RELIGION IN THE LIFE AND WORKS OF LONGFELLOW

BY

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PREFACE

I wish to express my appreciation to Mr. M. R. Cooper of Cooper's Book Store of Richmond, Virginia, for his help in securing copies of the Life of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow by Samuel Longfellow in two volumes, and the Riverside Edition of the complete works of Longfellow in eleven volumes, which is the standard edition of Longfellow. These books have been my primary sources of information in writing this thesis. All references in footnotes to Poetical Works or to Prose Works are to the Riverside Edition, from which all quotations from the works of Longfellow have been taken.

I also wish to express my sincere gratitude to Professor Lewis Ball of the English Department of the University of Richmond, who first suggested the subject of this thesis, and who has aided and advised me with suggestions and criticisms during its preparation.

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FOREWORD

An author's work is generally colored by the presence or the lack of religious convictions. The poetry and prose of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow indicate a deep-seated faith in God. Although this faith is most clearly manifested in the works of the man, its source is found in the life and character of the poet himself. It is the aim of this paper to discover the various contributing factors, to ascertain their effect upon the poet and his writings, and to draw certain conclusions concerning his religious faith.

It is necessary to delve into the biography of the poet in an attempt to discover the influences which gave rise to his early faith and to trace this early religious development to maturity. Home and college marked the beginnings of Longfellow's religious life. Within his lifetime he came into contact with various persons who tremendously influenced his thinking. He was nurtured within the liberal walls of the Unitarian Church. During his travels through Europe, he saw on every hand the Roman Catholic Church. His knowledge of the Bible was thorough. He was a man who found in worship the experience that his restless soul especially needed. His church was a church that was not restricted to creed or doctrine, but one in which belief was expressed in deeds. The poet's outlook on life, death, and immortality that form so much of his work tells us much concerning the religious faith of the man.

This paper will attempt to deal in some manner with each sacred impulse within the breast of the poet and to point to the expression of these impulses within his prose and poetry. The development of his faith

deepened through the personal experience of often meeting the Eternal and walking hand and hand with Him to meet the crises of life. His mature faith leaves no doubt in our mind that religion had an important share in the life of the man. To discover what made up that faith, then, is the aim of this paper.

Chapter I

THE EARLY RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE OF LONGFELLOW

No study of the life of a man is complete until one understands all of the influences that worked together in that person from the earliest days of childhood. Every little thing contributes to the finished product. This is likewise true of the religious development of a man. From his earliest days he is influenced for or against religion by the attitude and character of those with whom he is thrown in contact. As a result he is either religious or anti-religious, depending upon the strength of those influences. His attitude toward religion is reflected in his life, and certainly, in the case of a poet, in his writings.

There is little wonder that all through his life the mind of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow turned toward religion. It all began in his boyhood home in Portland, Maine. His mother, Zilpah Wadsworth, was a woman who saw the value of spiritual things in the life of a person. Samuel Longfellow wrote of her devotion and piety:

> Full of a tender, simple, unquestioning piety, she was a lover of church and sermon and hymn; a devout and constant reader of the Bible, especially of its Psalms. She commended religion by its fairest fruits. It was the religion of the two great commandments. .... She was a kind neighbor and friend, a helper of the poor, a devoted mother to her children, whose confidant she was, the sharer of their little secrets and their joys, the ready comforter of their troubles, the patient corrector of their thoughts.[1]

The life of such a mother created an influence that lasted a lifetime.

His father, Stephen Longfellow, also had an influence in the religious life of the boy.

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[1] Samuel Longfellow, Life of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, vol. I, p. 4.

> He was noted for his purity of character, his gentlemanly bearing, his buoyant spirits, and social warmth. .... In his family he was at once kind and strict, bringing up his children in habits of respect and obedience, of unselfishness, the dread of debt, and the faithful performance of duty.[2]

At Harvard College he was the classmate of Dr. Channing, who was also his intimate friend. He had followed his friend in his liberal thought, for it is believed that he insisted that the old church covenant of the First Parish of Portland be modified in its doctrinal statement before he could conscientiously assent to it and become a church member. In the later life of this church Stephen Longfellow became one of its most valued parishioners.

The earliest record we have of Longfellow's interest in religion comes at the time when the poet is seven years old. In a letter to his father, in January, 1814, he writes: "Ann [his little sister] wants a little Bible like little Betsey's. Will you please buy her one, if you can find any in Boston?"[3] There may be no more significance to this statement than the fact that the devotion of the mother to her Bible had been conveyed to her children.

Of far more importance were the Sundays that were spent in those early days in Portland.

> On Sundays, according to the habit of the time, all ordinary books and occupations were laid aside. There was church going twice a day — "going to meeting," it was always called — never to be laid aside by any of the family, save for the reason of sickness.[4]

The Longfellows worshipped in the old First Parish Meeting House in Portland, where the moderate Calvinism of another day had gradually

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[2] Ibid., vol. I, p. 5.
[3] Ibid., vol. I, p. 7.
[4] Ibid., vol. I, p. 12.

passed into the early form of Unitarianism. The pastor of the congregation was the Rev. Ichabod Nichols, "a man of high intellectual power, an elevated reverential spirit, and great dignity of character and presence."[5] Sunday afternoons were likewise devoted to religion.

> As there were no Sunday schools as yet, on Sunday afternoons, after the meeting, the mother gathered her children around her, to read in turn from the great family Bible, and to look over, and talk over its rude engravings of Scripture scenes and stories. .... On Sunday evenings there was always the singing of hymns of the familiar Psalmody of the old "Bridgewater Collection."[5]

This early reverence for the Sabbath, the habit of attending worship services, and his interest in the Bible persisted through the entire life of the poet. All of these will be discussed in later chapters.

