began suggesting that it was the government’s job to restore moral harmony to society when rebuilding Tokyo.<sup>89</sup> Taken as a warning sign, the earthquake sparked a discourse on how Japan was to rebuild. Kido Takayoshi insisted that it rested on the people of society alone:

...stability of our country will never be carried out if we have only a small number of able people; we have to have universal adherence to the moral principles of loyalty, justice, humanity, and decorum. Unless we establish an unshakable national foundation, we will not be able to elevate our country’s prestige in a thousand years. The creation of such public morals and the establishment of such a national foundation depend entirely on people.<sup>90</sup>

But many saw moral reform as job of both the government and society, for “God had begun a thorough ‘cleanup’ [of] the nation” – a “much-needed ‘purification’ of Tokyo.”<sup>91</sup> From these discourses, it can be seen that the idea, practice, and tradition of “purification” had transformed and influenced the nationalists’ desire for a “cleansing of the nation” of the evil non-traditional (non-Shinto), Western cultural influences. The radical traditionalists heavily urged for a unification of the “national faith,” and “universal adherence” by all of society to proper and traditional (exclusively Shinto) morals. The ritual of purification had gone from washing the body, to cleansing the mind, to cleansing the religious and ethnic history and doctrine, to finally the purification of the nation. As the nationalists looked to traditional Shinto to justify their ethnic superiority with claims of divinity, they also saw an opportunity to purge society of the elements they saw as morally evil. They insisted that “if the attitudes and motives of the people [...] are impure and sordid and scattered in many directions, the unification of the national faith is hardly to be expected.”<sup>92</sup> All these efforts to unify the national faith and restore moral purity ultimately failed in the long term, for these Shinto ultranationalists were the products of their nation’s effort to promote nationalism through Shinto revival. As Walter Skya stated, they were “victims of their

own delusions of grandeur and power.”<sup>93</sup> There had never been a movement to solidify it into a universal religion that could “break out of the narrow confines of ethnicity within which it had been imprisoned.”<sup>94</sup>

## Conclusion

From the evidence presented, it can clearly be seen that the Meiji era government used the doctrines of Shintoism, especially within their own State Shinto, to increase nationalism, unify the nation, and justify imperial rule. Shintoism had already begun taking on a radical exclusionist and ethnocentric perspective since the turn of the nineteenth century. The “religious nationalism” within Shinto grew to include those of anti-Buddhists, anti-Confucians, and anti-Westerners; they were essentially traditional fundamentalists. Needing ways to unify Japan, the government turned to Shintoism and let the religious values of emperor-worship, hierarchy structure, and purification exert their influences within different government branches. Just like the standardization of the Japanese language, the government looked to standardize the faith. In this way, Shintoism was influenced by the government, as it allowed the revival of religious fundamentalism, until the Japanese nation, ethnicity, and government were equated with the Japanese religious heritage and agenda. The government needed to make the entire nation the *uji* so as to create a shared identity – they needed to make the entire nation share a single *kami*; the *kami* being the emperor, or perhaps even the nation and religion itself. The Shinto concept of purification turned into a need for the dominance and separation of Shinto over other faiths, and evolved during the Meiji period into the ultranationalist desire for solidifying the nation – and the Japanese ethnicity – as a separate nation, dominant over all the others by claims of divine origin. This need for a purification of the culture led to the establishment of specialized culture police (or moral police), as well as the military’s eventual expansion of the empire across the Pacific Ocean. As disaster struck Japan, the morals of society were called into question, as exclusionist Shintoism and ultra national traditionalism entered the debate in the voices of the harshest critics. With the overthrow of the Tokugawa, Shintoism, its beliefs and practices, evolved due to the rise of the ethnocentric ultranationalists both within and outside of the religion itself. And the government was also forever changed as it shifted to make Shinto a dominant element of the government and society of the “unified” nation. It would be these core Japanese views and principles held by society – having originated from the self-aggrandized ultranationalists and Shintoists – that would fuel the Japanese Empire’s stubborn refusal to surrender during the Second World War.

Their desire to dominate the world and see Japan rise to greatness would be one of many factors that would lead to their reckless and impetuous attack on Pearl Harbour, which would ultimately lead to their downfall.

**Nathan Painter**

**Class of 2016**

### Endnotes

1. Shinichi Nagai. *Gods of Kumano: Shinto and the Occult, 1st ed.* (Bunkyo, TY:Kodansha International , 1968). Japanese names are formatted in the traditional order of last name first except for sources originally published in English.
2. Andrew Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan: From Tokugawa Times to the Present, 3rd ed.* (New York;Oxford University Press, 2014), 4.
3. Mikiso Hane, *Premodern Japan: A Historical Survey*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), 1.
4. *Ibid.*, 4.
5. *Ibid.*, 4.
6. *Ibid.*, 1, 2.
7. Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan*, 4.
8. The “Great Unifier” were: Oda Nobunaga, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, and Tokugawa Ieyasu. During this period the capital city was named Edo – renamed Tokyo after the Meiji restoration of 1868.
9. *Ibid.*, 21.
10. *Ibid.*, 30.
11. *Ibid.*
12. Toshio Kuroda, “Shinto in the History of Japanese Religion,” *Journal of Japanese Studies* 7, no.1, (Winter 1981):, 4.
13. Joseph M. Kitagawa, “Some Remarks on Shinto,” *History of Religions* 27, no.3 (February 1988):, 227.
14. *Ibid.*, 228.
15. J. W. T. Mason, *The Meaning of Shinto: The Primaeval Foundation of Creative Spirit in Modern Japan* (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1935), 100.
16. Genchi Kato, *What Is Shinto?* (Tokyo: Maruzen Company, 1935), 11.
17. *Ibid.*, 12.
18. *Ibid.* This might confuse some to think Shintoism not a religion at all, since it worships humans and gods are not divine, merely “superior” But as Kato points out, a man is worshiped because of his divine nature. *Ibid.*,13.
19. *Ibid.*
20. *Ibid.*
21. Kato, *What Is Shinto?*, 19, Kato’s division of Shinto’s history focused mainly on the changes Shintoism underwent in comparison to other religions. That is to say the division was not based off of events or changes specific to Shintoism.
22. *Ibid.*
23. *Ibid.*
24. *Ibid.*, 21-2; Their names were: Amaterasu-Omikami, Tsuki-yomi-no-Mikoto, and Susano-no-o-no-Mikoto (the brother of the Sun Goddess), respectively.
25. *Ibid.*, 24, 25.
26. *Ibid.*, 26, 28.
27. *Ibid.*,28; The grandson’s name was Ninigi-no-Mikoto.
28. Shane Sletten, “Shinto Practices and Rituals,” Yasukuni Shrine, Last modified 2010; Kato, *What Is Shinto?*, 22.
29. Sletten, “Shinto Practices and Rituals;” Kato, *What Is Shinto?*, 42; A form of misogi harai is temizu, which is the washing and purification of the body when entering a Shinto shrine; it is to show respect to the ‘kami.’ (Sletten, “Shinto Practices and Rituals.”)
30. Mason, *The Meaning of Shinto*, 89, 92; “Shinto sees death as pollution and regards life as the

realm where divine spirit seeks to purify itself by rightful self-development." (Mason, *The Meaning of Shinto*, 93.)

31. Kato, *What Is Shinto?*, 31.

32. *Ibid.*, 43.

33. However, the concept of ethical purity quickly found its way to being imposed upon women, as they were beaten for cheating, as well as forced and shamed into identifying the frequency of their "unchastity" by wearing "saucepans" on their heads. (*Ibid.*, 45, 49-50.)

34. Kitagawa, "Some Remarks on Shinto," 231-2, 233.

35. *Ibid.*, 232.

36. *Ibid.*, "Japan [discerned] in Buddhism and Confucianism fundamental meanings that had become atrophied on the continent because of over-sophistication." (Mason, *The Meaning of Shinto*, 88.)

37. Ichiro Hori, *Folk Religion in Japan*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 9-10.

38. Kitagawa, "Some Remarks on Shinto," 235.

39. Kato, *What Is Shinto?*, 53.

40. Genchi Kato, *A Study of Shinto: The Religion of the Japanese Nation*, 2nd ed. (Tokyo, Japan, 1926; Reprint, Curzon Press, 1971), 85.

41. Kitagawa, "Some Remarks on Shinto," 238-9.

42. Joseph M. Kitagawa, "Introduction to 'The Shinto World of the 1880s,'" *History of Religions* 27, no.3(February 1988): 322.

43. Kitagawa, "Some Remarks on Shinto," 240.

44. *Ibid.*, 240.

45. "State Shinto," in *Sources of Japanese Tradition Volume Two: 1600 to 2000*, 2nd ed., Wm. Theodore de Bary, Carol Gluck, and Arthur E. Tiedemann, eds.(New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 791; Helen Hardacre, "The Shinto Priesthood in Early Meiji Japan: Preliminary Inquiries," *History of Religions* 27, no.3 (February 1988): 296. National Learning scholars held office predominantly during the "Great Promulgation Campaign."

46. Kitagawa, "Some Remarks on Shinto," 240, 241.

47. "State Shinto".

48. *Ibid.*

49. Kitagawa, "Some Remarks on Shinto," 241.

50. *Ibid.*, 240, 241.

51. *Ibid.*,241.

52. Sandra Wilson, "Rethinking Nation and Nationalism in Japan," in *Nation and Nationalism in Japan*, ed. Sandra Wilson, (New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002), 1-2.

53. *Ibid.*, 2-4.

54. Alan S. Christy, "The Making of Imperial Subjects in Okinawa," *positions: east asia cultures critique* 1, no. 3 (Winter 1993): 610.

55. Kitagawa, "Introduction to 'The Shinto World of the 1880s,'" 324.

56. Tokutomi Soho, "Worship of the Imperial House", in *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, de Bary et. al eds. 806.

57. Hirata was largely associated with the National Learning ideals.

58. Kitagawa, "Introduction to 'The Shinto World of the 1880s,'" 322.

59. Hirata Atsutane, *Hirata Atsutane Zenshu* Vol. 1 (Tokyo: Itchido Shoten, 1911-18), 22, cited in Wilburn Hansen, "The Medium is the Message: Hirata Atsutane's Ethnography of the World Beyond," *History of Religions* 45, no. 4 (May 2006): 339-40.

60. Hirata Atsutane, "the Land of the Gods," in *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, de Bary et al., eds., 512.

61. Hirata spoke of the reverence that “all other” countries had of Japan, as it was “the Land of the Kami.” This claim to divinity further emphasized the Japanese sense of superiority. When compared to other countries, Japan was superior to them all in every way.
62. Walter A. Skya, *Japan's Holy War* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 218.
63. *Ibid.*, 22.
64. *Ibid.*, 19, 22.
65. *Ibid.*, 218-9.
66. *Ibid.*, 219.
67. *Ibid.*
68. *Ibid.*, 223.
69. *Ibid.*, 219-220.
70. Kitagawa, “Some Remarks on Shinto,” 228.
71. Kitagawa, “Some Remarks on Shinto,” 239; Motoori Norinaga, “First Steps into the Mountain,” in *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, 500.
72. Motoori, “First Steps into the Mountain,” in *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, 500.
73. Kitagawa, “Some Remarks on Shinto,” 240.
74. *Ibid.*, 240-1.
75. Kitagawa, “Introduction to ‘The Shinto World of the 1880s,’” 325.
76. Aizawa Seishisai, “The National Substance,” in *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, de Bary et al., eds., 625.
77. He no doubt associated the Confucian hierarchy with Shintoism as well, as with the worship of the superior. Like the Neo-Confucians in China that rejected Taoist and Buddhist influence, he likely held a similar opinion.
78. Aizawa Seishisai, “The Source of Western Unity and Strength,” in *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, de Bary et al., eds., 627.
79. Fukuzawa Yukichi, “Creating State Shinto,” in *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, de Bary et al., eds., 791.
80. J. Charles Schencking, “The Great Kanto Earthquake and the Culture of Catastrophe and Reconstruction in 1920s Japan,” *The Journal of Japanese Studies* 34, no. 2 (Summer 2008), 296.
81. *Ibid.*, 303
82. *Ibid.*, 305
83. *Ibid.*, 305, 306.
84. Miriam Silverberg, “The Modern Girl as Militant,” in *Recreating Japanese Women: 1600-1945*, ed. Gail Lee Bernstein, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 239.
85. *Ibid.*, 242.
86. *Ibid.*, 241.
87. *Ibid.*, 263.
88. Schencking, “The Great Kanto Earthquake,” 304.
89. Kido Takayoshi, “Kido Takayoshi to Sugiyama Takatoshi, January 26, 1872,” in *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, de Bary et al., eds., 678.
90. Schencking, “The Great Kanto Earthquake,” 305, 306.
91. “A Policy for the Unification of the National Faith,” in *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, ed. de Bary et al., 796.
92. Skya, *Japan's Holy War*, 324.
93. *Ibid.*



