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Hopedale, a Moderate Utopia:
Distinguishing Practical Christianity from Radical Idealism

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History 490- Senior Thesis

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Adin Ballou was frustrated. He had grown weary with being compared to the “impractical” Shakers.¹ He had established a fraternal community in 1841 called Hopedale. At the same time, there was another communistic brotherhood called the Shakers. While sharing some attributes, Ballou thought that the members of Hopedale and the Shakers had distinct systems. But by 1850, Ballou felt that the outside world did not distinguish his followers from those of the Shaker communities. In 1851, Ballou dedicated seventy pages of his publication *Practical Christian Socialism* to rebuffing those ideas. While respectful of the Shakers and their system, Ballou thought that “the Shaker theocracy and spiritualistic hierarchy are too *assumptive* and dominating...They will probably remain a small, select and peculiar people.”² For Ballou, communities like Hopedale or the Shaker communes needed to be open to mainstream American thought. The Shakers, as Ballou understood them, had cast aside conventional society completely. Because of this isolation, Ballou argued that the Shaker system would “never be adopted and submitted to by large numbers of free minded, intelligent persons. It is too unnatural, ascetic, monotonous, artificial, arbitrary, ceremonial and fantastic.”³

¹ Adin Ballou, *Practical Christian Socialism: A Conversational Exposition of the True System of Human Society* (New York: Fowlers and Wells, 1854), 560.

² Adin Ballou, *Practical Christian Socialism*, 563.

³ Adin Ballou, *Practical Christian Socialism*, 564.

Ballou thought that the system he created at Hopedale, in contrast to the Shaker asceticism, was pragmatic and did not break completely from nineteenth century conventions. Hopedale was a small community founded by Ballou and his followers in 1841 near Milford, Massachusetts. While the members of Hopedale tried to reduce the competitive spirit of American capitalism, they also tried to create a moderate organization that balanced both personal responsibility and equality. Instead of embracing any form of “socialism,” the members of Hopedale looked to a humane form of capitalism to guide them in their textile and agricultural pursuits. Hopedale became a forum for debate and dialogue that was open to the reformist ideas of the nineteenth century. These debates contained matters of theology but also topics such as abolition. The members of Hopedale had a moderate perspective, as they wanted to reform American society, but they did not want to change it entirely. Instead, Ballou and other members of Hopedale yearned to create a Christian basis for all to live.

Yet current historians continue to place both the Shakers and the followers of Adin Ballou in the same category. Historians call communities like Hopedale and the Shaker communes “utopias.” Edward Spann, for example, identifies utopias as systems of “radical social idealism...in which members form small societies.”⁴ Spann’s definition of utopias illustrates the analysis that historians have given these systems—as radical organizations. Other historians, including Robert Sutton and William Hinds, follow this classification of utopias.

Utopians, or members of utopias, left mainstream American society in order to enact multiple reforms at once. Utopians aimed their reforms at creating an ideal structure. This structure might include egalitarian beliefs in which all members of the utopia would be equal.

⁴ Edward Spann, *Brotherly Tomorrows: Movements for a Cooperative Society in America 1820-1920* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), xiii.

Other utopians redefined cultural mores or religious arrangements in a community. To adopt this structure, many utopians bought tracks of land on which they established small communities. Most utopian leaders thought that once the individual community became perfect, then the outside world would emulate the utopia. Utopian communities dotted the northern United States during the nineteenth century. During the 1830s, communal societies claimed more than 2,300 members.⁵

For utopians, industrial society had redefined humanity in terms of higher and lower classes.⁶ With the technologies of the era and the new order of industrialization came a wave of changes. These trends toward industrialization and modernization spawned a new economic order. The new economic order polarized humanity into two distinct categories: the capitalists and the laborers. The capitalists generally lived prosperous lives as they controlled the means of production. By controlling the tools of production, the capitalists directed how to distribute wealth. They turned out a high profit for themselves while giving a minimum to their workers. The other side of industrialization involved the lower class who did the manual work. Industrialists were able to pay a minimum in labor costs to these men and women because work had become unskilled. Nineteenth century capitalism called for a division of labor. Instead of having one person craft an item, the management of an industry divided production into simple jobs. Since most manual tasks were now simple and did not require training, the capitalists hired laborers at minimal expense, for they could hire *anyone* to fill positions. Americans applied the

⁵ Ronald Walters, *American Reformers: 1815-1860*, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1997) 40.

⁶ Edward Spann, *Brotherly Tomorrows*, xiv.

principles of the division of labor to many trades and industries, which created the dichotomy between rich and poor, but also increased efficiency.

However, many individuals in America and Europe rejected the new economic industrial order. As early as the eighteenth century, intellectuals and members of the lower classes called for change in the industrial society. Many laborers found their work degrading and the pay they received as inadequate for survival. Empathetic intellectuals saw the treatment of the common man as inhumane. A well-known example was Claude Henri de Rouvroy, Comte de Saint-Simon, a French socialist thinker. Saint-Simon lived during the early years of western industrialization. He looked upon the changing world and saw that the “hand of greed” needed to be eliminated from society entirely.⁷ He declared that the avarice brought on by the new system fostered competition which made people treat others like parts of a machine in order to get ahead. Instead, Saint-Simon urged his contemporaries to embrace socialism—the idea of a more egalitarian society by which people were not treated as merely means by the capitalists. He expounded many of his ideas on socialism in the treatise *L’Industrie*.⁸ In this work, Saint-Simon asked for people to put aside their greed and redefine their society as more equal and fair. However, Henri de Saint-Simon’s thoughts were not unique. Throughout the nineteenth century, many other thinkers embraced their own forms of socialism. All of these reformers wanted to create their own versions of an equal society.

Members of utopian communities were one category of reformers who tried to generate a more egalitarian society in the nineteenth century. While utopians differed in how to approach

⁷ Thomas Kirkup, *History of Socialism* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1906), 6.

⁸ Thomas Kirkup, *History of Socialism*, 236.

the question of equality, most despised the stratification created by the industrial world. The matriarch of the Shaker communities, Mother Ann, lived through the worst conditions of a factory town in England during the 1750s.⁹ Her experience fortified her beliefs as leader of the Shakers. Adin Ballou also felt extreme dissatisfaction with American capitalism: “the existing society is evil and unjust...Its trade, intercourse, and relations are modifications of war, treachery and slavery.”¹⁰ Sentiments like these illustrated how the ideals of the utopians differed from those of the mainstream.

Historians consider utopian communities different from larger, more mainstream communities and reform movements because they grasped at seemingly unattainable ideals. Utopians used unorthodox methods to reach their ideologies. Robert Sutton states that “the utopian tradition is an unbroken motif, not an erratic and fragmented experience.”¹¹ Sutton’s comment reflects the common conception that historians have of utopian communities: all followed the same “radical” track toward perfectionism. In *American Communities and Co-operative Colonies*, William Hinds looks extensively at nineteenth century utopias. However, in this history, he fails to distinguish between the communities themselves, and groups them together in one universal unit called “utopias.”¹²

⁹ Robert Sutton, *Communal Utopias and the American Experience: Religious Communities, 1732-2000* (London: Praeger, 2003), 20.

¹⁰ Adin Ballou, *The Practical Christian*, February 19, 1842, 2.

¹¹ Robert Sutton, *Communal Utopias and the American Experience*, x.

¹² William Hinds, *American Communities and Co-Operative Colonies* (Philadelphia: Porcupine Press, 1975), 40-110.

The word “utopian” in the scholarly imagination denotes images of impracticality and idealism. The word “utopia,” after all, means “nowhere.” In *Between Hell and Reason*, the twentieth century author and philosopher Albert Camus writes: “a utopia is that which is in contradiction with reality.”¹³ Camus expresses what many scholars and historians believe: that all “utopian” communities were impractical. Historians define utopian communities as unconventional because they physically and symbolically leave mainstream society and follow instead a “heavy handed idealism.”¹⁴ Ronald Walters in his history *American Reformers* declares: “all such groups formed around a strong and magnetic leader whose unorthodox theological teachings gave the community reason for its being.”¹⁵ Walters describes the religion and ideas behind these movements as “unorthodox,” revealing that historians and intellectuals like Camus think utopias were odd reform movements which advocated even stranger beliefs.

There are currently three types of histories about utopias. The first involves books like *Brotherly Tomorrows* by Edward Spann and *American Communities and Cooperative Colonies* by William Hinds. These tomes present large quantities of information regarding how utopian communities developed. Spann and Hinds ignore what distinguishes utopias from each other and instead focus on general themes which characterize all communities.¹⁶ The second type of history revolves around individual utopias. Spann’s *Hopedale: from Commune to Company*

¹³ Albert Camus, *Between Hell and Reason* (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1991), 121.

¹⁴ William Hinds, *American Communities and Co-Operative Colonies*, 57.

¹⁵ Ronald Walters, *American Reformers: 1815-1860*, 41.

¹⁶ William Hinds, *American Communities and Co-Operative Colonies*, 70-100; and Edward Spann, *Brotherly Tomorrows*, 79-90.

Town, for example, focuses on only the utopian Hopedale, and mostly forgoes mentioning any other utopias in its pages.¹⁷ The third type of utopian history involves studying a small selection of utopias. In *Communal Utopias and the American Experience*, Robert Sutton evaluates several nineteenth century utopias for the purpose of understanding general trends that characterized these societies.¹⁸

Except in individual histories about other communities, Oneida and the Shakers dominate utopian scholarship. Perhaps contemporary thought sees utopians as idealistic and impractical because of these most famous examples of utopias. The Shakers began as the earliest of these utopian societies in 1747 in England.¹⁹ Eventually, the Shakers expanded to New England and by 1850 had settled nineteen communities.²⁰ Since utopians advocated perfect living, the Shakers enacted many reforms in their communities. The Shakers attempted to eliminate all sin in their community—which involved celibacy, confession, and the rejection of capitalism. By reforming their environment, the Shakers thought they could find God. The Shakers created their system based upon a common stock company.²¹ Everyone in the community shared all property, in contrast to mainstream capitalism. Members of the Shaker

¹⁷ Edward Spann, *Hopedale, from Commune to Company Town, 1840-1920* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1990), 2-100.

¹⁸ Robert Sutton, *Communal Utopias and the American Experience*, 17-36, 67-87.

¹⁹ Robert Sutton, *Communal Utopias and the American Experience*, 17.

²⁰ Frank Albertson, “Seven Utopias of Mid-Nineteenth Century New England,” *Old Time New England*, (1971): 15.

²¹ Robert Sutton, *Communal Utopias and the American Experience*, 19.

community worked for the “collective good,” and not their own self interest.²² The Shakers hoped that by making all property communal, the selfishness seen in general society would disappear. In the Shaker mindset, mysticism, in the form of “physical paroxysms—trances, trembling, rolling on the floor” were all manifestations of God’s spirit.²³ In this way, the Shaker community separated itself from mainstream society which “looked down upon Shaker mysticism as lunacy.”²⁴ The Shakers were so unique in their mysticism and religious life that the outside world considered them their own denomination.²⁵

A second major example of a utopian community was Oneida. The founder of Oneida, John Humphrey Noyes, had similar thoughts to the Shakers. A communal society that shared property destroyed “jealousy that controlled a capitalist society.”²⁶ Thus Noyes advocated for a common stock company, in which members shared property. Oneida propounded free-love, by far its most distinctive reform. Noyes and the other members of the community thought that the relationships between men and women faltered during the industrial era.²⁷ To reestablish loving relationships, members of Oneida were part of “complex marriages” in which everyone shared partners sexually. Sexual intercourse, Noyes argued, added a spiritual element to everyday

²² Frank Albertson, “Seven Utopias of Mid-Nineteenth Century New England,” 15.

²³ Robert Sutton, *Communal Utopias and the American Experience*, 19.

²⁴ Robert Sutton, *Communal Utopias and the American Experience*, 20.

²⁵ Robert Sutton, *Communal Utopias and the American Experience*, 24.

²⁶ Frank Albertson, *Seven Utopias*, 25.

²⁷ William Draper, “Hopedale,” in Lynn Gordon Hughes, *Hopedale Reminiscences* (Providence: Blackstone Editions, 2006), 65.

relationships.²⁸ Oneida's redefinition of sexuality clearly broke from the mainstream. New York and Connecticut officials tried to arrest Noyes multiple times, because his beliefs were considered so radical.²⁹

Both the Shakers and Oneidans exemplified how extreme utopias could be. Their restructuring of their communities and religious life distinguished them from the mainstream. Because of this radicalism, scholars like Sutton have dedicated most of their publications to dealing with these communities. Hinds and other historians follow the same pattern, and deal with the subject of utopias in relation to extreme communities like these.³⁰ However, not all utopian communities followed the same radical course. Some utopias attempted to find a more moderate path to reach their ideals. Extensive histories like Hinds' focus on the main themes of utopias, but analyze all utopias in terms of an "acute reaction to the world."³¹ Sutton and Spann also see utopias as "radical."³² These historians fail to consider that there was a spectrum in the utopian landscape during the nineteenth century.

If on one end of the utopian spectrum lay Oneida and the Shakers, and a "normal" New England town lay on the opposite end of this spectrum, in the middle would lay Hopedale. Adin Ballou and his followers, the architects of Hopedale, agreed that the mainstream American

²⁸ Ronald Walters, *American Reformers*, 35.

²⁹ Robert Sutton, *Communal Utopias and the American Experience*, 70.

³⁰ William Hinds, *American Communities and Co-Operative Colonies*, 227.