From his earliest youth Henry seemed to have possessed that type of soul that is truly religious and knows the deepest meaning of the word. His sister said that he was "true, high-minded, and noble -- never a mean thought or act; injustice in any shape he could not brook."[6] His brother writes of him:

> His nature was at heart devout; his ideas of life, of death, and of what lies beyond were essentially cheerful, hopeful, optimistic. He did not care to talk much on theological points; but he believed in the supremacy of good in the world and in the universe.[7]

He was greatly impressed in reading Heckwelder's Account of the History, Manners, and Customs of the Indian Natives of Pennsylvania and the Neighboring States to find that the Indians were "a race possessing magnanimity, generosity, benevolence, and pure religion without hypocrisy."[8] These attributes were completely in keeping with the early ideals he had cherished from boyhood.

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[5] Ibid., vol. I, p. 13.
[6] Ibid., vol. I, p. 9.
[7] Ibid., vol. I, p. 14.
[8] Ibid., vol. I, p. 32.

The religious training in his home and the experiences of worship in the old First Parish with its Unitarian leanings determined many of his activities while he was in school at Bowdoin College. He was active in a little Unitarian Society which he founded on the campus. His brother remarked: "An independent spirit crops out in his active efforts to establish a Unitarian Society in the very precincts of orthodox Bowdoin."[9] There were but six members in the little society, with only a hundred or two volumes in their library. In writing to his friend George Wells, Longfellow expresses the wish that the former would exert his influence and "purchase twenty-five or thirty copies of a little work called 'Objections to Unitarian Christianity Considered,'" to which he invited him to "add such other works of the Unitarian tract society"[10] that he thought would be useful. On his later return to the college as a professor, we find that he gave personal and financial aid to the little Unitarian church that had been established there since his college days. At one time he taught one of the Bible classes in the church and gave his services to the choir as well.

Through the formative years of his life, the college years, and even in the years beyond graduation as he turned his face and his steps toward Europe, the influence of his father and his mother continued to follow him. To them he often turned for guidance; with them he shared the deepest experiences of his soul. Their letters to him carried an ever present reminder of the presence of the Supreme Being and of the assurance of their prayers for him. His mother wrote to him in 1824,

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[9] James Hatfield, New Light on Longfellow, p. 4.
[10] Samuel Longfellow, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 52.

while he was still a student at Bowdoin: "Not a day passes that I do not think of my absent sons, nor do I ever forget them in my daily petitions to that Being who alone can protect us."[11] As he was about to leave for Europe, she wrote: "May God be with you and prosper you; may you hold fast to your integrity, and retain that purity of heart, which is so endearing to your friends."[12] His father likewise counseled, "Be careful not to take part in any opposition to the religion or politics of the countries in which you reside. .... In all your ways remember the God by Whose power you are sustained and protected."[12] While Henry was in France, his mother wrote to him:

> Your parents have great confidence in your uprightness, and in that purity of mind which will instantly take alarm on coming in contact with anything vicious or unworthy. We have confidence; but you must be careful and watch. But enough. I do not mistrust you.[13]

These excerpts from letters show that there was nothing superficial or puritanical in their deep concern for their son, but a genuine piety that believed that religion could bring out the best in a man. There was an influence here that lasted a lifetime. The desire of the parents for their children is perhaps best reflected in a letter received from his father in 1824:

> I am happy to observe that my ambition has never been to accumulate wealth for my children, but to cultivate their minds in the best possible manner, and to imbue them with correct moral, political, and religious principles, — believing that a person thus educated will with propor diligence be certain of attaining all the wealth which is necessary to happiness.[14]

Perhaps the poet realized the full truth of his father's words as he

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[11] Ibid., vol. I, p. 48.
[12] Ibid., vol. I, p. 72.
[13] Ibid., vol. I, p. 96.
[14] Ibid., vol. I, p. 56.

commented upon the funeral service held for his father in 1849: "A funeral discourse by Dr. Nichols, extolling the great virtues of Benevolence, Integrity, and true Religion. Oh, my dear father, these are thy monuments on earth!"[15]

To Longfellow, as to every man, came the decision for his life's work. In his time the three leading professions were law, medicine, and the ministry. While we find much evidence in his writings of his genuine religious feeling, and though his nature was at heart devout, he felt no calling to the sacred desk. To his father from the campus at Bowdoin, he wrote: "I hardly think that nature designed me .... for the pulpit."[16] To George Wells he confessed: "I am not good enough for a minister."[16] Later to the same friend he wrote:

> The study of divinity I always regard with the greatest reverence; and I should not wish to enter so beautiful a vineyard — however great the harvest and few the laborers —, unless I thought that by my care the holy vine would flourish more, and its branches yield more fruit.[17]

It was his strong conviction that nature had designed him to follow a literary career, and that, if he would ever rise to success in the world, it must be through the use of his talents in the field of literature.

Thus early influences played a major part in the religious development of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. From his mother he gained a devotion to piety and a "pure religion and undefiled" that best expressed itself in a living faith that was related to all of life. From his father he acquired a liberal turn of mind that led him to embrace the Unitarian faith, which seemed to satisfy him all of his life. His

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[15] Ibid., vol. II, p. 146.
[16] Ibid., vol. I, p. 52.
[17] Ibid., vol. I, p. 54.

faith was a practical one, which he believed was best expressed in works. He frequently attended worship services. His early association with the Bible led to his frequent quotations from the Scriptures in his poems. As we pursue the study of the religious life of Longfellow, we shall see that he never essentially departed from any of these early influences.

Chapter II

THE INFLUENCE OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH ON LONGFELLOW

As we read the works of Longfellow, we are impressed by the fact that the Catholic Church and its tradition were among the major sources from which the poet drew a great deal of material. It is well for us to consider in detail the extent of this influence, both in the works and in the life of the poet.

Many of his narrative poems are steeped in the background of the monastery, or the holy atmosphere of the Mass, or the countryside where the Angelus is a familiar sound, and the cowled head of the priest a frequent sight. The first poem that comes to mind is Evangeline, with its scenes laid in French Canada and the bayous of Louisiana. From the opening scenes in the little village of Grand-Pré, where the parish priest and the sound of the Angelus bell predominated, until the final scenes of the poem that find the heroine as a Sister of Mercy, there is a distinct Catholic flavor. The Golden Legend, the second part of Christus, is an "evocation of the Middle Ages .... especially the scenes of monastic life."[1] Here the poet has captured the true picture of the influence of the Catholic Church upon all of medieval life. It was said by Ruskin that Longfellow in The Golden Legend "had entered into the temper of the monk more closely than any historian or theologian."[2] More will be said of this work in a later chapter.