**Brittnye Smith**

## **Jefferson and the Women Who Loved Him**

While we identify Thomas Jefferson as a founding father, the author of the declaration of independence, a president, and even a slave owner, who else was he? Was he a good father, a friend, maybe even a lover? One thing he certainly was is private. This paper is an attempt to puncture that privacy, to understand Jefferson on a deeper level. Whether in his unusual relationship with daughter Martha Jefferson Randolph, or his adoration of Abigail Adams, his need for Sally Hemings, or his lust for Maria Cosway, Jefferson was influenced by the women in his life. Each of these women perhaps unbeknownst to them fulfilled role that in his mind which women could only fill. This article demonstrates that Thomas Jefferson envisioned what a perfect woman should be and would not allow himself to see them differently. He valued domestic bliss and believed that women had 'god given roles.' He saw his women through these lenses either as a lady or a slut. In his view, the former was a wife and mother, whose appearance was a reflection of her husband, while the latter brought disgrace on herself and those connected to her through her appearance and disposition. As seen in a letter to his daughter Martha, Thomas Jefferson judged women not by their minds, but by their style of dress,

A lady who has been seen as a sloven or slut in the morning will never efface the impression she has made, with all dress and pageantry she can afterwards involve herself in...I hope therefore, the moment you rise from bed, your first work will be to dress yourself in such style as that you may be seen by any gentleman without his being able to discover a pin amiss.<sup>1</sup>

This warning to his daughter reveals Thomas Jefferson's belief that women were not much more than ornaments.

On the search for a wife the third president looked for a woman of intelligence to be able to match his own mind. But this woman had to also possess the talent of a hostess, homemaker, and companion. With luck Jefferson met Martha Wayles Skelton, whom he married January 1, 1772. Martha the daughter of plantation owner, John Wayles and widow of, Bathurst Skelton at the young age of 19 was not only very attractive, but wealthy. This made her a target for the Virginia bachelor's including Thomas Jefferson, who found himself enamored by her. Although little evidence remains of their relationship, due to Jefferson's heartbreak after Martha's death, it is clear that this ten-year marriage was one of love and respect as Martha embodied Jefferson's vision of a lady. Martha's

granddaughter, Ellen Wayles Randolph Coolidge writes about the agreeableness of Mrs. Jefferson as follows:

She was a very attractive person and my grandfather was tenderly attached to her. She commanded his respect by her good sense and domestic virtues, and his admiration and love by her wit, her vivacity, and her agreeable person and manners. She was not only an excellent housekeeper and notable mistress of a family, but a graceful, ladylike and accomplished woman, with considerable powers of conversation, some skill in music, all the habits of good society, and the art of welcoming her husband's friends to perfection. She was greatly liked by them all. She made my grandfather's home comfortable, cheerful, pleasant, just what a good man's home should be.<sup>2</sup>

This picture Ellen paints of Martha makes her perfect for Jefferson's dreams of domestic tranquility including her duty to provide Jefferson with six children during their short marriage; leaving her frail and unhealthy. Eventually the stress of motherhood took its toll on Mrs. Jefferson, as she died just a month after the birth of her last child on September 6, 1782. A shocked and bereaved Jefferson wrote to Marquis de Chastellux: "A single event wiped away all my plans and left me a blank which I had not the spirits to fill up."<sup>3</sup> A woman so perfect could never be replaced in Jefferson's life, and he appeared to have mourned her for a long time. Furthermore, the image of Martha influenced Thomas' relationships with other women. Finding no single woman who could so perfectly replace her, he apparently tried to find little pieces of her in four very different women who together could at least fill his wife's shoes. Although the President never married again I intend to prove through historical documents and the work of other historians that Thomas Jefferson simply collected these four women and more in order to fulfill the longing that his late wife left behind. While Martha was of course his lover, friend, and greatest confidant, her position in Jefferson's mind was too.

During their time together the Jefferson's welcomed six children, unfortunately only two survived to adulthood. The eldest daughters Martha, and Mary who died at just twenty-five, were all that Jefferson had left of his deceased wife. Because of Martha's age she became a surrogate wife to Jefferson in the manner of hostess and lady of the home. Martha commanded much of her father's attention along with caring for her husband, Thomas Mann Randolph and their eleven children. From the length and size of letters between Jefferson and the Randolph family it is clear to see that their relationship was one of love, closeness and clearly, of dependence. Born September 27, 1772 Martha Jefferson also called Patsy was the eldest child of Jefferson and Martha. The young Patsy faced a hard beginning to life, as her mother could not produce enough milk to sustain the child, leaving her sickly and small. Patsy's childhood also saw the revolutionary war come and go from her castle on the mountain. With

the affectionate and family oriented life of an isolated Monticello, Martha was protected from the warfare, but faced the difficulty of multiple family deaths and her mother's constant illness. This isolation of her childhood home left the first daughter with ample time to study her father's library and practice her music as Jefferson wished. Although he did not believe in the in-depth education of women, Thomas Jefferson felt a lady should be educated in language, music, and dance, as this will one day please her husband. In a letter to an eleven-year-old Patsy, Jefferson gave instruction on how her time should be spent,

With respect to distribution of your time the following is what I should approve. From 8 to 10 o'clock practise music. From 10 to 1 dance one day and draw another. From 1 to 2 draw on the day you dance, and write a letter the next day. From 3 to 4 read French. From 4 to 5 exercise yourself in music. From 5 till bedtime read English, write etc.<sup>4</sup>

According to Cynthia Kierner, while Thomas Jefferson encouraged his daughter's studies he in no way saw her as his equal in an intellectual sense. Indeed, he did not consider these subjects (music, arts, etc.) as intellectual fields because as Kierner states, "Born into a seemingly genteel and orderly world that prized feminine virtue, masculine independence, and social hierarchy,"<sup>5</sup> his perspective of social hierarchy placed men above women. This hierarchy played out in the Jefferson home by taking Thomas Jefferson away much of the time on business, leaving Mrs. Jefferson alone, most of the time pregnant, ill, in charge of a massive plantation, and quite surely overwhelmed. But nevertheless she managed to keep her home in shape with the only regret being that she did not have enough time to pass these skills along to her daughter. Although Patsy was taught to be an excellent hostess, which she utilized in later years, Mrs. Jefferson neglected grooming her daughter as a housewife. With the first Martha Jefferson being, "a very attractive person," as described by her eldest daughter, she herself hosted her husband's important guest with great ease.<sup>6</sup> This niche for hosting was passed on to Patsy who like her mother was a talented musician, and as a daughter of a very important international figure she was granted the luxury of education and travel making her an acceptable companion. These advantages also gave Patsy a glimpse into politics leading her to not only campaign for her father, but also her future husband. Not limiting herself to the home and care of children, during his presidency Martha became her father's first lady - not only governing his public image, but also taking control of his social life. This close and some may say needy relationship between Patsy and her father may have caused the breakdown of her own marriage.<sup>7</sup> As Patsy so much like her mother took on the emotionally supportive role in her father's life as well as hostess, he often asked too much of her and required perfection from her to avoid his disappointment. He writes to her, "I shall become very much mortified and disappointed if you become inattentive to my wishes and particularly to the directions of that which I meant

for your principal guide.”<sup>8</sup> Kierner suggests that Jefferson not only expected too much of his daughter, but also was discouraging in her pursuit of civic duties as many women of the time wished to be apart of. Although Jefferson in his letters to Patsy often spoke about his own ventures, he in no way expected or desired his daughters or any other woman to involve themselves within the political arena. As women and slaves were denied the vote, Jefferson also felt no woman so be allowed political office, “The appointment of a woman to office is an innovation for which the public is not prepared, nor I.”<sup>9</sup> Jefferson could only place women into two categories and for his daughter to fit into the mold of a ‘lady’ she must only play a supportive role to his world, leaving little space for her own agendas or even those of her husband.

In the years during her marriage to Thomas Mann Randolph, her father was extremely loving to the couple and their children, but he was also quite needful of their attention. Writing to Martha shortly after her wedding he states, “I have now been seven weeks from you my dear and have never heard one title from you. I write regularly once a week to Mr. Randolph, yourself, or Polly, in hopes it may induce a letter from one of you every week also.”<sup>10</sup> The lonely Jefferson required Martha’s attention and as soon as he acquired the presidency he required a hostess once again. During the years of 1802-03 and 1805-06 Martha performed the duties of ‘first lady’ leaving behind her own life as a mother and wife. During her husband’s time as governor of Virginia the marriage between the two had begun to dissolve leading Patsy and her children to relocate to Monticello, where her father enjoyed retirement. Martha would stay with her father until his death, becoming not just his hostess and companion, but also his caretaker until the end. In his last letter to his daughter, Jefferson expressed his love and appreciation for her:

Life’s visions are vanished, it’s dreams are no more. Dear friends of my bosom,  
why bathed in tears? I go to my fathers; I welcome the shore, which crowns all  
my hopes, or which buries my cares. Then farewell, my dear, my lov’d daughter,  
Adeui! The last page of life is in parting from you! Two Seraphs await me,  
long shrouded in death: I will bear them your love on my last parting breath.<sup>11</sup>

His death left her estranged from her husband, and broke from his lavish spending Martha Jefferson was with her father right where she had always been; by his side. Martha would go on to live out her days in the homes of her children and eventually again with her husband before she passed away just eleven years after her father, October 10, 1836.

While Patsy in her father’s eyes was a beautiful reflection of her mother and he greatly adored her, he seemed to lack a certain respect for his daughter. Thomas Jefferson made it clear that a woman’s mind is not built for politics, but for housework and childrearing, suggesting that women, “too wise to wrinkle

their foreheads with politics.”<sup>12</sup> However Jefferson may have had to eat his own words upon meeting Mrs. Abigail Adams in 1784. As they became friends, the two often debated a multitude of topics and leaned on one another for support during their time in Europe. The wife of John Adams, who was once a close friend to Jefferson and also a opponent, Abigail found herself heavily involved not just politics, but also in the founding of this country as she often counseled her husband. Though the Adams had been separated from one another for several years due to John Adams’ important work, Mrs. Adams took a break from her children and the running of her home to join her husband in Paris. Before her departure she was introduced to Thomas Jefferson who would also be traveling to join John Adams in Europe. After their initial meeting Jefferson wrote to Adams in regards to his wife, “I have hastened myself on my journey hither in hopes of having the pleasure of attending Mrs. Adams to Paris and of lessening some of the difficulties to which she may be exposed.”<sup>13</sup> In Mrs. Adams, Jefferson saw perfection as not only was she an excellent wife and mother, but she also managed to be an exceptional friend who challenged Jefferson’s opinions on the ability of women to participate within a political arena. While Abigail displayed the epitome of domestic ability she was also no doe, and frequently made this known to Jefferson, forcing him not only to admire and love her but also develop contempt for her. She was occasionally too vocal for his taste. However, before their relationship became strained the three Americans found themselves at home with one another during their time overseas as Abigail describes Jefferson as, “one of the choice ones of the earth.”<sup>14</sup>

Unfortunately for the blossoming friendship, John Adams was sent to England just a year later and his wife accompanied him. Abigail and Thomas continued to correspond through letter while he remained in Paris. They exchanged thoughts about political and even domestic issues, which Jefferson seemed to have entertained despite his preconceptions regarding women in politics. His openness with Abigail was projected throughout their letters to one another with Jefferson admitting, “[W]hen writing to you, I fancy myself at Auteuil, and chatter on till the last page of my paper awakes me from my reverie.”<sup>15</sup> This also reflects the closeness that Abigail shared with the late Mrs. Jefferson. Mrs Adams reminded him of the strength and commitment that he so valued in his own wife, both being young wives to revolutionary men forced to handle the responsibility of domestic life often times for years on their own. Both women displayed great confidence in themselves and although respectful of their husbands and their role as wife and mother. These women were very capable of profound thought and some may say they display the perfect match of intelligence to the brilliant men they married.

