4

The American Colonial and Antebellum College

A CITY UPON A HILL

Preaching to the future leaders of the Massachusetts Bay Colony aboard the ship *Arbella* in the late spring of 1630, John Winthrop prophesied, "Men shall say of succeeding plantations: the Lord make it like that of New England: for we must consider that we shall be as a city upon a hill, [and] the eyes of all people are upon us." Bolstered by absolute faith in a divine blessing upon their venture, the intrepid Puritans thus set out to create in the forbidding and oftentimes hostile wilderness of the New World a new order of things, a "city upon a hill."[1] As Francis Higginson was to explain in *New-Englands Plantation*, "That which is our greatest comfort, and means of defense above all others, is, that we have here the true religion and holy ordinances of Almighty God taught among us . . ." He asked rhetorically, "Thus, we doubt not but God will be with us, and if God be with us, who can be against us?"

Early on it was apparent that a desire to found an institution of higher learning ran strong among the first settlers of English America. "After God had carried us safe to New England, reported *New England's First Fruits,* a pamphlet first printed in 1643, "and we had builded [*sic*] our houses, provided necessaries for our livelihood, reared convenient places for God's worship, and settled the civil government: one of the next things we longed for, and looked

after was to advance learning and perpetuate it to posterity."[2] Accordingly, in October of 1636 the general court of Massachusetts—then only in its eighth year of operations—appropriated funds for the establishment of a college at Newtown (later renamed Cambridge).[3] Instruction probably began in the summer of 1638, two years later. The untimely death of a benefactor some months later decided the question of a name for the fledgling college. A certain Edward Johnson recounted the story as follows: "This year, although the estates of these pilgrim people were much wasted, yet seeing the benefit that would accrue to the churches of Christ and civil government, by the Lord's blessing, upon learning, they began to erect a college, the Lord by his provident hand giving his approbation to the work, in sending over a faithful and godly servant of his, the Reverend Mr. John Harvard, who joining with the people of Christ . . . suddenly departed this life; wherefore the government thought it meet to call it Harvard College in remembrance of him."[4]

Harvard's earliest published rules announced the chief aim of the institution: "Every one shall consider the main end of his life and studies to know God and Jesus Christ, which is eternal life . . . and therefore to lay Christ in the bottom, as the only foundation of all sound knowledge and learning"; each scholar was to read the scriptures twice daily so that he "shall be ready to give such an account of his proficiency therein, both in theoretical observations of the language, and logic, and in practical and spiritual truths, as his tutor shall require, according to his ability"; every student was to attend diligently all lectures and tutorials, obey unfailingly the college's statutes and regulations, and eschew profanity and association with dissolute company; and no one was to "go abroad to other towns" without official consent.[5] Just as Emmanuel College at Cambridge had been founded in 1584 to educate clergy "at once learned and zealous, instructed in all that scholars should know," likewise Harvard, established according to its charter *pro modo Academiarum in Anglia* ("according to the manner of universities in England"), was to raise up a literate and pious clergy.[6]

To the new school was entrusted also the task of preparing men of refinement and culture, those destined to positions of responsibility and leadership in society.[7] Harvard's first president took special pains to emphasize to entering fellows what was expected of them: "You shall take care to advance in all learning, divine and humane, each and every student who is or will be entrusted to your tutelage, according to their several abilities; and especially to take care that their conduct and manners be honorable and without blame."[8] A commencement orator in the 1670s left no doubt that the college's civic function was as important as its religious purpose. Had the first Puritan settlers not founded Harvard, he avowed, "the ruling class would have been subjected to

mechanics, cobblers, and tailors, the gentry would have been overwhelmed by lewd fellows of the baser sort, the sewage of Rome, the dregs [of society] which judgeth much from emotion, little from truth. . . . Nor would we have rights, honors or magisterial ordinance worthy of preservation, but plebiscites, appeals to base passions, and revolutionary rumblings."[9] Upon the success with which Harvard continued to discharge its duties depended the fate of both religion and the established social order.

HIGHER LEARNING IN ENGLISH AMERICA

Each of the eight other colleges founded prior to the American Revolution shared the same broad sense of dual purpose as that enunciated by Harvard, namely, educating civic leaders and preparing a learned clergy: the College of William and Mary (founded in 1693); the Collegiate School at New Haven (chartered in 1701 and later renamed Yale College); the College of Philadelphia (founded in 1740 and later renamed the University of Pennsylvania); the College of New Jersey, 1746 (renamed Princeton College); King's College, 1754 (renamed Columbia University); the College of Rhode Island, 1764 (renamed Brown University); Queen's College, 1766 (renamed Rutger's College); and Dartmouth College, founded in 1769.[10] As the founders of the College of New Jersey phrased it, "Though our great intention was to erect a seminary for educating ministers of the gospel, yet we hope it will be a means of raising up men that will be useful in other learned professions—ornaments of the state as well as the church."[11]

Whatever the particular circumstances of their origins, all of the first nine English colonial colleges in America subscribed to the goal, as expressed at the founding of William and Mary, of ensuring "that the youth . . . [be] piously educated in good letters and manners." As early as 1619 the Crown had appropriated acreage in the Virginia colony for a proposed institution of higher learning, only to have most of the project's supporters wiped out three years later in an Indian massacre.[12] When the king acceded to renewed pleas for a college charter, the royal attorney general, unimpressed by the argument that a college would be helpful for the saving of souls, reportedly exploded, "Souls! Damn your souls! Raise tobacco!"[13] Nonetheless, despite several false starts, in the closing years of the seventeenth century Virginia's first college was well under way.

The founding of the Collegiate School in Connecticut in 1701 was attended by much controversy over a proposed site. Beginnings had been made at both Saybrook and Killingsworth by Harvard graduates who, alarmed over the decline in their alma mater's Puritan orthodoxy, were resolved to start over. New Haven eventually captured the college as its own, however, with an

endowment secured by a patron from Boston who had made his fortune with the East India Company at Madras. When a donation of assorted dry goods tendered by Elihu Yale raised a munificent endowment of 500 pounds, the college's overseers quickly assented to the suggestion that the new institution should be renamed after its chief benefactor.[14] Similarly, the chartering of the College of New Jersey in 1746 occurred as the result of doctrinal tensions among Presbyterians. Just as the founders of Connecticut's Collegiate School were fired by a desire to revive in a new seat of learning the Puritanism then allegedly in decline at Harvard, so-called "New Light" Presbyterians sought to discredit charges of their indifference to learning by creating an institution of higher education they could call their own. The outcome was the establishment of the college later called Princeton.[15]

The College of New Jersey was not the only higher school founded as a result of the "Great Awakening," a pan-Protestant arousal of enthusiastic religiosity that swept across the colonies in the mid-1700s.[16] Imbued with the same evangelical fervor and missionary zeal that had seized liberal Presbyterians, New England Congregationalists were upset over the religious complacency into which they felt the colleges at Cambridge and New Haven had fallen. Their solution was to throw their support to the Reverend Eleazor Wheelock in the founding of a new college, called Dartmouth.[17] Meanwhile Baptists had founded the College of Rhode Island at Providence in 1765 to advance their own sectarian ends.[18] Not to be outdone, the Dutch Reformed Church the next year took measures to secure a founding charter also. Its first institution of higher learning was named Queen's College.[19]

Yet even as a rising tide of denominationalism engulfed America's colonial colleges in the eighteenth century and traditional patterns of shared collegiate governance between established church and secular state were being challenged, agencies of higher education lost little of their sense of broad purpose and function. When the College of Rhode Island was chartered in 1764, its founders stressed the point that "institutions for liberal education are highly beneficial to society by forming the rising generation to virtue, knowledge and useful literature and thus preserving in the community a succession of men duly qualified for discharging the offices of life with usefulness and reputation."[20] However much sectarian passions contributed to the founding of any given college, its custodians never lost sight of a larger aim. As Provost William Smith of the College of Philadelphia expressed it, "Thinking, writing and acting well . . . is the grand aim of a liberal education."[21] Similar declarations that the secular purpose of colleges was to "guard against ignorance" and "to instruct in branches of useful knowledge" and thereby "advance learning" were commonplace.

At a very early date it was apparent that the Reformation principle of *cuius regio, eius religio*, by which a ruler's religious allegiance determined that of the sovereign's subjects as well, was poorly adapted for application to colonial America. In the same way, religious diversity throughout the colonies precluded the possibility that any one sect or denomination could long exercise exclusive control over whatever college it might establish. Hence, toleration was essential. Even as Anglicans, Presbyterians, and Congregationalists vied with one another to found institutions of higher learning, followed closely by Baptists, then Methodists, Quakers, Catholics, and Universalists, no college found it possible to impose a religious test for admission or doctrinal requirements for graduation; and members of minority congregations invariably were assured freedom of religious belief while attending the school of the dominant faith. William and Mary for a time did require that its teachers be Anglicans, but its proviso was an exception. No sectarian affiliation was insisted upon at the College of Philadelphia. At King's College in New York, the official persuasion was Episcopalian, but rival Protestants were free to attend without hindrance. (In the latter instance, rival sectarian pressures forced the issue of Anglican dominance to the point where the college was forced to relinquish half the proceeds from funds raised in a public lottery to support a city jail and "a proper pest-house for the reception of such persons as may be infected with contagious distempers.")[22]

Even at Yale and Harvard, tight sectarian control was soon loosened by the adoption of more liberal policies.[23] It was widely acknowledged, for example, that the creation of the Collegiate School at New Haven had not helped Harvard's cause, and the former in turn had been seriously weakened by the founding of a college in New Jersey. Nor was the latter institution in any condition to handle competition from Queen's College at New Brunswick. Forever desperate for patrons and tuition-paying students, colleges found it expedient even in matters of basic governance to provide for minority sectarian representation on their respective boards of trustees or overseers. The practice amounted to a tacit recognition among schoolmen everywhere that within a pluralistic society, there were no realistic alternatives to policies of conciliation and accommodation.[24]

A practical consequence of religious tolerance within and among collegiate institutions throughout the eighteenth century was a certain blurring between their "public" and "private" status.[25] (The distinction between the two would not become important until much later in the century following.) Puritan Harvard in its infancy was supported by the General Court through a combination of bank taxes and revenues generated by a toll on the ferry across the Charles River, then by a toll on the bridge that later replaced it. The 1693 charter

for Anglican William and Mary reserved a tobacco tax to help defray its cost; and the school was assigned further revenues returned by export duties on furs and skins, not to mention a tax on peddlers. The Collegiate School likewise was the beneficiary of state subsidies; after 1712 its students also were granted immunity from taxes and military service. Public subsidies notwithstanding, however, none of the colonial colleges was a state institution in the modern sense, even when secular authorities were represented alongside ecclesiastic representatives on a college's governing body.

Paradoxically perhaps, although shaped by aristocratic traditions of scholarship and learning, colonial colleges in the seventeenth century were never the monopoly of a single exclusive caste.[26] Unlike class-bound Europe, in the environment of the New World where privilege was suspect and individual striving for self-improvement strongly encouraged, opportunities for a poor but ambitious youth to attend college and thereby advance himself remained open. At Harvard between 1677 and 1703, for instance, surviving records attest to the fact that sons of clergymen comprised a majority of those admitted, followed by the sons of merchants, shopkeepers, master mariners, magistrates and attorneys, militia officers, and wealthy farmers. But included on the rosters also were the sons of artisans, ordinary seamen, servants, and poor farmers. It was not until well into the eighteenth century that colleges assumed an elitist, patrician cast as rising costs began to restrict attendance at college to the well-to-do. Even then, however, so-called "charity" scholarships supplied a degree of access for the nonaffluent; and schedules were devised that allowed some poor students to work their way through college by teaching school on a part-time basis.