³¹ William Hinds, *American Communities and Co-Operative Colonies*, 63.

³² Edward Spann, *Brotherly Tomorrows*, xiii.

society did not offer a Christian basis upon which individuals were to live. They created Hopedale to provide such a foundation. The members of the new society sought to create an environment in which all people could live a fulfilling life, untouched by greed. The village of Hopedale was a small utopian community founded in 1841 by a group known as the Practical Christians, whose religious beliefs were a unique blend of Unitarianism and Universalism. To better understand Hopedale and its religious life, these Protestant denominations need to be analyzed.

Christian denominationalism, or the division of Christianity into smaller sects, has dominated the development of Christianity for centuries. The idea of division within Christianity has existed since the fifteenth century with the rise of Protestantism and the Reformation. Each Protestant sect had its own set of beliefs that related to its reading of the Bible. Protestant sects divided into “right-wing” and “left-wing” beliefs.³³ The “right,” or conservative half of a denomination tried to keep a status quo. The “left” perspective attempted to take a denomination to its theological and structural limits to enact change.³⁴ Historians such as Sutton and Frank Albertson do not consider utopias on this range.³⁵ They think that all utopias were so far removed from usual religious divisions of the day that some of them could be considered their own denominations. The Shakers were an example of a utopia that became its own denomination. But not all utopias followed an extremely “left” perspective. Ballou urged his

³³ Sidney Mead, “Denominationalism: The Shape of Protestantism in America,” *Church History* 23 (1974): 293.

³⁴ Nathan Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989), 25-60.

³⁵ Frank Albertson, “Seven Utopias,” 47-52.

followers to accept a moderate religion that did not “dominate” but at the same time prescribed “what was necessary for salvation.”³⁶ Ballou illustrated here how some utopians wanted a middle path to their theology.

The separation between church and state played a huge role in defining what type of political power each denomination wielded. The Founding Fathers gave no special status to any particular religion, as all religions were politically equal. Religions, therefore, had no political power and could not force anybody to follow their beliefs.³⁷ American denominational leaders such as ministers and evangelists had to use persuasion in order to attain converts. Revivals became centers of persuasion, in which ministers converted thousands to various sects within Protestant Christianity. Utopian communities likewise became centers of persuasion. Some joined a community to partake in egalitarian communal life. Others joined because of the free-love movement such as at Oneida. Ultimately, the leaders of utopias tried to influence people to their belief system through material or ideological persuasion.³⁸ Church leadership was essential to running Protestant communities and also important in “establishing local order.”³⁹ Charismatic ministers or priests led these religious communities. These leaders were in charge of worship but also finding new converts to help the community grow. The Protestant leader was essentially a

³⁶ Adin Ballou, *Practical Christian Socialism*, 29.

³⁷ Sidney Mead, “Denominationalism,” 290-294.

³⁸ Johann Neem. *Creating a Nation of Joiners* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 20-40.

³⁹ Sidney Mead, “Denominationalism,” 295.

politician, who advocated and persuaded people to join his faith.⁴⁰ Adin Ballou was one of these leaders. He tried to convert many to his faith of Practical Christianity.

Both Unitarianism and Universalism were leftwing Protestant movements that began in Europe during the eighteenth century. Both denominations had roots in an anti-Calvinist and Congregationalist heritage.⁴¹ The question of the afterlife plagued many Christians in the nineteenth century. Calvinists looked upon human nature with disgust, and Calvinist tenets articulated that God chose which humans were saved or damned from birth. The term used by historians and theologians like David Robinson to describe Calvinist salvation beliefs was predestination.⁴² For many Americans, this “selective damnation” of Calvin contrasted with what they wanted to believe.⁴³ Many in New England instead turned to Congregationalism, in which all churches were free of an overruling dogma. Rather than having loyalty to a broad denomination, Congregationalism emphasized local community.⁴⁴ Congregationalist churches were independent of each other and only loosely agreed upon basic doctrine.

Unitarianism in America was a division of Congregationalism that developed in the late eighteenth century. Unitarians believed in only one personality of God (the Father), as opposed to other Protestant sects who were Trinitarian with three personalities of God—Father, Son and

⁴⁰ Sidney Mead, “Denominationalism,” 294.

⁴¹ David Robinson, *The Unitarians and the Universalists* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1985), 3.

⁴² David Robinson, *The Unitarians and the Universalists*, 1-10.

⁴³ David Robinson, *The Unitarians and the Universalists*, 5.

⁴⁴ Sidney Mead, “Denominationalism,” 290.

Holy Spirit. They believed that while Christ was the perfect human being, he was not divine.⁴⁵ Christ was the apex of the human condition. To Unitarians, he expressed what human beings could become if mastered by grace. Unitarians thought that to live a good life, one must emulate Christ. Conservative and liberal Unitarians argued over the best way to do this. For right-wing Unitarians, simply living one's life to the fullest brought grace to man. However, more liberal Unitarians promoted freedom of thought and advocated for the use of reason in religious life.⁴⁶ Often known as Transcendentalists, these Unitarians thought that since Christ became the perfect individual, Christians must emulate that by perfecting themselves. Christ was simply a man like everyone else, and therefore all must follow that example and integrate Christian beliefs into everyday life.⁴⁷

The best way to do this was through education. Education demanded that each person become better at something. Education for the liberal Unitarians had to be holistic in order for humans to become perfect beings.⁴⁸ Education was not just for the young but for adults as well. Everyone needed to achieve higher living by learning how to emulate Christ. Unitarianism took a strong foothold in New England because many of the learning centers of the faith were located there, such as Harvard.⁴⁹ Transcendentalists founded Brook Farm, a utopian community in which

⁴⁵ Conrad Wright, *A Stream of Light: A Short History of American Unitarianism* (Boston: Unitarian Universalist Association, 1979), 50.

⁴⁶ Conrad Wright, *A Stream of Light*, 10-15.

⁴⁷ Philip Gura, *American Transcendentalism* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007), 20-70.

⁴⁸ Conrad Wright, *A Stream of Light*, 39.

⁴⁹ Russell Miller, *The Larger Hope: The First Century of the Universalist Church in America 1770-1870* (Boston: Unitarian Universalist Association, 1979), 14.

Unitarian beliefs figured prominently. George Ripley, Brook Farm's founder, emphasized education in his utopia because he thought that it was the way to create the ideal human being. Similarly, Adin Ballou at Hopedale would emulate this education system. However, Ballou never agreed with the Unitarians regarding the Trinity, as he believed in three personalities of God.

Unitarian theology articulated the idea that all humans were perfectible beings; Ralph Waldo Emerson expressed this idea in his *American Scholar* speech given at a Harvard graduation ceremony in 1837: "in self-trust, all the virtues are comprehended... As the world was plastic and fluid in the hands of God, so it is ever to so much of his attributes as we bring to it."⁵⁰ Emerson's words reveal the Unitarian belief that God created the world, but only through human action can the world become perfect. The emphasis on self-trust illustrates how Unitarians had confidence in the actions and nature of men. Unitarians also propounded freedom of thought, as it led to the perfection of the human condition.⁵¹

Unitarians thought that since humans were perfectible, God could never condemn them to eternal damnation.⁵² However, Unitarian beliefs on salvation were not the same thing as universal salvation. Unitarians thought that while humans were *capable* of being perfected, not all people reached perfection; thus, some Unitarians still "held a belief in damnation."⁵³ But most

⁵⁰ Ralph Waldo Emerson. "The American Scholar," in David Robinson, *The Unitarians and the Universalists*, 111-112.

⁵¹ David Robinson, *The Unitarians and the Universalists*, 1-10.

⁵² Russell Miller, *The Larger Hope*, 15.

⁵³ David Robinson, *The Unitarians and the Universalists*, 10-11.

Unitarians saw human nature as striving toward the good. Unitarian perfectionist principles implied that humans were in charge of their own destiny, unlike that of Calvin's predestination.⁵⁴

Universalism, on the other hand, proclaimed the universal salvation of all people, even if they did not believe in Christ. Universalism took hold in America in the 1790s, a time when several new Protestant denominations began to emerge in America, and like Unitarianism, grew predominantly in the New England area during the nineteenth century. John Murray, the father of American Universalism, believed that all supporters of Christ would be saved upon death.⁵⁵ Murray thought that those who did not truly follow Christ would be damned, but they would be eventually redeemed once they accepted Christ. In this way, all could be eventually saved.⁵⁶

These beliefs on salvation implied that all were equal on this plane of existence, since God chooses all humanity for salvation.⁵⁷ Because of the implications of universal salvation, Universalists advocated for social responsibility, believing that it was up to them to exemplify their beliefs by changing the world to be more egalitarian. This philosophy became the basis for Universalist support of abolitionism and better conditions for industrial workers. Universalists advocated for abolitionism because they thought that everyone—including the slave—was

⁵⁴ David Robinson, *The Unitarians and the Universalists*, 1.

⁵⁵ David Robinson, *The Unitarians and the Universalists*, 3.

⁵⁶ Charles Howe, *The Larger Faith: A Short History of American Universalism* (Boston: Skinner House Books, 1993), 12.

⁵⁷ Charles Howe, *The Larger Faith*, 17-27.

eventually saved, not just a select few.⁵⁸ Southern Christians condemned Universalism because this central Universalist belief undermined slavery.⁵⁹

Universalists, while rejecting eternal damnation altogether, did agree with Calvinists that the power of salvation rested in the hands of God, not humanity. Universalists saw God as a beneficent being who could never condemn anyone to hell permanently.⁶⁰ Universalists supported the Calvinist claim that God decided who gets salvation and who does not, but Universalists expanded salvation to everyone. Universalism broke off from Unitarianism on the concept of the will of God. While Unitarianism emphasized human free will and cutting one's own path to heaven, Universalism left salvation in the hands of God, who simply saved everyone eventually.⁶¹ Yet the end was the same for both denominations: a break with mainstream Protestantism on the question of salvation.

In 1815, Hosea Ballou, a young Universalist minister, called for change in the Universalists' theological beliefs on salvation. In his *Treatise on Atonement* Hosea Ballou wrote: "the moment we fancy ourselves infallible, everyone must come to our peculiarities or we cast them away... Let brotherly love continue. If we agree in brotherly love, there is no disagreement that can do us any injury, but if we do not, no other agreement can do us any good."⁶² Hosea

⁵⁸ Charles Howe, *The Larger Faith*, 15.

⁵⁹ Charles Howe, *The Larger Faith*, 15.

⁶⁰ Elmo Robinson, *American Universalism* (New York: Exposition Press, 1970), 23.

⁶¹ Elmo Robinson, *American Universalism*, 20.

⁶² Ernest Cassara, *Universalism in America* (Boston: Skinner House Books, 1984), 47.

Ballou's words meant that all people have peculiarities and defects and thus all shared the same fate in the afterlife: immediate salvation. Historians such as Charles Howe, author of *The Larger Faith: a Short History of American Universalism*, agree that this quotation began a drastic shift in the beliefs of Universalists in terms of salvation.⁶³ Instead of some souls going to hell to become Christian before ascending into heaven, all were saved immediately upon death. Hosea Ballou's belief contradicted John Murray's philosophy on Universal Salvation. Murray was too old to defend his standpoint, and so Hosea Ballou's thoughts prevailed.⁶⁴

Hosea Ballou's doctrine became known as the "Ultra Universalist" perspective since it took the beliefs of Murray to an extreme.⁶⁵ Most lay Universalists kept their beliefs in Murray's Universalism, being impartial toward Hosea Ballou's beliefs.⁶⁶ However, the clergy of the Universalist convention squelched any opposition to the Ultra Universalist perspective. Thus the Ultra Universalist view dominated in the official teaching of Universalism for the remainder of the century.

Some Universalists openly dissented with this judgment. These Universalists said that while all humanity would be eventually restored in the final resurrection, some souls would spend at least some time in a type of purgation. Those who disagreed with Hosea Ballou on practical terms were known as the "Restorationists." The Restorationists were called such a name

⁶³ Charles Howe, *The Larger Faith*, 17-27.

⁶⁴ Charles Howe, *The Larger Faith*, 20.

⁶⁵ Ernest Cassara, *Universalism in America*, 70.

⁶⁶ Charles Howe, *The Larger Faith*, 25.

because they wanted to restore the original salvation beliefs of Murray to Universalism.⁶⁷ American Universalism divided into two camps for the majority of the nineteenth century. Adin Ballou, the founder of the Hopedale community, was a Restorationist, who disagreed with his distant cousin Hosea Ballou over the concept of universal salvation.

Unlike the majority of Restorationists who kept their beliefs silent, Adin Ballou was a vocal opponent of Ultra Universalism. He had become a Universalist minister in 1823, but soon found himself at odds with the official teaching of Universalism.⁶⁸ In his *Autobiography*, Adin Ballou made it clear that he disagreed with the “Ultra” view on pragmatic grounds.⁶⁹ Ballou believed that universal salvation was unrealistic since it took away responsibility from humanity’s actions. Ballou had always thought that it was important to “keep elbow room,” meaning that one should keep one’s mind open, especially in ideology.⁷⁰ To Adin Ballou, Hosea Ballou’s followers had created an absolutist belief without sensitivity to the context in which they operated. Reason had to be used when evaluating how God judged humankind. Ballou thought that God spared all of humanity, but everyone still had a responsibility in this life. If they did not meet these responsibilities, then some type of temporary punishment awaited them. Ballou thought that by creating a Christian environment, one could meet these responsibilities. After falling away from mainstream Universalism because of his Restorationist philosophy,

⁶⁷ Ernest Cassara, *Universalism in America*, 60-70.