Just as Jefferson with his own wife shared a love for music he found that same passion in Abigail, who while in Paris acquired songbirds and frequently discussed them with her friend. Once she confessed to Jefferson that these songs “... hourly repay me with their melodious notes.”<sup>16</sup> The two also found

themselves bonding over their children who of similar age found pleasure in visiting with one another. This may have also contributed to Jefferson's respect for Abigail, as she was a motherly influence to his own young daughters Martha and Mary during their time in Europe. Even taking on the care of Mary and Sally Hemings upon their arrival in England before traveling to Paris Mrs. Adams wrote of Mary, "she was the favorite of everyone in the house."<sup>17</sup> In 1785 upon the news of their departure Abigail sadly wrote, "I shall regret[sic] that, and the loss of Mr. Jefferson's society."<sup>18</sup> Suggesting she will miss Mr. Jefferson's company; just ten days after parting from her dear friend Abigail would pen their first letter hoping for a response almost as if a young girl developing a crush, "I have to apologize for thus freely scribbling to you." She adds: "I will not deny that there may be a little vanity in the hope of being honourd[sic] with a line from you."<sup>19</sup> While she and her husband remained in England for three more years and Jefferson in Paris, the two would become even more friendly, exchanging some forty letters attempting to be helpful to one another as seen in a letter from Abigail,

I received by Col. Franks your obliging favour and am very sorry to find your wrist still continues lame; I have known very Salutory effects produced by the use of British oil upon a Spraind[sic] joint. I have Sent a Servant to See if I can procure Some. you may rest assured that if it does no good: it will not do any injury.<sup>20</sup>

The two also shared news from home, Europe's gossip, and shopping of expensive goods that were too far from reach, such as the British oil mentioned above. Jefferson depended on this friendship in his political decision-making, but she also provided him with a jovial pass time to break the monotony of his day-to-day duties. However this friendship that had endured many years and the divide of continents was soon brought to a halt. While John Adams and Thomas Jefferson got back to work in Washington the two began to distance themselves through their political views. Although in 1796 Abigail found hope when Jefferson was chosen as John Adams' vice president, writing to her sister, "mr. [sic] Jefferson I have no doubt will support the president."<sup>21</sup> Unfortunately that support ran out in 1800 when Jefferson ran for and won the presidency of the United States; beating Adams in the election left the friends unable to bare one another, but it is clear that the affection between these two old friends was never lost. This is revealed by Abigail's distant reaction to the tragic death of Jefferson's younger daughter Mary in 1804.

Had you been no other than the private inhabitant of Monticello, I should e'er this time have address you, with that sympathy, which a recent event has awakened in my Bosom. But reasons of various kinds withheld my pen,

until the powerful feelings of my heart, have burst through the restraint, and called upon me to shed the tear of sorrow over the departed remains, of your beloved and deserving daughter, an event which I most sincerely mourn.<sup>22</sup>

While the writing was cold compared to the joyful responses previously shared, it is obvious that the sentiment of friendship and mutual respect never stopped respecting between them. Jefferson, unable to simply let bygones be bygones responded with criticism of Abigail's husband as follows: "one act of Mr. Adams' life, and one and only you repeat, ever gave me a moment's personal displeasure, I did think his last appointments to office personally unkind, they were from among my most ardent political enemies." Unlike their previous banter Jefferson was more than unwilling to accept the strong and unapologetic opinions of women who as he said before were, "too wise to wrinkle their foreheads with politics."<sup>23</sup>

This pattern of exchange, friendly, caring, but problematic continued for nine years ending when a letter from John Adams was included in a note from Abigail reopening the lines of communication between Thomas and her husband:

A kind note at the foot of mr [sic]Adams's letter of July 15 reminds me of the duty of saluting you with friendship and respect; a duty long suspended by the unremitting labors of public engagement, and which ought to have been sooner revived, since I am become proprietor of my own time.<sup>24</sup>

The reconnection between the two men was heartwarming, revealed in warm notes shared between them, which seemed to have brought them comfort. Jefferson wrote to Abigail in 1817, "You and I, dear Madam, have already had more than an ordinary portion of life, and more, too, of health than the general measure."<sup>25</sup>

Strangely enough Abigail was not the only friend Thomas Jefferson met in Paris, during his time there he also created a genuine bond with Maria Hadfield Cosway. Mrs. Cosway, an artist, musician, and the topic of conversation between Jefferson's head and heart, swept Thomas off his feet. It is unclear whether Jefferson, the great author ever wrote any love letters to his one and only wife Martha, even though she was the love of his life, and according to historian James Parton, an early biographer of Jefferson, "the mightiest capacity which this man possessed was the capacity to love."<sup>26</sup> Virginia Scharff, author of *The Women Jefferson Loved*, observes that, "his passion for the woman who would become his only wife was fervent, lifelong, and consequential."<sup>27</sup> In contrast, Jefferson wrote prodigiously to Cosway, even though she was a married woman. Jefferson may have felt some passion for her but because she was married, he did not pursue the idea.

Jefferson met Cosway while still in her twenties when she was described as, “charming, beautiful, intelligent, artistic, and musical.”<sup>28</sup> She was born in 1760, and being raised in the city that birthed the Renaissance, Maria was an artist at heart and an extremely talented musician. She had been invited by the grand duke of Tuscany at the young age of ten to play the harpsichord in concert. The same instrument kept at Monticello and played later by Martha Wayles Jefferson as a visiting Hessian officer attested to in 1780. “You will find in his house an elegant harpsichord pianoforte and some violins. The latter he performs well upon himself, the former his lady touches very skillfully and who, is in all respects a very agreeable sensible and accomplished lady.”<sup>29</sup> This musical talent is something Jefferson may have been drawn to as he shared that passion with his wife. Although Cosway, who was already a wife herself to artist Richard Cosway, she was attracted to the tall handsome American and their time together was short but emotional intense. Jefferson while trying to impress Cosway incapacitated his wrists for several weeks and was in need of Abigail Adams’s British oil remedy. In the time it took Jefferson to recover from his injury Maria Cosway was departed back to London. Jefferson wrote to Cosway: “I have passed the night in so much pain that I have not closed my eyes. It is with infinite regret therefore that I must relinquish your charming company.”<sup>30</sup> After many attempts to visit Jefferson during his time of need, Mrs. Cosway was quickly whisked away by her impatient husband leaving Jefferson to watch the wheels of her carriage roll away. His letter to her revealed his deep disappointment at not having spent more time with her.

Having performed the last sad office of handing you into your carriage in the Pavillon de St. Denis, and seen the wheels get actually into motion, I turned on my heel and walked, more dead than alive, to the opposite door, where my own was awaiting me.<sup>31</sup>

A heartbroken Jefferson’s confusion about his feelings for this captivating but unavailable woman led to one of Jefferson’s best literary works: *The Head and Heart Argument*, which Jefferson rewrote multiple times as he could only use his left hand. In the opening dialogue he writes:

Head. Well friend, you seem to be in a pretty trim. Heart. I am indeed the most wretched of all earthly beings, overwhelmed with grief, every fibre of my frame distended beyond it’s natural powers to bear, I would willingly meet whatever catastrophe should leave me no more to feel or to fear.<sup>32</sup>

Possibly the Parisian air filling his head with little heart, Thomas Jefferson found himself in love; an attraction to a woman he had not felt since his beloved Martha. Returning home to Virginia in 1787, Jefferson did not allow himself to feel such passion for Cosway again as their relationship turned from intimate to friendly. Jefferson wrote:

I have to acknowledge [sic] the receipt of your favor of July 20, 1801 from London, and Feb. 25. 1802 from Paris. That I am so late in answering them arises from my incessant occupations which deprive me of the happiness of satisfying the affections of my heart by expressions of them on paper to my friends.<sup>33</sup>

While Jefferson shared a passion and lust for Cosway she never shared his bed, either because hers was already taken, or because his was. His wife Martha not only left him daughters, her wealth, and some heartache, she also left behind her slaves. Slaves that were part of her father, John Wayles' estate and part of her family through her father's relationship with Betty Hemings. After John Wayles passed away, the Hemings, a mulatto slave family and Martha's half siblings, moved in to Monticello. One sister in particular resembled Martha greatly. Sarah Hemings who came into Jefferson's life in 1776 while Martha was still alive and well. Acting as a companion and maid to Jefferson's daughters, Sarah, who was nicknamed Sally, she was also with the Jeffersons during his time in Paris. This is most likely where their relationship began, as Jefferson took special care of Sally by making sure she was inoculated against smallpox, dressing her in fine clothes, and making sure she lived in comfortable quarters close to his daughters. Although Jefferson does not write directly about Sally in any letters or notes that have been found today, historians believe he took his wife's slave sister as his lover. Keeping her close by only charging her with housework and even the work of being his chambermaid, Jefferson found himself the father of six mulatto children. While it is unclear whether Jefferson truly loved Hemings or not, he and the remainder of the Jefferson family would forever be tied to the Hemings not just through blood, but also scandal. Although the rumors were rampant it was not until 1802 that James Callender ousted Jefferson's secret family, but it was not until 1873 that Madison Hemings, one of Jefferson and Hemings sons came clean about his parents' relationship.

As Sally was not married, Jefferson could have no reason to hold himself back from his desire. Being a man who valued the tranquility of a domestic life it is easy to see the benefits of a concubine to Jefferson. While away from Monticello, Jefferson could be sure his home was tended to just like his wife, Martha would have done. Upon returning to his home on the mountain the president could expect to be greeted with the smiling faces of healthy young children, particularly as his two legitimate daughters were becoming women. Also the comfort of a companion to spend evenings with once all of the visitors had left must have been reason enough for Jefferson to have need for Sally. Although he could never make her his official wife due to her mulatto status, I believe Sally filled that role not only in his heart, but also in his home.

This goes to show that while Jefferson was a president, philosopher, politician, writer, etc., he was also a father, a lover, and a friend. His views on women may have skewed his relationships, but in all actuality he was just seeking one relationship: The one that was taken from him, the one with Martha his

only wife. As she was the perfect woman and Jefferson saw no one who could singly fill her role among the many women he sought to reenact her memory with. Whether it be his daughter who acted as his hostess, or Abigail who acted as a friend, Maria Cosway who rekindled the love and passion Jefferson had not felt in years or Sally Hemings who provided him the domestic gift of a new family. A complicated man, it is easy to see how in Jefferson's mind he could put these women into a category as a way to understand the loss of his wife, the changing roles of women, and his own place in the world.

**Brittnye Smith**

**Class of 2016**

### Endnotes

Editor's note: Thomas Jefferson's letters can be read at: <https://www.loc.gov/collections/thomas-jefferson-papers/about-this-collection/>

1. Thomas Jefferson, Letters, 22.
2. Ellen Randolph Coolidge, Letterbook.
3. Thomas Jefferson, Travels.
4. Thomas Jefferson, Letters, 19.
5. Cynthia Kierner, Daughter of Monticello, 32.
6. *Ibid.*, 39.
7. Cynthia Kierner, Daughter of Monticello, 6.
8. Thomas Jefferson, Letters, 22.
9. Thomas Jefferson, The Wolf by the Ears, 184.
10. Thomas Jefferson, Letters, 54.
11. Thomas Jefferson, Circle of Friends, 275-276.
12. Thomas Jefferson, Daughter of Monticello, 111.
13. Thomas Jefferson to John Adams, June 19, 1784.
14. Abigail Adams to Mary Smith Cranch, May 8, 1785, The Adams Papers.
15. Thomas Jefferson to Abigail Adams, September 25, 1785, 16. Abigail Adams to Thomas Jefferson, June 6, 1785.
17. Abigail Adams to Thomas Jefferson, July 10, 1787, The Papers of Thomas Jefferson.
18. Abigail Adams to Cotton Tuft, April 26, 1785, The Adams Papers.
19. Abigail Adams to Thomas Jefferson, June 6, 1785, The Papers of Thomas Jefferson.
20. Abigail Adams to Thomas Jefferson, January 29, 1787, Circle of Friends, 68.
21. Abigail Adams to Elizabeth Smith Shaw Peabody, February 10, 1797, Founders Online.
22. Abigail Adams to Thomas Jefferson, May 10, 1804, Circle of Friends, 200.
23. Thomas Jefferson to Abigail Adams, June 13, 1804, Circle of Friends, 201.
24. Thomas Jefferson to Abigail Adams, August 22, 1813, Circle of Friends, 241.
25. Thomas Jefferson to Abigail Adams, January 11, 1817, Ford.
26. Virginia Scharff, The Women Jefferson Loved, 79.
27. *Ibid.*, 79.
28. Jon Kukla, Mr. Jefferson's Women, 86.
29. Monticello.org, Martha Wayles Skelton Jefferson.
30. Thomas Jefferson to Maria Cosway, October 5, 1786, Circle of Friends, 54.
31. *Ibid.*, October 12, 1786, 55.
32. Thomas Jefferson to Maria Cosway, October 12, 1786, Circle of Friends, 55.
33. *Ibid.*, January 31, 1803, 191.