Schoolmen often gave the appearance of wanting it both ways. On the one hand, they saw themselves as custodians of—and they remained unswerving in their devotion to—an educational tradition that in the final analysis held scant popular appeal. On the other, they excoriated men of practical affairs for their perceived failure to value learning and adequately support institutions devoted to its diffusion and dissemination. An early Harvard president, for example, complained that the many enterprising self-made men of the times had "waxed fat" in their pursuit of material abundance, but "kicked at supporting education."[27] More than a few academics undoubtedly subscribed to the point of view expressed by a South Carolina newspaper editorialist in 1770 that the colony ought not to support another college because "learning would become cheap and too common, and every man would be for giving his son an education."[28] Nevertheless, schoolmen repeatedly returned to the theme that the great unwashed masses were uncouth, overbearing, and indifferent to the fruits of erudition. As a somewhat self-pitying Harvard commencement orator

lamented in 1677, "Mad nobodies, haranguers at street-corners, have more influence with the populace than reverent men, filled with singular gifts of the divine spirit."[29] Indicative of one widely-held perception was the criticism voiced by sixteen-year-old Benjamin Franklin in his family's newspaper, the *New England Courant*, that Harvard had become a rich man's school, a place that wealthy parents sent their sons to, "where, for want of a suitable genius, they learn little more than to carry themselves handsomely, and enter a room genteely."[30]

At no time prior to the American revolution, at any rate, did the colonial college touch the lives of the majority of the people at first hand. During the whole of the seventeenth century, less than six hundred students attended tiny Harvard, of which no more than 465 were finally graduated. Yale's enrollment in 1710 was only 36; it reached a peak of 338 in the year 1770. Harvard had 123 students enrolled in 1710; the total had reached 413 in 1770; and the school's largest pre-revolutionary graduating class (1771) numbered no more than 63 matriculants. It is estimated that probably no more than one in every thousand colonists attended any of the colleges in existence before 1776, and fewer still completed a bachelor of arts degree.

The course of study offered by the typical colonial college very much reflected the earliest settlers' resolve to effect a *translatio studii*—a direct transfer of higher learning from ancient seats of learning at Queen's College in Oxford and Emmanuel College at Cambridge to the frontier outposts of the American wilderness.[31] The curriculum basically was a combination of medieval learning, devotional studies judged conducive to the preservation of confessional religious piety, and late Renaissance arts and literature. In seeking to achieve the ideal of a learned clergyman, gentleman, and scholar, the fundamental disciplines required were Greek and Latin, proficiency in which was demanded for collegiate admission. During the first year of study, Greek, Hebrew, logic, and rhetoric were curricular staples. In the second year to them were added logic and "natural philosophy." The third year brought moral philosophy (ethics) and Aristotelian metaphysics, followed in a fourth year by mathematics and advanced philological studies in classical languages, supplemented by a smattering of Syriac and Aramaic.[32] Taken as a whole, the course of studies was regarded less as an induction into various branches of learning and more as a fixed body of absolute, immutable truths. It was a corpus or repository of knowledge to be absorbed and committed to memory, not criticized or questioned.

Shared in common by all academicians, whatever their sectarian persuasion, was the presumption that classical learning was essential for success in the various learned professions of law, medicine, or theology.[33] A thorough

grounding in the languages and literature of Greco-Roman antiquity was therefore not simply a badge of gentility or sign of class status—however much it might be held in high regard on that account alone. More fundamentally, classical erudition was believed to afford the only sure guide for those destined to conduct affairs of state and church.[34] Subsequent additions of new subjects to the colonial college curriculum in the later 1700s, including mathematics, modern languages and literature, and natural sciences (astronomy, physics, chemistry) did little to weaken that conviction. Yet secular learning of a decidedly nonclassical character had begun to make inroads well before the end of the eighteenth century.[35] As early as 1734 Yale expanded its course offerings to include navigation and surveying as well as specialized mathematical studies.[36] At King's College in 1754 it was announced that henceforth modern geography, history, navigation, surveying, and "the knowledge of every thing useful for the comfort, the convenience and elegance of life . . . and everything that can contribute to . . . true happiness" would be offered.[37] Two years later the College of Philadelphia under the leadership of William Smith followed with a three-year course of study emphasizing practical arts and scientific studies.

Unshakable confidence in the efficacy of classical liberal learning, leavened by personal piety and righteousness of character, was reflected directly in early statements of degree requirements. The official statutes of Harvard in its formative stage (1642–1650) provide a good example. "Every scholar that on proof is found able to read the original of the Old and New Testament into the Latin tongue," it was decreed, "and to resolve them logically, withal being of honest life and conversation and at any public act hath the approbation of the overseers, and master of the College, may be invested with his first degree." Three additional years of application were required before the bachelor of arts became eligible to receive the master of arts certificate. This second degree, Harvard's rules announced, would be awarded "to every scholar that giveth up in writing a synopsis or summa of logic, natural and moral philosophy, arithmetic, geometry, and astronomy, and is ready to defend his theses or positions, withal skilled in the originals as aforesaid and still continues honest and studious."[38]

Commencement exercises at Harvard and elsewhere in the early colonial period still retained all of the pomp and circumstance of the traditional medieval disputation. Upon completing his formal studies, each candidate, having been assigned either the affirmative or negative side to a controversy, was required to make a formal presentation of his forensic and logical skills before an examining board. Typical subjects or topics might treat such questions as "Death is to be undergone rather than any sin perpetuated"; "Prudence is the most difficult of virtues"; or "Human reason alone does not suffice to explain how the true religion was introduced and built up so firmly in the

world."[39] Records of the College of New Jersey in the early eighteenth century yield a vivid picture of a colonial college commencement: "It was a public holiday and gala occasion not only for the College but for all the county around. Lines of booths and wagons where refreshments were sold made their appearance at that time, and the town took on the aspect of a fair. The 'Old Road' was a race-course; there were playing for pennies, and dancing and fiddling, and even bull-baiting."[40] The striking conjunction of homely American frontier diversions, on the one hand, and the solemn rituals and observances of European learning, on the other, appears not to have been remarked upon.

Consistent with the American colonial aspiration to follow English academic precedents as closely as possible, early colleges were mostly residential institutions.[41] Whereas no college enjoyed sufficient resources to reproduce elaborate quadrangular enclosures after the fashion of Oxford or Cambridge, the tendency was to house students together in a residential dormitory of one sort or another whenever possible. The aim was to foster among all students a common social, moral, and intellectual life. Early experiments met with decidedly mixed results. In the seventeenth century instances of student misconduct were relatively rare; and stern admonitions usually sufficed to bring those who violated the rules back into compliance. Only in exceptional cases involving theft, assault, or fornication were authorities forced to resort to flogging or expulsion. When incidents did occur, they characteristically erupted over complaints about such matters as the food served in the commons, as was reported at Harvard where the president's wife was once accused of serving mackerel "with guts in them," and "goat's dung in the hasty pudding."[42] Generally, colonial colleges enjoyed a reputation for strict discipline and order—so much so that English parents often elected to ship their wayward sons off to the colonies for their education instead of entrusting them to the more relaxed atmosphere then prevailing at Oxford or Cambridge. Sometimes the strategy backfired. Commenting on what had transpired at Harvard, one friend of the College mused, "This hath been a place certainly more free from temptations to lewdness than ordinary England hath been, yet if men shall presume upon this to send their most exorbitant children intending them more especially for God's service, the justice of God doth sometimes meet with them . . . for of late the godly governors of the college have been forced to expel some, for fear of corrupting the fountain."[43]

From the early 1700s onward, residential overcrowding and expanding enrollments began to spell more serious trouble. Incidents—some of them quite serious—grew more frequent.[44] Drunkenness was rampant, as were violent assaults, uncontrolled gambling, and debauchery of one sort or another.[45] At Harvard in 1728, twenty-two students were reprimanded for "nocturnal

expeditions" and "entertainments" involving the stealing and consumption of stolen geese. Several members of the class of 1767 were sent home to be cured of "the Itch," the outcome of "associating with, countenancing, [and] encouraging one or more lewd women." More than once commencement revelries, Guy Fawkes Day celebrations, and similar observances got out of hand, ending in shattered windows, cracked furniture, and broken bones. Lawlessness reached a crescendo during the worst of several periodic food riots, the infamous "Bad Butter Rebellion" of 1766. That particular incident had begun as a complaint about rancid butter served in the Harvard student commons but soon escalated into a major political confrontation between students and the board of overseers over a host of other unrelated issues.[46] Few observers of the collegiate scene on the eve of the Revolution, surveying the record of student turmoil and misconduct, could have predicted how abruptly the situation would change within the span of just a few decades—and yet at once remain the same.[47]

In retrospect, judged strictly on its own terms and according to the standards it publicly professed, the colonial college was probably considerably less effective than its more ardent defenders would have conceded, but more successful than its strongest detractors alleged. It did in fact uphold for more than a century and a half a received academic tradition based upon a uniform, fixed regimen of liberal learning. It took seriously its self-appointed mission to prepare a learned and pious clergy; and it did actively pursue the announced goal of raising up successive generations of political leaders committed to the common welfare. The colonial college as an institutional type thus emphasized character as much as it did learning, piety as well as erudition, and civic virtue over private advantage. To these basic policies and goals the college held firm, without substantial alteration, from its inception in the colonies of Virginia and Massachusetts in the early seventeenth century until the outbreak of the War for Independence in the late eighteenth, and beyond. Moreover, for all of its faults and shortcomings, because the humble colonial college was the prototype emulated by nearly all of the liberal-arts colleges that were to make their appearance over the course of the succeeding nineteenth century, its historical importance as an academic archetype would be difficult to overestimate.[48]

THE REVOLUTION AND REPUBLICAN IDEALS

American colleges were very much embroiled in the turmoil accompanying the outbreak of the Revolution.[49] Princeton's lofty Nassau Hall, as a case in point, suffered severe damage during the hostilities. It was occupied in December of 1776 by the British and the next month by the Continental Army, whereupon the hall was pressed into service as a barracks to house troops for

the next half year. Vandalized and disfigured, it subsequently found use as a military hospital late in 1777, and then again in 1783 when the facility furnished a refuge for congressmen fleeing mutinous soldiers. Yale, fearing invasion and occupation, suspended operations in 1777 and sent its students and tutors inland when no food could be found for the commons. William and Mary provided shelter for American and French troops during the siege of Yorktown; a building designed by architect Christopher Wren was accidently set ablaze by French soldiers; and the school temporarily shut down. Everywhere enrollments plummeted dramatically and necessary endowments were cut off. At King's College, the first casualty of the war was the school's Tory president, Myles Cooper: In May of 1775, with Alexander Hamilton of the Class of 1774 holding an enraged mob at bay, President Cooper fled in scanty attire over his back fence, from where he was able to make his way down to the harbor to find refuge on an English sloop of war headed for home.[50]

At war's end, the fate of the colleges seemed uncertain. Noah Webster, writing in 1790, observed, "Our constitutions of civil government are not yet firmly established; our national character is not yet formed; and it is an object of vast magnitude that systems of education should be adopted and pursued, which . . . may implant in the minds of the American youth, the principles of virtue and of liberty; and inspire them with just and liberal ideas of government, and with an inviolable attachment to their own country."[51] Benjamin Rush, writing in 1786, sounded much the same theme. "The business of education," he observed, "has acquired a new complexion by the independence of our country. The form of government we have assumed, has created a new class of duties to every American. It becomes us, therefore, to examine our former habits . . . and in laying out the foundations for nurseries of wise and good men, to adapt our modes of teaching to the peculiar form of our government."[52] The question was whether schools of higher learning, heretofore adapted to life under a monarchy and wedded to essentially aristocratic notions of leadership, could be adjusted to serve the emerging American democratic order. Additionally, while most academics ardently embraced the republican cause, some harbored grave doubts about what the future might bring.