⁶⁸ Adin Ballou, *Autobiography* (Lowell, Massachusetts: Vox Popui Press, 1897), 170.

⁶⁹ Adin Ballou, *Autobiography*, 197.

⁷⁰ Adin Ballou, *Autobiography*, 50.

Ballou preached at a Unitarian parish, because the congregation there allowed him to keep his Universalist beliefs.⁷¹

In developing the philosophy called Practical Christianity, Ballou took many ideas from both Unitarianism and Universalism. For Ballou, these denominations offered much in terms of perfecting Christianity. Unitarianism's emphasis on free thought and education was attractive for Ballou. But at the same time, the social outlook of Universalism and the reforms it promoted also appealed to him and other Practical Christians. A utopia, then, was the only pragmatic system for the Practical Christians because it offered a place where they could perfect Christianity. By studying both Unitarianism and Universalism, it becomes clear that Hopedale emulated and developed around these two denominations, whereas other utopias ignored mainstream denominational belief. Ballou thus decided to establish a utopian community because he saw it as the most pragmatic means of putting Practical Christianity into practice. Ballou thought that "no where but in the community can the social interest be perfect."⁷² Social interest for Ballou meant how society developed. Jacksonian America did not offer a way to live a good life by itself. The Practical Christians were trying to bring together many ideals: "[Practical Christians] are imperatively required [to have] divine love in their affections for all... Practical Christianity proposes to harmonize all important ideas into a true social state."⁷³ Ultimately, however, the society the Practical Christians created would not look much different than the world they tried to escape from, unlike other utopias like Oneida and the Shakers. Hopedale did not redefine

⁷¹ Adin Ballou, *Autobiography*, 198.

⁷² Adin Ballou, *The Practical Christian*, December 25, 1841, 84.

⁷³ Adin Ballou, *Practical Christian Socialism*, 54.

cultural or religious mores, nor differ greatly from mainstream culture. Instead, the Practical Christians chose an arrangement of beliefs and systemization which was unorthodox, but not radical.

At Hopedale, the Practical Christians built a community that reformed the ideals of American society rather than rejecting them altogether. Unlike the Shakers, the members of Hopedale did not think they were leaving mainstream denominational belief behind.⁷⁴ Even before its inception, the Hopedale experiment ceased to be called either “Unitarian” or “Universalist.” It instead became a place of hybridization of both Universalism and Unitarianism. The joining of these philosophies arose from a pragmatic need in which Ballou and the other Practical Christians “wanted to bring all Christian interests into a social state.”⁷⁵ This interplay of ideals is seen in the formation of Practical Christianity, but also in the religious and educational life at Hopedale. While the Practical Christians did want to reform Jacksonian society, they did so in a more moderate fashion compared to the Shakers or Oneidans. The reason behind this moderate impulse came from a desire to attract outsiders. Ballou did not want to alienate the outside world. Ballou thought that the Shakers would remain a “small, select and peculiar people,” because they were too extreme.⁷⁶ While the Practical Christians went against many principles of the mainstream, they created a system that reconciled their Christian perfectionism and the outside world. The product was a moderate utopia.

⁷⁴ Edward Spann, *Brotherly Tomorrows*, xiii.

⁷⁵ Adin Ballou, *Practical Christian Socialism*, 28.

⁷⁶ Adin Ballou, *Practical Christian Socialism*, 563.

Few historians have studied Hopedale, and many of those who have have overlooked its religious life. While individual histories provide sketches of the religion found at Hopedale, the community's religion has never been the topic of a thorough study. In *The Larger Faith*, Charles Howe furthers the assumption that Hopedale remained a Universalist reaction to the world.⁷⁷ Howe ignores the Unitarian philosophy that the Practical Christian utilized—especially in their moral education system.

In his full history *Hopedale: From Commune to Company Town*, Edward Spann writes extensively about the structure of the community in Hopedale. Spann offers a full synopsis of the various infrastructure projects that took place. He mentions the religious education that took place there. Spann argues that Adin Ballou never returned to Universalism after leaving the Universalist Parish in Milford, and that the chapel and religious life in the community were Unitarian but adhered to the tenets of Practical Christianity.⁷⁸ Spann's history, as the title implies, illustrates the shift from communal living to living in a company town. In later chapters of *Hopedale*, Spann does compare religious life under the earlier system with the later one, but does not give a full analysis of both the Unitarian and Universalist ideologies at work in Hopedale.

In *A New Civilization Radically Higher than the Old: Adin Ballou's Search for Social Perfection*, Jerry Caswell attempts to tie Adin Ballou's philosophy to that of perfectionism. Caswell states that Ballou was trying to perfect the world of New England. Ballou, who developed in a liberal Protestant setting and inspired by thinkers like William Lloyd Garrison, thought that human beings had to reach a perfect state by isolating themselves from society. By

⁷⁷ Charles Howe, *The Larger Faith*, 30.

⁷⁸ Edward Spann, *Hopedale*, 18-64.

isolating oneself from corrupt institutions like government, one could attain inner perfection. However, only initially did Ballou agree with thinkers like Garrison. Eventually, Ballou came to the conclusion that only through social means could humans truly reach perfection, that only through interacting with the world and becoming a “social creature” could one truly find perfection.⁷⁹ Caswell ties Ballou’s Universalism to this ideal of social perfection: if all people have at least the potential of eventual salvation, then all of society must be unified and treated equitably. But Caswell only extends this analysis to the formative days of the movement; he does not apply it to the later days of the movement nor even to the philosophy behind the movement itself. Caswell also portrays Ballou’s perfectionism as a clear break from the mainstream. However, Ballou’s perfectionist impulse was his means of creating a perfect environment to express moderate beliefs.

Many primary sources express this moderate trend. Primary sources that present Hopedale’s religious life are varied and are strongly tied to Ballou. The first source which narrates the entire journey of the Hopedale community is Adin Ballou’s *Autobiography*. Ballou and William Heywood, Ballou’s son-in-law, compiled the *Autobiography* in the late 1880s. Ballou and Heywood attempted to present the full story of Ballou’s life by gathering together various newspaper articles and other primary documents. Ballou wrote the *Autobiography* in his pastoral prose, making the narrative both historical and philosophical. At times, Ballou damns or praises the world around him, giving a window into what exactly the Practical Christians believed. The *Autobiography* takes the reader across a huge swath of time, from Ballou’s birth in 1803 to the 1870s. While at times Ballou may be accused of giving an unbalanced interpretation

⁷⁹ Jerry Caswell, “A New Civilization Radically Higher than the Old: Adin Ballou’s Search for Social Perfection,” *The Journal of the Universalist Historical Society* 9 (1967): 70-96.

of events, his presentation of the theological and philosophical ideas central to understanding Practical Christianity is helpful, especially in explaining the formative years of Hopedale, when few written sources exist. The *Autobiography* also suffers from its extensive utilization of polemics: Ballou was trying to achieve a very particular goal, and there were many, he found, who got in his way.

Ballou further articulated his ideas about Hopedale in *A History of the Hopedale Community: From its Inception to its Virtual Submergence in the Hopedale Parish*, published in 1897, after Ballou's death. In his history, Ballou deals with the community life of Hopedale and how its culture changed throughout its relatively brief existence. To some extent, Ballou crafted *History of the Hopedale Community* as a lamentation about how the Hopedale community was hijacked by self-interest. Ballou admitted that "the great masses of people are not yet sufficiently indoctrinated and established in pure Christian ethics."⁸⁰ The failure of Hopedale, Ballou thought, was a clear indication that the people of his time remained unready for Practical Christianity. Ultimately, he thought that another generation would learn from Practical Christianity and hopefully succeed in implementing it. Thus, the *History of Hopedale* is specifically aimed at a future audience. In the *History*, Ballou clearly presents Hopedale's failures and what was lacking in the town's practices. It also gives a clear picture of the moderate ideology Ballou was trying to maintain.

In support of his *History of Hopedale*, Ballou quoted extensively from the pages of the *Practical Christian*, the newspaper in which Ballou and his followers wrote prolifically. The paper was originally printed in 1838 in nearby Mendon, Massachusetts, but Ballou moved

⁸⁰ Adin Ballou, *History of the Hopedale Community: From its Inception to its Virtual Submergence in the Hopedale Parish* (Lowell, Massachusetts: Vox Populi Press, 1897), iv.

publication to Hopedale itself in the mid-1840s, once the infrastructure of the town improved. Ballou wrote many articles in its pages expounding upon the system of Practical Christianity. At times, the opinions of others, including William Lloyd Garrison, were also presented, but most of the time the newspaper was dedicated to the Hopedale community itself. The masthead of every issue contained the words “devoted to truth and righteousness,” a clear indication of the newspaper’s definite goals which included defending Ballou’s Restorationist theology as well as promoting the utopian ideals of Hopedale. By the 1850s, the *Practical Christian*’s readership numbered several hundred, including many outside of the community.⁸¹ While Ballou intended his *Autobiography* and *History of Hopedale* for later generations, he aimed the *Practical Christian* at his contemporary audience.

An effective source for understanding the culture of Hopedale is the *Hopedale Reminiscences: Papers Read Before the Hopedale Ladies’ Sewing Circle and Branch Alliance, April 27th 1910*. The *Reminiscences* were memoirs of girls who had grown up in Hopedale. While they by no means represent a chronologically complete history of the community, their stories and anecdotes provide a glimpse of life at Hopedale. As the title implies, the ladies’ sewing circle at Hopedale asked older members of the group for papers recording their experiences as children. These memoirs were presented almost fifty years after the events recorded, and in the memoirs themselves some of the authors admitted to a loss of memory. No doubt, too, some of their experiences were exaggerated or filtered. But in spite of these limitations, other documents, including Hopedale’s newspaper *The Practical Christian*, buttress

⁸¹Edward Spann, *Hopedale*, 50-60.

their narratives. The accounts reveal a utopian community trying to stand on principle, yet striving, too, to be humane and pragmatic.

Adin Ballou's philosophy was initially shaped by his childhood. He was born to Ariel and Edilda Ballou in 1803.⁸² He described his early life as hard, but fulfilling: "work was the fundamental law in my father's household. He led off and all his forces had to follow. He allowed no idling and but a small modicum of amusement."⁸³ Ballou thought that his early life was difficult, and he reacted against his hardship in his later life. Ariel Ballou had a farm with a "large, comfortable domicile, plenty of wholesome food, decent clothing, and the ordinary necessaries of an agricultural family; but luxuries, fineries, and gentilities were afar off."⁸⁴ This quote reveals that Ballou grew up in an agrarian home that did not have the wealth of other families. Ballou thus saw a disconnect between hard work and the wealth of the capitalist world. Some, he argued, were given little and did everything, while others did nothing and were given everything by society. Later in life, Ballou would compare a scholar to a housewife, finding that the scholar was praised, yet did little to benefit society. The housewife was largely not thanked, yet "brings happiness to everyone that surrounds her."⁸⁵ He thought that with responsibility came reward, and through much of Ballou's life, the idea of equality remained important.

From a young age, Adin Ballou had a fascination with the afterlife: "death was a strange and awful mystery to me for a considerable time, notwithstanding the patient answers to my

⁸² Adin Ballou, *Autobiography*, 1.

⁸³ Adin Ballou, *Autobiography*, 13.

⁸⁴ Adin Ballou, *Autobiography*, 14.

⁸⁵ Adin Ballou, "Labor," *Practical Christian*, April 13, 1841.

inquiries concerning it. I imbibed the inculcations given me that the souls of the dead had been taken away by God into some region of happiness or misery.”⁸⁶ Ballou would try to answer such questions his entire life. Part of this obsession came from the active role of religion in his early childhood. Many of Ballou’s relatives, including his parents, were part of a small group known as the Christian Connexion during the early 1800s: “[the Christian Connexion] spread over a region of country not less than fifty miles square, of which the Ballou neighborhood might be considered the center.”⁸⁷ Members of the Christian Connexion believed that souls were either saved or destroyed. Unlike in the Calvinist view of the afterlife, there was no hell whatsoever; rather souls stopped existing altogether. The souls of those God found favorable were saved; the souls of those who were not saved were simply destroyed. In his *Autobiography*, Ballou stated that while the Christian Connexion won many converts at first, it “failed to stop people from falling back to their old ways.”⁸⁸ Ballou judged the Connexion as a failure because it “was not promoting the name of Christ properly... [The Connexion] met infrequently...people slipped into sin quickly.”⁸⁹ Ballou instead struggled to find a religious system that tried to keep individuals on the good path. The Connexion did not do this, so Ballou moved on.

Even as a young man in the 1810s, Adin Ballou’s obsession with the afterlife attracted him toward religious life: “I longed to be a Christian, and prayed and wept in secret places,

⁸⁶Adin Ballou, *Autobiography*, 12.

⁸⁷ Adin Ballou, *Autobiography*, 29.

⁸⁸ Adin Ballou, *Autobiography*, 31.

⁸⁹ Adin Ballou, *Autobiography*, 31.

seeking to be humble and penitent enough to receive some heavenly assurance of acceptance with God.”⁹⁰ Here, Ballou’s pietistic qualities become clear. Evangelization and redemption became his obsession, and he attempted to find a way to express those qualities emotionally. During these early years, Ballou looked on with awe as “the controversy between the Trinitarians and Unitarians in this country was inaugurated about this time.”⁹¹ During this period, Ballou doubted whether the Unitarians were true Christians. While he later would accept many of the structural ideas of the Unitarians, he never accepted their “one personality” theology. Universalism was also anathema as it “had rejected all belief in future punishment... and through their preachers and published expositions to make their influence felt in many places where they had no organized foothold.”⁹² Ballou’s family considered Universalism a “Deist” religion, and thought that it had no basis in the Bible and focused far too much on rationality. With Ballou’s pietistic beliefs in God, he was very active in the Connexion, and was raised to ministerial status.