There are many other poems with a similar background. Among them

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[1] Van Wyck Brooks, The Flowering of New England, p. 444.
[2] Ibid., p. 456.

may be found "The Norman Baron" and "King Witlaf's Drinking Horn" from Voices in the Night; "King Robert of Sicily," "The Saga of King Olaf," "Torquemada," "The Cobbler of Hagenau," "The Legend Beautiful," "The Baron of St. Castine," "Emma and Eginhard," and "The Monk of Casal Maggiore" from Tales of a Wayside Inn.

There is every evidence in his writings that he was acquainted with the Church Fathers and Catholic theology. He had read the sermons of St. Augustine as we can see in the poem "The Ladder of St. Augustine." "The Sermon of St. Francis" shows us his familiarity with St. Francis of Assisi. "Monte Casino" deals with the founder of the Benedictine order, St. Benedict. In other places in his writings we find references to men such as Gregory, Aquinas, Chrysostom, Tertullian, Justin Martyr, Origen, and Cyprian. In his Journal, Longfellow once said:

> I love at times to turn over the pages of the early Christian Fathers. When I open one of their sombre-looking tomes, and my eye loiters down the long and weather stained column, something of the same feeling comes over me as if I were passing along the gloomy aisles of an old cathedral, and listening to the sage monitions of the past.[3]

The poet also knew and utilized a great deal of Catholic folklore and saint's legends. It was the legend of St. Christopher that had such a marked influence upon the life of the hero of Longfellow's novel Kavanagh. In "The Spanish Student" there is a reference to the temptation of St. Anthony by the devil. The poem "Santa Filomena," dealing with Florence Nightingale, uses as its background the legend of St. Filomena. In "King Witlaf's Drinking Horn" there is a reference to St. Guthlac and St. Basil.

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[3] Prose Works, vol. I, p. 146.

Another influence of the Catholic Church upon his writings may be found in his use of many Catholic allusions of speech. In his Journal, we find these two figures: "Shrouded in a cold which covers me like a monk's hood,"[4] and "Welcome, O brown October! like a monk with a drinking horn, like a pilgrim in russet."[5] In "Midnight Mass for the Dying Year" we find the lines:

> The winds are chanting solemn masses,
> .....
> And the hooded clouds, like friars,
> Tell their beads in drops of rain.[6]

In "The Spanish Student" we read:

> Kneeling like hooded friars, the misty mountains
> Receive the benediction of the sun.[7]

In Tales of a Wayside Inn the Sicilian is described thus:

> Clean shaven was he, as a priest,
> Who at the mass on Sunday sings.[8]

In "Emma and Eginhard" we find this description:

> And, placid as a nun, the moon on high
> Gazing from cloudy cloisters of the sky.[9]

Without these figures the writings of the poet would be lacking in much of their rich imagery.

The first poem of Longfellow in which we find any element of Catholic influence was written before his first trip to Europe in 1826-1829 and is based upon the misuse of a word. This poem is "The Hymn of the Moravian Nuns of Bethlehem." It was suggested by a

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4 Samuel Longfellow, Life of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, vol. II, p. 78.
5 Ibid., vol. II, p. 124.
6 Poetical Works, vol. I, p. 32.
7 Ibid., vol. I, p. 182.
8 Ibid., vol. IV, p. 20.
9 Ibid., vol. IV, p. 205.

sentence written upon Count Casimir Pulaski in the North American Review for 1825, which stated: "The standard of his legion was formed of a piece of crimson silk embroidered by the Moravian nuns of Bethlehem in Pennsylvania." These words touched the fancy of the poet. According to his brother he was misled by the word "nuns" and conceived the scene of consecration as given in the poem, pictured after what he had read of the Roman Catholic ritual.

> Of the Moravians he knew nothing. The scene was purely imaginary. In the world of plain fact the church of the Moravians had, of course, neither "censer," nor "cowled head," nor "chant of nuns," nor "dim mysterious aisle," nor "consecration of the banner." [10]

It is very possible that the poet had little, if any, contact with the ritual or the service of the Catholic Church before his first trip to Europe. This seems to be borne out by the great detail used in Outre-Mer to describe all of the elements of Catholic worship that greeted him upon his arrival in Europe. What he saw seemed to open up for him a whole new world of thought and imagery. There is little wonder that he turned to this new source of characters and background. No man could have travelled as widely in Europe and not had some impression created within him by this Church.

In Rouen, Longfellow had his first glimpse of a Cathedral, as he emerged from a narrow alley through which he was walking. Of this experience he writes:

> If it had suddenly risen from the earth, the effect could not have been more powerful and instantaneous. It completely overwhelmed my imagination, and I stood for a long time motionless.[11]

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[10] Samuel Longfellow, op. cit., vol I, p. 43.
[11] Prose Works, vol. I, pp. 29-30.

There was something about the Catholic service that touched a responsive chord in his life. He wrote:

> The thrilling chant of the Catholic service broke upon the ear. At first it was low, solemn, and indistinct; then it became more earnest and entreating, as if interceding and imploring pardon for sin; and then arose louder and louder, full, harmonious, majestic, as if it wafted the song of praise to heaven —and suddenly ceased. Then the sweet tones of the organ were heard — trembling, thrilling, and rising higher and higher, filling the whole air with their rich, melodious music. What exquisite accords! What noble harmonies! What touching pathos.[12]

He loved the hour of vespers, and "the religious twilight of the place, the lamps that burned on the distant altar, the kneeling crowd, the tinkling bell, and the chant of the evening service." All of these filled him with "new and intense emotions."[11] He describes in detail the Catholic funeral procession that passed beneath his window in the little French village of Auteuil, feeling that it was necessary to complete his picture of the life of the France he visited.