President Charles Nisbet of newly created Dickinson College in Pennsylvania, for one, was troubled by the populist swell of democracy. "In a republic," he complained, "the demagogue and rabble drivers are the only citizens that are represented or have any share in the government." He added, "Americans seem much more desirous that their affairs be managed by themselves than that they should be well managed."[53] Old habits of thought were not abandoned overnight. Philip Schuyler, father-in-law to Alexander Hamilton, upon hearing of a petition signed by a thousand common citizens

for the founding of Union College in Schenectady exclaimed, "May indulgent heaven protect and cherish an institution calculated to promote virtue and the weal of the people!"[54]

THE DARTMOUTH CASE

Antebellum colleges, like their colonial forbears, tended to be both small and poor. Even a well-established school of the 1820s and 1830s typically enrolled no more than a few dozen students at a time. As late as 1846, New York City's two colleges together accounted for a total enrollment of less than 250 students; at Lafayette College during the same period members of the school's governing board of trustees actually outnumbered the entire student body. In Ohio's two dozen or so colleges in the late 1850s, the average enrollment was less than a hundred. Not until 1860 did Harvard graduate more than a hundred students from a single class.[55] Tuition accounted for the bulk of a college's revenues. But not all students paid in full: many were on stipends or scholarships reserved for the needy. In bad times colleges were forced to accept payment in kind instead of hard currency—cotton, sheep, pewter, and foodstuffs—or, worse yet, promissory notes. The inevitable result was that most colleges subsisted on the verge of insolvency. Supplementing tuition were charitable donations and an occasional endowment. The only remaining source of income was public grants. Colleges assiduously sought such state support, but never exchanged it for control over internal policy-making, except in the sense of allowing for limited public representation on their governing boards. It required a decision by the United States Supreme Court decision in 1819 to help lay the foundations for the legal distinction between a "public" and "private" college.[56]

Dartmouth College originally had been chartered by the English Crown, a deed of trust which provided for a self-perpetuating board of trustees and a president authorized to appoint his own successor. Upon the death of the first founding president, Eleazor Wheelock, his son John succeeded to the presidency. Rebuked by the board for allegedly heavy-handed and erratic administration, the new president challenged the right of absentee trustees to "meddle" in the college's internal affairs. A lively controversy ensued when the board responded with a vote for his dismissal. Professing concern for the "literary progress" of the people of the state and ostensibly angered by the board's usurpation of power, the state legislature moved to amend the institution's charter to provide for a reorganized Dartmouth University. New members were added to the board of trustees, all of them pledging to support Wheelock's administration. The original board balked at the change, at which point two rival entities, Dartmouth College and Dartmouth University, began

operating in legal competition with one another. Matters came to a head when the question arose as to who was entitled to the institution's records and original seal.

In 1816 the original trustees took their case before New Hampshire's high court. The issue in contention basically was whether the college was a public corporation whose founding charter was liable to amendment by the legislature, or an inviolate private corporation with a charter immune to legislative fiat. On November 17, 1817, the state court held that Dartmouth was in fact a public corporation, that its governors were officers responsible to the people, and therefore that it fell under the legislature's authority. If the college lay outside public control, the court declared, trustees would be free to exercise their authority in ways inimical to the general welfare. Hence, or so it was argued, legislative oversight was essential.

The attorney who had argued his alma mater's brief submitted an appeal to the United States Supreme Court. As the date for trying the case drew near, several prominent citizens weighed in with their own opinions. Among them was Thomas Jefferson who wrote to the state governor arguing that "the idea that institutions established for the use of the nation cannot not be touched or modified even to make them answer their end, because of rights gratuitously supposed in those employed to manage them in trust for the public, may, perhaps, be a salutary provision against the abuses of a monarch, but it is most absurd against the nation itself." On the other side, Dartmouth College's supporters were prepared to hold that the school's charter was a contract and that New Hampshire's attempt to amend it was a unilateral impairment of contractual obligation, in direct violation of the Constitution. Technical legalities aside, the argument advanced was that public control carried with it a risk that the college would fall prey to narrow political partisanship and the vicissitudes of popular whim.

On March 10, 1818, Daniel Webster, a relatively obscure and still unknown lawyer, (Dartmouth Class of 1801) argued the trustees' position. The oratory for which he would later become famous reportedly lasted five full hours. Winding up and, according to legend, close to tears, Webster concluded his plea, "This, sir, is my case. It is the case, not merely of that humble institution, it is the case of every college in the land. It is more. It is the case of every eleemosynary institution throughout our country . . . the case of every man who has property of which he may be stripped—for the question is simply this: Shall our state legislature be allowed to take that which is not their own, to turn it from its original use, and apply it to such ends or purposes as they, in their discretion shall see fit? Sir, you may destroy this little institution . . . but if you do . . . you must extinguish, one after another, all those great lights of science,

which, for more than a century, have thrown their radiance over the land! It is, sir, as I have said, a small college, and yet there are those that love it."[57]

On February 2, 1819, the Court handed down a 5–1 decision in Dartmouth's favor. Siding with Webster, Chief Justice Marshall agreed that the college was neither a civil institution nor its holdings public property. The New Hampshire legislature had indeed violated the contract implied by its founding charter. Hereafter, the state would be prohibited from exercising direct control over whatever academic institutions it authorized, except in cases where it was expressly stated that the institution in question was a public entity, supported by funds from the state's treasury.

The meaning, significance, and ultimate consequences of the Court's decision are still disputed by historians of American higher education. Some have held that the Dartmouth decision, in delineating or underscoring the distinction between public and private colleges, encouraged the development of private institutions by protecting them from state encroachment. Private donors were moved therefore to found colleges. Public institutions would have to be direct creations of the state, not state transformations of existing colleges. Proof of the encouraging influence of the Dartmouth Case, some have held, is found in the rapid proliferation of "private" schools that took place after 1819. On the other side, it has been argued that the distinction between public and private institutions was not nearly as clearly laid down or popularly accepted as has been supposed.[58] Thus, for example, not long after winning their case, Dartmouth's trustees petitioned the New Hampshire legislature to pay the legal fees incurred in fighting the state; and they continued to offer state representation on the board in exchange for public appropriations. In many instances throughout the decades following, state authorities continued to contribute to the support of what, to all intents and purposes, were purely private ventures, treating them more as philanthropic community agencies than as arms of the state. What is apparent, however, is that state subsidies fell off substantially throughout the next half century, as did efforts by state officials to intervene directly in the affairs of colleges not created under direct public auspices.

"A LAND OF COLLEGES"

Historians also differ in assessing the consequences of the overbuilding of institutions of higher learning in the antebellum period, both before and after the Dartmouth decision.[59] Some view the post-revolutionary period as an age in which anti-intellectual evangelicals displaced traditional academic educators, causing a serious debasement in the value of higher education.[60] Had funds expended on higher education been concentrated in a select few institutions, it has been argued, the United States soon would have developed a system

of education unsurpassed by any other in the world. On the other side, it could be argued that what was lost in intellectual quality as colleges of all types proliferated in the late 1700s and throughout the first half of the nineteenth century was more than compensated for by popular support and interest in higher learning, an involvement that would otherwise have been lacking.[61] What is plain, at any rate, is that the rush to found new colleges in the early Republican era proceeded without restraint.[62] Between 1782 and 1802, nineteen colleges were established, more than twice as many as had been chartered in the preceding century and a half. Denominational loyalties, state rivalries, increasing affluence, and an expanding population, the westward march of the frontier—all figured as contributing factors in the proliferation of colleges.[63] North Carolina, Tennessee, Vermont, and Georgia each had a state-chartered, state-supported institution prior to the turn of the century. Columbia University (formerly King's College) was temporarily taken over by state government, as was Dartmouth and the University of Pennsylvania at Philadelphia. Harvard, Yale and William and Mary all accepted more state representation on their respective governing boards.[64]

In Maine, supporters of what would become Bowdoin College were offering an entire township to any contractor able and willing to build them a four-story building to house the institution.[65] In 1826 the citizens of Easton, Pennsylvania, were busily engaged laying down plans for Lafayette College. In 1829 out on the midwest prairie, Illinois College opened its doors to an enrollment of nine students. At Bloomington, Indiana, in 1830 the Reverend Andrew Wyle alighted to assume charge of the newly created Indiana College. In November of 1832, five Presbyterian ministers founded Wabash College near Crawfordsville, Indiana. Six years later, in 1838, Emory College in Georgia opened its door, its founders undeterred by the fact that the new venture lacked any funds whatsoever, only promises of future donations. In October of 1841, eight French-speaking clerics, brothers of the Congregation of the Holy Cross, rode into the northern wilds of Indiana to inaugurate the college later called Notre Dame. On August 6, 1845, the University of Michigan proudly held its first commencement—for eleven graduates.[66] At the time of the American Revolution there were nine colleges; the total had jumped to 250 on the eve of the Civil War. Not without reason did a certain Absolem Peters remark in 1851: "Our country is to be a land of colleges."[67]

Everywhere the mania for founding colleges raged on uncontrolled.[68] Whereas England with a population of 23 million had only four institutions of higher learning, the state of Ohio, with a total population of just 3 million, at one point was hosting thirty-seven.[69] Sometimes the major cause at work was

state pride. In 1819 supporters of the proposed University of Vermont hit upon a winning argument when they pointed out that the state had lost an estimated $14 million to neighboring states because it lacked a public institution of higher learning. The same argument surfaced in an 1851 newspaper editorial in Minnesota that urged that "not a single youth of either sex should be permitted to leave the territory to acquire an education for want" of a suitable public university.[70] Previously, the president of Indiana College had argued successfully along identical lines. Hanover's president received his college charter in 1830 by arguing that other state legislatures had shown little restraint in granting authorization for the building of colleges, and Indiana ought not to be an exception.[71]

Sometimes, as was the case with the founding of Bowdoin College, colleges were founded because of the sheer difficulty of traveling long distances to attend an established institution.[72] In other instances, the chief motivating factor seems to have been regional pride or local pride as rural frontier towns sought to remake themselves over in the image of a New England community, complete with an academic institution. Carleton, Oberlin, Colorado, Whitman, and Pomona were all products of the desire of transplanted New Englanders to make the western expanse resemble the more settled East. More than a few times, also, colleges and universities were fought over as political prizes among rival communities, as proved to be the case in Boone County, Missouri, where local citizens outbid all competitors for the honor of hosting the state's first university.[73] In a few cases, legislatures awarded a college as a sort of consolation prize to a town that had lost out in the competition for a penal institution or insane asylum.[74]

Philip Lindsley of the University of Nashville addressed himself in 1837 to the question of whether America needed so many colleges. He concluded that "our busy, restless, speculating, money-making people" wanted academic centers as scattered and mobile as themselves. But he wondered aloud if many of them could be sustained.[75] General John Armstrong, a member of the governing board at Dickinson was another, one of many, who cautioned against the impetus to build colleges. His alternative suggestion was to begin by establishing small-scale academies in the rural back counties and charging them with the preparation of students for admission to existing higher schools. With the passage of time, he conjectured, it would be discovered where colleges were actually needed.[76] But voices such as those of Armstrong and Lindsley were ignored—or countered by an argument extolling the advantages of diffusing knowledge as widely as possible. College founding would continue unhindered, as historian Frederick Rudolph once noted, in the same entrepreneurial spirit as canal-building,