However, his beliefs changed after his mother-in-law gave him a Universalist tract to read. Ballou had thought that he could argue her out of her Universalist beliefs, but after reading “Winchester’s ‘Dialogues,’ I felt all the force of their reasoning and felt it against the doctrine of annihilation as well as against that of endless misery.”⁹³ This sudden conversion came not only from his mother-in-law but also from outside influence. Massachusetts was a stronghold of Universalist (as well as Unitarian) belief where Ballou would have been exposed to their

⁹⁰ Adin Ballou, *Autobiography*, 32.

⁹¹ Adin Ballou, *Autobiography*, 45.

⁹² Adin Ballou, *Autobiography*, 47.

⁹³ Adin Ballou, *Autobiography*, 80.

arguments. Ballou might have wrestled with these arguments for a long time, but his mother-in-law might have persuaded him to conversion. Since Ballou doubted his destructionist faith, he came to believe that the Universalists made better arguments and even had Church Fathers like Origen to support them. Even more, he believed that the Universalists offered a “foundation on which to build a rational society.”⁹⁴ For Ballou, the Connexion did not adhere to a rational basis. While the Connexion fostered his emotions, the Universalists offered a way to appease him rationally; so in early 1823, Ballou converted to Universalism. His family, especially Ariel Ballou, rejected his conversion and spurned him.

At first, Ballou accepted the Ultra Universalist position, believing that all souls were saved by God at death. He stated: “future retribution as well as that of final restoration begged me to remember that the denomination embraced both believers and disbelievers in that view of the divine government, not making either a test of fellowship.”⁹⁵ Yet the above quote illustrates how Ballou had qualms with immediate universal salvation even early in his Ultra Universalist days. Ballou’s pragmatism led him to believe that the individual did not have enough responsibility in Universalism. If God simply saved everyone, then Ballou feared a slippery slope in which people “did what they wanted.”⁹⁶ But the Connexion had already exiled Ballou, and he needed to accept the predominant ideology within Universalism in order to obtain a ministry. Therefore, Ballou preached that “death was to finish sin and the resurrection to

⁹⁴ Adin Ballou, *Autobiography*, 80.

⁹⁵ Adin Ballou, *Autobiography*, 85.

⁹⁶ Adin Ballou, *Autobiography*, 92.

inaugurate perfection of character and blessedness.”⁹⁷ Preaching such Ultra Universalism, Ballou became the minister of a Universalist parish in Milford, Massachusetts in 1824. By that time, Hosea Ballou and most other Universalist clergy had cast Restorationist belief aside. The Restorationists, those Universalists who did not think that everyone was immediately saved upon death, had grown quiet since Hosea Ballou’s rise to predominance within Universalism around 1815. Likewise, Adin Ballou’s “thoughts on Restorationism had receded into the background, becoming faint and feeble in its abeyance.”⁹⁸

But that acceptance did not last. During his seven-year ministry in Milford, his Universalist beliefs would evolve, with his Restorationist tendencies returning to the fore. Ballou stated that in the late 1820s he felt that: “I could [not] in reason and conscience abide by the slim measure of Ultra Universalism. Nor could I do otherwise than disapprove and scorn the contemptuous tone of the general Universalist press and pulpit towards nearly everything.”⁹⁹ Ballou explored the narrowness of universal salvation in this quote. For Ballou, belief in Christ was the bare minimum for salvation and sin was a reality. According to this interpretation, the Ultra Universalists had foregone reason and had become impractical. For example, Ballou hypothetically asked if the fate of the irresponsible man was the same as that of the responsible one.¹⁰⁰ The Ultra Universalists argued that, under a Universalist system, both men’s fates were ultimately the same. But Adin Ballou thought it was essential to keep man’s actions up for

⁹⁷ Adin Ballou, *Autobiography*, 90.

⁹⁸ Adin Ballou, *Autobiography*, 114.

⁹⁹ Adin Ballou, *Autobiography*, 170.

¹⁰⁰ Adin Ballou, *Practical Christian Socialism*, 29.

interpretation, and that many ideas about humanity had to be utilized in order to craft a practical faith. Ballou dismissed the Ultra Universalists because they had instead created a theological absolute.

Ballou developed his thoughts further in “The Medway Sermon,” or “The Inestimable Value of Souls,”¹⁰¹ written in 1830. Here, Ballou commented again on the Ultra Universalist perspective. As the title suggests, Ballou argued that one cannot know how God values souls, and urged the Universalist congregation in Medway to partake in a more sensible understanding of Universalism. Ballou wanted the Universalism of John Murray brought back because it fostered a more dynamic faith. Without a dialogue between Universalists, there was, Ballou felt, no way to know how to live a good life. The Ultra Universalists, he feared, placed insufficient emphasis on matters of morals.¹⁰² The religious boundaries of Ultra Universalism had grown too confining for Ballou, and the only escape was to refine Universalism. Ballou also tried to argue in “The Inestimable Value of Souls” that God’s will could not be measured through human-made laws. God was a kind, loving figure to Ballou, and all would eventually be saved, but God was not blind to the human condition. To Ballou and other Restorationists, God required faith in Jesus Christ for immediate salvation.

After the Medway Sermon, many Universalist preachers attacked Adin Ballou in various publications. Hosea Ballou personally led the assault. Adin Ballou recounted the situation in his *Autobiography*: “[the Ultra’s] chief offense to those decrying [Restorationism] was that it interpreted and applied certain important passages of Scripture, in such a way as to derive from

¹⁰¹ Adin Ballou, *Autobiography*, 172.

¹⁰² Adin Ballou, *Autobiography*, 172.

them support for the doctrine of future retribution, which was contrary to the *ex-cathedra* expositions of Rev. Hosea Ballou and kindred doctrinaires.”¹⁰³ Ballou placed emphasis on the words “ex-cathedra.” To Ballou, the Universalists were far too absolute and dogmatic in their ideology. To him, Ultra Universalist beliefs took away from a rational liberal basis, in which ideas had to be examined and refuted or accepted. The words “ex-cathedra” compared the policies of Hosea Ballou to that of the Catholic Church, one of the chief institutions of dogmatism in the world to Ballou and other nineteenth century American Protestants. Like the Catholic Church, Adin Ballou implied that Hosea Ballou and his followers were simply telling people what to believe.

But as much as Adin Ballou tried to counter the charge that he was “not being a Universalist,” the Ultra Universalists repudiated him. Nevertheless, he honestly thought that the majority of church members were with him.¹⁰⁴ Perhaps the most important and unique of these claims was: “there was no denominational creed or standard of faith giving the no-future-punishment view any precedence of its opposite.”¹⁰⁵ According to Ballou, the Ultra Universalists had no standing in claiming that their beliefs better represented “true” Universalism than those of the Restorationists. Ballou believed that one could use her better judgment in evaluating questions of salvation. Of his fellow ministers, Ballou said: “they had their honest convictions

¹⁰³ Adin Ballou, *Autobiography*, 172-173. The italicized words are as they appear in the *Autobiography*.

¹⁰⁴ Adin Ballou, *Autobiography*, 177.

¹⁰⁵ Adin Ballou, *Practical Christian*, December 23, 1844.

and I had mine; and the two points were irreconcilable.”¹⁰⁶ Ballou remained a Restorationist, and eventually chose to leave the Universalists.

Ballou pondered where to go. He wanted to keep his Restorationist beliefs, but the Universalists, especially in Milford, wanted no part of his rebellion. His journey would lead him to consider the Unitarian denomination. At first, Ballou was skeptical of uniting with the Unitarians: “I could not therefore, with honor, think of gaining entrance into that fold. Much less was I morally capable of accepting any form of philosophical materialism or of nebulous transcendentalism with its hazy dreams of the Great Absolute and of a doubtful immortality.”¹⁰⁷ The free thought and self-centered nature of the Unitarians troubled Ballou. He doubted if their Arian beliefs (those who agree with the heretic Arius) would create a suitable place for him. For Ballou, like most nineteenth century Americans, the Unitarian belief in only one personality of God was too radically different from mainstream theology. But seeming to have no other option, he became minister of a small parish in Mendon Massachusetts, moving there in 1831.

Because of their “open-mindedness,” Ballou’s new parish did not consider him a threat as long as he held to the basic tenets of Christianity. Ballou ministered to only a small group of Unitarians in Mendon: “the First Parish and church in Mendon at the time I took pastoral charge of them, were in a depressed and unpromising condition. The church proper had been reduced by a recent secession to eight members.”¹⁰⁸ But Ballou would go wherever he needed to have his voice heard and to make a basic living.

¹⁰⁶ Adin Ballou, *Autobiography*, 177.

¹⁰⁷ Adin Ballou, *Autobiography*, 220.

¹⁰⁸ Adin Ballou, *Autobiography*, 194.

Ballou's movement to Mendon in 1831 was no conversion to Unitarianism. He benefitted from the freedom that he "might be allowed to entertain and promulgate [his] views unchallenged and without hindrance of any sort."¹⁰⁹ But while Ballou did not convert, he came to the conclusion that a creedless religion would at least offer him the opportunity to present and develop his own thoughts. In addition, Ballou saw value in the structure of the Unitarian version of Congregationalism. In those communities, freedom of thought and individual expression were commonplace. One did not have to drop one's own beliefs in order to enter those communities.¹¹⁰ Rather, members of a Unitarian church met to "hear scripture... [And] be in the presence of the community."¹¹¹ Congregationalists only required belief in a simple creed, such as belief in God. Later, Practical Christianity similarly would become a loose set of agreements instead of a definite creed, in order to counteract the impracticality of absolute religion. Ballou took some of the Unitarian beliefs and utilized them later in the Hopedale experiment.

Ballou learned to break down denominational lines at his parish in Mendon: "we are willing and anxious to meet all Christians, however different from us in opinion, on a level of brotherly love, and while we claim and allow perfect freedom in matters of faith, to treat them as we wish to be treated. If we can have such fellowship and co-operation, we shall rejoice, not as a sect, but as Christians."¹¹² Ballou wanted to keep Christianity open and so tried not to force any

¹⁰⁹ Adin Ballou, *Autobiography*, 220.

¹¹⁰ Conrad Wright, *A Stream of Light*, 50.

¹¹¹ Sidney Mead, "Denominationalism," 294.

¹¹² Adin Ballou, *Autobiography*, 242.

dogma or creed on people.¹¹³ But there was also a very pragmatic reason for Ballou allowing all beliefs into his fold: once you declare the boundaries of a faith, some may not join. Since Ballou understood people to be stubborn in terms of faith (he himself would not change his faith to match anyone else's) he knew that forcing some to follow would only make them turn away. Other utopian communities such as the Shakers proposed a definite direction which they wanted to follow. Both at his parish in Mendon and later with Practical Christianity Ballou instead found it important to have no radical set of religious laws.

Ballou's ideology became increasingly distinctive during the mid 1830s. During this time, he promoted many reforms such as temperance and anti-slavery. Ballou also advocated for an extensive educational system. In Mendon, Ballou became very active in the Sunday school: "I gave special lectures to the children and youth of the Sunday School, exhorting them earnestly to be conscientious, reverent."¹¹⁴ Ballou wanted education and reform, but there was no way to promote these ideas in a denominational setting. The Unitarians promoted education but ignored social reform while the Universalists did the opposite. For Ballou, a perfect Christian system had to be created. But the question of where troubled him.

Ballou found his answer while at Mendon during the 1830s. He met with the Restorationist Association, a group of Universalist men and women who advocated for change within the Universalist faith. The Association met frequently to discuss the problems of Ultra Universalism and the next moves of Restorationism. But the Restorationist Association, too, was

¹¹³ Paul Conkin. *American Originals: Homemade Varieties of Christianity* (London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 60.

¹¹⁴ Adin Ballou, *Autobiography*, 275.

divided into a conservative and a progressive wing. The conservatives advocated compromise with the Ultra Universalists, while the progressives believed that a break with Ultra Universalists must be made and that the Restorationists should establish their own denomination.¹¹⁵

Ballou was still the minister at the Unitarian parish in Mendon, but increasingly felt the need to escape from its unitarian theology and returned to the Universalists.¹¹⁶ Ballou led the progressive half of the Restorationist Association to adopt the Standard of Practical Christianity in 1839, which would serve as the basis of a new Restorationist belief system. The Restorationist Standard begins: “we are Christians. Our creed is the New Testament. Our religion is love. Our only law is the will of God. Our grand object is the restoration of man, especially the most fallen and friendless.”¹¹⁷ The first line indicated that the Standard was not only calling out for a Restorationist philosophy, but also general reform. The Standard required its members to be Christian, but not necessarily Restorationists. It tried to break down denominationalism and attempted to bring freedom of thought to the table. As stated above, Ballou found freedom of thought an attractive element in Unitarianism. Freedom of thought was also a quick way to get converts. Having no creed “besides the New Testament” created a loose basis for Ballou and his followers. The final line of the Standard indicated the need for a new community, on which education and reform would be combined to create the perfect Christian character: “our immediate concern is the promotion of useful knowledge, moral improvement, and Christian

¹¹⁵Adin Ballou, *Autobiography*, 275-279.

¹¹⁶ Adin Ballou, *Autobiography*, 275-280.