All of the elements of the worship of the Catholic Church made a very vivid impression upon him: the Elevation of the Host, the sacrament of Confession, and the sacrament of Extreme Unction administered to a dying girl. We get an insight into the side of the poet that sought for God in the beauty of worship as he comments upon the Ave Maria, the evening service for the Virgin Mary, which he found particularly beautiful and impressive. He found food for his soul in the basic idea behind this service, even though he did not agree with worship of the Virgin. He writes:

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[12] Ibid., vol. I, p. 59.

> Just as the evening twilight commences, the bell tolls to prayer. In a moment, throughout the crowded city, the hum of business is hushed, the thronged streets are still; the gay multitudes that crowd the public walks stand motionless; .... The multitude uncover their heads, and, with the sign of the cross, whisper their evening prayer to the Virgin. Then the bells ring a merrier peal; the crowds move again in the streets, and the rush and turmoil of business recommense. .... It seemed to call the soul from its worldly occupations to repose and devotion. .... and though I may differ from the Catholic in regard to the object of his supplication, yet it seems to me a beautiful and appropriate solemnity, that, at the close of each daily epoch of life .... the voice of a whole people, and of the whole world, should go up to heaven in praise, and supplication, and thankfulness.[13]

In Spain, Longfellow visited the Escorial, at the same time a palace, church, convent, and sepulchre. While there he heard Mass said, and as always the effect of the chanting and the pealing of the organ was most powerful upon the soul of the poet.

There were those elements in the Catholic worship that filled great needs in his life. Three days after the death of his first wife, in November, 1835, on his journey from Rotterdam to Heidelberg, he stopped at Dusseldorf. There he strayed into a Catholic Church where "the solemn stillness at the elevation of the host, the kneeling crowd, and the soft subduing hymn chanted to the music of the organ, soothed and cheered him."[14] The following Sunday found him in the cathedral at Bonn. In the solemnity of the worship, in the lifting of voices and organ to the sky, and in the devotion to God found in much of the ritual, Longfellow found much that attracted and pleased him.

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[13] Ibid., vol. I, pp. 220-221.
[14] Samuel Longfellow, op. cit., vol. I, p. 212.

Although Longfellow found "its principles .... as pure and holy as could be wished,"[15] let it be said that he did not find everything in the Roman Church to his liking. In Spain the evils of Catholicism came forcibly upon him. He saw there a "superstitious devotion to the dogmas of the church."[16] He felt that they were enthusiastically religious, but that much of it was expressed only in external ritualism. He writes:

> They will believe anything a priest tells them to, without asking why or wherefore. But at the same time, as you may readily infer from this, they have as little pure religion as can be found upon the face of the earth. In fact their religion may be justly compared to one of those little grocery stores in the purlieus of Green Street, which has its whole stock of sugar hats and gingerbread images stuck up at the windows.[17]

He found much in the art, poetry, and drama of the land that took from the beauty of the religious devotion. Among the literature of the Spanish poets he found poems written about the lives of saints or Biblical characters that cheapened these characters and made them appear more on the level with common men because they were in a low, vulgar style. He writes:

> Such descriptions tend to strip religion of its peculiar sanctity, to bring it down from its heavenly abode, not merely to dwell among men, but, like an imprisoned culprit, to be chained to the derelict of principle, manacled with base desire and earthly passion.[18]

Much of what he saw in Spain Longfellow characterized as "this monument of superstition."[19] In Italy, he found more of the same superstition:

> At Rome there is a great deal of religious superstition.... but I have been so long in Roman Catholic countries that the abuses have little effect upon me. .... The only idea they have of hallowing the seventh day is that of going to Mass in the morning. And all the other festivals of the

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15 Ibid., vol. I, p. 212.
16 Prose Works, vol. I, p. 140.
17 Samuel Longfellow, op. cit., vol. I, p. 119.
18 Prose Works, vol. I, p. 190.
19 Ibid., vol. I, p. 214.

church are kept just as holy as the Sabbath.[20] One night in Italy he passed through a public square, and there entered a church for midnight Mass. He saw the light from the high altar, and the kneeling crowd, and heard the somber tones of the organ. He found himself wondering how many among all of that crowd had been drawn to that place by unworthy motives, motives even more unworthy than just mere idle curiosity. He thought to himself: "How many a heart beat wildly with earthly passions, while the unconscious lip repeated the accustomed prayer."[21]

In France, he found that the Church was attempting to "shackle the spirit of the nation" with a restriction of freedom of the press. He writes:

> It is the dark and dangerous policy of the priesthood that is doing this. The Jesuits rule the mind of a weak and good-hearted king (Charles X). Think with what strides a nation is going back to the dark ages when a printer is publicly prosecuted for publishing the moral precepts of the Evangelists without the miracles.[22]

There were other things he could not help questioning. One evening in Spain, he drew near a chapel where a priest was instructing a group of children gathered around him "into the mysterious doctrines of mother church." These instructions consisted of questions from the catechism, dealing with the Trinity, the Virgin Birth, the Divinity and the Humanity of Christ, and the place to which the departed soul was carried. Said Longfellow:

> I did not quarrel with the priest for having been born and educated in a faith different from mine; but I .... could not help asking myself in a whisper, "Why perplex the spirit of a child with these metaphysical subtilties, these dark mysterious speculations, which man in all his pride of intellect cannot fathom or explain.[23]

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[20] Samuel Longfellow, op. cit., vol. I, p. 118.
[21] Prose Works, vol. I, p. 230.
[22] Samuel Longfellow, op. cit., vol. I, p. 101.
[23] Prose Works, vol. I, p. 179

On another occasion he stood and looked at a "barefoot Carmelite .... wasted by midnight vigils and long penance," who had shut his heart to the "endearments of earthly love," whose shoulder did not bear the burden of his fellow man, and who has "no friends, no hopes, no sympathies." Longfellow asks himself the question: "Thou standest aloof from men—and art thou nearer God? I know not. Thy motives, thy intensions, thy desires are registered in heaven. I am thy fellow man—and not thy judge."[24] In "Amalfi" he continues thinking along these lines as he says:

> Lord of vineyards and of lands,
> Far above the convent stands.
> On its terraced walk aloof
> Leans a monk with folded hands.
> Placid, satisfied, serene,
> Looking down upon the scene
> Over wall and red-tiled roof;
> Wondering unto what good end
> All this toil and traffic tend,
> And why all men cannot be
> Free from care and free from pain,
> And the sordid love of gain,
> And as indolent as he.[25]

I think we can see here that to the poet religion was something that was best expressed, not in keeping it to oneself, but in sharing it with all mankind. And yet he knew that "solitude works miracles in the heart," that "all is not therefore rottenness that wears a cowl," and that "many a pure spirit has fled the temptations of the world to seek in solitude and self communion a closer walk with God."[26] He also recognized that it was these same hours of solitude that had passed on to posterity the bestin classical scholarship as these monks alone had spent many hours laboring over old manuscripts.