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cotton-ginning, farming, and gold-mining.[77] "More" was "better," and the appearance of colleges dotting the landscape everywhere, it was widely accepted, was a sure sign of American progress in the field of arts and letters, as in all other things.[78]

When all else failed, invocations of classical antiquity sometimes prevailed. Appealing to the state legislature for financial assistance in 1795, the trustees of Princeton promised that if their request was granted, they would make New Jersey "the Athens of America."[79] The same plea was forthcoming in 1847 from those who urged that the College of Charleston be supported, such that it might serve as "the Athens of the South." In Ohio, it was no coincidence that the state's two public colleges were located in towns bearing the names of Oxford and Athens. So too did the trustees of Williams College in Massachusetts propose to the state's general Court that their college in the Berkshires become the true "Athens of the New World." Others states, from Georgia to Arkansas, inevitably chose the name "Athens" for one of their own communities.[80]

Whenever possible, prospective college founders wrapped themselves in the loftiest rhetoric imaginable. The commitment of the president of the board of trustees for the College of California (1868) was "to make men more manly, and humanity more humane; to augment the discourse of reason, intelligence and faith, and to kindle the beacon fires of truth on all the summits of existence."[81] Others, among them the founders of South Carolina College in 1801, spoke at length of the need to help heal sectional rivalries that formed part of the legacy of the Revolutionary era. At the University of North Carolina in 1837, officials resolved to educate a new generation of wise and virtuous republican leaders. The 1835 charter of Oglethorpe University in Georgia sounded the theme of colleges working to end the supposed monopoly on learning by the rich and powerful; while the 1828 incorporation of Indiana College committed the institution to educating youths in all branches of knowledge, both ancient and modern.[82]

Typical in its sentiment was an address by President McKeen at Bowdoin in 1802. "It ought always to be remembered," he reminded his audience, "that literary institutions are founded and endowed for the common good, and not for the private advantage of those who resort to them for education. It is not that they may be able to pass through life in an easy or reputable manner, but that their mental powers may be cultivated and improved for the benefit of society. If it be true no man should live for himself alone, we may safely assert that every man who has been aided by a public institution to acquire an education and to qualify himself for usefulness, is under peculiar obligations to exert his talents for the public good."[83]

DENOMINATIONAL SCHOOLS

Far and away the most active founders of colleges throughout the first half of the nineteenth century were various religious denominations. It seemed to matter little that many sectarian colleges and academies were begun without sufficient resources to ensure their long-term survival, that more than a few floundered in short order, or that most of the new ventures were capable of offering little more than the rudiments of secondary-level instruction. In every state, churches were at work establishing what purported to be genuine colleges of higher learning.[84] In Ohio, Franklin and Muskingham were founded by Presbyterians; Marietta and Oberlin were sponsored by Congregationalists; Kenyon College was the creation of Episcopalians; Denison was a Baptist college at its inception; Methodists founded Mount Union, Ohio Wesleyan, and Baldwin College; Otterbein was sponsored by the United Brethern; Wittenberg was begun by Lutherans; Urbana was the inspiration of Swedenborgians; Hiram opened its doors under the auspices of the Disciples of Christ; Heidelberg was the product of the Reformed church; and St. Xavier was opened under Catholic control—each founded prior to 1850. Denominationalism likewise left its mark in Kentucky where almost a dozen sectarian academies were established; in Illinois where twenty-one different religious colleges had sprung into existence; in Indiana where four colleges—Vincennes, Hanover, Indiana, and Wabash—were products of the home missionary movement; and in Iowa where there were at least thirteen denominational schools struggling to survive prior to 1869. Presbyterians alone accounted for the founding of at least one-quarter of those religious colleges that endured throughout the nineteenth century.[85]

The founder of Oberlin College, the Reverend John H. Shepherd, was forthright in announcing that he had come out to the Western Reserve to save the people from "rum, brandy, gin and whiskey" and to rescue the church from "Romanists, atheists, Deists, Universalists, and all classes of God's enemies."[86] Naturally, those so branded disagreed vociferously—all the while redoubling their own efforts in founding colleges where the "true" gospel might be preserved.[87] Finally, when it became obvious to all parties concerned that direct and unrestricted competition would be ruinous to all, the custom arose of apportioning territory among contending sectarian factions. Appointed to oversee the task were such interdenominational Protestant agencies as the American Home Missionary Society (founded in 1826) and in New York the Society for the Promotion of Collegiate and Theological Education at the West (1843). Meanwhile, by 1860 Roman Catholics had opened scores of colleges of their own, only a dozen or so of which managed to survive into the next century.[88]

Even those most active in the spread of sectarian schools wondered sometimes about the wisdom of their efforts.[89] As a committee on education of the General Conference of the Methodist Church conceded in 1856, "We have, in many parts of the land, called into existence institutions that were not needed and could not be sustained."[90] More acerbic in tone was the declaration of Philip Lindsley in 1829: "I am aware," he observed, "that as soon as any sect succeeds in obtaining a charter for something called a college, they become, all of a sudden, wonderously liberal and catholic. They forthwith proclaim to the public that their college is the best in the world—and withal, perfectly free from the odious taint of sectarianism. . . . They hold out false colours to allure and deceive the incautious."[91]

In fairness to denominational schools, it should be noted that many of the so-called "booster" and "hilltop" colleges of the period, such as Williams and Amherst, did in fact offer educational opportunities for poor but pious young men (often inspired by a local parson) who sought to prepare themselves for the ministry in locales far distant from the environs of New Haven or Cambridge and other mainstream colleges.[92] At Williams, Nathaniel Hawthorne spoke with only a touch of condescension of the typical divinity student as a type: "country graduates—rough, brown featured, schoolmaster-looking, half-bumpkin, half-scholar, in black, ill-cut broadcloth . . . a rough-hewn, heavy set of fellows from the hills and woods in this neighborhood."[93] These were the people the Reverend John Todd, in an appeal on behalf of a missionary society seeking patrons, undoubtedly had in mind when he declared in 1847, "Our colleges are chiefly and mainly institutions designed for the poor and those in moderate circumstances, and not for the rich. . . . We have no institutions in the land more truly republican than our colleges."[94]

JACKSONIAN IDEALS AND THE COLLEGE MOVEMENT

So-called female seminaries and academies were new additions to the growing roster of collegiate institutions that appeared in the first half of the nineteenth century.[95] Most were inspired by Emma Willard's famous Troy Female Seminary, founded in New York in 1821, and Mary Lyon's Mount Holyoke Seminary, opened in 1837. In the South, the Wesleyan Female College of Macon, Georgia, was the first institution of its type to grant its graduates a formal academic degree (1836). Alabama's Judson College, founded in 1836, and the Mary Sharp College for Women in Tennessee in 1852 likewise offered women opportunities to obtain a collegiate education. Whether many qualified as true post-secondary institutions, however, remains doubtful. In a majority of cases, admission standards were low and required preparatory training was almost nonexistent. The age at which students were admitted also tended to be

lower than at exclusively male colleges. Almost all lacked sufficient endowments to assure their permanent survival, reflective perhaps of popular skepticism about the value of higher education for women. Serious scholarship, it was widely believed, lay beyond female capabilities.[96] Moreover, women who did acquire a modicum of formal learning ran the risk of finding themselves educated above and beyond the domestic station in life for which most were destined. For much the same reasons, coeducation was virtually unheard of until 1833 when Oberlin opened its portals to women as well as men. It was also Oberlin that was the pioneer in awarding bachelor of arts degrees to three women in 1841, each having completed precisely the same course of studies as their nine male peers.[97]

Very few blacks were afforded opportunities to pursue higher learning in the antebellum period. Throughout the South, it was a statutory crime in most states to teach even the rudiments of reading and writing to anyone of African-American ancestry.[98] Hence it was not altogether surprising that it was 1826 before the first black college graduate was awarded an A.B. degree—and there were no more than twenty-seven others prior to the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation. Avery College, founded in Allegheny City, Pennsylvania, in 1849 was among the very first black colleges to begin operations, followed in 1851 by the Miner Academy in the nation's capital. The next year a college for "colored youth" was begun in Philadelphia. In 1856 Wilberforce was founded in Ohio under Methodist auspices; two years before Presbyterians had opened Lincoln University of Pennsylvania for blacks.[99] Oberlin College, meanwhile, freely admitted people of color of both sexes for instruction.

Among Jacksonian democrats in the early 1800s, however, demands for the expansion and reform of higher education did not speak to the aspirations of women, blacks, indigenous peoples, or other ethnic minorities. Rather, the target of concern of labor groups and workingmen's associations was the growth of monopoly in the world of trade and commerce. Herein lay a fundamental paradox in American social and political thought of the time. On the one hand, Americans professed to admire self-taught, self-made men, ambitious entrepreneurs who, by virtue of their own efforts, had attained positions of eminence or prominence at the top of the social hierarchy. Wealth, accordingly, was taken as a symbol of respectability and achievement. On the other hand, there coexisted a deep-seated distrust of privilege and social inequality, a notion uneasily wedded to the equally potent appeal of egalitarianism.[100] The "common man" of plain and homely virtues was likewise venerated, no less than the self-made millionaire; but in both cases it was widely accepted that little or no formal learning was needed to make one's way or to achieve success in the rough and tumble of social life. Institutions of higher learning

found it difficult to navigate their way between these two polarities. By tradition they were pledged to the training of leaders, in an era now grown suspicious of anything resembling elitism. Furthermore, the notion of a "higher" learning bent to some tangible, useful end—the colleges' very stock-in-trade—was itself suspect. In the end, more than a few institutions succumbed to a genteel sort of "collegiate anti-intellectualism" (for want of a better expression), a kind of affected indifference to learning aimed at winning popular acceptance and respectability for themselves. Nothing else explains why in many instances scholastic achievement was not emphasized even within academe, and why young students were counseled not to work too hard or to seek to excel at their studies.

President Lindsley of the University of Nashville, always an astute social critic, posed the dilemma of the colleges somewhat differently in his 1829 baccalaureate address. "The levelling system," he observed, "which is so popular and captivating with the multitude, may be made to operate in two ways, with equal success. . . . Colleges and universities, as implying odious pre-eminence, may be prevented from growing up among us: or every petty village school may be dignified with the name and legal attribute of a college." The basic problem, as he saw it, was that populist sentiment tended to equate excellence of any sort with privilege, while radically egalitarian democrats mistook quantity for quality.[101] The result, he and other critics argued, was that the country was in the process of acquiring a multiplicity of schools of indifferent or mediocre standing, rather than a few academic citadels of exceptional quality.

Sensitive to allegations of elitism, some colleges responded by holding out the promise of social mobility to those willing to subject themselves to an academic regimen. In Ohio in 1830 Philander Chase promised to make of Oberlin a true "People's College" committed "to teach the children of the poor to become school-masters . . .[or] to rise by their wisdom and merits into stations hitherto occupied by the rich; to fill our pulpits, to sit in our state chambers, and on our seats of justice, and to secure in the best possible way the liberties of our country."[102] Still another stratagem adopted by some colleges in their bid for popular acceptance was an attempt to make collegiate attendance self-financing. Basically, the idea was that students would be instructed in such practical skills as farming or carpentry. They would then be employed in a useful trade while attending classes and thus pay their own way through to graduation. By all accounts, the experiment was an abysmal failure. Collegiate farms lost money; student malingering was commonplace, and the cost of providing equipment for mechanical shops proved prohibitive. At Ohio University, according to one report, students made so many wooden barrels

that they eventually glutted the market.[103] By 1837 or thereabouts, virtually all work-study ventures had been abandoned.