¹¹⁷ Adin Ballou, *History of the Hopedale Community*, 4.

perfection in a united community.”¹¹⁸ Useful knowledge meant a way of attaining better education and, in the end, a perfect society.

The Standard then became more specific in what type of reforms and system it was advocating: “we can make no earthly object our chief good; nor be governed by any motive but the love of right; nor compromise duty with worldly convenience; nor seek the preservation of our property, our reputation, our personal liberty, or our life by sacrificing conscience. We can... but to do good.”¹¹⁹ The Restorationist Association placed emphasis on a simple yet active lifestyle. They promoted staying away from worldly goods and instead advocated for “doing the good.” Ballou wanted the capitalistic sin of material want obliterated, ushering in the return of Christ-like Christians.

The Restorationist Association advocated for non-resistance, another leading reform movement of the nineteenth century: “we cannot be governed by the will of man, however solemnly and formally declared, nor put our trust in an arm of flesh. Hence we voluntarily withdraw from all interference with the governments of this world.”¹²⁰ Non-resistance made Christianity the only true authority on Earth. Because secular governments were corrupt and interfered in the rightful roles of religion at times, Ballou thought that it was important to separate from them altogether. Non-resistance critiqued government as corrupt and coercive. Advocates of non-resistance wanted all coercive force eliminated because it “killed man’s

¹¹⁸ Adin Ballou, *History of the Hopedale Community*, 4.

¹¹⁹ Adin Ballou, *History of the Hopedale Community*, 4.

¹²⁰ Adin Ballou, *History of the Hopedale Community*, 5.

freedom.”¹²¹ Thus non-resistance, as with many of the reforms that the Standard advocated, demanded a practical way to the attainment of a perfect Christianity. To Ballou, such reforms were humanity’s stepping stones toward God. By throwing off the burden of government, men took their first step in achieving the perfect Christianity.¹²² These seemingly small steps were the ladder to a perfect society, and the Standard was the basis for them.

The Standard of Practical Christianity also affirmed its belief in anti-slavery, another important reform element to Ballou. Slavery incarnated man’s greed. Because masters made a profit from another man’s work, the Practical Christians felt as though slavery was materialistic and coercive. By allowing such a sinful institution to remain, Ballou believed that he and his followers were taking part in that sin. But the destruction of such a powerful evil, Ballou knew, would be difficult. When the Restorationist society drafted the Standard of Practical Christianity in 1839, Ballou felt as though the outside world had not “dealt with the issue of slavery correctly.”¹²³ Ultimately, Ballou thought the only method to destroy slavery was to create a meeting place where abolitionists could discuss ways to end the evil. Ballou saw his communal solution as rationalistic, since other conventions had failed.¹²⁴

The Standard of Practical Christianity would eventually become the basis of the Hopedale movement. With the promulgation of this document, the progressive wing of the

¹²¹ Adin Ballou, *Autobiography*, 320.

¹²² Adin Ballou, *History of the Hopedale Community*, 5.

¹²³ Adin Ballou, *Autobiography*, 278.

¹¹⁸ Adin Ballou, *Autobiography*, 278.

¹²⁴ Adin Ballou, *Autobiography*, 279.

Restorationist Association would begin to call itself the Practical Christians from 1839 onward, distinguishing themselves from the more conservative Restorationists by their staunch advocacy of social reforms. The Practical Christians, unlike their fellow Universalists, urged the creation of a better world with haste. But unlike their fellow utopians, the Practical Christians did not stray too far from mainstream causes in seeking that more perfect society. The Standard of Practical Christianity explicitly dismissed the social control aspect that other utopians were advocating. Instead, the Standard stated: “we cannot be busy-bodies in other people's affairs, nor tale-bearers of domestic privacy, nor announcers of matters unsuitable for the public ear. We cannot rashly judge men's motives, nor raise evil suspicions against them.”¹²⁵ The Standard of Practical Christianity was not about building a new society that judged people differently than the mainstream did. To Ballou, the outside world had much to offer. While American capitalism promoted greed, it also provided a system in which “individuality and responsibility” might be provided.¹²⁶ Whereas the Practical Christians advocated a place where man was more prone to be moral, Oneida and the Shakers advocated extreme social control—they would throw people out if they broke even the slightest of rules.

Part of building this moral environment consisted of living an educated life. For example, the Standard advocated for marriage to be a well-organized and deliberate event: “we cannot enter into the state of matrimony without grave deliberation and an assurance of divine approval. We cannot neglect or abuse our families, nor evince any want of natural affection towards our

¹²⁵ Adin Ballou, *History of the Hopedale Community*, 7.

¹²⁶ Adin Ballou, *Autobiography*, 315.

bosom companion, our aged parents, or helpless offspring.”¹²⁷ The Practical Christians thought that in building a better society, the moral fiber of the family had to be attained first. All relationships had to be informed; otherwise the environment surrounding the family would be tarnished. Here, Ballou wanted nothing different from societal norms. But the environment that Ballou wanted to create reaffirmed these mores and brought them to life.

The Standard of Practical Christianity further buttressed the idea of establishing a utopian community. Many “enemies of the Practical Christians” proposed that the ideas behind the Standard of Practical Christianity were “impractical” and could “never happen.”¹²⁸ These attacks often came from the conservative side of the Restorationist Association, who took no part in the discourses of Ballou and his friends. Instead, the conservatives persisted in asking the simple question of how one could achieve this society. To Ballou, none of the mainstream denominations offered a way of building a perfect community: “nowhere upon the face of the earth was there a place to *live* by Christian [Ideals]... in their entirety.”¹²⁹ Even here, Ballou was not disagreeing with mainstream conventions or thought. He found the spirit of mainstream denominations efficient, but they did not offer a way to live by their values. The denominations of American Christianity fed too much into the “abounding *spirit of competition, rivalry, self-aggrandizement, and open antagonism* which dominates industry and trade, whereby the strong make victims of the weak, the cunning and unscrupulous outwit and overreach the honest,

¹²⁷ Adin Ballou, *History of the Hopedale Community*, 8.

¹²⁸ Adin Ballou, *History of the Hopedale Community*, 9.

¹²⁹ Adin Ballou, *History of the Hopedale Community*, 10.

simpleminded, and self-respecting.”¹³⁰ To live by true Christian values, then, one must leave mainstream religion because it was “generally satisfied with the existing social order.”¹³¹ To Ballou and the Practical Christians, mainstream religion was the impractical force. It contradicted itself by remaining part of the selfish quest for monetary gain.

The Practical Christians never completely broke from American society; that was never their goal. Instead, their ideas were focused on actively changing it from the outside. Ballou stated in his *History of Hopedale*: “we could not stand in our separate and unrelated individuality — apart from the world and all existing associations, institutions... We must ourselves, few in numbers as we were, strike hands together, and build a new civilization radically higher than the old.”¹³² This quote is often misrepresented by historians, including Edward Spann. Spann focuses on the word “radical” in his work, denoting that the Practical Christians wanted to completely break off and start a new society. But taken in context to the surrounding paragraph, the “new civilization” would not be cut off from the old. Instead, it would utilize what it found useful from that society. The Practical Christians did not want to be “individual” but rather wanted a place that gave form to their religion. Ballou did not call for a break with “existing institutions.” Rather he called for a collective society that used these institutions in a more just and equitable manner. The phrase “new civilization” illustrated that Ballou wanted to create a more Christian system different than the one found in mainstream New England. However, Ballou did not desire distance from most mainstream conventions.

¹³⁰ Adin Ballou, *History of the Hopedale Community*, 11. The italicized words are as they appear.

¹³¹ Adin Ballou, *History of the Hopedale Community*, 12.

¹³² Adin Ballou, *History of the Hopedale Community*, 13-14.

In deliberating over their beliefs, the Practical Christians ultimately agreed to establish a community: “the proposition to establish a Community seemed to be in line with that inquiry and to furnish a satisfactory answer to it. Under such a system as that to which our declaration of faith was impelling us, all our material wants would be adequately provided for and we could proclaim our Gospel of Reform.”¹³³ Ballou emphasized that the new environment excluded the monetary burdens of the outside world because their idealism would create a fair and just system. To perform this task, the Practical Christians thought that a pragmatic solution would be to build a commune.

Adin Ballou wrote about the establishment of a community in the early days of the newspaper *The Practical Christian*. Apparently, the idea was very popular among his audience: “we have been frequently requested as of late to lay the subject matter before the readers of this paper.”¹³⁴ Ballou tried to provide a holistic understanding of what the community would be like. He asserted that: “our notions of a Practical Christian Community preclude very much of the governmental machinery employed in both the Shaker and Moravian establishments.”¹³⁵ Ballou distinguished the future Practical Christian settlement from that of the Shakers who, Ballou thought, lacked practicality and “realistic sight.”¹³⁶ They based their society on a common stock

¹³³ Adin Ballou, *History of the Hopedale Community*, 15.

¹³⁴ Adin Ballou, “Communities,” *The Practical Christian*, September 15, 1840.

¹³⁵ Adin Ballou, “Communities,” *The Practical Christian*, September 15, 1840.

¹³⁶ Adin Ballou, *Practical Christian Socialism*, 560.

corporation, which did not foster individual responsibility.¹³⁷ But more than that, Ballou saw a problem with the disconnect between Shaker society and mainstream American society.¹³⁸ Ballou could not understand how some groups tried to run away from the same people they tried to convert. Even at this early stage, Ballou tried to separate himself from the extremism of the Shakers.

This idea applied clearly to his views on religion. The Shakers completely broke off from conventional religion. Their unique culture and alternative mores separated them from any mainstream brand of Christianity. They utilized social control and established stringent rules like celibacy. Ballou thought that while their religious life had some beauty to it, in the long run they could not establish a true church of Christ: “[the Shakers] are lights of Christian excellence to which we should do well to give heed: not implicitly as unto perfection itself, but judiciously, as unto lamps lighted at the great sun, Jesus Christ, which yet may be excelled in some respects by still brighter luminaries.”¹³⁹ Ballou believed the Shakers’ lights were far too dim. Only by lighting up the entire world, he thought, could one reach perfect Christianity. By remaining closer to the religious mainstream, one could hope to have a more practical way of effecting wider change.

The Practical Christians looked to their leader, Adin Ballou, for guidance on how to press forward in establishing a community. With the help of early members such as George Stacey, Ballou built a system not too different from that found in mainstream society. He summed up the

¹³⁷ Robert Sutton, *Communal Utopias and the American Experience*, 20-30.

¹³⁸ Adin Ballou, *Practical Christian Socialism*, 560.

¹³⁹ Adin Ballou, “Communities,” *The Practical Christian*, September 15, 1840.

basics of the future community he envisioned as “a compact neighborhood or village of practical Christians, dwelling together by families in love and peace, insuring to themselves the comforts of life by agricultural and mechanical industry, and devoting the entire residue of their intellectual, moral, and physical resources to the Christianization and general welfare of the human race.”¹⁴⁰ Unlike some communities—such as the Shakers who rejected conventional industrial labor because it stratified society—the Practical Christian commune would use both agriculture and industry. In utilizing means of production already extant in society, the Practical Christians closed the door on such radical change such as in the Shaker communes.

A similar point came when Ballou decided to make the future community a joint stock company.¹⁴¹ The people of Hopedale bought as many shares of the company as they wanted, and then received returns depending on how much one invested, thus creating individual incentive. If one had more stock, then one wanted to work as hard as possible so that the community could give out higher dividends. Ballou, and the majority of the other founders of Hopedale, thought that a common stock company had no practicality: “a common stock community...was out of the question—utterly impractical and not to be considered for a moment.”¹⁴² Common stock companies were the basis of most other utopias, including Oneida and the Shakers. Ballou’s frustration with the common stock idea is readily apparent throughout the history of Hopedale. Whenever the community pondered becoming a common stock company, Ballou and his

¹⁴⁰ Adin Ballou, “Communities,” *The Practical Christian*, September 15, 1840.

¹⁴¹ Adin Ballou, *History of the Hopedale Community*, 27.

¹⁴² Adin Ballou, *History of the Hopedale Community*, 97.

supporters always rebuked the idea because it would “hurt people’s ideas of responsibility.”¹⁴³ Ballou and the leaders of Hopedale thought common stock companies did not encourage hard work, but rather helped the less responsible at the expense of the more industrious. If everyone shared property, then some might exploit or corrupt the system. No matter what work or money one put into a system, the end was always the same.¹⁴⁴ Modeled on the corporate structures of most nineteenth-century companies, Ballou deemed this capitalistic system “fair.”¹⁴⁵ Ballou thought, however, that the competitiveness of the Jacksonian era needed to be reduced. Ballou wanted people to “treat each other as brothers instead of as means.”¹⁴⁶ Christian values needed to be instilled into economic matters in order to create a more humane form of capitalism.

The debate about Ultra Universalism versus Restorationism paralleled the later joint stock versus common stock dialogue. In believing that salvation was the same for everyone, no matter how virtuous a person was, the Ultra Universalists did not demand enough responsibility from its members.¹⁴⁷ Restorationism, on the other hand, called for at least an attempt on the part of individuals to be moral and responsible. If one did not meet the conditions of virtue, then some punishment awaited that person. Thus whereas Restorationism was structured like a joint stock company (the more one put into a system, the more one got out), Ultra Universalism paralleled a common stock company, in which the end was always the same for saint and sinner

¹⁴³ Adin Ballou, *History of the Hopedale Community*, 97.

¹⁴⁴ Edward Spann, *Brotherly Tomorrows*, 43-70.