Paris Thalheimer

## The Education of Samuel Clemens

Standing on an outside stairway of the Clemens home, young Samuel Clemens bombarded his younger brother, Henry, with dirt clods. To avoid punishment from their mother, Samuel hopped over a fence and did not come back for at least an hour or two. Upon his return, Henry sat ready to ambush his older brother. As Samuel came into view, Henry got his revenge by landing a stone on the side of Samuel's head. With a large lump on the side of his head, Samuel went to their mother for sympathy. Coolly, Mrs. Clemens replied that that some lumps might do him some good.<sup>1</sup> Reading this exchange between mother and son, one wonders how this willful and mischievous child grew into the man who would become the celebrated writer and humorist, Mark Twain. To understand this, we must look at the events and people in his life which shaped him.

Of all Samuel Clemens' relationships, it was the women in his life who made the greatest impact in forming him into not only the persona known as Mark Twain, but a loving husband and father. Through his mother, Jane Clemens, whom he caused all manner of trouble with his willful behavior, he would learn wit, humor and cynicism. As a young adventuring man, he would learn the importance of friendship and personal change from his close friend and mentor Mrs. Mary Fairbanks. In order to win the love of Olivia Langdon, Samuel Clemens would work to refine and control his untempered nature. Throughout their marriage, Samuel Clemens would rely on his wife's wisdom and kind heart. From his children, namely Susy, his eldest daughter and protégé, he would learn to be a loving father and mentor. Samuel Clemens would have many friends in his lifetime, but it was his relationships with these women which he cherished the most. These women were his confidantes, teachers and wise counselors.

Some might argue that Samuel Clemens did not live up to his greatest potential as a humorist due to the requirements of respectability placed on him by his mother, and later in life his wife.<sup>2</sup> According to DeLancey Ferguson, Van Wyck Brooks argues in his book, *The Ordeal of Mark Twain*, that Samuel's mother and wife held him back. Brooks goes on to explain that this "thwarting of his natural impulses embittered him as a man, and crippled him as an artist."<sup>3</sup> When reading Samuel Clemens' autobiography and many of his correspondences, one will find that Samuel was far too free spirited and strong willed to heed his mother's demands and deeply respected his wife, even if he did not always agree with her. Whether it went against his nature or not, the positive influence these women had on Samuel Clemens' life is evident in his letters, autobiog-

raphy and writings. It will never be known how far Samuel Clemens' talents could have gone. What is known is that with their influence, Samuel Clemens, better known as Mark Twain, became one of America's most celebrated writers.

Having outlived each of these women, Samuel Clemens would learn grief and emptiness. Reading his later works, such as *Letters from Earth* and *The Mysterious Stranger*, one can see the negative effects of their absence in his later writings. Due to the importance and influence of the women in Samuel's life, the world was given the writings of Mark Twain, but those closest to Samuel Clemens were given a more sensitive and contemplative soul.

The name "Mark Twain" is synonymous with clever wit and American storytelling. In his adult life, he was world renowned and regularly in demand for speaking engagements, which often kept him away from home. The public was given a view into his thoughts and private life through countless published letters, articles and books, of which *Huckleberry Finn* and *Tom Sawyer* were inspired by his mischievous childhood.

Born in Monroe County, Missouri on November 30, 1835 to John M. Clemens and Jane Clemens, Samuel Clemens was the second of six children.<sup>4</sup> Though there were other children before him, Samuel grew up with his brothers Orion, Benjamin, Henry, and two sisters Pamela and Margaret.<sup>5</sup> Death appeared to be a constant companion in the Clemens' family, leaving Samuel to outlive almost all of them. When Samuel was twelve years old, Jane Clemens became a widow and left to raise Samuel and his siblings alone, and would become Samuel's first, and primary, childhood role model.<sup>6</sup> John M. Clemens died of pneumonia two weeks after being caught in a storm on March 11, 1847. After his father's death, Samuel lacked the mentorship of an older male companion. Orion was already an adult by this time and their brother Benjamin had died years earlier.<sup>7</sup> This left his younger brother, Henry, as his only other male family member and childhood rival in the Clemens home.

While Samuel was steersman on the steamboat *Pennsylvania*, he secured a position for his brother as "mud" clerk on board.<sup>7</sup> Tragedy struck when the *Pennsylvania's* boiler exploded. Suffering from steam burns, Henry Clemens would die some days later from an accidental morphine overdose.<sup>8</sup> Without a strong male role model for Samuel to learn from, women would play a greater part in his life. After leaving home and making his way in the world, Samuel Clemens found a surrogate mother in the form of Mrs. Mary Fairbanks. They met while on tour of the Mediterranean and Holy Land aboard the steamship *Quaker City*.<sup>9</sup> An accomplished writer in her own right, Samuel Clemens found Mrs. Fairbanks to be a gracious and engaging traveling companion. In comparison, he found her husband, Abel Fairbanks, quite a bore.<sup>10</sup> With her intellect and mature personality, Mrs. Fairbanks would continually influence Samuel's

writings and his courtship with Olivia Langdon, whom Samuel desperately wanted to marry. It was also on this trip that Samuel met and befriended Charles Langdon, younger brother of Olivia, whom Samuel had first glimpsed in a small photo which Charles carried with him.<sup>11</sup>

Smitten by Olivia, called Livy by family and friends, Samuel would work to temper his adventurous ways to win her heart. Livy Langdon had come from a refined, wealthy and religious family in Elmira, New York. From the onset, the relationship between Samuel Clemens and Livy Langdon seemed to be an unlikely pairing. Despite this, Clemens was able to ingratiate the Langdon family by befriending Charles Langdon, thirteen years Samuel Clemens' junior.<sup>12</sup> With Mrs. Fairbanks' assistance and Charles' friendship, what had begun as a platonic relationship between Samuel and Livy, would become a lifelong marriage of respect and partnership. In their lifetime, Olivia and Samuel Clemens had four children: one son, Langdon and three daughters, Susy, Clara and Jean.<sup>13</sup> Langdon, their eldest child, passed away less than three months after Susy's birth, in 1872.<sup>14</sup> This fact would shape the relationship between Samuel Clemens and his eldest daughter.

### **A Reserved Loving Mother**

After his father's death, Samuel Clemens would find Jane Clemens his primary role model. From her he would gain an education in wit and humor, and a critical perspective of the world, which she employed on a regular basis when disciplining Samuel. Within the Clemens household, it was Henry Clemens who was the child that could do no wrong. On a regular basis, Samuel found himself in some sort of trouble. Though Jane Clemens appeared to be a strong-willed and commanding presence, Samuel Clemens was a handful for his mother. He points out in his autobiography that whereas Henry was well behaved, he himself was a greater challenge, stating "My mother had a good deal of trouble with me, but I think she enjoyed it."<sup>15</sup> Where Henry was mild, obedient and seemingly honest, never causing a single issue for their mother, young Samuel would continually test his mother's resolve.

The effect of Jane Clemens' sharp responses and observations of her son's character and behavior would one day be read in many of Samuel Clemens' writings. On one occasion, Henry had broken their mother's prized sugar bowl while sneaking some sugar. Upon Jane Clemens' entry into the room, she saw the broken bowl, paused for moment and without asking who was responsible, hit Samuel on the head with the assumption that he was the culprit. When Samuel protested, explaining that it was Henry who broke the bowl, his mother replied that she assumed that he had it coming for some previous or future misdeed, saying, "You deserve it for something else that I don't know about [or] . . . something that you are going to do."<sup>16</sup> During his childhood, Samuel regularly received powerful lessons in wit and critical observation from his mother

and these lessons remained with him for his life. Jane Clemens taught him to be critically observant of other people. On Sundays, Jane Clemens required Samuel to attend church, something he could not bear. Upon his supposed return from church, she quizzed him about the text in the sermon. Being a clever lad, Samuel would select one of his own. This worked well until one day when Samuel's sermon and a neighbor's, who had actually attended the service, did not match. Having been exposed to the truth, Jane Clemens found other ways to make sure her son had attended church services.<sup>17</sup> It is interesting that Jane Clemens, herself, did not attend church services with her son.

In many ways it was Jane Clemens' wit, humor, and judgmental character that readers see in Samuel Clemens' book *Traveling with the Innocents Abroad*, which was published in 1869.<sup>18</sup> At thirty-one years old, Samuel Clemens traveled with Charles Langdon and Mrs. Fairbanks to the Middle East and the Holy Land. While on board the *Quaker City*, Clemens and many of the other passengers read *Tent Life in the Holy Land*, by William Prime.<sup>19</sup> The book had been suggested reading in preparation for the trip. Samuel Clemens read the book and made several cutting annotations in the margins. In his judgments of Mr. Prime, Samuel judged him quite harshly. He points out that Mr. Prime was a common thief when he observed Prime excusing his own behavior for chipping off a part of a monument saying, "where I see such antiques fast disappearing before the hands of the Vandals, I am not so foolish as to refuse to take what I can." Clemens' wrote: "The customary excuse of a thief." The response was to the point and might easily have been something his mother would have said.<sup>20</sup>

Clemens put a fine point on another of Prime's crude behaviors when Prime describes riding his horse over Moslem graves. To which Clemens responded, "They were the tombs of somebody's fathers and mothers. Would he have desecrated them if they had been his own [father and mother's graves]?"<sup>21</sup> Just as his mother before him, Samuel Clemens was never timid or reserve in his harsh judgment of people's shortcomings. It was these moments of wit and sarcasm that one can see the foundations of his mother come through the surface of Mark Twain.

Though Samuel might have desired love and approval from his mother, she would hold herself in reserve. In his autobiography, Samuel describes his mother as "warm-hearted," but he felt it natural for her to keep it in reserve due to his father's lack outward affection.<sup>22</sup> In her later life, Jane Clemens told Samuel, "You gave me more uneasiness than any child I had."<sup>23</sup> Though Samuel had an eagerness for his mother's love, it was Jane Clemens' critical nature that was poured out on her son.<sup>24</sup> Yet when Jane Clemens passed away on October 27, 1890, Samuel wrote, "She always had the heart of a young girl; and in the sweetness and serenity of death she seemed somehow young again. She was always beautiful."<sup>25</sup> Even with all of her critical wit, and judgment of her son, Samuel Clemens still loved his mother and held her dear to his heart.