COLLEGE MANAGEMENT AND CONTROL

Nineteenth-century colleges commonly employed two types of teachers. Tutors were the most numerous. A typical tutor was a young man in his early twenties who had himself only recently graduated from the institution where he was employed. His assignment was usually a temporary one, assumed while he awaited a more permanent position outside academe (usually as a minister). In the interim his chief duties were to hear student recitations and act as a disciplinarian and overseer of students under his charge. The regular professor, in contrast, had some post-baccalaureate training in one of the established professions (albeit not in any particular teaching specialty), had served previously in an extended tutorship, or, as was more likely, had received an appointment from his alma mater following years of service in some nonacademic occupation—again, usually having served in some pastorate. Ordinarily, conditions precluded a professor from specializing: it was not at all unusual to find the same person teaching geography, mathematics, and natural philosophy; or Latin and Greek literature, plus history, ethics, and moral philosophy.[104]

Like the tutor, each professor or teaching master was expected to help enforce the college's many stringent policies and rules. It was a practice calculated to generate an adversarial relationship between faculty and students. Students who attempted to cultivate any sort of association with "the enemy," for example, were ostracized by their fellow classmates or were viewed with suspicion. Faculty, for their part, were inclined to resent being cast as disciplinarians and felt frustrated when their efforts to maintain order failed. (At South Carolina College, legend has it that on one occasion an immigrant political economist by the name of Francis Lieber had set out in hot pursuit of a student bearing a stolen turkey. He stumbled over a pile of bricks, injuring himself in his fall. Rubbing his shins as he lay sprawled on the ground, he was heard to exclaim aloud, "Mein Gott! All dis for two t'ousand dollars!")[105]

Presiding over the whole was the president. Answerable only to a nonresident board of trustees or governors in most cases, the college's chief executive tended to function—depending upon the individual institution involved—as an authority unto himself.[106] If the institution was still in its formative stage, his responsibilities encompassed the full range of duties later assigned to such subordinate functionaries as deans, registrar, bursar, treasurer, and so on. Whether his title was "rector," as at Yale; or "provost," as was customary at the University of Pennsylvania; or "chancellor," the title used at the University of

Nashville; or even "principal," as custom dictated at Dickinson, the antebellum president was more than "first among equals" after the fashion of the English academic guild. On the contrary, his authority in all matters pertaining to his school's management was nearly absolute. College faculty members, of course, did not always readily acquiesce to the authority of political appointees, clergymen, or wealthy benefactors whose claims to academic legitimacy they questioned. Nor did they accede easily to the autocratic rule of a strong president. But from the outset, power struggles, such as they were, were conducted on uneven ground; and when a president was directly threatened, he could usually depend upon the college's statutory governors for backing.[107]

The accommodation or compromise that proved most enduring was to allow decisions regarding student admissions, academic standards, and curricular specifics to be controlled by faculty, while in all other matters the board and its president held sway. Thus, in those few colleges where traditions of faculty authority remained strong, some limits to presidential authority and power were at least tacitly observed. Elsewhere, however, in the majority of cases, there was little to prevent a strong-willed executive officer from ruling day to day with an iron hand.

Increasingly too, a president's position was strengthened by growing acceptance of the notion that college administrators and academics were two different breeds entirely. Samuel Eliot, a historian at Harvard, supplied a near-classic rationale for vesting power with trustees, and through them, to the president. Writing in 1848, Eliot observed, "Gentlemen almost exclusively engaged in the instruction and discipline of youth are not, usually, in the best condition to acquire that experience in affairs, and acquaintance with men, which, to say the least, are extremely desirable in the management of the exterior concerns of a large literary institution." Extending his theme, Eliot argued, "Arrangements for instruction must be adapted to the state of the times, and to that of the world around, as well as of that within, the college walls; and of this state men engaged in the active business of life are likely to be better judges than the literary man."[108] By implication, then, if ivory-tower academics were unsuited by temperament and lack of experience to deal with matters of academic governance and management, it was incumbent upon busy practical men to do so, delegating power as necessary to their surrogate in the person of the president.

With so many duties and responsibilities—teaching, fund-raising, maintaining student discipline, record-keeping, collecting and disbursing funds—vested in a single person, the president's position was apt to be both burdensome and time-consuming. A candidate for the presidency at Illinois College in 1844 agonized over whether or not he was up to the task. "May the

Lord give me wisdom," he wrote to a friend. "If I am to be placed at the head of this College, may he pour out upon [me] his spirit till I am fully qualified for the holy and responsible work—to be wise, to be firm, to be humble, to shed over this College the holy influence of piety and to lead the successive generations of students. . . . How can I ever be sufficient for these things? Pray for me."[109] President Martin Brewer Anderson of the University of Rochester disclosed in 1868 that his biggest problem was safeguarding the welfare of the students entrusted to his tutelage. "No class passes through my hands which does not contain more or less young men who are on the eve of ruin from wayward natures, bad habits, or hereditary tendencies to evil," he claimed. "These men must be watched, borne with, and if possible saved to the world and to their families. . . . This work must mainly be done by the president."[110]

More than a few of the early colleges were fortunate enough to attract effective leaders. Not all college presidents were adequate to the task, however, nor did they always measure up to the high standards demanded of them. The Reverend Samuel Locke of Harvard, for example, was forced to resign his position when it was revealed in 1773 that he had something to do with his housemaid's pregnancy. Eliphalet Nott at Union College steadfastly refused to resign as president until he had occupied the post for sixty-two years. Illustrating the extreme pettiness to which some presidents descended was the case of the Reverend William M. Blackburn, an early president of the University of North Dakota, who appeared before the state board of regents with repeated complaints about a certain Mrs. E. S. Mott, who was employed as a preceptress and instructor in English. Among them, he recounted to the board, was her steadfast refusal to defer eating until he had finished the blessing. Mrs. Mott retorted that the food served was equally bad before and after his prayers. In the end, the board voted to remove them both from their positions.[111]

ACADEMIC SUPERVISION AND COLLEGIATE LIFE

Colleges and academies of the antebellum period, unlike their predecessors in the colonial era, tended to be located not in cities but in or near small rural towns. Agrarian mythology held that a bucolic setting far removed from the contaminating influence of the metropolis was better adapted for academic pursuits, more conducive to character-building, more protective of moral virtue.[112] President Wayland of Brown spoke for a minority when he declared in 1842, "It matters really but little whether an institution be situated in a town or in the country. Place it where you will, in a few years there will cluster around it all the opportunities of idle and vicious expenditure. Under such circumstances, it is obvious that no physical means can be devised which shall furnish such supervision as will present an impassable barrier to unlawful

inclination." Furthermore, he argued, an enforced residential pattern encouraged the spread of disease, fostered unsanitary habits, reinforced the disinclination of students to exercise regularly, isolated young men from community life and the world's affairs, diverted funds needed for building up libraries and classrooms, imposed supervisory responsibilities the college lacked the means to discharge effectively, and actually served to expose impressionable young scholars to the vices and evil habits dormitories were intended to eliminate.[113]

But most college authorities were determined to attempt control over student life in all of its particulars. Student dormitories were viewed as a means admirably suited to accomplishing that end. Whenever possible, efforts were made—as in colonial times—to create residence halls on the model of the English college. Manasseh Cutler, who helped found Ohio University, in 1800 advised strongly against the attempt, viewing elaborate residence halls as a needless extravagance and an impediment to the very purpose for which they were intended, namely, protecting students from themselves. "Chambers in colleges," as he put it, "are too often made the nurseries of every vice and cages of unclean birds."[114] Nonetheless, even when students did not live "on campus" but in boarding houses nearby, most school officials spared no effort in regulating where students could live, how they should dress, what they were allowed to eat, and what use they made of the little free time that institutional routine—which usually began with compulsory chapel at dawn and lasted until evening prayers—allowed them.

At Dartmouth, the day commenced as soon as there was sufficient light for the president to read the Bible at morning chapel. One class was scheduled before the morning meal. More classes and study periods followed until the noon hour, when lunch was served. In the afternoon there were more classes and recitations, concluded by supper. Ever vigilant against the prospect of idle minds falling into devilish mischief, college tutors made regular rounds to ensure that students were occupied with their studies in the evening hours until they retired.[115] At Oglethorpe University in Georgia, much the same pattern prevailed. The routine opened at 6:30 with compulsory morning prayers and extended until the end of classes at 5:00 in the afternoon. Students were then obliged to return to chapel, where prayers were offered up begging God's forgiveness for whatever sins had been committed since daybreak.

Students deeply resented the regimen, judging by frequent reports of absenteeism, of obscene graffiti scribbled by students on the flyleaves of their hymnals, of spitting in the chapel aisle, and general inattentiveness. William G. Hammond, a student at Amherst in the 1840s questioned whether official religiosity served any useful purpose whatsoever. "I do really think," he remarked, "these public prayers do more harm than good to the religious

feeling of a majority of students: they are regarded as an idle bore, and only tend to do away with that feeling of reverence with which everyone naturally regards an address to the Deity."[116]

Antebellum collegiate instruction was organized strictly according to classes. That is, all students accepted for admission in a given year were considered members of a single class, which was kept intact over the four-year period until its members graduated together. The course of studies was the same for all at most colleges, at least until the second quarter of the nineteenth century. Entering freshman were subjected to the English-school custom of "fagging," whereby lowerclassmen were expected to run errands upon demand and otherwise serve as unpaid servants to upperclassmen. Fagging eventually disappeared, only to be replaced by a briefer but no less severe series of initiation rites or trials—"hazing"—by which first-year students supposedly proved themselves worthy of the company of their student superiors. Despite official disapproval, canings and other forms of physical punishment were freely administered by upperclassmen when their demands went unsatisfied.

College classrooms of the 1800s were bare and unadorned, stuffy and poorly ventilated during the warmer months, ill-heated in winter. Lectures and recitations were the two chief methods of instruction. Gifted speakers such as Charles Nisbet of Dickinson, Samuel Johnson at Columbia University, and Timothy Dwight at Yale were renowned in the early 1800s for their classroom eloquence, and did much to keep alive the medieval lecture tradition. (Mark Hopkins, president of Williams College, was especially well known for his skill in sustaining lively exchanges among his students, prompting an often-misquoted remark attributed to President Garfield that the ideal college was one with Mark Hopkins at one end of a bench—not a log—and a student at the other.) Elsewhere, at less prestigious institutions, according to surviving accounts, students were more likely to encounter uninspired pedants whose classroom presentations as a whole were considered a colossal waste of time. More typical still was the treadmill of constant recitations. Customarily the tutor drew names at random from a hat to determine which student would be summoned before the class and examined over how thoroughly he had committed particular texts to memory. Faced with the prospect of learning long passages by rote, students often resorted to "ponies," or "crib sheets." It was a practice that inspired the wry observation, "The keeping of same doth tend to produce stable scholarship."[117]

Isolated in a small town offering few diversions or amusements, obliged to memorize a seemingly endless and meaningless succession of materials, under constant faculty supervision, and allowed little release from the daily routine of collegiate life, students doubtless considered higher learning a tedious

business. Discontent occasionally erupted into open rebellion. Commenting on a succession of incidents that had wracked Princeton between 1800 and 1830, President Ashbel Green attributed "the true causes of all these enormities" to "the fixed, irreconcilable and deadly hostility [of students]. . . to the whole system of diligent study, of guarded moral conduct and of reasonable attention to religious duty." A more practical assessment of the riots that broke out from time to time—at Amherst, Brown, Yale, Harvard, Dartmouth, Lafayette, Bowdoin, DePauw, Dickinson, the University of South Carolina, Miami University, at the City College of New York, and at countless other schools—might have taken into consideration the enforced seclusion, the isolation, the sheer boredom students experienced. In a small, closed environment where rumors abounded and tempers flared easily, it was almost inevitable there would be fights, duels, and stabbings. Even minor irritants could assume major proportions and foment rebellion. Poor food in the student commons, as always, was a frequent source of complaints. At South Carolina College in 1811, for example, students learned that the steward had purchased a tough old bull and intended it for slaughter. Enraged, the students took their revenge by driving the animal into the river where it was drowned. Elsewhere, wormy salt pork or leftovers offered up once too often drove students to riot. A young Harvard student, Augustus Torrey, recorded in his diary in 1822: "Goose for dinner, said to have migrated to this country with our ancestors."[118]