It did not take him long to recognize that which was evil and that which was good in the annals of the Roman Church and its worship. Perhaps the best contrast of this may be seen in three of the narrative

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[24] Ibid., vol. I, p. 150.
[25] Poetical Works, vol. III, p. 91.
[26] Prose Works, vol. I, p. 204.

poems from Tales of a Wayside Inn. The first two deal with as sordid and as black a picture of the Roman Church as could be found anywhere. One of these is "Torquemada," which Longfellow himself called " a dismal story of fanaticism." Laid in the days of the Spanish Inquisition, it depicts a father who with mistaken zeal accuses his own daughters of heresy and lights the torch himself that seals their doom. The second of these dark pictures is found in "The Cobbler of Hagenau. It deals with the famous sale of indulgences by Tetzel. Longfellow treats this practice with irony in the story of the cobbler who will have no Mass said for his dead wife because he believed that her soul was absolved from sin and ready to enter the gates of heaven because of the indulgence purchased from Tetzel. However, "The Legend Beautiful" gives the other side of the picture of the Roman Catholic Church. It tells the story of the monk whose prayers and devotions were rewarded by a vision of the Christ as He had once walked through Galilee teaching and healing. The vision bids the monk to go out to minister to the needy who have gathered on the porch of the monastery to be healed. At first he hesitates. Why should he go when the Vision is with him? However, he goes and ministers to the needy. His job completed, he returns to his cell to find the Vision still there and saying to him, "Hadst thou stayed, I must have fled."[27] Is there here in this narrative an indication of the true nature of the religion of the poet? As we shall see later, there was within Longfellow an intense feeling for his fellow man.

In his over-all view of the Catholic Church, Longfellow found much that inspired him and delighted him, but he found much that was not congenial with his idea of the true spirit of religion. His attitude

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[27] Poetical Works, vol. IV, p. 177.

toward the Roman Church perhaps can be summed up in his feeling on entering the cloister of the nuns in Marienburg in Germany: "I did not say on that occasion, as Thomas Aquinas did on entering the convent at Terracina, 'Here let me rest in peace forevermore,' but the quiet of the place delighted me."[28] He never would have felt at home in the Roman Catholic Church, but there was much in the ritual, the beauty of worship, the solemnity of the Mass that started the chord of inspiration vibrating in his breast which lifted him toward God. The endearing values of the Catholic Church to Longfellow were the same ones that the young minister Kavanagh found: "zeal, self devotion, heavenly aspirations, human sympathies, endless deeds of charity."[29] He found satisfaction in these rather than in its "bigotry, and fanaticism, and intolerance."[29] What was noble, pure, and of a good report, these gave Longfellow's questing soul satisfaction and delight. This was the importance of the influence of the Catholic Church upon Longfellow

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[28] Samuel Longfellow, op. cit., vol. I, p. 404.
[29] Prose Works, vol. II, p. 354.

Chapter III

THE USE OF THE BIBLE IN THE WORKS OF LONGFELLOW

In the works of Longfellow there is overwhelming evidence of his familiarity with the Bible. The prominent place of the Bible in the Longfellow home in Portland has already been discussed. The poet's mother would gather the family around her on Sunday afternoons "to read in turn from the great family Bible, and to look over, and talk over its rude engraving of Scripture scenes and events."[1] In the home the poet also met the old "Bridgewater Collection" of the hymns and Psalms, in the singing on Sunday nights. Later, in "The Courtship of Miles Standish," his mention of "the well-worn Psalm-book of Ainsworth" indicates a knowledge of this old collection of hymns and Psalms.

It would seem that the interest of Longfellow in the pages of the Scripture continued through his life. He could not have turned his mind toward The Divine Tragedy without a thorough knowledge and interest in the Scriptures. On several occasions we find references to his reading of the Bible. "Read passages in Exodus. Wonderful, eventful, strange history!"[2] He not only read the Bible in English, probably using the King James Version, but he was also skilled enough in the use of the Greek language to read the New Testament in its original tongue. He writes:

> I was reading this morning .... the tenth chapter of Mark, in Greek, the last seven verses of which contain the story of blind Bartimeus, and always seemed to me remarkable for their beauty. At once the whole scene presented itself to my mind in lively colors, — the walls of Jericho, the cold wind through the gateway,

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[1] Samuel Longfellow, Life of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, vol. I, p. 13.

[2] Ibid., vol. II, p. 87.

> the ragged, blind beggar, his shrill cry, the tumultuous crowd, the serene Christ, the miracle; and these things took the form I have given them above, where, perforce, I have retained the striking Greek expressions of entreaty, comfort, and healing; though I am well aware that Greek was not spoken at Jericho.[3]

It is not certain whether Longfellow also knew Hebrew. One evening a friend came to call, who "repeated .... some of the Psalms in Hebrew; strange mysterious language, building up its poems with square blocks of sound. The same tongue in which Jeremiah prophesied and David sang."[4]

There are a number of his poems that have a definite Biblical background. The result of the reading of Mark 10: 46-52 in Greek was the poem "Blind Bartimeus," with expressions from the Greek original in each stanza. One of his anti-slavery poems, "The Warning," is based upon the closing events in the life of Samson as found in Judges 16: 21-31. Upon the occasion of his brother's ordination to the ministry, he chose the conversation of Jesus with the Rich Young Ruler as found in Mark 10: 17-22 as the background for the poem entitled "Hymn." In "The Three Kings," which is based on the familiar passage in Matthew 2: 1-12, the poet stays close to the story except in the use of the names of the three Magi: Melchior, Gaspar, and Baltasar. In "The Sifting of Peter" he dips into Luke 22: 31-34; 54-62 to describe the story of the denial of Jesus by Peter.