¹⁴⁵ Adin Ballou, *History of the Hopedale Community*, 82.

¹⁴⁶ Adin Ballou, “Communities,” *The Practical Christian*, September 15, 1840.

¹⁴⁷ Adin Ballou, *History of the Hopedale Community*, 82.

alike. Ballou deemed both the Ultra Universalist beliefs and a common stock structure impractical and unfair.¹⁴⁸

With these basic beliefs in mind, in 1840 the Practical Christians established a constitution.¹⁴⁹ Later known as the “Constitution of the Fraternal Community no. 1”, the constitution formulated the basic laws of the community. The Constitution explained that “nothing herein contained shall be so construed as to countenance the slightest interference with the conscience, rights, duties, or responsibilities of any individual member.”¹⁵⁰ The constitution affirmed that nothing forced members to do anything, illustrating that the Practical Christians did not want to change or redefine people according to some outward authority. Commitment to a denomination of Christianity was not a requirement for joining the community. Instead, the Fraternal Community no. 1 became a place where Christians could become better men and women. While historians like William Hinds state that all of those who joined a utopia were “radical people” seeking a “process to become perfected,” Hopedale merely provided the place, not necessarily the process, for self-betterment.¹⁵¹

In 1841, with the Constitution developed, and an “army” of Practical Christians at his back, Ballou led the way to the establishment of a new utopian community. The Practical Christians purchased a small tract of land near Milford, Massachusetts. The area was known as “the Dale.” A farmhouse stood there in which twenty-five adults and twenty-five children started

¹⁴⁸ Adin Ballou, *Practical Christian Socialism*, 460.

¹⁴⁹ Adin Ballou, *History of the Hopedale Community*, 85.

¹⁵⁰ “Fraternal Community no. 1,” *Liberator*. February 26, 1842.

¹⁵¹ William Hinds, *American Communities and Co-Operative Colonies*, 13, 40.

living. People later called the farmhouse the “Old House.”¹⁵² Communal living was not what many of the Practical Christians were expecting. Conditions were crowded, and in many of his articles, Ballou talks of the “pains of communal living.”¹⁵³

The earliest experiences of the first Practical Christians during the early months in Hopedale seemed to show a lack of careful planning. For example, religious worship and infrastructure were not yet formally organized. Ballou explained the situation: “we were [limited] in our capacity to fulfill the goals of the community.”¹⁵⁴ Yet while the Practical Christians seemed very rash in their decision to enter into a communal society, they felt as though the community would change quickly, with Ballou working constantly to make their vision a reality.

Perhaps early Hopedale gave an appearance similar to that of other utopian communities, but this was not by intention. In her contribution to the *Reminiscences*, Sarah L. Daniels tells of living as one of the children of the Hopedale community in its early days from 1841 to 1842. Sarah’s parents brought her to live at the Old House in 1841 when she was four.¹⁵⁵ She recalled that her sister was born the same year. Early in her time at Hopedale, Sarah remembered being alone with her mother and sister. By her account, a “shack” or a wanderer came by and threatened their lives when her father was gone: “he drew out a long knife from his belt and

¹⁵² Sarah Daniels, “The Old House of Hopedale,” in *Hopedale Reminiscences*, 3.

¹⁵³ Adin Ballou, *Autobiography*, 323. and Adin Ballou, *History of Hopedale*, 50.

¹⁵⁴ Adin Ballou, *History of the Hopedale Community*. 50.

¹⁵⁵ Sarah Daniels, “The Old House of Hopedale,” in *Hopedale Reminiscences*, 3.

commenced to sharpen it... No harm resulted there from, but we were glad to see him leave.”¹⁵⁶ While the incident might seem exaggerated or perhaps misinterpreted by a young child, it does reveal the relative isolation in which the new residents were living.

This isolation quickly disappeared, however, as “one family after another came in the course of a few months, and the community life began in earnest.”¹⁵⁷ This sudden shift from relative isolation to communal living amazed Sarah. She revealed how different life was in a singular household from that in the Old House. With everyone living under one roof, Sarah’s descriptions of Hopedale made the community look like other utopian communes: “families were crowded, each into one room, which served as sleeping room, dining room and kitchen.”¹⁵⁸ But such ragged egalitarianism was only characteristic of the community’s earliest days, and came into existence only because Hopedale did not yet have the means to change.

The fact that members of the Hopedale community walked to nearby Milford to hear sermons illustrated how non-restrictive the members of the community were in matters of religion. Rather than abiding a single, unique faith, they utilized the full array of mainstream religion. But members came back to Hopedale as their place of community. Eventually, religious services would take place in the Old House: “they were held in the Old House... a goodly number of interested friends from the general vicinity joining our own little company to make a respectable audience. I preached an earnest discourse in the morning from Psalms 133:1: ‘Behold

¹⁵⁶ Sarah Daniels, “The Old House of Hopedale,” in *Hopedale Reminiscences*, 4.

¹⁵⁷ Sarah Daniels, “The Old House of Hopedale,” in *Hopedale Reminiscences*, 4.

¹⁵⁸ Sarah Daniels, “The Old House of Hopedale,” in *Hopedale Reminiscences*, 4.

how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.”¹⁵⁹ Ballou showed how little the practice of religion in Hopedale differed from that in mainstream society. People from surrounding towns attended services there, indicating that this community was not closed to the outside world. Even Ballou’s quoting that particular psalm revealed that the Practical Christians wanted to unite with the outside world. The community did not change people’s religion; it merely changed the environment in which people lived.

The theme of creating a united Christianity was emphasized in the writings of *The Practical Christian* during the early period of Hopedale (1841-1843). In an article entitled *The Way for the Christians to be United*, George Stacey expounded on how Christianity should not be so divided: “still, if there are those who can have nothing to do with Christ as a pattern and a guide, let them labor, in sincerity and earnestness, to build what they consider preferable to Christianity. Let them not be destructive, but constructive.”¹⁶⁰ The emphasis on constructive instead of destructive power illustrates that the Practical Christians were attempting to build a religion which would unify Christianity instead of destroying and separating the church of Christ. Unlike the Shakers, or even the residents of Brook Farm, the members of the Hopedale community had no interest in further division within Christianity. Rather, Practical Christianity attempted to pull together as many compatible ideas as possible, in service to the community as a whole. Stacey wrote “but let those for whom it is enough to be *Christians* not to be content with

¹⁵⁹ Adin Ballou, *History of Hopedale*, 66.

¹⁶⁰ George Stacey, “The Way for Christians to be United,” *Practical Christian*, February 19, 1842.

a mere historical, or tradition faith, but open their hearts, that Christ might be formed in them.”¹⁶¹

Stacey agreed with the premise of creating an environment where people would become better Christians. But communal living continued to get in the way of this ideal. Living in one house became rather troublesome: “the early community likened to collectively denominated courtship, culminate in marriage, which is followed by the so-called honeymoon, whose poetry ere long is transformed into sober prose.”¹⁶² Ballou’s analogy meant that while the Practical Christians had avid hopes about the early community, it became difficult to live together. This difficulty stemmed from the fact that the Practical Christians were looking for a practical lifestyle, not one radically distinct from that of America’s mainstream.

The roles played by women further exemplified how the community did not have the infrastructure in order to create the system the Practical Christians envisioned. Sarah Daniels described the role of women in 1841: “the cooking was done by the women, who took turns...My mother...prided herself, when it came her turn to superintend, to give them all something extra good to eat. When some others, with less experience than she, had charge, oftentimes all the family had for supper was cornmeal mush and milk.”¹⁶³ Daniel’s description matched the shared household work of the Shaker and Oneida communities. In the Shaker communes “sisters cooked and cleaned for brothers.”¹⁶⁴ The members of Oneida followed the same trend, where women

¹⁶¹ Adin Ballou, “The Way for Christians to be United,” *Practical Christian*, February 19, 1842. Italicized words are as they appear.

¹⁶² Adin Ballou, *History of Hopedale*, 70.

¹⁶³ Sarah Daniels, “The Old House of Hopedale,” in *Hopedale Reminiscences*, 5.

¹⁶⁴ Robert Sutton, *Communal Utopias and the American Experience*, 25.

worked in the kitchen and cleaned clothes for men.¹⁶⁵ The Practical Christians were unclear if they wanted to keep this system communal or not. But as time passed, the Practical Christians turned away from communal eating, and instead turned to a more mainstream conception of women's roles. Later in the community's development, Ballou would state that women cooked for only their own families.¹⁶⁶

After about a year of living in such communal conditions, the community decided to adopt a new strategy: separate housing. Beginning with George Stacey in 1842, the members of the Hopedale community started building new housing surrounding the Old House. Ballou described how "suitable housing became necessary."¹⁶⁷ Many of Hopedale's contemporary utopias had shared living space. For the Shakers, everyone slept in one housing unit, men separated from women.¹⁶⁸ At Oneida, all adults shared space in one large house.¹⁶⁹ However, Hopedale broke from the stereotypical role of housing in the community. After the initial year, living space at Hopedale became more conventional. While some of the poorer members of Hopedale lived in the "Old House," most members constructed small abodes independent of communal rule.¹⁷⁰ A sense of private land and property arose—a much different phenomenon

¹⁶⁵ Robert Sutton, *Communal Utopias and the American Experience*, 76.

¹⁶⁶ Adin Ballou, *History of Hopedale*, 75.

¹⁶⁷ Adin Ballou, *History of Hopedale*, 83.

¹⁶⁸ Robert Sutton, *Communal Utopias and the American Experience*, 29.

¹⁶⁹ Robert Sutton, *Communal Utopias and the American Experience*, 80.

¹⁷⁰ Adin Ballou, *History of Hopedale*, 85.

than that which existed at the Shaker communes or at Oneida. By 1843, Ballou and about a dozen other families had their own homes.¹⁷¹

The physical infrastructure of Hopedale expanded dramatically throughout the mid 1840s. By 1844, Hopedale had its own printing press, chapel, workshop as well as many other industries.¹⁷² The community used the chapel as schoolhouse on weekdays. As the infrastructure of the community expanded, the way of life at Hopedale looked more like that of a traditional New England town than that at one of its fellow utopias.

Furthermore, the interplay between Restorationist and Unitarian philosophy guided the Practical Christians in creating an environment that educated and reformed its members. The workplace was one area in which the Practical Christians tried to create a fair environment. In 1844, Ballou wrote: “he who has produced food, or raiment, or any other good thing by such industry, has a natural right of property in such production. That he who *can* produce the necessaries and comforts of life and yet *will not*, has no right to consume the fruits of another's industry.”¹⁷³ Here, Ballou called out for capitalistic industry in which people worked for reward. Hopedale's system followed this ideal: the more one worked the more one received. However, wages were “more uniform” indicating that no matter what one's occupation, one made similar wages at the end of the day.¹⁷⁴ For Ballou, the type of work should not determine earnings.

¹⁷¹ Adin Ballou, *History of Hopedale*, 89.

¹⁷² Adin Ballou, *History of Hopedale*, 70-90.

¹⁷³ Adin Ballou, *Practical Christian*, June 10, 1844. Italicized words are as they appear.

¹⁷⁴ Adin Ballou, *Practical Christian*, May 27, 1843.

Rather, how much one worked determined how much one made.¹⁷⁵ The Practical Christians undermined the stratification found in mainstream society, which they saw it as unfair. Being Universalists, the Practical Christians wanted to reform their society to help create equality among their members. But the word “wages” indicated that the community did not want to give into total communism in which everyone shared all property. Wages could be spent on whatever the owner wanted, making the money private property. If a person did little or no work, then the community would not pay that person. Ballou and other Practical Christians opposed the system promoted by the Shakers or Oneidans under which one worked for the community’s property with no incentive of private property—everything went to the collective pool. Thus Hopedale became a moderate system which tried to reform the “hand of greed” in capitalism, but did not go the lengths of other utopias in doing so. This system remained almost unchanged until 1856.

The Practical Christians divided branches of work into separate “industrial armies.” A leader supervised these groups to make sure that the industry ran smoothly while individuals remained productive.¹⁷⁶ The Practical Christians thought that if individuals were left to their own devices then productivity would dwindle. As in other nineteenth century businesses, members of Hopedale thought that control in the workplace was needed in order to increase productivity.¹⁷⁷ But the workplace also became a place of education: “[in] the general industry of Hopedalians... there [was] an unusual attention given to education.”¹⁷⁸ The industrial armies became a way to

¹⁷⁵ Adin Ballou, *Practical Christian*, May 27, 1843.

¹⁷⁶ Adin Ballou, *History of the Hopedale Community*, 177.

¹⁷⁷ Edward Spann, *Hopedale*, 52.

¹⁷⁸ Adin Ballou, *History of the Hopedale Community*, 256.

organize and educate the community's members. Industry in Hopedale taught its members the art of their craft but also the "virtue of the workplace."¹⁷⁹ The Practical Christians attempted to instill morality into the members of the community by making the workplace a regulated and fair environment. A leader of an industrial army organized members and made sure that conditions were suitable for work. The leader also taught Christian values.¹⁸⁰ For Ballou, in mainstream society "battles [were] fought across merchant's counters, in the reciprocal conflict between buyer and seller for the better bargain. The laboring class, extensively, are bond-men...They toil as the ox is fed and stabled, for the profit of the owner."¹⁸¹ Instead of promoting traditional capitalism which made animals of the worker, the Practical Christians wanted a humane system which enlightened its members. Day-to-day life at Hopedale became a way to educate people in Christian morals, much like what many Unitarians had wanted.