Though Jane Clemens did not give her son the love, affection and approval he so desired from her, she gave him a quick witted and observant mind.<sup>26</sup>

### **Mrs. Fairbanks, Samuel and Olivia Clemens**

Livy Clemens would be Samuel Clemens's closest friend and truest advisor. The seeds of their relationship began the moment he laid eyes on her miniature ivory image in Charles Langdon's locket during their trip on board the Quaker City in the summer of 1867. Of her, he describes a petite young lady with strength and kindness he cherished even after her death. In 1906 he writes in his autobiography "Under a grave and gentle exterior burned inextinguishable fires of sympathy, energy, devotion, enthusiasm, and absolute limitless affection." Though frail in appearance, Samuel Clemens saw strong loving character in his wife, which he respected and relied on for their entire marriage.<sup>27</sup>

It was her caring nature, counsel and insight of people he learned to rely on to make better sense of his world. In many ways, Samuel Clemens saw in Livy the person he was not. Of her judgment of people and life, he says that she was "sure and accurate."<sup>28</sup> On many occasions, Livy would clarify or explain things which seemed to baffle Samuel. Yet this was not a relationship which was certain from the start. Samuel and Olivia's courtship was not a smooth one. They were from two very different worlds. Samuel Clemens was an uncultured traveling reporter and Livy Langdon was a reserve and refined young lady from an affluent family. When Samuel first proposed to Livy in September of 1868, Livy turned him down.<sup>29</sup> A persistent person, Samuel proposed three or four times before Livy accepted his hand in marriage.<sup>30</sup> The Langdons were quite surprised and a little taken aback by Samuel's unabashed frankness and frontier ways, traits he would carry for life.<sup>31</sup>

Not prepared to give up with Mrs. Fairbanks' assistance, Samuel Clemens vowed to win Ms. Langdon's hand in marriage. Indeed, his reaction to Livy's rejection did not sit well with him, as Samuel made plain in a September 7, 1868 letter to her. In it, he refers to her as "sister," something she has requested him to view her as. Yet even as he uses this title, he reminds her that as much as the situation pains him, he "loved [her], still [loves] & shall always love [her]." Samuel reminds her that he is used to such disappointment and suffering, and that this will be one more thing to bear.<sup>32</sup>

In several letters between Mrs. Fairbanks and Samuel Clemens, the discussion of marriage was a prominent topic. In one letter, Samuel wrote that if he were to simply just settle down, "[I would] quit all nonsense and swindle some [poor] girl into marrying me."<sup>33</sup> He went on to discuss how he would not be worthy of her and she of him. He admitted that he worked at change, but it did not come easy. This was in great part to Samuel's promise to Mrs. Fairbanks not to swear

or be lazy. As Samuel put it, “I have kept the bond—I failed not in the task you have set me to do.”<sup>34</sup> Looking for Mrs. Fairbank’s approval, Samuel worked to stop swearing and improved with time and effort. His only regret was that he wished he had adopted a more active behavior sooner.

It would take time and perseverance, but Livy finally accepted Samuel’s marriage proposal. With promises of commitment and reform, Samuel convinced the Langdon family that he was serious and capable of taking care of Livy.<sup>35</sup> Jarvis Langdon expected Samuel to not only keep his daughter happy, but financially comfortable as well. To ensure his son-in-law’s success, Jarvis Langdon financed a newspaper partnership with Samuel.<sup>36</sup>

Often times when corresponding with Mrs. Fairbanks, Samuel Clemens became the apologetic child seeking approval and forgiveness from his surrogate mother. At a Newspaper Correspondents’ Club dinner in Washington, D.C., Samuel proudly made a toast to women on January 11, 1868.<sup>37</sup> During the toast, encouraged by the presence of men at the stag dinner, Samuel Clemens boasted of the love of women by pointing out their value as the persons who take care of men’s domestic needs. He proudly exclaims, “She sews on our buttons [sic], [laughter,] she mends our clothes, [laughter,] she ropes us in at the church fairs . . . she tells us whatever she can find out about the little private affairs of the neighbors. She gives us good advice and plenty of it . . . [and] she bears our children.”<sup>38</sup> With enthusiasm and commanding presence, Samuel Clemens was at that moment fully Mark Twain. Published in the Washington Star on January 13, Clemens enjoyed the moment of center stage. Without Mrs. Fairbanks or Livy there to curtail his vulgar behavior, Samuel Clemens spoke without reflecting on the consequences of his words which made their way to the press. Reflection would come in the morning.

Concerned that Mrs. Fairbanks would see the story, he wrote a letter asking her to not be too critical and to forgive him for his use of slang. Like a naughty school boy, Clemens could not help but try and divert some of the blame to newspaper, claiming: “They ought to have left out the slang.”<sup>38</sup> He then went on to promise not to make any more public speeches in the hopes that it would smooth out his lapse in judgement.<sup>39</sup> As he predicted, Mrs. Fairbanks did in fact come across the article, and from his response in a January 30th post script (the letter did not survive), Samuel humbled himself by acknowledging her response, and promised to be more careful in his public speaking, saying, “I will rigidly eschew slang and vulgarity in future.”<sup>40</sup> One can see from his letters that Samuel kept Mrs. Fairbanks’ judgements and instruction in high regard, something which a younger Samuel Clemens would never have given Jane Clemens. We can see the magic of Mrs. Fairbanks’ counsel shaping the thinking and character of Samuel Clemens. A younger Samuel Clemens would not have been self-aware enough to even notice such things.

So important was Mrs. Fairbanks' respect and approval to Samuel Clemens that in an 1868 letter, he proclaimed his joy of following her wisdom to stop being vulgar when speaking. He proudly states that he can be "funny without being vulgar." He explained with pleasure that he had brought honor to his teacher and awaited her reply which he believed will contain accolades for a job well done.<sup>41</sup> His letter is filled with the pride of a young child running home to show his mother high marks on an exam. Reflecting on the differences between Samuel's relationship with his mother and with Mrs. Fairbanks, it might appear that Mrs. Fairbanks had become the mother Samuel Clemens never had with Jane Clemens.

Even as the years passed, Mrs. Fairbanks was ever Samuel Clemens loyal critic. Whenever a new book was published she wrote words of appreciation and pride.<sup>42</sup> Throughout their friendship, Samuel would send her pre-published copies of his books for her approval. Mrs. Fairbanks would give her insight by praising his books when they had virtue, but gave kind admonishment when writing would, as Wecter describes, "lapse into slang, horseplay and flippancy at the expense of serious subjects."<sup>43</sup> To this advice, Samuel took her wisdom to heart. For example, he destroyed any pages Mrs. Fairbanks disapproved of from his *Quaker City* trip. The fact that Samuel Clemens took the time to ensure Mrs. Fairbanks received pre-published copies of his books, and took her correspondence seriously, demonstrated the level of his respect for her. Over time, their correspondence would lessen, but never quite ended until her death in 1898.<sup>44</sup> Though Mrs. Fairbanks was gone, her impact could be seen in Samuel's writings and his relationship with Olivia.

Either deliberately or unintentionally, Samuel Clemens sought out the wisdom and guidance of women which helped smooth out his rough edges, first from Mrs. Fairbanks and then Olivia Langdon. His marriage to Livy was more than a partnership of equals, and till her death they complemented each other. Where Samuel was outspoken and quick to emotional outbursts, Livy was refined and self-controlled. On more than one occasion her counsel saved Samuel Clemens from himself.

Livy was greatly interested in her husband's writings and concerned about the impressions he left on others.<sup>45</sup> Around 1902, Livy wrote a letter to Samuel concerning a letter he wrote which was critical of a writer named Marie Van Vorst. Having found Samuel's letter before it was sent to the newspapers, Livy reminded her husband the words of his youth to her. Early on in their relationship, Samuel told Livy that she was always on his mind, and would only write things which she approved. Feeling that the letter concerning Marie Van Vorst was hurtful, Livy was disturbed by her husband's attitude, and proceeded to tell him so. In her letter, she asks if there was any benefit to always railing at the world. She reminded him that his words have a powerful impact on others

and that nothing good can come from sending his critical letter to the newspapers.<sup>46</sup> Interestingly, just a year later Marie Van Vorst dedicated a book she had co-written with John Van Vorst to Samuel Clemens.<sup>47</sup>

In closing her letter to Samuel, Livy reminded her husband how much she loved and respected his work, but she wished he would listen to her sound advice.<sup>48</sup> The letter in question which Samuel Clemens wrote concerning Marie Van Vorst has not survived, but the fact that Ms. Van Vorst dedicated a book to Mr. Twain implies that he took her advice seriously and the letter never published. Even in her admonishments of his ornery and cynical perspective, Livy's love and respect were always loyal to her husband. She wrote to him as an equal who had his best interest at heart. His actions in response to her letter demonstrate his respect and love for her were mutual.

Livy would ensure that she was not only a wife to Samuel, but a business advisor as well. When the time came to publish *Huckleberry Finn* and *The Prince and the Pauper*, Livy vetoed Samuel's desire to publish them as a single volume. He believed that since both books were about two boys, it stood to reason that they would go well together. According to De Lancey Ferguson, author of *The Case for Mark Twain's Wife*, "Olivia was right, even if her reason—that the Prince was the better book—was wrong."<sup>49</sup> Livy's guidance and wisdom concerning Samuel's writings can be seen in decisions which are not readily evident on the surface, yet are still with the public.

At every turn, even if she could not always be present, Livy was looking out for Samuel's best interests. Her devotion and love would even come in the form of a small note card in his vest pocket. In preparation for a visit to meet President Grover Cleveland at the White House, Livy told Samuel "I cannot be with you, and so I delegate my sentry duties to this little note. If I should give you the warning by word of mouth, now, it would pass from your head and be forgotten in a few minutes."<sup>50</sup> Upon meeting President and Mrs. Cleveland, Samuel Clemens took out the card and requested that the First Lady sign under the words "He didn't" he had written on its reverse side. Perplexed and with some reservation, Mrs. Cleveland signed the small card. At which point Clemens explained the nature of his request. He handed her the card and with a shock, she read Livy's warning "Don't wear your arctics in the White House." At which point, the First Lady had the note mailed to Livy to ensure the verification made its way back home.<sup>51</sup> Even without her presence, the act of placing a small note in a vest pocket, one can see the love and caring Livy and Samuel Clemens shared.

Besides being partners in life, Livy and Samuel Clemens shared a similar sense of humor. In Susy's biography of her father, she tells of the frustration Samuel had with the home's burglar alarm. In his comments, Samuel Clemens makes great humor of the alarm and its uselessness. According to Samuel, it would go off without warning or reason. He describes it as "having a gay and care-

less life and had no principles.”<sup>52</sup> The alarm would go off and Samuel would search the house only to find that no one had broken in. On one March morning around 2 am, the alarm went off again. This time, someone was actually breaking into the house.

Lying in bed, Livy asked if it were burglar and what he might want. Samuel replied with sarcastic humor, “I suppose he wants jewelry.”<sup>53</sup> Without missing a beat, Livy played along. Soon, they heard the sounds of someone rifling through the house looking for items. As the burglar moved through the house, Livy asked what the burglar was doing now. To which Samuel added some new room and items being pilfered. Finally, Livy said, “Well, what is the use of a burglar alarm for us?”<sup>54</sup> To which Samuel replied that it had been useful up till that moment. Samuel Clemens goes on to explain that the burglar will be quite disappointed in what he finds. As it turned out, the next day Samuel Clemens followed a trail of his belongings on the ground. It appears that the burglar was in fact quite disappointed.<sup>55</sup> Even in stressful times, Samuel and Livy Clemens were partners who understood each other’s humor and could use it to their benefit. Livy was Samuel’s equal. He not only knew it, but delighted in it.

Even with his weakness for vulgar language, smoking tobacco, and disagreeable attitude towards family prayer, Livy accepted her husband as he was, warts and all. Ever his equal, Livy’s wit could be a match to Samuel’s. After another failed attempt to reform and control his language, Livy finally told Samuel, “Don’t reform any more, it isn’t any improvement.”<sup>56</sup> For all of Samuel’s good intentions to reform his un-tempered nature, he would fail to truly change his ways. And at every turn, Livy would eventually yield to Samuel’s uncultured frontier ways.<sup>57</sup>

Even Samuel would agree that he was helpless in his endeavors to truly change who he was deep inside. In his words, Samuel states, “I used to vex myself with reforms . . . the pleasure which I got out of the vice when I returned to it, always paid me for all it cost.”<sup>58</sup> In the end, Samuel Clemens would be true to himself, yet always seek out his wife’s wise guidance when it was truly needed. Without this guidance, Samuel’s later writings would take on the much darker tones Livy warned him about and which she could not stomach.<sup>59</sup>

### **Like Father, Like Daughter**

Loss of his eldest child, Langdon, would impact Samuel Clemens’ relationship with his daughters Clara, Jean and to a greater degree, his eldest daughter, Susy. In her, Samuel saw some of himself. Like her father before her, Susy was a writer, reflective of the world and at times quite willful and overtly emotional. At the age of fourteen, she had written a biography of her father.<sup>60</sup> Through a child’s eyes, the reader is able to better see Samuel Clemens beyond the persona of Mark Twain. There was a more sentimental side of Samuel Clemens

which the public might not know existed. In her biography of her father, Susy writes that many did not truly know Mark Twain, pointing out that *The Prince and the Pauper* “revealed something of his kind sympatric nature.”<sup>61</sup>

Five years after her death in 1896, Samuel Clemens took out the biography and added a forward and many of his own notes. Of the biography, Samuel writes, “she did not garble history, but stated fact.”<sup>62</sup> Through his copious comments throughout the biography, Samuel Clemens clarified Susy’s stories and observations of her father. In the introduction, he points out that Susy was a remarkable child who learned quickly at almost anything she put her mind to.<sup>63</sup> Out of love and the feeling of loss, Samuel Clemens was moved to put his own mark on her writing. In this, one might see the partnership of mentor and pupil. In many ways, Samuel and Susy Clemens were very much kindred spirits. When her father claimed that he could not bear going to church because he could only stand to hear his own voice without getting tired, Susy wrote that his statement was not entirely an honest one.<sup>64</sup> She understood her father well and could see through his humorous deception.