The one work of the poet that makes the greatest use of Biblical materials is The Divine Tragedy, which is Part I of Christus. This work will be treated in detail in a later chapter. Here it is our purpose to show the sources from which the poet drew his material for this account of the life of Christ. The following table will account for these sources:

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[3] Ibid., vol. I, p. 386.
[4] Ibid., vol. II, p. 151.

SOURCES OF BIBLICAL MATERIAL IN "THE DIVINE TRAGEDY"

Division of Poem	Synoptic Gospel	Johannine Gospel	Other Sources
THE FIRST PASSOVER		John 2: 13	
I. Vox Clamantis	Matt. 3: 1-12	John 1: 19-34	Hab. 2: 14 Isa. 42: 2,3 Dan. 12: 3 Ps. 104: 2 Jer. 19: 11
II. Mount Quarantania	Matt. 4: 1-11		
III. The Marriage in Cana		John 2: 1-11	Song of Sol. 2: 4, 10-12 5: 2, 10-13 6: 9 7: 11,12
IV. In the Cornfields	Matt. 12: 1-7 Mark 3: 27	John 1: 45-51	
V. Nazareth	Luke 4: 16-29 Matt. 13: 55 Mark 6: 4		Isa. 61: 3,4,10 62: 1,4,8, 10,12
VI. The Sea of Galilee	Luke 5: 1-17 Luke 4: 29,30 Matt. 11: 28-30		
VII. The Demoniac of Gadara	Mark 5: 1-20		
VIII. Talitha Cumi	Mark 5: 21-43		Lam. 2: 10,11 3: 6,12,14
IX. The Tower of Magdala	Matt. 14: 25-31 Luke 8: 2		
X. The House of Simon the Pharisee	Luke 7: 31-50		
THE SECOND PASSOVER		John 6: 4	
I. Before the Gates of Machaerus	Mark 6: 17,21		
II. Herod's Banquet Hall	Mark 6: 27-28		
III. Under the Walls of Machaerus	Mark 6: 27-29		

Division of Poem	Synoptic Gospel	Johannine Gospel	Other Sources
IV. Nicodemus at Night		John 3: 1-21	
V. Blind Bartimeus	Mark 10: 46-52		
VI. Jacob's Well		John 4: 1-35	
VII. The Coasts of Caesarea Philippi	Matt. 16: 13-18, 20-26 17: 1-21 Mark 9: 2-29		
VIII. The Young Ruler	Luke 18: 9-14,16 Matt. 19: 16-30 Mark 10: 17-31 Luke 18: 18-30		
IX. At Bethany	Luke 10: 38-42		II Kings 2: 23-25
X. Born Blind		John 9: 1-34	
XI. Simon Magus and Helen of Tyre			Acts 8: 9-24
THE THIRD PASSOVER		John 12: 1	
I. The Entry into Jerusalem	Mark 10: 46-52 Matt. 15: 21-28 Matt. 21: 9,10 Luke 19: 38-40	John 12: 17-19	
II. Solomon's Porch	Luke 2: 40-52 Matt 23: 2-7, 13-15, 23-27, 29-35, 37,38	John 7: 40,41, 52	Acts 22: 3
III. Lord, Is It I?	Mark 14: 17-21, 27-29 Luke 22: 31,33, 35-38 Matt. 26: 33-35	John 13: 27,36,37	
IV. The Garden of Gethsemanee	Matt. 26: 38-44 Mark 14: 41,42 Luke 22: 44 Matt. 26: 49-55 Luke 22: 53 Mark 14: 51	John 18: 11, 4,5,8	

Division of Poem	Synoptic Gospel	Johannine Gospel	Other Sources
V. The Palace of Caiaphas	Matt. 26: 57-75 Mark 14: 58,62	John 11: 47-49 John 18: 10-23, 26	
VI. Pontius Pilate	Luke 23: 2-25		
VII. Barabbas in Prison	Matt. 27: 16 Mark 15: 7		
VIII. Ecce Homo	Luke 23: 13-15 Matt. 27: 17,22, 23 Luke 23: 22 Matt. 27: 19,24, 25	John 19: 4-15 19,21, 22	
IX. Aceldama			Acts 1: 19
X. The Three Crosses	Matt. 27: 39-43 Luke 23: 34,39, 42-43 Matt. 27: 46-48	John 19: 28,30	
XI. The Two Maries	Matt. 28: 1-7 Luke 24: 5-7	John 20: 13,14, 16	
XII. The Sea of Galilee	Luke 5: 4	John 20: 5,7,27 John 21: 5-7, 10-12 15-22	I John 4: 18

Epilogue

The use of the Bible by the poet was not limited to the poems based upon Biblical stories. He often quoted from the Holy Scriptures in many of his poems. Many of his figures of speech and allusions are also drawn from its pages. Here and there are general references to the Bible that show his intimate knowledge of its contents. The following table will show something of the extensive use made of the Bible in his writings in addition to the sources already cited.