EXTRACURRICULAR PURSUITS

One of the few diversions approved by college authorities in the antebellum period were activities sponsored by religious societies. In the 1790s, Enlightenment ideals had enjoyed enormous if brief popularity among college students. Inspired by the French Revolution and the writings of such *philosophes* as Diderot, Voltaire, Condorcet and others, it became fashionable for a time to embrace Deism, to denounce the work of churches, and to otherwise espouse antireligious rationalism. But after the turn of the century, the pendulum of opinion swung back far to the right once again, now encouraging a return to theological orthodoxy and evangelical religiosity. On campuses across the country throughout the first half of the nineteenth century there were periodic religious revivals strongly reminiscent of those stimulated by the Great Awakening half a century earlier.[119] At Yale, the Moral Society required its members to adhere strictly to Biblical precepts, to "suppress vice and improve the interests of morality" and to refrain from profanity, gambling, card-playing, and the consumption of alcoholic beverages. It was the same at Williams, Wofford, Amherst, North Carolina, Wake Forest, Wabash, Trinity, Emory, and the University of Georgia. At Dartmouth, moved by "an imperious

sense of duty," members of the Theological Society, founded in 1813, ceremoniously dismissed one of their colleagues who had been found drinking. At Harvard, students devoted much of their free time debating such weighty questions as whether any sin was absolutely unpardonable or whether sexual inter-course after a formal marital engagement qualified as fornication. As late as the 1860s at Yale it was held, "If any student shall profess or endeavor to propagate a disbelief in the divine authority of the Holy Scriptures, and shall persist therein after admonition, he shall no longer be a member of the College."

The diary of William Otis Carr, a student at Amherst in the 1850s, recounts how the college president's sermonizing inspired a revival in March of 1855 and how it spread when a passing evangelist came to preach at the college. "One young man," Carr wrote, "who gloried in his wicked ways and seemed the first in any forbidden scheme, was stopped in his maddened course and, blessed be to God, made a new creature. And what a change! His first act was to banish from his room the servants of sin. He threw into the fire his cards . . . and upon this he poured the contents of his brandy bottle. Many are giving up their foul feasts on tobacco, and instead of the curse, from almost every room may now be heard the voice of prayer. It is wonderful to perceive the holy calm that reigns around us."[120]

Literary societies and debating clubs of a more secular cast also were immensely popular among students of the early nineteenth century, sometimes commanding the fierce loyalties and rivalries later associated only with intercollegiate athletics.[121] In stark contrast with the sterility of classroom exercises, the oratorical and declamatory "exhibitions" sponsored by literary societies were intellectually robust exercises greatly prized by students. Their entertainment value apart, forensic displays and oratorical contests were regarded as good practice for the sermonizing, teaching, and legal pleading for which students were preparing themselves in their future careers. Typical topics debated included questions about whether or not legitimate theater was prejudicial to public morals, and whether wealth or physical attributes "tended more to relieve a female of celibacy."[122] As the century progressed, other activities came to play an important role in the extracurricular life of students: amateur theater and orchestras, dancing (denounced from some quarters as satanic), hunting, foot races, bowling, skating, shooting marbles, and early free-for-all versions of football or soccer.[123] In the 1820s organized gymnastics came into vogue, prompting an official pronouncement at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute that "such exercises as running, jumping, climbing, scuffling, and the like are calculated to detract from that dignity of deportment which becomes a man." Earlier, Princeton officials had judged that "shinny," a type of field hockey, should be forbidden on the basis that it was "in itself low

and unbecoming gentlemen and scholars, and is attended with great danger to the health." Undeterred by official pronouncements of disapproval, the gymnastic movement in particular continued to enjoy great popularity among students.[124]

Greek-letter societies made their first appearance on college campuses in the early 1800s. Beginning at Union and Hamilton in the 1820s and 1830s, fraternity chapters were founded within a very short span of time: Kappa Alpha in 1825, Sigma Phi and Delta Phi in 1827, Theta Delta Chi in 1847, followed soon thereafter by Psi Upsilon, Chi Psi, and Alpha Delta Phi. By the 1830s there already were local chapters of national fraternities flourishing at Amherst, Bowdoin, Brown, Columbia, Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Miami, Kentucky, Wabash, and elsewhere. In the same period, local Greek associations had sprung up at the University of Vermont, Dartmouth, and Wesleyan.[125] Mark Hopkins, for one, was unalterably persuaded that college officials everywhere should act promptly to banish all fraternities while there was still time. "Their influences have been evil," he insisted. "They create class and factions, and put men socially in regard to each other into an artificial and false position."[126] Reuben A. Gould, a librarian at Brown, heartily agreed. "Secret societies," he declared flatly in 1852, "originate with the Devil, all of them."[127] Opposition tended to become muted in later years, after efforts at suppression had failed. By the 1850s the first Greek societies for women were also beginning to appear.

THE YALE REPORT

Allegations that the typical antebellum college was unresponsive to popular demands for curricular reform throughout the first half of the nineteenth century do a serious injustice to the historical record.[128] In point of fact, the American college's course of study was never rigid, and it evolved continuously over time in both form and content. Confronted with demands that new scientific knowledge be admitted within the academic cloister, Princeton between 1796 and 1806 experimented with the elimination of Latin and Greek requirements, substituting in their stead an array of scientifically oriented subjects.[129] Union College between 1802 and 1827 moved in much the same direction. At the University of Pennsylvania in 1816, trustees appointed a four-person faculty of physical science and "rural economy." Modern languages, applied mathematics, and courses in political economy were allowed to substitute for classical studies in several institutions, including Ohio University, Lafayette College, Union, Hobart, Wesleyan in Connecticut, and Columbia in New York throughout the 1820s and 1830s. Sometimes so-called "parallel" courses of studies were inaugurated which allowed students to choose

between a classical and a literary-scientific progression of studies. More often, the approach taken was to supplement the required plan of ancient subjects with modern languages, mathematics, and various scientific specializations. Again, efforts were undertaken to merge both scientific and classical subjects within a single curricular sequence.[130]

At the University of Virginia, Thomas Jefferson's 1824 experiment in allowing students to choose from among different courses offered through eight specialized units or schools—ancient languages, modern languages, mathematics, natural philosophy, history, anatomy and medicine, moral philosophy, and law—excited much attention and was watched closely. Elsewhere, when such critics as Francis Hopkins, Jonathan Trumbell, Benjamin Rush, William Smith, and Benjamin Franklin complained that students should be allowed to select from among several alternatives, schoolmen did not necessarily turn a deaf ear. President Horace Holley at Transylvania University in Kentucky, James Perkins Marsh at the University of Vermont, Eliphalet Nott at Union, and George Ticknor at Harvard were only a few of the scores of leading educators who experimented with enlarging the curriculum and expanding choices through parallel or "partial" courses of study.[131]

Clearly dominating the educational scene were controversies over the proper course to be pursued. In an era increasingly shaped by science and technology, some argued, it was incumbent upon colleges to go even further. "We have listened too long to the courtly muses of Europe," declared Ralph Waldo Emerson in his famous 1837 "American Scholar" Address at Harvard.[132] Francis Wayland of Brown concurred. "In a free country like our own," he asked, "unembarrassed by precedents, and yet not entangled by the vested rights of bygone ages, ought we not to originate a system of education which shall raise to high intellectual culture the whole mass of our people?"[133] But anything resembling a consensus of opinion on what was to be done proved impossible to achieve. Some, like Henry Tappan of Michigan, held that efforts to crowd both old and new subjects into the collegiate curriculum were impractical. "With the vast extension of science," he reflected, "it came to pass that the course of study was vastly enlarged. . . . We have only pressed in our four years' course a greater number of studies. The effect has been disastrous."[134] Many agreed with Tappan's diagnosis, even as they continued to disagree on a cure.

In September of 1827 President Jeremiah Day of Yale resolved to meet the issues head-on. A select committee of college fellows was appointed to draw up a position paper, specifically to deal with a proposal to eliminate "dead languages" from the school's required course of studies. The document that ensued the next year, in 1828, ended up addressing a much broader range of

questions. Following its 1829 publication in the prestigious *American Journal of Science and Arts*, the Yale Report quickly became the most widely read and influential pronouncement on education of the time. It was, in essence, a spirited, closely reasoned defense of traditional classical education.[135]

Day's paper opened with the admission that Yale's existing educational system was not perfect and should remain open to improvements. It further pointed out that new studies in chemistry, mineralogy, geology, political economy, and other subjects had been added to older courses. But it rejected outright the criticism that colleges were "not adapted to the spirit and wants of the age," and discounted dire predictions that colleges soon would be deserted unless drastically revamped and "better accommodated to the business character of the nation." Invoking the venerable theory of the mind as a receptacle and a muscle capable of being strengthened through proper mental exercise, the Report declared, "The two great points to be gained in intellectual culture, are the *discipline* and the *furniture* of the mind; expanding its powers, and storing it with knowledge." Hence the aim of a collegiate course should be to call the mind's "faculties" or potentialities into "daily and vigorous exercise." Branches of study therefore should be prescribed that were "best calculated to teach the art of fixing the attention, directing the train of thought, analyzing a subject . . . for investigation; following . . . the course of argument; balancing . . . evidence presented to the judgment; awakening, elevating and controlling the imagination . . . [and] rousing and guiding the powers of genius."[136] Appropriate subjects inherently adapted to these ends, the committee held, included mathematics, ancient and modern English literature, logic, rhetoric, oratory, written composition, and the physical sciences.