Various industries took hold in Hopedale. The textile industry was the largest trade in Hopedale and was run by Ebenezer Draper.¹⁸² Draper professed loyalty to Practical Christianity and was an innovative business man. He organized his industrial army around a machine shop that utilized the most advanced technology of the 1840s.¹⁸³ Other industries in Hopedale included shoemaking, a gristmill, a blacksmith, and a medical department.¹⁸⁴ The people of

¹⁷⁹ Adin Ballou, *History of the Hopedale Community*, 256.

¹⁸⁰ Edward Spann, *Hopedale*, 53.

¹⁸¹ Adin Ballou, *The Practical Christian*, February 19, 1842.

¹⁸² Edward Spann, *Hopedale*, 46.

¹⁸³ Edward Spann, *Hopedale*, 48.

¹⁸⁴ Edward Spann, *Hopedale*, 47.

Hopedale used common innovations and technology, as long as these things worked into build their Christian system.

There were, of course, times of controversy and disagreement. Lamson, a member of the Hopedale community, decided to leave in 1843.¹⁸⁵ Leaving the community was common, but the reasons behind his leaving were where controversy arose. As a poor minister, he thought that the community did not give enough to the poor, and arguments arose between members of the community. Eventually, Lamson joined the Shakers.¹⁸⁶ Lamson's leaving illustrated that Hopedale really did not have structure much different than mainstream communities, but perhaps a more creative one than most. Even after he was gone, Lamson found a place in the conversations among adults and children in Hopedale. Abbie Ballou, the daughter of Adin Ballou stated: "in 1843, one of the original ministers became so dissatisfied that he soon found a home with the Shakers...Slang and oaths among the members were rare... but existed to some extent when Lamson left."¹⁸⁷ The community painted Lamson in a negative light. Lamson represented exactly what was not accepted in Hopedale's ideology: pure communalism. The community shunned Lamson's more extreme ideas, as Hopedale tried to keep their system similar to that of capitalistic society. To Lamson, Hopedale was not radical enough to care for the poor, and so he left for the Shakers.

Hopedale was very open to members traveling in and out of the community. The community offered to each member of the community "conveyance by horse and carriage...fifty

¹⁸⁵ Adin Ballou, *Autobiography*, 345.

¹⁸⁶ Adin Ballou, *Autobiography*, 348.

¹⁸⁷ Abbie Ballou Heywood, "Hopedale Community, Founded in 1841," in *Hopedale Reminiscences*, 56.

miles each per annum.”¹⁸⁸ The Practical Christians encouraged members to explore Massachusetts and be an active part of outside reform meetings, including the Worcester women’s rights convention.¹⁸⁹ The Practical Christians built no wall between their community and the rest of nineteenth century American society. Members and nonmembers traveled in or out as they pleased, which distinguished Hopedale from some of its contemporary utopias which advocated total isolation. The Shakers secluded themselves because of persecution.¹⁹⁰ The residents of Hopedale did not seclude themselves even though they, at times, faced harassment by local non-members. William Draper described how “going to the neighboring town of Milford was discouraged... [People] there did not sympathize with the Community, and greeted us with opprobrious epithets.”¹⁹¹ While the Practical Christians tried to find common ground with the outside world, the outside world at times rejected them. But unlike the Shakers, the Practical Christians still took an active part in outside reform movements like abolitionism and temperance.

Sexual mores and marriage in Hopedale were no different from those in mainstream American culture. While the Shakers advocated for complete celibacy and the members of Oneida took part in “complex-marriages,” the people of Hopedale took a more liberal attitude toward sex. Ballou stated that partners needed to have a “tolerable knowledge of human physiology which treats of the sexual peculiarities, functions, relationships and necessities, as

¹⁸⁸ Edward Spann, *Hopedale*, 37.

¹⁸⁹ Adin Ballou, *Autobiography*, 302.

¹⁹⁰ William Hinds, *American Communities and Cooperative Colonies*, 52.

¹⁹¹ William Draper, “Hopedale,” in *Hopedale Reminiscences*, 70.

existing in both male and female.”¹⁹² The Practical Christians thought that sex had to be enlightened. Both husband and wife needed to know how sex operated for the other. Ballou thought that sexual intercourse could strengthen a marriage.¹⁹³ However, the members of Hopedale insisted that sexuality remain in marriage and not violate the “dictates of pure chastity.”¹⁹⁴

In 1853, the Practical Christians shunned a couple for having sexual relations outside of marriage. The couple continued having their affair, and professed to believe in the tenets of “free-love.”¹⁹⁵ The couple had “brought so much scandal” to Hopedale that they decided to leave.¹⁹⁶ After the couple left Hopedale, they decided to join a free-love commune called Modern Times, a community much like Oneida.¹⁹⁷ The sexual mores of Hopedale did not differ from those of nineteenth American society. More extreme tenets like celibacy or free love were only expressed at the radical utopias of Oneida or the Shaker communes. The Practical Christians educated members on sexuality, but this education reinforced a moderate morality.

People wore pragmatic clothing at Hopedale. Ballou thought that clothing should be “as light as possible and afford the necessary protection against cold, moisture or other injury. It

¹⁹² Adin Ballou, *Practical Christian Socialism*, 158.

¹⁹³ Adin Ballou, *Practical Christian Socialism*, 370-380.

¹⁹⁴ Edward Spann, *History of Hopedale*, 76.

¹⁹⁵ Adin Ballou, *History of the Hopedale Community*, 247.

¹⁹⁶ Adin Ballou, *History of the Hopedale Community*, 247.

¹⁹⁷ Adin Ballou, *History of the Hopedale Community*, 248.

should not impede the circulation of blood or the free play of the muscles.”¹⁹⁸ The result was a costume no different than that of everyday American society. The members of Oneida and the Shaker communities, on the other hand, had very specific dress. Shaker women wore dresses that expressed their modesty, while men adhered to strict rules regarding their clothing.¹⁹⁹ At Oneida, Noyes ordered women to look attractive in dress, in order to create sexual desire between sexes.²⁰⁰ For the Practical Christians at Hopedale, no specific forms of style were mandated. Clothing at Hopedale “kept out the cold” and had no other purpose.²⁰¹ Susan Thwing Whitney described the outfit of her youth: “if you happened to meet [me] in some stormy evening in winter, you could see that [I] wore a warm hood, a simple dress, rubber boots and leather mittens.”²⁰² Whitney’s description of her clothing was simple and fitting to the New England winter.

While nondescript dress was the norm in Hopedale, some women advocated a “freer” dress which included the bloomer. The bloomer was a long baggy pair of pants which was worn under a skirt. This trend in Hopedale was especially prominent during the early 1850s, when the Worcester woman’s rights convention took place.²⁰³ Ballou thought that women should be

¹⁹⁸ Adin Ballou, *Practical Christian Socialism*, 286.

¹⁹⁹ Dolores Hayden, *Seven American Utopias*, (Boston: MIT Press, 1976), 64.

²⁰⁰ Robert Sutton, *Communal Utopias and the American Experience*, 78-79.

²⁰¹ Adin Ballou, *Practical Christian Socialism*, 286.

²⁰² Susan Whitney, “The Post Office,” in *Hopedale Reminiscences*, 13.

²⁰³ Edward Spann, *History of Hopedale*, 72.

dressed “comfortably and rationally.”²⁰⁴ He had “distaste for the elaborate and confining dresses decreed for women.”²⁰⁵ So when Abby Price, the local advocate for women’s rights, proposed this innovation to Ballou, he welcomed it. The design was practical to Ballou. While mainstream mores promoted a more ornamental design, the bloomer had elements of both modesty and usefulness. The introduction of the bloomer expressed the reform spirit of the Practical Christians. In clothing, the Practical Christians saw a level of inequality within mainstream society: women had to wear uncomfortable dresses while men wore more comfortable pants. They thus sought to close this gap; at least five women in the community started wearing bloomers in the early 1850s.²⁰⁶

The religious services at Hopedale contained an extensive array of ideas and values. As a child during the 1840s, William Draper recalled that “Sunday meetings were unusual and sometimes very interesting. There were... five regular preachers taking turns; and the pulpit was also frequently occupied by eminent men from abroad including unordained reformers.”²⁰⁷ The Practical Christians opened the way for modern reform to enter into religious life at Hopedale. As reform-minded Universalists, the Practical Christians combined secular ideas into their religious service. Draper continued: “among [these reformers] I distinctly remember William Lloyd Garrison, Wendell Phillips, [and] Steven Foster. I have been told that Anna Dickinson

²⁰⁴ Adin Ballou, *Practical Christian Socialism*, 278.

²⁰⁵ Edward Spann, *History of Hopedale*, 71.

²⁰⁶ Edward Spann, *History of Hopedale*, 71.

²⁰⁷ William Draper, “Hopedale,” in *Hopedale Reminiscences*, 65.

made her first speech in public in the Hopedale pulpit.”²⁰⁸ Most of the reformers that Draper mentioned were abolitionists or liberal thinkers. These men and women helped to create a reformist environment at Hopedale that focused on the outside world. While their fellow utopians tried to isolate themselves from the outside world, the Practical Christians welcomed outside thoughts, even in their services.²⁰⁹

The Practical Christians used many methods of persuasion to encourage people join their faith, including the themes chosen for worship. Ballou collected various hymns from the Hopedale movement and combined them into the *Hopedale Hymnal* in 1850. The hymnal articulated the religious affiliation of the people of Hopedale, and also revealed their commitment to social reform and egalitarianism. While the hymnal contained a wide array of ideas, some of its poems reflected the Restorationist belief system. Others were concerned with more secular ideals. The first hymn called simply “Hymn #253” read as followed:

All men are equal in their birth
 All heirs to the earth and skies...
 Tis man alone who difference sees
 And speaks of high and low.²¹⁰

The hymn expressed the Universalist emphasis on humanitarianism and social equality. The Universalists believed that only humans—not God—judge and condemn others. God created man as an equal being. Capitalist society, when unenlightened by Christian thought, took away that equality and stratified people between rich and poor. In this sense, Hopedale religious life

²⁰⁸ William Draper, “Hopedale,” in *Hopedale Reminiscences*, 65.

²⁰⁹ William Hinds, *American Communities*, 20-30.

²¹⁰ Adin Ballou, “Hymn # 253,” in *Hopedale Collection of Hymns and Songs*, (Hopedale, Massachusetts: Hopedale Press, 1850).

combined both a mentality of social action, but also the religious ideals of the Universalist faith. The hymn did not condemn the social order, but rather tried to rationalize a more egalitarian world. The mainstream accepted an unequal society too quickly. Ballou thought that Practical Christians could do more to humanize the perceptions of mainstream American society. Like many nineteenth century Protestants, Ballou tried to persuade the outside world to his cause, instead of simply condemning it.

A second hymn, again not named, appeared in the *Hopedale Hymnal*:

Its deadly blade restrain;
For they that trust its fell support,
Shall perish with the slain.
Thus Jesus promptly stayed Impetuous Peter's arm,
And though to murderous foes betrayed,
Forbade to do them harm.²¹¹

The poem promoted the stance of non-resistance. The non-violent imagery was clear: the author utilized the biblical story of Jesus telling Peter not to take up arms, lest he be slain himself. The Practical Christians were adamant supporters of the philosophy of non-resistance. They condemned all types of violence and coercion, which they thought went against the teachings of Jesus. Non-resistance, which stemmed from a Unitarian belief that one could only perfect oneself through self-control and non-violence, became a basic component of the Hopedale community.

In a final poem, the Practical Christians tried to reveal that only in their community could social interest be perfected:

²¹¹ Adin Ballou, "Hymn # 221," in *Hopedale Collection of Hymns and Songs*.

To emulate thy love;
So shall we bear thine image here,
And all share thy throne above.²¹²

The poem referred to several themes in Ballou's works. The first line referred to the Universalist belief that all humans must love not only God, but also love one another. To many of those who read it, the poem became a call for reform of American society. The Universalists believed that God loved his creation so much that he could never eternally damn his subjects. But humans must also emulate God by loving their neighbors. To the Universalists, this meant treating all people equally and with kindness. The members of Hopedale, in the main, believed in a loose form of "Christian socialism" under which all should be treated equally, but only if they accepted their responsibilities. Ballou wanted the poor lifted up not only to a place of decency, but a place well-earned.²¹³

The impetus toward reform was essential in understanding the religious life at Hopedale. Once the Practical Christians established a "sound infrastructure" in the community in 1845, Hopedale became a home to advocates of many different reform movements. Universalists, and subsequently Restorationists, placed an emphasis on social outlook because they wanted to establish a more egalitarian society. Movements centered on the rights of women, opposition to slavery, advocacy of temperance and non-resistance—and even phrenology—all had an impact on the culture of Hopedale. In *Hopedale Reminiscences*, Sarah E. Bradbury remembered the various ideologies that Hopedale supported: "the members were men and women drawn together by a common interest in the great principles of liberal and Practical Christianity at a time when

²¹² Adin Ballou, "Hymn # 40," in *Hopedale Collection of Hymns and Songs*.

²¹³ Adin Ballou, *Practical Christian*, April 13, 1841.

church doctrines were narrow.”²¹⁴ Bradbury referred here to the fact that the Practical Christianity was a pragmatic culmination of various reforms. Other mainstream churches, she argued, did not promote as many reforms because they held “narrow” doctrines. Ballou believed that only in a communal setting could reforms be preformed wholesale. Thus Hopedale utilized many doctrines and reforms because it kept a broader, wider look than the mainstream.