BIBLICAL QUOTATIONS AND ALLUSIONS IN THE WORKS OF LONGFELLOW

Book	Quotation	Allusion	Work
OLD TESTAMENT			
Genesis		2: 8	The Courtship of Miles Standish, IX.
		2: 10-14	"The Falcon of Sor Federigo"
			The Courtship of Miles Standish, VI.
	2: 18		The Courtship of Miles Standish, II.
		3: 1	"The Spanish Student"
		3: 8	Hyperion, III, v.
		4: 9,10	"John Endicott," II, ii.
		4: 11	"The Slave in the Dismal Swamp"
			"The Arsenal at Springfield"
	8: 22		"An April Day"
		18:	Christus: "The Abbott Joachim"
		18: 1	"Elliot's Oak
		19:	"Giles Corey of the Salem Farms," II, ii.
		19: 24	Judas Maccabeus
		19: 26	Hyperion, III, ix.
		21:	"The Jewish Cemetery at Newport"
		21: 1-21	Evangeline, I, iii.
		22:	Tales of a Wayside Inn: "Torquemada"
			"The Golden Legend," II.
		24:	The Courtship of Miles Standish, IX.
		27:	Hyperion, IV, i.
		27: 22	"Elegiac Verse"
		28: 12	"A Gleam of Sunshine"
			Evangeline, I, ii.
			"Sandalphon"
			Journal, Life, II, p. 368.
		29: 23-25	Journal, Life, II, p. 316.
		32: 24-32	Evangeline, II, i.
		37: 28	"Sand of the Desert in an Hour Glass"
Exodus		7: 19	Kavanagh, I, i.
		13: 21	"The Lighthouse"
			Journal, Life, I, p. 358.
	14: 13		"The Ballad of the French Fleet"
		15:	"The Slave Singing at Midnight"
	20: 12		"John Endicott," III, i.
	22: 18		"Giles Corey of the Salem Farms," III, ii.
		28: 34	Journal, Life, II, p. 137.
		28: 31-38	The Courtship of Miles Standish, IX.
		32: 19	"The Jewish Cemetery at Newport"
	33: 20		Tales of a Wayside Inn: "The Legend of Rabbi Ben Levi"
Leviticus	17: 11		Judas Maccabeus

Book	Quotation	Allusion	Work
Numbers		13: 23,24	The Courtship of Miles Standish, IX.
		17: 8	Kavanagh, I, xiv.
			"The Children's Crusade"
		20: 27	Hyperion, IV, viii.
Deuteronomy		3: 11,12	The Courtship of Miles Standish, VII.
	13: 6,8,9		"John Endicott," I
Joshua		2: 3	Hyperion, I, iv.
	10: 12		Judas Maccabeus
Judges		9: 15	Judas Maccabeus
	16: 21-31		"The Warning"
Ruth			"A Gleam of Sunshine"
			Flowers
			The Courtship of Miles Standish, IX.
I Samuel		16: 23	Christus: "Martin Luther"
			Tales of a Wayside Inn: "The Birds of Killingworth"
		17: 4	The Courtship of Miles Standish, VII.
		28: 7	"Giles Corey of the Salem Farms," II, i; IV, ii.
			Tales of a Wayside Inn: "The Saga of King Olaf"
II Samuel	6: 16		Journal, Life, I., p. 276.
	11: 27		The Courtship of Miles Standish, IV.
	18: 33		"John Endicott," IV, ii; V, iii.
			"The Chamber over the Gate"
		21: 8-11	Judas Maccabeus
I Kings	[illegible]	16: 31	"Helen of Tyre"
	18: 17		Outre-Mer: "The Baptism of Fire"
		18: 38	Hyperion, IV, ix.
	20: 40		Journal, Life, II, p. 355.
	21: 1-20		"Giles Corey of the Salem Farms," III, iii.
		17: 41-46	Judas Maccabeus
II Kings		2: 11	Evangeline, IV.
		2: 13	"A Summer Day by the Sea"
		13: 21	"Michael Angelo"
		19: 35	Judas Maccabeus
I Chronicles			
II Chronicles			
Ezra			
Nehemiah			
Esther			"The Jewish Cemetery at Newport"

Book	Quotation	Allusion	Work
Job			"Giles Corey of the Salem Farms," I, ii.
	5: 6		"Resignation"
Psalms	57: 8		Letter, Life, I, p 31.
	90: 4		"The Golden Legend," II.
			Christus: "Finale"
	110: 3		Hyperion, IV, v.
Proverbs		23: 31	Tales of a Wayside Inn: "The Rhyme of Sir Christopher"
	31: 10-13, 19,21		The Courtship of Miles Standish, VIII.
Ecclesiastes	1: 2		"Belisarius"
	1: 9		Letter, Life, i, p. 50.
Song of Solomon			
Isaiah	1: 18		"Divina Commedia," III.
		1: 18	Tales of a Wayside Inn: "King Robert of Sicily"
		17: 6	"The Meeting"
		20: 3	"John Endicott," I, i.
		35: 1	"John Endicott," IV, v.
	38: 1		"John Endicott," IV, iii.
		40: 12	Kavanagh, IV,
		42: 3	"Keats"
	63: 1,2		Kavanagh, XXII.
		65: 10	"John Endicott," I, iii.
Jeremiah		9: 21	"John Endicott," I, i.
		18: 4	"The Ballad of the French Fleet"
		31: 15	"Resignation"
Lamentations			
Ezekiel	34: 2,19		"John Endicott," I, i.
Daniel		3: 9	"Giles Corey of the Salem Farms," I, ii.
		5: 5	Evangeline, II, iii.
		5: 33	Hyperion, I, viii.
		8: 27	"John Endicott," I, i.
Hosea		8: 7	Journal, Life, II, p. 347.
Joel	2: 29		"John Endicott," III, i.
	3: 14		"Giles Corey of the Salem Farms," I,ii.
Amos		2: 13	Tales of a Wayside Inn: "Elizabeth"
Obadiah			
Jonah			
Micah	3: 11		"John Endicott," I, i.

Book	Quotation	Allusion	Work
Nahum			
Habakkuk	2: 11,12		"John Endicott," III, i.
		3: 7	"A Ballad of the French Fleet"
	3: 15		"A Ballad of the French Fleet"
Zephaniah	2: 9,14		"John Endicott," IV, ii.
Haggai			
Zechariah			
Malachi			