Susy could be a temperamental child, and in her nature, Samuel Clemens saw the shadows of his childhood. He described her as having a “passionate temper.”<sup>65</sup> Once, on the morning of a promised hayride, Susy suddenly admonished her sister, Clara, with a stick or shovel. Yet, unlike her father, Susy admitted the transgression, and after much discussion with her mother, decided the loss of the hayride was a proper punishment to atone for her behavior. Concerning this event, Samuel Clemens observed that Susy’s punishment still bothered him twenty-six years after the fact.<sup>66</sup>

Susy’s death in August of 1896 of meningitis had a devastating effect on Samuel and the Clemens home gained a perpetual somber atmosphere.<sup>67</sup> Livy confined herself to her bedroom as her own health began to suffer and Samuel withdrew inward. The once joyous house had become a place of sorrow. From an 1898 entry in his notebook, Samuel Clemens wrote that Clara’s birthday had come and gone without even a mention of it. He reflected, “Up to a year and ten months ago all our birthdays were . . . milestones on the march of happiness. Then Susy died.”<sup>68</sup> The impact of Susy’s death on the Clemens’ home was indelible and Samuel’s heart was broken as he lamented the loss of his eldest daughter. Though one can see the positive impact Susy’s presence had on Samuel Clemens, it was her absence which sent a louder message. Time would march on, but the family never truly recovered.

## The Solitude and Grief of Later Life

In the last few years of Samuel Clemens' life he had outlived those relationships he has cherished the most. Livy Clemens passed away on Clara's birthday in 1904 after twenty-two months of suffering.<sup>69</sup> The day before Christmas 1909, his youngest daughter, Jean, was found dead in a tub, apparently from an epileptic seizure. Reflecting of his life, "I lost Susy; I lost her mother . . . and now I have lost Jean. How poor am I, who was once so rich!"<sup>70</sup>

Life without the loving presence of women he respected, Samuel Clemens' spirit turned to darker places. For all his wit and vigor for living, he turned his mind inward to find only bitter disappointment. He had lost his mother, wife, and children.<sup>71</sup> In his book *Letter From the Earth*, published after his death in 1938, Samuel Clemens' writings are darker and more cynical than his earlier works. In *Satan's Letter*, Clemens writes of humans, "Man is a marvelous curiosity. When he is at very best, his is some sort of nickel-plated angel; at his worst . . . he is sarcasm."<sup>72</sup> Within the pages of *Satan's Letter*, the cold hearted cynicism is raw and unfettered. Playing the part of the Devil, he makes several sarcastic references to the human belief in prayer, God's love, heaven and the human misinterpretations of the Bible.<sup>73</sup> Without Livy, Mrs. Fairbanks, or Susy to guide him or question his writings, there was nothing to stop Samuel from only viewing the negative aspects of the world. Further in *Letters From the Earth*, Samuel Clemens describes fictional life twenty years after creation. The editor of *Letters From Earth*, Bernard DeVoto, explains Clemens' description of the world: "We are surrounded by unspeakable evidence of social rot."<sup>74</sup>

Samuel's perspective on ancient earth is dark and devoid of kindness. This dark and cynical perspective poses the question: When Samuel Clemens wrote his description of humans, was it his own contemporary world he used as the model? Though he made later attempts at writing, Samuel Clemens was unable to create anything other than dark humor. In the book *The Mysterious Stranger*, Huckleberry Finn and Tom Sawyer are adults. They are told that, as Henry Seidel Canby explains, "Good and evil and happiness and misery are all illusions, the products of a cheating, vagrant thought."<sup>75</sup> This was Samuel Clemens without the rational and tempered perspectives of his wise advisors. This was Clemens without a filter.

The last few years of Samuel Clemens' life were in deep reflections of death and his old age. In his writings, Samuel returns to the past. With loss in his life, the cruel evils of this world, which he poked fun at, were as Canby puts it, "beyond laughter now."<sup>76</sup> It is the empty humor of a man filled with regret and loss. Upon receiving the death notice of Mrs. Mary Wilkes, widow of Rear-Admiral Wilkes, he writes, "It is death-notices like this that enable me to realize in some sort how long I've lived. They drive away the haze from my life's road and give me a glimpse of the beginning of – glimpse of things which seem incredibly remote."<sup>77</sup>

In this one passage it is clear to see that Samuel Clemens' heart longs for the past. Reading Mrs. Wilkes' death notice puts into sharp perspective for Samuel how much he had lost, and how much he desired to relive it.

## **Conclusion**

Samuel Clemens cherished the women in his life as confidantes, teachers and wise counselors. Through their influence, Samuel was shaped not only into one of America's most celebrated writers and humorists, but a loving husband and father. His mother, Jane Clemens, taught him wit and critical observation. Mrs. Fairbanks became his mentor and guide in gaining Livy's hand in marriage. Taking up where Mrs. Fairbanks left off, Livy became Samuel Clemens' closest companion and partner in life. With his daughter, Susy, he would find a kindred spirit and protégé.

Without these women in his later life, Samuel Clemens became a bitter man filled with grief and regret. Some have argued that Samuel Clemens could have gone further as writer and humorist if left to his own devices and unvarnished nature.<sup>78</sup> Yet one does not need to look beyond the examples of his later published works to see that in the absence of women such as Mrs. Fairbanks and Livy Clemens, Samuel's writings became darker and less refined. Whether it went against his nature or not, the positive influence of these women on Samuel Clemens' life is evident in his letters, autobiography and writings.

Even though Jane Clemens could be critical of her son, Samuel understood her nature. Upon her death, he spoke warmly of her. Lacking a close relationship with his mother, Samuel relied on the wisdom and mentorship of Mrs. Fairbanks. Without her guidance, Samuel would never have worked to change his unrefined frontier ways and win Livy Langdon's hand in marriage. Once married to Livy, Samuel gained a life-long partner and advisor whom he loved and respected. The benefits of this partnership can be seen in his relationship with the Clemens children, namely Susy Clemens, in whom Samuel saw much himself, and mentored as a protégé. It was the positive influence of the women in Samuel's life which provided him guidance, support and stability, and ensured the world was given the writings of Mark Twain, and those closest to Samuel Clemens, a sensitive and contemplative soul.

**Paris Thalheimer**

**Class of 2016**

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Shelby Zimmerman

## “The Streets Were The[ir] True Homes”: Working Class Children in New York City at the Turn of the Century

In the late nineteenth century, Rivington Street in New York City’s Lower East Side served as a playground for the children of the working class. Comedian George Burns, who grew up there, remembers all the children from his tenement building running outside to play. “There was never any problem finding someone to play with,” he said, “because the streets were loaded with kids ... when we were all playing together in the street there were so many of us we’d get mixed up and forget which family we belonged to.”<sup>1</sup> Children would transform the street bustling street into a baseball field where fire hydrants, lamp-posts, and manholes all served as bases, and make broom handles, trashcan lids, and bags into sporting equipment. They would late into the evening until their mothers opened the tenement windows and told them it was time to go to sleep. Then the children would leave the street and sleep in their crowded tenement units.<sup>2</sup>

Life in the tenements, however, could be extremely difficult. The children were resilient in having fun with very little, but this could not replace the lack of access to a well-ventilated home and nutritious diet. Efforts were made by local and state government to improve the lot of tenement children, and private charity sought to give them opportunities to improve their health and their morals, but well-intended efforts to improve their situation could only do so much. While some of these efforts would bring about positive change, efforts to prevent child labor did not take into account how just crucial the children’s labor was to their families. As soon as they were able to, these children abandoned their schools, evaded truancy officers, and went to work, pursuing their Lower East Side vision of the American dream. The situation for working class children in New York during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries demonstrates how thorough reform had to be in order to ensure that these children would have a safe and healthy childhood.

### **Living and Working Conditions**

In nineteenth century New York, tenement buildings were widely available and the rent was affordable, and thus they were a common choice for immigrants and the working class. In the mid-nineteenth century, millions of Irish, Italians,

and Jewish immigrants arrived in New York City from Europe and could not afford to move to another city. In the 1850s, the aristocratic residents of New York's East Side moved uptown, resulting in abandoned single-family houses that were converted into utilitarian tenements. An immigrant family might find itself housed with fifteen other families in a dwelling designed for one. By 1890, three-fourths of New York City's population lived in the city's thirty-seven thousand tenement houses.<sup>3</sup>

The tenements were chronicled in a series of exposés by journalist Jacob Riis. Some caution is required when approaching Riis's work. As historian James B. Lane has noted, Riis's photographs and articles tended to promote racial stereotypes and sometimes exaggerated the plight of his subjects.<sup>4</sup> Still, Riis's accounts largely correspond with other contemporary descriptions of the tenements, and should thus be treated as generally trustworthy. He described the most common type of tenement: "large rooms [of the single family house] were partitioned into several smaller ones, without regard to light or ventilation, the rate of rent being lower in proportion to space or height from the street; and they soon became filled from cellar to garret with a class of tenantry living from hand to mouth, loose in morals, improvident in habits, degraded, and squalid as beggary itself."<sup>5</sup>

The buildings usually had four to six floors with approximately four families per floor, and varying rental prices depending on how many flights of stairs were needed to access the apartment.<sup>6</sup> In one tenement on West Third Street, a family's rent was eight dollars and fifty cents for a tiny unit on the top floor of the building.<sup>7</sup> This led tenement districts to develop a diverse and multiethnic character, with poorer and more recent immigrants relegated to the cheaper top floors. According to Riis, although the tenement districts were originally divided by residents' nationality, the tenement buildings came to house families of various ethnicities and religions.<sup>8</sup>

Tenement families found themselves living in spaces that were extremely cramped, dark, and poorly ventilated. The average unit comprised "one or two dark closets, used as bedrooms, with a living room twelve feet by ten."<sup>9</sup> Marcus Ravage, a Jewish Romanian immigrant, recalled how "one baby slept on the washtubs, while the rest of the youngsters held the kitchen floor. The pretended children's room was occupied by a man and his family of four."<sup>10</sup> Only the units in the front and rear of the building contained windows, thus preventing the interior units from receiving natural light and ventilation.<sup>11</sup> Some houses were backed directly by another building, depriving the rear units of light.<sup>12</sup> The staircases, Riis reported, "[were] too often a dark well in the center of the house, and no direct through ventilation is possible, each family being separated from the other by partitions."<sup>13</sup>

Working conditions were little better. Garment factories in late nineteenth century New York were notorious for their long hours, harsh conditions, and low pay. According to New York factory inspectors, the sweatshop work was “nearly akin to slavery as it’s is possible to get. The work is done under the eyes of task-masters, who rent a small room or two in the rear part of an upper floor of a high building, put in a few sewing machines, a stove suitable for heating irons, and then hire a number of men and women to work for them.”<sup>14</sup> In order to maximize production, the manufacturers utilized all available space in order to ensure that the largest number of workers could fit in the room. In 1891, the *Fifth Annual Report of the Factory Inspectors of the State of New York* reported that “the trouble with the ‘sweater’ workshops of New York is this: the hours of labor are too long, being sometimes as high as ninety a week; the ventilating and sanitary arrangements are nearly always vile to the last degree, and the work-rooms are excessively overcrowded.”<sup>15</sup> Factory inspector George McKay observed “poison from surrounding putrescence and unsanitary plumbing... permeates everything present, and it needs only the single bacillus of disease to start into life a horrible death for thousands....”<sup>16</sup>

The living and working conditions of the working class and immigrants prompted some reform efforts. The “Tenement-House Act” (1867) required that tenements improve airshafts, and that interior tenement units have windows in order to increase ventilation and natural light.<sup>17</sup> In 1888, New York State began to regulate the labor of women and children in factories by mandating factory inspectors to report about the condition of the workspace.<sup>18</sup> And in 1892, the state modified the factory inspection laws “to regulate specifically ‘the manufacture of clothing, etc., in Tenements and Rear Buildings,’ banning sewing in tenement apartments except by permit or by family members.”<sup>19</sup> Immigrant families, however, continued to find ways to circumvent the age laws in order to earn money, and contractors ignored housing measures with impunity. The reform movement remained largely unsuccessful in addressing the most serious concerns of tenement life.