In describing Hopedale, Sarah Bradbury stated: “in addition to the vital principles of ultimate salvation for all, temperance, non-resistance, etc. each one brought some fad of its own—a belief in Spiritualism, or vegetable diet. The fads...were often discussed in public.”²¹⁵ Interestingly, Bradbury places universal salvation among the other reform movements, indicating that the religious beliefs of the Practical Christians were often entangled with their beliefs in reform. Whereas the religion of Universalism offered a basis for social work, it did not always foster individual responsibility. On the other hand, many Unitarians cared more about personal education than reform of the outside world. Thus the only pragmatic basis was to establish a community that promoted both the desire for reform and the responsibility needed to carry out reform.

One member of the Hopedale community, Abby Price, illustrated the type of reformer that the Practical Christians let into Hopedale. Price joined the community in 1842, and was an active member of the New England Non-Resistance Society.²¹⁶ She served as a spokesperson for women’s rights. She gave speeches and “even persuaded a few members to join in her

²¹⁴ Sarah Bradbury, “Community Life as Seen by One the Young People,” in *Hopedale Reminiscences*, 10.

²¹⁵ Sarah Bradbury, “Community Life as Seen by One the Young People,” in *Hopedale Reminiscences*, 10.

²¹⁶ Edward Spann, *Hopedale*, 70.

beliefs.”²¹⁷ Even within more liberal denominations like Universalism, women’s rights became a controversial topic.²¹⁸ Many utopians like the Shakers ignored or condemned these movements because they undermined Shaker morality.²¹⁹ Even Oneida women “were not feminists. They willingly performed the domestic chores such as making beds and cooking food with little question.”²²⁰ Both of these utopias rejected everything that did not fit into their own particular mores. However, Hopedale was open to women’s rights groups. Even as Abby Price advocated for more rights for women, the members of Hopedale did not turn a deaf ear to her. Instead, Price expressed “general satisfaction” in 1852 with the political rights that the community had given women.²²¹ But Hopedale did not give her everything she wanted: she wanted a “combined household... in which men took part in the household labor.”²²² Much like mainstream society, Hopedale enacted reforms on the basis on reason and moderation, and discarded more radical ideas.

Many of Hopedale’s members had a firm commitment against slavery. Members of the community including Ebenezer and Anna Draper were part of the New England Anti-Slavery convention. Ballou preached many sermons on the topic: “slavery is... an evil abomination that

²¹⁷ Adin Ballou, *History of the Hopedale Community*, 195.

²¹⁸ David Robinson, *The Unitarians and Universalists*, 60.

²¹⁹ Robert Sutton, *Communal Utopias and the American Experience*, 40.

²²⁰ Robert Sutton, *Communal Utopias and the American Experience*, 45.

²²¹ Edward Spann, *History of Hopedale*, 70.

²²² Adin Ballou, *History of the Hopedale Community*, 195.

must be rid of.”²²³ Hopedale hosted a speech by Sojourner Truth in 1854.²²⁴ Like common reformers, the members of Hopedale were open to the issues that pervaded New England. 1854 was a year in which the question of slavery rose to the fore again with the passing of the Kansas-Nebraska Act. Hopedale did not isolate itself from the controversies of society; rather, it attempted to face those questions from its own utopian perspective. The community became a meeting place for abolitionists, as well as a place where some escaped slaves would go after fleeing north. In one case, during the early 1850s, Ballou allowed a freed “colored girl” to live in the community and go to school.²²⁵ In another instance, Ballou rejected a colored boy from entering the community because “there was already an overabundance of boys [in Hopedale].”²²⁶ Moments like this reveal that Hopedale and Ballou failed in some of their goals of equality.

Freedom of thought characterized Hopedale, and that also meant freedom of dissent; not everyone needed to agree with all of the reforms being advocated. Members concurred with some reforms and refuted others, and in the process Hopedale became a round-table of intellectual thought. For example, in 1850 several members of Hopedale took up growing long beards.²²⁷ As Bradbury recollected: “to shave or not to shave was a burning question. I remember a non-shaver who, having worked his fiery way to the climax exclaimed, ‘I have not shaved for five years and I never will shave again!’ Instantly the quiet voice of Mr. Swazey answered, ‘You

²²³ Adin Ballou, *History of the Hopedale Community*, 315.

²²⁴ Edward Spann, *History of Hopedale*, 67.

²²⁵ Adin Ballou, *History of the Hopedale Community*, 317.

²²⁶ Adin Ballou, *History of the Hopedale Community*, 321.

²²⁷ Adin Ballou, *History of the Hopedale Community*, 315.

may get shaved though.”²²⁸ The question of shaving exemplified some of the smaller, homegrown versions of reform that Hopedale advocated. But this picture of Hopedale certainly contradicts the picture that many historians, including Hinds and Sutton, have presented of utopian communities as closed-off, centralized states that eradicated freedom of thought.²²⁹ Instead, Bradbury’s description reflected a liberal state not strikingly unlike that which existed in the mainstream United States.

While Ballou and many of the Practical Christians loathed free love, they opened their forum to proponents of it. William Draper recalled: “an advocate of free love had the pulpit, and delivered an address. My father questioned him, and made an opposing argument, and a vote was taken in which my father was nearly unanimously sustained.”²³⁰ Even though some reforms were rejected, Hopedale became a place where everyone’s voice could be heard. While free love was ultimately unacceptable, the community was open to dialogue about it. Hopedale became a place of experimentation and adaptation, instead of a place of a monolithic creed. Dissent in other utopias like the Shaker communes was punished with banishment, something unheard of in Hopedale.²³¹

Education at Hopedale became a way of understanding the Unitarian side of the community. While Ballou did not accept Unitarian theology, he did admire the structure of the Unitarian and Transcendental education movements. Sutton states that “while secular utopias

²²⁸ Sarah Bradbury, “Community Life as Seen by One the Young People,” in *Hopedale Reminiscences*, 11.

²²⁹ Robert Sutton, *Communal Utopias and the American Experience*, 98.

²³⁰ William Draper, “Hopedale,” in *Hopedale Reminiscences*, 66.

²³¹ Robert Sutton, *Communal Utopias and the American Experience*, 33.

pushed education for children during the 1800s, religious ones did not.”²³² The extensive education system at Hopedale refutes this claim. Nowhere does Ballou express his desire for a perfect society more than in *Practical Christian Socialism*. Ballou wanted “the human constitution [of all learning]... to be enlightened and govern man in accordance with his wants, susceptibilities and capabilities.”²³³ Ballou saw that the only way to perfect humans was to have a perfect cultural system.

Ballou structured this educational system around *Practical Christian Socialism: A Conversational Exposition of the True System of Human Society*. *Practical Christian Socialism* was a book written by Ballou in 1854. By this point, Hopedale was a thriving community with a growing population and a lucrative economy. Many of the original Practical Christians had died or left, but Ballou held steadfast to his ideology, and *Practical Christian Socialism* offered a clear Christian basis for the remaining Practical Christians. Ballou’s definition of “socialism” was not the same as the Marxian definition. For Ballou, socialism was a holistic word that meant the system of society.²³⁴ Ballou did not call for class conflict or even absolute egalitarianism. Rather, his educational system was both an expression of a humanistic sentiment but also of a moderate understanding of the world. But education was also the method of bringing about the Christian socialism he envisioned: “children must be trained to behave with propriety and understanding with their parents...juniors, seniors...strangers, foreigners and all commonly despised classes... let them behave with propriety with various enemies, offenders and all the

²³² Robert Sutton, *Communal Utopias and the American Experience*, x.

²³³ Adin Ballou, *Practical Christian Socialism*, 27.

²³⁴ Adin Ballou, *Practical Christian Socialism*, 2.

various classes.”²³⁵ This statement expressed the goal that Ballou had from the start: the need for humanity to create a universally equal and just society that fostered every person’s individual responsibility.

Ballou approached his goal through education on every level—spirit, body and mind. Hopedale ran lyceum meetings from 1846 to the mid 1850s, at which various scholars would lecture the members of Hopedale on how to lead better lives. The lyceums consisted “of lectures, debates, compositions, readings, recitations of classes... which proved of great value as a means and stimulant of intellectual training and culture.”²³⁶ Ballou led the majority of these meetings, but once in a while guest speakers would come who “talked about the various bones of the body and how they had to be trained.”²³⁷

Ballou thought that every stage of the development of a human being was essential. Ballou even considered how an embryo must be nurtured in order to become a proper person in society. But education was not just a matter of being well-socialized; it was also about becoming a perfect human being that “reached toward his brothers in need.”²³⁸ The former ideas certainly echoed the call of Unitarian education and perfection of the self in order to become Christ-like. However, the latter ideas also called for social responsibility, an ideal dear to Universalism. The Universalist side of Ballou called for action outside the self, while his Unitarianism called for an

²³⁵ Adin Ballou, *Practical Christian Socialism*, 127.

²³⁶ Adin Ballou, *History of the Hopedale Community*, 191.

²³⁷ Adin Ballou, *History of the Hopedale Community*, 191.

²³⁸ Adin Ballou, *Practical Christian Socialism*, 57.

inward perfection. The perfect system for Ballou in *Practical Christian Socialism* was a synthesis of these two ideas drawn from denominational society.

But however eloquently Ballou expounded these great ideals, his utopian dream for Hopedale eventually came to an end. By 1850, Ballou and the original founders of the community realized that fewer and fewer people adhered closely to the principles of Practical Christianity. Many of the original townfolk had left for personal or ideological reasons. Hopedale had become increasingly more like a company town where individual industries ran themselves.²³⁹ New members were brought in as hired hands to run the industries at Hopedale, but did not necessarily accept the utopian principles upon which the village was founded.²⁴⁰ The administration of Hopedale attempted to crack down on these problems by forming the Council of Religious Conciliation and Justice in 1848, revitalizing it in the 1850s in order to bring more social control to both industry and everyday life.

Yet it would ultimately be the community's capitalistic structure that would prove to be its downfall. In 1856, Ebenezer Draper took control of the community by buying a majority of its stocks. Draper could do this because of a recession that hit Hopedale in 1855; many members were in debt. Ebenezer, however, was not a cold-hearted capitalist. He had believed in Practical Christianity and Hopedale's system for many years, and still had some sympathy for its philosophy. However, his brother George, who had no sympathy for Practical Christianity at all, persuaded Ebenezer that he could make a very high profit by buying up a majority of the shares of the joint stock company that ran Hopedale. Draper agreed to pay off the community's debts,

²³⁹ Adin Ballou, *Practical Christian*, February 11, 1854.

²⁴⁰ Edward Spann, *Hopedale*, 100-120.

but structurally Hopedale would no longer be considered the Fraternal Community; it instead became an industrial company town.²⁴¹ Draper disbanded the Council of Religious Affairs and other utopian inventions that had fostered Hopedale's environment.²⁴² Without this structure, the Practical Christians could do nothing further to foster their higher ideals. Instead, attention turned to transforming Hopedale into a company town. The chapel remained under the town's control, but the distinctly Christian socialist culture which Ballou had crafted gradually waned.

Sarah Bradbury wrote about the transition from utopian to industrial Hopedale: "community life was for children a simple and happy one... But later when it became necessary to lower our standards to those of the ordinary business village, the charm dissolved—life became commonplace, and... wicked."²⁴³ Bradbury exaggerated the differences between Ballou's Hopedale and that of Draper's. Hopedale did not become a place of vice or immorality under a "wage slave system."²⁴⁴ Structurally, the governance of the community was not much different.²⁴⁵ But without the oversight of the Council of Religious Affairs, many distinct elements of Hopedale, including the lyceum meetings, came to a halt. Instead, control of the town went to the Draper brothers, whose goals were more financial than educational and religious. The intellectual and religious forum that first characterized Hopedale no longer existed. The

²⁴¹ Edward Spann, *History of Hopedale*, 135.

²⁴² Edward Spann, *History of Hopedale*, 135.

²⁴³ Sarah Bradbury, "Community Life as Seen by One the Young People," in *Hopedale Reminiscences*, 11.

²⁴⁴ Adin Ballou, *History of the Hopedale Community*, 230.

²⁴⁵ Edward Spann, *History of Hopedale*, 140.

extensive interest in various reform movements dwindled. The education system no longer promoted Practical Christianity. Instead, it became a just another public school system, albeit with a better record of achievement than many.²⁴⁶

Only within a utopian setting could the reforms promoted at Hopedale have ever existed at all. But ultimately, Hopedale attempted something that could not be done within society. Ballou's early ministry was a testament to that. The Universalists had expelled him because of his free thinking and the Unitarians because of his expansive views on society. Where, then, would a person like Adin Ballou ever belong? Ballou could only find fulfillment within the utopian society where he could establish a place both for the education and the reform of humanity. But all along, Ballou—and Hopedale—kept their connections with mainstream society and the real world it represented.

In light of the Practical Christians of Hopedale, scholars could well say that Camus was wrong about utopias. The Practical Christians were not running away from reality; rather, they chose to deal directly with it, and in bringing together distinct ideas from two different Protestant denominations, Ballou showed his debt to the wider world and society. Mainstream conventions did not allow Ballou and his companions to craft their pragmatic system fully. Entering a “utopia” became the only way to realize something of those ideals. But unlike those utopian communities which, in their pursuit of the “perfect,” ran away from the world and distorted the mores and practices of the wider culture, the founders of Hopedale exemplified a different story. Between the evils of industrial society and the extremes of doctrinaire utopias, Adin Ballou sought to live out a middle way, and envisioned a more moderate vision of utopia.

²⁴⁶ Edward Spann, *History of Hopedale*, 140.

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