Undergraduate education, the argument continued, should *not* attempt to include professional studies: "Our object is not to teach that which is peculiar to any one of the professions; but to lay the foundation which is common to them all." Against the claim that a student should not be required to waste time on studies lacking any direct connection with his future profession, the committee responded, "The great object of a collegiate education, preparatory to the study of a profession, is to give that expansion and balance . . . those liberal and comprehensive views, and those fine proportions of character, which are not to be found in him whose ideas are always confined to one particular channel." Furthermore, the purpose of an education should not be confined to preparing one to make a living. Rather, learning should be directed to the larger task of acquiring the arts of living. Nor should preprofessional education "include all the minute details of mercantile, mechanical, or agricultural concerns." What one needs to know is best learned in the specific settings where such learning is applied: "The young merchant must

be trained in the counting room, the mechanic, in the workshop, the farmer, in the field."[137]

To the objection that students should not be required to complete a uniform course of studies, the Yale Report held that "thorough education" should consist of those elements common to the needs of everyone, "those branches of knowledge of which no one destined to the higher walks of life ought to be ignorant." Personal preference or natural inclination, it was added, should not be allowed to dictate the shape of anyone's studies. Assessing the argument that educational opportunities should be opened to everyone, the Report agreed wholeheartedly. But by the same token it denied that the college of itself should attempt to supply all needs or attempt to be all things to all people. Further, study of the classics should be acknowledged and appreciated both as the foundation of good taste and judgment, and as the basis for precisely the sort of training most needed by future "merchants, manufacturers, and agriculturists." They too, no less than clergymen and academics, would profit from "high intellectual culture." It should be obvious "to the most cursory observer," avowed the Yale Report's authors, "that the classics afford materials to exercise talents of every degree, from the first opening of the youthful intellect to the period of its highest maturity." Classical discipline, they asserted, "forms the best preparation for professional study." The Report concluded, "Is it not desirable" that men of wealth and influence "should be men of superior education, of large and liberal views, of those solid and elegant attainments, which will raise them to a higher distinction than the mere possession of property; which will not allow them to hoard their treasures, or waste them in senseless extravagance; which will enable them to adorn society by their learning, to move in the more intelligent circles with dignity, and to make such an application of their wealth, as will be more honorable to themselves and most beneficial to their country?"[138]

Conservatives were greatly heartened by so forthright a defense of traditional learning. President Lord of Dartmouth went even further in declaring that a college education was not intended for people who planned to "engage in mercantile, mechanical or agricultural operations."[139] Classicists felt vindicated in opposing demands for more popular and practical learning. As South Carolina President James H. Thornwell urged defiantly, "While others are veering to the popular pressure . . . let it be our aim to make scholars and not sappers or miners—apothecaries—doctors or farmers."[140] Many hailed the Yale Report as a definitive statement on the nature and purpose of education offered by the liberal-arts college. They appealed to it repeatedly in attempting to counter demands that colleges turn themselves into preparatory training sites for the trades and professions. The true mission of the college, it was

avowed repeatedly, was to serve as a custodian of high culture; to nurture and preserve the legacy of the past; to foster a *paideia*, or "common learning," capable of enlarging and enriching people's lives; and to impart the knowledge, skills, and sensibilities foundational to the arts of living themselves. But if traditionalists expected that the Yale Report would put an end to academic controversy, they were destined for disappointment. If anything, debate over collegiate priorities and purposes was to continue unchecked throughout the nineteenth century and beyond.

THE AFTERMATH: IN RETROSPECT

For all the brave talk among academic traditionalists about holding the line and not succumbing to cultural philistines, not even the most hidebound among them was able to avoid making some place in the college curriculum for utilitarian studies. By the 1850s if not before, to botany, chemistry, and zoology had been added a host of other applied scientific and technological arts in many institutions. At Yale in 1846 a professorship of "agricultural chemistry and animal and vegetable physiology" was established, not to mention a chair of "chemistry and the kindred sciences as applied to the arts."[141] Harvard meanwhile in 1851 had awarded its first bachelor of science degree and was contemplating the prospect of opening up a graduate school of arts and sciences. Other colleges and universities soon followed. John William Draper at an address before an audience assembled in 1835 at New York University announced, "Mere literary acumen is becoming utterly powerless against profound scientific attainment." He then posed two questions: "To what are the great advances of civilization for the last fifty years due—to literature or science? Which of the two is it that is shaping the thought of the world?"[142]

Some academics welcomed the advent of scientific studies, not on the grounds of practicality but as allies of religion. Long before, President Walter Minto of Princeton had hailed "natural philosophy" for having led "in a satisfactory manner to the knowledge of one almighty, all-wise and all-good Being, who created, preserves and governs the universe. . . . Indeed," he stressed, "I consider a student of that branch of science as engaged in a continued act of devotion."[143] Albert Hopkins at Williams returned a half century later, in 1838, to the same theme. Defending a proposal to open an astronomical observatory on campus, he bolstered pragmatic arguments with a religious rationale. The facility would be beneficial, he declared, because it would inspire students to direct their thoughts "toward that fathomless fountain and author of being, who has constituted matter and all its accidents as lively emblems of the immaterial kingdom."[144]

Critics nonetheless continued with a barrage of attacks upon those colleges slow to adjust their programs. In California in 1858, the state's superintendent of public instruction demanded to know, "For what useful occupation are the graduates of most of our old colleges fit?"[145] In Georgia the year before, a newspaper editorial criticized the professorate for its alleged intransigence in the face of social change and wondered aloud why its members deserved access to public funds. "We are now living in a different age, an age of practical utility," the paper announced, "one in which the State University does not, and cannot supply the demands of the state. The times require practical men, civil engineers, to take charge of public roads, railroads, mines, scientific agriculture." Rejecting claims that institutions of higher learning were never intended to supply the technical skills needed for the practice of any occupation whatsoever, the writer went on to argue that "practicality" and "utility" should become the watchwords of any public academic agency.[146] Henry Tappan, future president of the University of Michigan, interpreted the situation as he saw it in 1851 somewhat differently. "The commercial spirit of our country, and the many avenues of wealth which are opened before enterprise, create a distaste for study deeply inimical to education," as he put it. "The manufacturer, the merchant, and the gold-digger, will not pause in their career to gain intellectual accomplishments. While gaining knowledge, they are losing the opportunities to gain money."[147] By implication, the question was whether and for how long traditional colleges could manage to survive and about who they would serve.

For all the harsh criticisms to which they were subjected, it seems important to note that on the eve of the Civil War, colleges both public and private, sectarian and nondenominational, classical or otherwise, were still flourishing enterprises throughout America. By their own lights, collegiate leaders grappled honestly with significant social and intellectual questions of the day. Not all colleges were victims of a debilitating and narrow brand of sectarianism; nor were all necessarily bastions of suffocating paternalism. And the fact that vocal detractors viewed colleges as something of a luxury, even in an expanding economy, tends to obscure the point that a disproportionate number of leaders in all of the major professions from the 1820s onward *were* college graduates—notwithstanding that lack of formal academic credentials did not necessarily preclude professional attainment.

While the response of many educators to outside pressures for change may have been purely reactive and often clumsy, the seeming inadequacy of their responses falls far short of demonstrating that colleges somehow *should* have tailored their curricula to the demands of certain utilitarians. The truth of the matter was that academicians of the day genuinely disagreed even among

themselves over whether liberal-arts schools could better serve society by converting themselves into professional trade schools or by resisting vocationalist appeals. Matters of principle and conviction were involved on all sides. Finally, some accounting must be made of the local pride that kept so many colleges alive through hard times. As President William Tyler of Amherst told the Society for the Promotion of Theological and Collegiate Education at the West in 1856, the genius of the American institution of higher learning was that close ties between college and community could be mutually beneficial. "While the college redeems the community from the curse of ignorance," as he put it, "the community preserves the college from an undue tendency to monkish corruption and scholastic unprofitableness."[148]

Brown's Francis Wayland was only one of many conflicting voices delivering pronouncements on the condition of the colleges at the century's halfway point. To him at least it was clear that the colleges had to change, that they stood in need of "a radical change" that would permit them to offer courses of study "for the benefit of all classes." "What," he asked, "could . . . Horace and Homer and Demosthenes, with a little mathematics and natural philosophy, do towards developing the untold resources of this continent?"[149] Others were less sure of the need for drastic measures, and more uncertain still of the direction urged upon them by President Wayland. But Brown's reform-minded president had posed a question not easily answered by defenders of the *ancien régime*. Assessing American academe as it appeared to him in 1850, he declared, "We have produced an article for which the demand is diminishing. We sell it at less than cost, and the deficiency is made up by charity. We give it away, and still the demand diminishes. Is it not time to inquire whether we cannot furnish an article for which the demand will be, at least, somewhat more remunerative?"[150] To that query no authoritative or widely accepted answer was immediately forthcoming.

TEACHERS' INSTITUTES

Equally uncertain throughout the middle third of the nineteenth century and beyond was the issue of teacher preparation—specifically, the question as to whether pedagogical training demanded some type of systematic institutionalization—though perhaps not necessarily at any exalted level.

The most widespread form of teacher training around the mid-1800's was that provided by teachers' institutes. The original idea, it appears, was developed jointly by Emma Willard, founder of the Troy Seminary for women, and by Henry Barnard, Connecticut's first education secretary. In the autumn of 1839 in Hartford, Connecticut, Barnard launched a six-week course of instruction in "pedagogics" for 26 young men. Assisted by Charles Davis and Tomas

Gallaudet, Barnard promised a thorough review of all the subjects taught in common schools. In addition, practical counsel in teaching methodology would be offered, not to mention site visits to Hartford's local schools.

The apparent success of this first institute, and of those that followed, quickly gained attention elsewhere. In New York State, Samuel N. Sweet organized his own institute for prospective teachers. A "pedagogical convention" for 28 teachers was held in Ithaca, New York, in the spring of 1843 by the Tompkins County superintendent of schools. Reportedly it, too, was well received. Other districts followed the Ithaca example. Within the next two years similar institutes were convened in 39 different New York counties, collectively attracting over 1,000 participants. Massachusetts hosted an institute for teachers in Pittsfield in the fall of 1845; and over the next five years a dozen or so other states had made similar arrangements. New Hampshire, Maine, Ohio, Michigan, and Illinois all sponsored a considerable number of assemblies for teachers throughout the 1840s.

Attendance at institutes was purely voluntary at first, and participants were required to bear the expenses involved themselves. Beginning in Massachusetts in 1846 public funds were budgeted to provide stipends and scholarships to help defray the cost of compulsory participation by instructors already employed in schools. Over time, both private and public aid was forthcoming in amounts sufficient to allow prospective teachers to attend institutes as well. Much the same arrangement was worked out in other states.

Teachers' assemblies generally were held once or twice yearly, usually at a district school facility. Summer convocations lasted from two to eight weeks. The standard bill of fare was a short course in the theory and practice of teaching, leavened by inspirational talks from prominent guest lecturers. The common pattern at most institutes was to occupy each day with formal lectures, followed in the evening by campfire meetings, songfests, and informal open discussion on topics of general interest. At the Chautauqua County Institute held at Maysville, New York, in 1847, for example, two urgent questions preoccupied participants' attention. The first dealt with recommended procedures for preventing whispering among schoolchildren. The second had to do with effective techniques for the teaching of morality.[151]

The atmosphere of an institute oftentimes seems to have resembled nothing so much as that of an old-time religious revival, a camp meeting complete with didactic sermonizing and liberal doses of motivational rhetoric. Extended attention was given over to such questions as how teachers should use their leisure time, the "true philosophy" of school management, what incentives should be appealed to in striving to maintain classroom order and discipline, and the relation between intelligence and public morality. Prominent as a

theme at many convocations was the lofty responsibility borne by the teacher as a shaper and molder of children's character.[152]

Few observers could have supposed that teachers' institutes afforded an adequate or complete response to the problem of teachers' preparation. But in the great majority of cases throughout most of the nineteenth century, institutes supplied the only type of training available to teachers, either before or during their tenure working in schools. Their limitations aside, the fact that teachers' institutes generally were popular with novices and experienced pedagogues alike assured their flourishing throughout the 1800s. Many were still being convened in the early years of the twentieth century. Eventually most gave way to the summer courses, workshops, and special district conferences on which teachers came to rely for their continuing education and inservice development.

NORMAL SCHOOLS

Dependence on "home-grown" common-school graduates as primary instructors within the local community was the time-honored method for recruiting classroom teachers at the elementary level. Long-standing also was the custom of hiring teachers directly on graduation from a secondary-level academy for the upper primary levels or grades. Institutes and short courses had evolved into yet another form of teacher preparation and development, particularly once public funds were made available for their support. State subsidies encouraging private academies and high schools to offer a limited array of classes in pedagogy ancillary to their standard courses of academic study—the practice followed early on in Pennsylvania, New York, Wisconsin, and Indiana—offered still another approach. Private pedagogical seminaries yielded yet another partial solution to the problem of preparing teachers, although it must be said that their financial viability was too precarious and their numbers too few for them to have much of an impact.