### **Recreation and Daily Life**

For children, the purpose of the tenement flat was eating and sleeping. As historian David Nasaw writes, “indoors was for adults; children only got in the way: of mother and her chores, of father trying to relax after a long day at work, of boarders who worked the night shift and had to sleep during the day.”<sup>20</sup> Consequently, children knew that there was not enough room in the tenements for them to play and that it was important for their parents to complete housework and rest. Older children might stay inside completing schoolwork and their chores, and very small children were kept indoors in playpens.<sup>21</sup> But cramped conditions left no room for indoor play, and as a result children socialized and played outside in the streets. The streets served as playground, sports field, and meeting location. The children converted the street into their playground

in which they would climb up clothesline poles, play games on the steps of the tenements, bounce balls off of residential and commercial doors, and use trashcan lids and broomsticks to play baseball.<sup>22</sup>

The streets, however, remained dangerous. Children at play shared the streets with adults, some selling goods in makeshift markets, others peddling advertising products, or drinking in outdoor taverns.<sup>23</sup> Games played in this milieu could easily turn dangerous. In *Children of the City at Work and at Play*, Nasaw describes how young boys would attempt to jump on the back of an open-bed wagon in order to get a free ride.<sup>24</sup> Resident Mike Gold described how this kind of game could turn deadly. His friend, he said, “had stolen a ride [on a horse-drawn carriage], and in jumping, fell under the wheels. The people around saw the flash of his body, and then heard a last scream of pain. The car rolled on. The people rushed to the tracks and picked up the broken body of my playmate.”<sup>25</sup>

Children also had to watch out for the police, who believed that young immigrant boys were responsible for theft and pickpocketing, and who persecuted children for damaging windows and streetlamps.<sup>26</sup> In New York’s Midtown West, more than fifty percent of arrests were for legal acts such as playing sports, begging, shooting craps, and throwing stones.<sup>27</sup> Harpo Marx, who grew up there, remembered that “since we couldn’t afford to pay off the cops in the proper, respectable Tammany manner, they hounded us, harassed us, chased us, and every chance they got, happily beat the hell out of us.”<sup>28</sup> Mike Gold recalled that “they [police] cursed us, growled and chased us for any reason. They hated to see us having fun.”<sup>29</sup> Jacob Riis too described callous disregard for children. According to Riis, “we have seen in New York a boy shot down by a policeman for the heinous offence of playing football in the street on Thanksgiving Day.”<sup>30</sup>

## The American Dream

Working class boys grew up learning about the American dream through the Horatio Alger stories, which inspired them to earn money in order to help their families and to get out of poverty. On the streets or in the schools, the boys learned about the Horatio Alger “rags to riches” story and the importance of hard work in order move from the working to the middle class. According to Nasaw, “they [the children] did not expect to strike it rich. But neither did they expect to live their lives as their parents lived theirs.

They would not be trapped in tenement flats or squeezed into the back rooms of heavily mortgaged houses; they would not work all day and then, in the evening, fall asleep after dinner; they would not allow themselves to be marooned by fear and by debt in slums and ghettos while the life of the city swirled on

around them.”<sup>31</sup> Thus, many children believed that by working hard during their childhood, they could follow Alger’s example and experience the middle class American dream.

There were many employers willing to offer the children an opportunity to work hard. Store windows were filled with “Boy Wanted” signs, making it simple to find a job, even for a boy who had just been fired.<sup>32</sup> It was common for young boys to earn money as vendors, selling items such as pencils, candy, and newspapers.<sup>33</sup> Parents, however, generally wanted to keep their children out of such jobs because they exposed them to crime. They thus preferred that their sons worked as messengers or errand boys because, as Nasaw explains, “errand boys had bosses and worked regular hours in a fixed location. From the moment they left school until the time they arrived home for dinner, they were watched over by responsible adults.”<sup>34</sup> The son of Antonio Giordano remembered how he wanted to sell newspapers, but his father refused because he believed that “paper selling makes boys gamblers and bums.”<sup>35</sup> Vendors were seen as only one step removed from petty criminals, and parents feared that such children would learn immoral behaviors such as lying about prices and deceiving customers.<sup>36</sup>

Expectations for working class girls were different. Young women rarely took work selling newspapers or other goods on the streets because those streets were seen as masculine spaces that could corrupt girls.<sup>37</sup> Instead, girls were tasked with assisting their mothers, who often had to work long hours outside the home in order to bring in money. It fell to their daughters to do household chores such as cooking, cleaning, laundry, and shopping.<sup>38</sup> Such tasks began at a young age. Journalist Riis described how Katie, a nine year old girl, served as a housekeeper for her older siblings after attending school.<sup>39</sup> By age ten, parents usually trusted girls to be more independent, enabling them to complete errands outside of the home.<sup>40</sup> However, the most important role of working class girls was taking care of their younger siblings, serving as “little mothers.”<sup>41</sup> “Baby-tending was not a chore,” Nasaw writes, “but something that little girls did in the afternoon, like embroidering or jumping rope.”<sup>42</sup> Consequently after school, “little mothers” would feed their siblings, change their diapers, play with them, and eventually help them fall asleep. Girls often lacked basic knowledge necessary to care for an infant, however, and tended to place greater emphasis on ensuring that the baby was quiet rather than healthy. The child in charge routinely fed the infants cheap candy and lemonade that was sold on the street.<sup>43</sup> Infants residing in the tenements were susceptible to pneumonia, bronchitis, and heat exhaustion.

## Charity

Charity initiatives sought to ameliorate the public health problems of tenement dwellers, and the health problems of children in particular. In 1906, John D. Rockefeller established the Junior Sea Breeze Home for Sick Babies, which temporarily removed babies from the tenements and taught mothers how to care for their children. In the sanitarium, all children, regardless of their race, religion, and social class, were provided with medical treatment from educated nurses.<sup>44</sup> The hospital's resources helped babies escape the dangers of residing in the tenements during the inhospitable summer months. Junior Sea Breeze nurse Rose Green taught mothers "how best to care for their babies under the circumstances and means at their command," which involved purchasing healthy food and promoting basic hygiene.<sup>45</sup> In addition, nurses visited the families after the infants were discharged in order to ensure that the babies were healthy and cared for by their mothers.<sup>46</sup>

Another such initiative was the Fresh Air Fund, established by Reverend Willard Parsons in the 1870s. Parson's goal was to temporarily remove working class children from the tenements during the summer in order to improve their health and in order to expose them to salutary effects of rural life and Christian teachings. In 1877, Parsons sent the first group of ill, over-worked children to rural Pennsylvania, where they stayed with Christian missionary host families for two weeks.<sup>47</sup> The program expanded, and in 1891 it sent more than 94,000 children to a vacation in the country.<sup>48</sup> The Fresh Air Fund enabled children to play outside, to escape their monotonous and difficult urban lives, and to overcome malnourishment and disease. According to a young girl who participated in the program, "we have lots to eat, and so much to eat that we could not tell you how much we get to eat."<sup>49</sup> Volunteer doctors conducted medical tests when the children arrived and when they departed, and used these measurements to quantify the improvement in health.<sup>50</sup> According to historian Julia Guarneri, the founders of the Fresh Air Fund "believed that by separating a child from his tainted urban environment and exposing him to a rural way of life, they could literally save the child, body, and soul."<sup>51</sup> Parsons wrote that his program had resulted in "the complete transformation of many a child." The child, he wrote, "has gone back to its wretchedness, to be sure, but in hundreds of instances about which I have personally known, it has returned with head and heart full of new ways, new ideas of decent living, and has successfully taught the shiftless parents the better way."<sup>52</sup> They believed that they could improve the children's morality by exposing them to the middle class Christian paternalism.

In the late nineteenth century, another alternative emerged for young children: the New York Kindergarten Association. Their goal was to establish kindergarten programs in the working class neighborhoods in order to teach young children important life skills through play while allowing them to temporarily escape the

tenement conditions. By 1902, New York City had 100 kindergarten programs, and the Board of Education was planning to establish more programs because of their success.<sup>53</sup> Children were admitted to kindergarten daily if they had clean faces, and once they entered the classroom, they would play games and choose from activities ranging from threading beads to blowing soap bubbles.<sup>54</sup>

These activities taught the children patience and obedience while allowing them to have fun. “The day slips by like a beautiful dream,” Riis wrote. “...Not infrequently [the child] goes home howling, to be found the next morning waiting at the door an hour before the teacher comes. Little Jimmie’s mother says that he gets up at six o’clock to go to the Fifty-first Street kindergarten, and that she has to whip him to make him wait until nine.”<sup>55</sup>

## Education

All children between the ages of eight and fourteen were required by New York State law to attend public school.<sup>56</sup> In theory, these public schools created the potential to close the gap between the social classes by bringing together children from both the middle class and the working class.<sup>57</sup> By age twelve, however, working class children had the potential to become successful wage earners (even if fourteen was the legal employment age), and therefore many twelve-year-old boys from the working class dropped out of school in order to work full time.<sup>58</sup> Riis described the transition from school to work, in which he stated “the moment his immediate value as a worker overbalances the gain in prospect by keeping him at his books, he goes to the shop.”<sup>59</sup> The consequences were potentially serious, as truant children were sent to reformatories, where they interacted with and were influenced by criminal. The city, however, did not have enough truancy officers to enforce school attendance.<sup>60</sup> As Riis, noted, “the city has no Truant Home in which to keep him, and all efforts of the children’s friends to enforce school attendance are paralyzed by this want. The risk of the reformatory is too great. What is done in the end is to let him take chances –with the chances all against him.”<sup>61</sup> Children skipped school and risked being sent to the reformatories in order to earn money for their families.

Another option for working class children was an industrial school, a beneficial alternative to public school where working class students would learn skills relevant to a vocation. According to the Eighteenth Ward Industrial School’s teacher, they are trained “dressmakers, milliners, ... nurses, machine operators, hand sewers, embroiderers... bookkeepers, workers in stained glass, painters, printers, lithographers...farmers, electricians, ship carpenters, [and] foremen in factories.”<sup>62</sup> According to Charles Loring Brace, the founder of the Children’s Aid Society, the purpose of the industrial schools was “to receive and educate children who cannot be accepted by the public schools, either by reason of

their ragged and dirty condition, or owing to the fact that they are obliged to sell papers or to stay at home to help their parents. The children at our schools belong to the lowest and poorest class of people in the city."<sup>63</sup> Employed children would attend vocational school in the evening after they left the sweatshops.<sup>64</sup> In addition, the industrial schools accommodated the needs of the students, with teachers writing excuse notes for children who skipped class. At the West Eighteenth Street School, a teacher stated in regards to truancy "I tell them, if they want to play truant to come to me and I will excuse them for the day, and give them a note so that if the truant officer sees them it will be all right."<sup>65</sup> Because the industrial schools were targeted towards the working class, the teachers tried to help them in whatever means possible.

In the late 1890s, New York City's Factory Inspection Bureau tried to reduce underage labor. In order to reduce child employment, New York City's Health Department required that children between the ages of fourteen and sixteen to obtain certificates from the local health boards in order to prove their age.<sup>66</sup> In addition, immigrant children had to prove that they were literate in English in order to receive an age certificate.<sup>67</sup> Consequently, it was the responsibility of the factory inspectors to periodically visit the factories in order to enforce the certificate law and to ensure that children under the age of fourteen were not working in the factories and mills.<sup>68</sup> However, according to Riis, children would pay twenty-five cents in order to receive a false age certificate.<sup>69</sup> According to Inspector Daniel O'Leary, "the officers of the department can force the child under fourteen years of age and the illiterate child out of the workshop or factory, but are powerless to molest them when they are found employed in their own home circle."<sup>70</sup> Therefore, children could help their parents with sweatshop work in the evenings. However, when inspectors visited the tenement sweatshops, children who could not pass as fourteen years old were given the night off from work.<sup>71</sup> Although the Health Department and the Factory Inspection Board sought to reduce child labor, it was difficult to enforce because the children were willing to lie to inspectors in order to help their families.