All fell short of what some reformers had long been arguing was essential: a system of publicly supported normal schools. Piecemeal measures were insufficient, critics claimed. Now was the time for state legislatures to step in and fulfill their responsibility for helping to ensure a supply of well-trained teachers for the nation's common schools. Public normal schools, or so it was claimed, offered the best hope of accomplishing that end. (The term "normal" as an appellation from teacher-training institutions derived via the French from the Latin *norma*, meaning conforming to a "rule, pattern, or model." Hence the intended connotation was a place imparting the "norms" or "rules" for exemplary teaching practice.)

Early in 1838, Edmund Dwight, a Boston industrialist and member of the Massachusetts Board of Education, offered the sum of $10,000 toward the establishment of a state normal school for the purpose of "qualifying teachers of the common schools." His bequest was extended on condition that the state legislature appropriate an equal amount on the school's behalf. On April 19, Governor Edward Everett signed a bill authorizing the assignment of the requisite funds to the Massachusetts State Board of Education. The board was charged, as it turned out, with opening not just one but three state normal schools; and the legislative appropriation it received was made contingent on the board's success in obtaining suitable facilities and furnishings from private sources for each institution. The first school was established in Lexington, in the northeastern part of the state. The second was located in the central portion, at Barre. The third was placed in the southeastern part of the state, at Bridgewater.[153] All were intended to operate on a trial basis for a three-year period.

Chosen to head the first of the three at Lexington was the Reverend Cyrus Peirce, a 49-year old Harvard graduate and former Unitarian pastor who had served as a school principal on Nantucket. On July 3, 1839, three apprehensive young ladies presented themselves on the occasion of the school's opening to take the entrance examinations. Peirce later wrote to Horace Mann of his disappointment that so few students had showed up despite extensive advance publicity accompanying the school's debut. Even by September no more than 12 students were enrolled. Notwithstanding, he was determined to make a success of the fledgling institution—he reportedly confided to his wife that he would rather die than fail in the undertaking.

Peirce at first was the school's sole staff member. To him fell the burden of shoveling snow, carrying water, keeping the fires supplied, performing all janitorial chores, preparing each of the lessons, and hearing students' recitations. Managing on four hours of sleep nightly, Peirce was responsible for teaching no fewer than 17 different subjects.[154] In October of 1839 a model school was opened, further adding to his supervisory responsibilities. In September of 1844 the school was relocated in West Newton, where it remained until December of 1853. Thereafter it moved to a more permanent site in Framingham.

Meanwhile, a coeducational state normal school had opened its doors on September 4, 1839 at Barre under the direction of the Reverend Samuel P. Newman, formerly a professor of rhetoric and acting president at Bowdoin College. Twelve young women and eight men attended. In September 1841 the school closed temporarily, reopening once again in September of 1844 at Westfield under the interim leadership of Emerson Davis, a local clergyman. The third school opened as planned at Bridgewater on September 9, 1840,

under the directorship of a former West Point graduate by the name of Nicholas Tillinghast. It too was open to both young men and women. During the first few years, enrollments remained low at all three schools, rarely exceeding 30 or 40 at a time.

A fourth state normal school was added in Salem in September of 1854. During its first three years of operation, it was directed by Richard Edwards, who later assumed the principalship of the City Normal and High School in St. Louis. The Salem school, like its prototype at Lexington, admitted only female students. In 1856, the four schools were reporting a total combined enrollment of no more than 332 students, of whom 290 were young women.

At both Lexington and Salem, candidates for admission had to be at least 16 years of age; the minimum age for male applicants at Barre and Bridgewater was set at 17. Those admitted were required to declare their intention to teach; to pass an entrance examination over primary school subjects; and to document their good moral character. The minimum course of study, as at Lexington, was no more than one year in length. Not until 1860 was it feasible for any of the state's normal schools to keep a longer, two-year course of instruction afloat. With allowance for minor variations among the several institutions, the standard one-year curriculum encompassed a thorough review of the "common branches" of learning taught in primary schools—spelling, reading, writing, geography, and arithmetic; a limited number of secondary-level academic subjects—geometry, algebra, natural and moral philosophy (that is, elementary physical science and ethics); studies devoted to the physical, mental, and psychological development of children; one or more methods courses; a course in classroom management; and a period of practice teaching in a model school.

Candidates who completed the entire one-year course were awarded a formal certificate to teach in the state's district elementary schools. Considering the chronic teacher shortage in Massachusetts, those who failed to win a certificate were still more or less assured a teaching post somewhere within the state. Predictably, few students remained to complete the course. Commenting on the problem in 1846, a member of the Board of Education admitted, "Many have remained but a single term, but few have given themselves time for the whole course, and the normal schools have been held answerable for their deficiencies. This is unreasonable, as nobody ever pretended that the new system could work miracles—that coming in one door and going out the other would make good teachers."[155]

Other states gradually followed Massachusetts' lead.[156] In New York State, the legislature acted to fund a normal school in 1844 for "the instruction and practice of teachers of common schools in the science of education and in the

art of teaching." The old Mohawk and Hudson railroad station in Albany was refurbished to house the school; and some 25 students were enrolled on opening day. David Perkins Page of Newburyport, Massachusetts, who in future years would gain prominence as the author of a well-known text, *Theory and Practice of Teaching*, was drafted to direct the new school. Page was assisted in this venture by another highly-respected educator of the day, William F. Phelps (who later was chosen to head the New Jersey State Normal and Model School at Trenton when it first opened in October 1855).

In New York State in 1853, Edward Austin Sheldon was elected secretary of the Oswego Board of Education. During his tenure as superintendent of schools, a well-organized model school was first developed. Subsequently, a full-fledged normal school also was begun. Teacher-training methodologies developed at Oswego soon gained national attention and were widely emulated elsewhere for a number of years. Between 1866 and 1867, New York founded several other normal schools: at Brockport, Cortland, Fredonia, and Potsdam, followed by two more, at Geneseo and Buffalo, respectively.

In Connecticut, a public normal school was organized at New Britain in May 1850. About 30 or so students comprised its first class. Henry Barnard himself was enlisted to serve as principal. Unlike normal institutions elsewhere, from its inception the New Britain school had no difficulty retaining students for a full three-year course of studies. (More than anything else, its success was due to the fact that under state law, teachers' salaries were tied directly to completion of the curriculum in its entirety.) In May of 1854, the General Assembly of Rhode Island assumed support for Rhode Island State Normal, successor to a former private normal school founded two years previously in Providence in the fall of 1852. In Pennsylvania, the Lancaster County Normal Institute opened for business in April of 1855. Otherwise, no other public normal schools were established in the Commonwealth until the early 1900s.

Michigan initiated its first teachers' school in 1849 and subsequently followed up with the creation of four others, including Michigan State Normal at Ypsilanti. The assignment of a location for the latter institution was decided on through what turned out to be a spirited competition among several communities vying for the honor of supplying its site. (The tiny town of Gull Prairie reportedly went so far during the bidding war as to claim that "Nature or the God of Nature has planned and arranged the place for the special purpose of accommodating the State Normal School of Michigan." Unimpressed even by this revelation of theological predestination, state officials passed over Gull Prairie in favor of Ypsilanti when the latter turned out to be the highest bidder.) The new school first admitted students in March of 1853.

Minnesota founded a state normal school at Winona between 1858 and 1860, following up with another at St. Cloud in 1869. North Carolina's first

entry in the field came in 1853 with funding for Union Institute, later renamed the Normal College. Wisconsin's Board of Regents embarked on an abortive attempt to earmark funds for normal training from the proceeds of the sale of public swamplands but without marked success. Only after 1866 was formal teacher preparation established under state appropriation.

Otherwise, with the exception of the founding of the Illinois Normal University in 1857 and of the Oswego Normal School in New York State, which was begun in 1861 and placed under state auspices in 1866, the movement to found normal schools did not gain momentum quickly. By 1865, there were still no more than 15 such state institutions in existence throughout the country. As events were to show, a broader, albeit desultory, expansion of the normal school movement was more of a post-Civil War phenomenon.[157]

Those attending municipal teacher-training institutions augmented enrollment at the earliest state normal schools. Boston had its own normal school by 1852. A city normal school separate and apart from the high school was opened in 1872; formerly it had been combined with a girls' high school. Worcester sponsored its own separate municipal normal school by 1868. In 1856, New York City's Board of Education organized a Normal School for Females; and within a few short years, Baltimore, San Francisco, and St. Louis (not to mention several smaller municipalities) had moved to create their own teacher-training institutions. Philadelphia opened a normal school for girls as early as 1848. In Chicago, to cite yet another example, a normal department was attached to a high school in 1856. St. Louis launched a normal school in 1857; Cincinnati, in 1868; and Cleveland, in 1874.[158] Not all municipal normal schools offered specific pedagogical instruction after the fashion of the state model. Many of them, although intended primarily for prospective teachers, offered little, if anything, besides a standard secondary-level course of instruction.

New Hampshire did not establish a state normal institution until 1871. Vermont launched a teachers' seminary in 1866, followed the next year by Nebraska. California established its first in 1862; Indiana, in 1865; Virginia and Louisiana, in 1884; North Carolina, in 1889; and Georgia, in 1890. Arizona and Florida both founded preparatory institutions in 1887. By 1875, there were state normals in 25 states, with a total combined enrollment of some 23,000 students. Added to the roster after 1864 was a state normal school in Emporia, Kansas; in Florence, Alabama, in 1873; at Cedar Falls, Iowa, in 1875; at Kirksville and Warrensburg, both in Missouri, in 1870 and 1871; and at Athens and Shepherdstown, West Virginia, in 1872.

By 1880, Maine, Minnesota and Vermont each had three state normal schools operating; Wisconsin had four; Missouri, five; Massachusetts and West Virginia, a half dozen or so each; and New York, eight. By 1885, state

normal schools were scattered from Maine to California and from Louisiana to Minnesota. Fifteen years later, there were almost 130 in existence, together with about an equal number of private normal schools.

Even with due allowance made for the increase in numbers, it is worth noting that the expansion and spread of normal schools took over half a century. Depending on the state in question, at the century's close normal-school graduates accounted for no more than about 10 to 40 percent of the total number of teachers entering schools each year. By 1898, the combined number of normal-school graduates in all states was still estimated to be less than a quarter of all teachers then employed nationwide. Thus, overall, the founding of normal schools occurred only by fits and starts; and it was obvious to nearly everyone at the end of the century that the degree of influence they exercised had fallen far short of the ambitious hopes nurtured on their behalf by the likes of James Carter and Horace Mann.

While normal schools were being founded in the mid-1800s, other educational agencies that traditionally had been relied on to supply teachers remained in operation. Private academics, some Latin grammar schools, and an expanding number of public secondary high schools all continued to turn out graduates intending to teach in the lower schools. Many observers felt the academic training these institutions afforded their students was infinitely preferable to anything the new normal schools were likely to develop. More often than not, in fact, economy-minded taxpayers and state officials looked at separate teacher-training institutions as a wholly unnecessary expense, believing that, at best, they could only hope to duplicate the work of the better-established schools with which they would inevitably begin to compete.

Unlike most students who completed a normal-school course of studies, those who matriculated as teachers from colleges or multipurpose secondary-level institutions (more than a few were virtually indistinguishable from one another in terms of their level of instruction) did so without benefit of any particular pedagogical training. This supposed deficiency in no way troubled those who had been skeptical about the advisability of creating normal schools all along and who resented the demands they placed on the public purse. At best, it was sometimes said, the value of self-styled teacher-training schools was the prospect that they too would evolve into serviceable secondary schools, fulfilling the needs of students in rural areas where academic high schools did not yet exist in any appreciable numbers. And therein lay the crux of a dilemma—one of "blurred identity" and disputed purpose—that was to plague normal schools ever after.