## Conclusion

New York City's working class children tried to make the best out of their situation by finding ways to both entertain themselves and to earn money for their families. Children sacrificed going to school in order to illegally obtain a job in the factories. Many children worked long hours after attending school in order to supplement their parents' income. In addition, the children played games and used available objects to serve as toys and athletic equipment. However, the city attempted to improve the conditions of working class children by establishing public schools, youth clubs, and programs to temporarily remove infants and children from the city. In addition, the city sought to reduce child labor but failed because of the need to help their families. Consequently, the experiences of

working class children played a large role in the Progressive Movement of the early twentieth century as well as prompting urban reform. Despite the many life challenges, the working class children of New York City, as the evidence shows, knew how to have fun with a small amount of resources.

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**Class of 2017**

### Endnotes

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# **Book Reviews**



James Trimmer

## Galileo, Bellarmine, and the Bible: A Delicate Treatment of a Contentious Issue

Richard J. Blackwell, author of *Galileo, Bellarmine and the Bible*, argues that the key catalyst of the Galileo affair was the conflict between religion and science as two different claims to truth. According to Blackwell, the nineteenth century saw many writers such as John William Draper use the Galileo Affair to posture against worldviews based on either science or religion, and many who studied the affair at that time were scientific historians who had little interest in either theological or religious history. Blackwell wrote *Galileo, Bellarmine and the Bible* in the interest of addressing the affair from a perspective that acknowledges the significance of the event in terms of the history of theology. Furthermore, Blackwell does not aim to solely address issues of theology, but to combine them with those of science in order to determine why the trial proceeded the way it did. *Galileo, Bellarmine and the Bible* ultimately moves to address the importance of both science and theology as two conflicting universal truths, a subject that was important at the time of the affair, and continues to be relevant up to the present. By considering the perspective of both science and theology, Blackwell delivers an even-sided and thorough analysis of the affair that is both engaging, informative and objective. While readers who prefer a scientific or theological answer to the question raised by Blackwell ought to read elsewhere, *Galileo, Bellarmine and the Bible* still provides an in-depth analysis of the affair itself, and addresses an important debate of the past and links it to the present, and, finally, addresses the concept of sixteenth century cosmology in a manner that is both engrossing and immersive.

The famous Italian astronomer Galileo Galilei is widely remembered in the modern context as one of the founding fathers of modern scientific thought, a man who, in the words of Blackwell, conjured “images of a flawed tragic hero, a struggle for intellectual freedom, of the individual against the institution of self-preservation.”<sup>1</sup> The legacy of Galileo marks a turning point in Western culture that moved it away from the medieval religious world and towards that of the modern scientific one, a turning point that ignited a whole range of popular generalizations based on the interactions between science and religion during that time period. When considering these generalizations, it is important to address the viewpoints of both sides in order to reach a more objective understanding of the events that occurred and their importance to the future. This subjectivity is not lost upon Blackwell who, instead of distorting information or taking it out of context, chooses to keep his information within the context of both the trial and time period. The key to understanding this context is to understand the

mindset of Galileo and his Copernican supporters, as well as that of his critic, Cardinal Robert Bellarmine, his clergymen and the Aristotelian philosophers who supported them. Furthermore, these mindsets cannot be understood without placing them inside the context of logic and belief systems of the seventeenth century. It is here that Blackwell goes beyond creating an effective thesis to treat the reader to an engrossing level of detail on then-contemporary cosmological models, while simultaneously relating their significance to the trial. By keeping close to the concepts of both logic and reason, Blackwell is able to overlap theology and science and deliver an analysis which is both engaging and nonbiased. It becomes clear through this analysis that the only way to truly understand why events in the trial unfolded the way they did is to understand the role that cosmology played in the lives of those who attended, and what factors governed that understanding.

Galileo Galilei is renowned for his pioneering work with the early telescope, and by observing the Jovian moons transit across the face of Jupiter, Galileo had discovered that the solar system included bodies that orbited independently of the Earth. For Galileo, to suggest such a theory was to in turn advocate the theories of the late 16th century Polish astronomer Nicholas Copernicus, who argued in favor of the heliocentric model of the universe over the prevailing geocentric model. It is on this subject that Blackwell argues it was not until the end of the sixteenth century that Catholic opposition to the theory emerged under Jesuit astronomer Christopher Clavius. Clavius leant heavily on the subject of the Scriptures that “state in many places that the earth is immobile, and that the sun and other stars move.”<sup>2</sup> This reasoning had historically been used by the Christian Church to sustain the ideas of ancient Greek and Latin philosophers who believed in the geocentric model, because it favored the concept of humanity being at the center of the universe which God had created. Clavius’s views were, in the words of Blackwell, reflective of the “common opinion in the educated Catholic world just as the affair began to develop.”<sup>3</sup> This section thus provides the context we needed to understand the controversy which surrounded the ideas of Galileo: to advocate Copernicanism was to go against Scripture, and, as a result, to go against both the authority of the Catholic Church as well as the ultimate authority of God.

While contemporary advocates of the scientific worldview may be tempted to believe that Galileo was above the thought of referring to the Bible for truths, *Galileo, Bellarmine and the Bible* tells us otherwise. While it should be noted that Galileo only referred to the Scripture for the sake of arguing that it should be changed to fit his theories, this section still shows that Galileo did in fact consider religion as a serious factor when he carried out his observations. Chapter Three, *Galileo’s Detour into Biblical Exegesis*, acquaints the reader with the nature of the views of Galileo on Scripture at the time of the first trial of 1616. Furthermore, Blackwell explains that his detour was necessary step to countering the arguments leveled against him during the trial, which were in

turn based on scriptural interpretation. In the subsequent section, *Galileo's Initial Response*, the reader is given a look into both the logic and rationale behind the views of Galileo. The reader is shown how Galileo believed that while the Bible was inviolably true, its interpreters were not, and that it was a book that clearly outlined the steps towards salvation, but was ambiguous on the subject of nature. While the Catholic Galileo was not above referring to Scripture, the author clearly shows that he placed his faith in the truth of science when understanding nature, stating himself that "the language of the Bible is often ambiguous while that of nature is not."<sup>4</sup> Galileo believed that truths established through experience and rational proof, such as his observations were certain on the condition that these truths applied only to the human understanding of nature. Because a human understanding of nature is not a prerequisite for Christian salvation, God does not require humans to understand it according to Biblical terms. Because of this view, this Galileo asserted that, instead of placing Scripture before science, exegetes should reinterpret the Bible accordingly.

Despite his reasoning, one major factor that afflicted both Galileo and his critics during the affair was their mutual failure to come to what Blackwell refers to as a "two world solution."<sup>5</sup> As outlined frequently in the book as well as in reality, the concept of science and religions as means to determine ultimate truth are in constant conflict with one another. The modern-day answer to this problem is the two-world solution, wherein science is used to define the natural and physical world, and religion is used to define the metaphysical, spiritual world. While this system of belief may be compatible with the secular and democratic nature of life in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, it was not so during the seventeenth century. Both Galileo and Bellarmine knew that the concept of God, being directly related to creation itself, was too important of an issue to leave out of scientific suggestions about nature. Therefore, any scientific question that raised doubts about Christian teachings could not be brushed aside as applying only to the natural world, because it would also apply to the spiritual world through extension. The result was that only one side, and one truth, could be correct.

One of the most interesting and eye-opening arguments made by Blackwell during his discussion of the beliefs of Bellarmine in Chapter Two, *Bellarmino's Views Before the Galileo Affair*, is the suggestion that his understanding of cosmology was neither based on Copernicanism nor Aristotelianism, but rather one that he himself had constructed. At the center the system constructed by Bellarmine was the concept of God as an ultimate truth, and that Bellarmine had based this belief purely on his own interpretation of the Scriptures and the early Christian Fathers. Blackwell explains that in the mind of Bellarmine, the Earth was round, unmoving, and in the center of the universe. The heavens were divided into three parts: "the airy one, the starry one and the empyreum; the first is completely transparent and partially capable of reflecting light, the third reflects light all over."<sup>6</sup> The first heaven represented the air and atmosphere of

Earth, the second being home to the moon, sun and stars, and the third being the home to God. Bellarmine believed that the second heaven was made of soft matter that did not revolve around the center of the universe. He believed, according to scripture, that the realm was changeable, and could be dissolved at the will of God such as on Judgement Day. According to Blackwell, Bellarmine believed that because Jesuit astronomers had been distraught by the controversy caused by the injection of the heliocentric theory and its conflict with the Ptolemaic model, they were rarely in agreement over how to understand the heavens. These astronomers were all, on the other hand, united in the belief that where there is uncertainty, understanding should be changed in order to best fit the Scriptures. The subject of changing science to fit the Scriptures, or changing Scriptures to fit science follows a continuous theme that is crucial to *Galileo, Bellarmine in the Bible*: the struggle to relate religious and scientific claims to truth.

One cannot understand the judgement of those who condemned Copernicanism during the trial of 1616 without understanding the role that religious faith played in their lives. Blackwell explains that natural beliefs are formed when the individual is given a claim, and then the opportunity to decide whether this claim is accurate. If this claim cannot be directly checked or tested, the individual has the free will to question whether the source of that claim is legitimate. Natural faith, in a Christian context, stems from an individual's ability to stake what is true in the word of God alone. Because God cannot lie or deceive, his word is automatically true, needing no proof, evidence or argument. Being the ultimate authority of truth, the word of God is enough to overcome any arguments made about the natural world, because it is his truth that governs the greater, transcendent world. Because the Papacy was tasked with interpreting the authority of God in seventeenth century Italy, the judges and inquisitors who went against Galileo were grounded in the virtue of obedience towards religious authority. The Catholic Church had historically institutionalized this authority within both its structure and teachings. The author attributes the injunction that Pope Paul V leveled against Galileo in 1616 to "the logic of centralized authority", where the Pope was not concerned with the truth of astronomical theories, but rather with obedience to the earlier decision to condemn Copernicanism.<sup>7</sup> Though Galileo was not a member of a religious order, and by default required to swear himself to religious obedience, he was still Catholic, and expected by Paul V to act with loyalty. The injunction was levelled on Galileo under the threat that if he disobeyed, he would face imprisonment. The result was that Galileo, in agreeing to the injunction, had been forced to obey the religious authority of the Church. According to Blackwell, "the use of obedience as a tool for the maintenance of power is a key element in the logic of centralized authority," and clearly explains the self-preserving nature of the Catholic Church at this time.<sup>8</sup> When considering the state of Italian society during the early seventeenth

century, the influence of Papal policy upon the daily lives of Italians cannot be discredited. To reiterate this point, Blackwell takes his discussion of the affair into the modern day.

If the liberal, tolerant policies of Pope Francis are proof of short term change in the nature of Papal politics, the long-term diminishment of Papal intervention in society and culture since the seventeenth century are proof that the Catholic Church itself is a decidedly different structure than it was four hundred years ago. Blackwell mentions that while the Catholic Church has furthered its centralization of its religious authority since the 1870 declaration of Papal infallibility, its social, political and cultural power has diminished.<sup>9</sup> This is in contrast to modern society, which is rapidly democratizing, valuing science and marrying it to technology. By raising the argument that science and religion have been moving in opposite directions since the affair, the reader is reminded of the fact that both subjects have evolved dramatically since the trial. In the United States, science now has a heavy appeal to the authority of established concepts and scientific communities, while Catholicism has become more open towards adjusting its beliefs in order to accommodate for science. This is in an ironic contrast to the way things were in seventeenth century Italy, with the situation being in reverse. Galileo, Bellarmine and the Bible concludes itself by presenting the reader with a question for the twenty-first century: if the nature of religious and scientific faith both remain tied to authority, what is the potential for them to clash again?

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**Endnotes**

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