NEW TESTAMENT

Matthew		2: 1-12	"The Three Kings"
		2: 1-10	"The Golden Legend," III.
		2: 13	"The Golden Legend," III.
		2: 16-18	"The Golden Legend," III.
		2: 7	Hyperion, III, vii.
		3: 16	Tales of a Wayside Inn: "Interlude" to "The Theologian's Tale"
	5: 8	5: 8	Kavanagh, II.
	5: 11,12		"John Endicott," III, iii; IV, ii.
	5: 37		"John Endicott," III, i.
		6: 6	The Courtship of Miles Standish, IV.
	6: 28		"Flower-de-Luce"
	6: 12		"John Endicott," II, i.
			"Giles Corey of the Salem Farms," II, ii.
	9: 13		"John Endicott," II, i.
	10: 9, 10		Outre-Mer: "A Tailor's Drawer"
		10: 9,10	"John Endicott," I, i.
	10: 29		"Giles Corey of the Salem Farms," I, ii.
		10: 29	Tales of a Wayside Inn: "The Birds of Killingworth"
		10: 42	Tales of a Wayside Inn: "Elizabeth"
	13: 22		Journal, Life, II, p. 50.
		13: 24-30	Kavanagh, XIX
		13: 33	Christus: "The Abbott Joachim"
		14: 29	Hyperion, IV, vii.
		17: 21	"Giles Corey of the Salem Farm," I, iii.
	20: 16		Journal, Life, II, p. 186.
		24: 6	Journal, Life, II, p. 364.
		24: 43,44	"John Endicott," III, i.
	25: 40	25: 1-13	Evangeline, II, iii. Tales of a Wayside Inn: "The Legend Beautiful"
	26: 40		Kavanagh, VI.
		26: 72	Evangeline, I, i.
		26: 73	"The Golden Legend," V.
	28: 6		"The Golden Legend," III.

Book	Quotation	Allusion	Work
Mark		2: 21	"Giles Corey of the Salem Farms," II, i.
		4: 35-41	"The Wreck of the Hesperus"
	5: 9		"Giles Corey of the Salem Farms," I, ii, II, i.
	5: 15		Hyperion, IV, iii.
		7: 28	Tales of a Wayside Inn: "Elizabeth"
		8: 24	Hyperion, I, i.
	9: 24		"John Endicott," II, iii.
	10: 17-22		"Hymn"
	10: 46-52		"Blind Bartimeus"
	11: 29		"Morituri Salutamus"
Luke	1: 28-35		"The Golden Legend," III.
	1: 52		Tales of a Wayside Inn: "King Robert of Sicily"
	2: 14		"Christmas Bells"
		8: 2	Hyperion, I, iv.
			"Giles Corey of the Salem Farms," II, i.
		9: 58	"Michael Angelo"
	9: 62		The Courtship of Miles Standish, III.
	10: 9		"John Endicott," I, ii.
		10: 38-42	Kavanagh, XXX.
			"The Golden Legend," I
	10: 42		"The Good Part"
		15: 11-24	Evangeline, II, iii.
		15: 16	"John Endicott," II, iii.
		17: 21	"Elegiac Verse"
		18: 11	Tales of a Wayside Inn: "Interlude" to "The Theologian's Tale"
	19: 17,20		"Morituri Salutamus"
		22: 31-34 54-62	"The Sifting of Peter"
	22: 34		Evangeline, IV.
John		2	Driftwood: "Frithiof's Saga"
		3: 8	"Woods"
	3: 8		Christus: "The Abbott Joachim"
		4: 6	"John Endicott," IV, ii.
		5: 2	Hyperion, IV, v.
		5: 2-4	Journal, Life, II, p. 286.
		5: 2,7	Letter, Life, I, p. 385.
		8: 7	"Giles Corey of the Salem Farms," Prologue.
		12: 3	Tales of a Wayside Inn: "Elizabeth"
	12: 8		Evangeline, II, v.
	14: 27		"The Arsenal at Springfield"
		19: 23	"John Endicott," III, ii.
	19: 26		"St John's, Cambridge"
		20: 25	"Giles Corey of the Salem Farms," III, ii.

Book	Quotation	Allusion	Work
Acts		1: 14	"John Endicott," II, i.
	1: 19		"John Endicott," II, i.
		2: 1-8	"Divina Commedia," VI.
		2: 3	"L'envoi"
		5: 39	"John Endicott," II, ii.
		8: 9	"Helen of Tyre"
		8: 26-39	Tales of a Wayside Inn: "Elizabeth"
		8: 27	"Helen of Tyre"
	9: 4		"John Endicott," I, ii; II, i.
		10: 6,32	Hyperion, III, ii.
		10: 11,12	Tales of a Wayside Inn: "Elizabeth"
		12: 23	Tales of a Wayside Inn: "The Birds of Killingworth"
		16: 25	"The Slave Singing at Midnight"
		24: 25	Journal, Life, I, p. 241.
	26: 28		Journal, Life, II, p. 101.
		28: 1-10	Evangeline, V.
		28: 20	Letter, Life, II, p. 16.
Romans		1: 17	"Michael Angelo"
	12: 9		Tales of a Wayside Inn: "Elizabeth"
	16: 1,16		Letter, Life, I, p. 83.
I Corinthians		11: 5	"John Endicott," I, i.
		13: 13	"The Four Princesses at Wilna"
	13: 13		"The New England Tragedies," Prologue
	14: 34		"John Endicott," I, i.
		15: 32	Tales of a Wayside Inn: "Torquemada"
	16: 22		"John Endicott," I, i.
	16: 22		"The Jewish Cemetery at Newport"
II Corinthians			
	5: 1		Outre-Mer: "The Tailor's Drawer"
	11: 26,27		"John Endicott," IV, v.
Galatians	1: 8		"John Endicott," IV, v.
Ephesians	4: 26		"Giles Corey of the Salem Farms," II, iii.
Philippians	4: 8		Letter, Life, I, p. 218.
Colossians		3: 15	"Giles Corey of the Salem Farms," III, iv.
I Thessalonians			
II Thessalonians			
I Timothy			
II Timothy			
Titus			
Philemon			

Book	Quotation	Allusion	Work
Hebrews		11: 1	Tales of a Wayside Inn: "Interlude" to "The Theologian's Tale"
	13: 2		"John Endicott," I, ii.
		13: 2	Tales of a Wayside Inn: "King Robert of Sicily"
			"The Hanging of the Crane"
			Journal, Life, II, p. 234.
James			
I Peter			
II Peter			
I John			
II John			
III John			
Judo			
Revelation		1	Tales of a Wayside Inn: "The Saga of King Olaf"
	1: 12,19		"To William E. Channing"
	1: 19		"The Poet and His Songs"
			Christus: "The Abbott Joachim"
	1		"The Golden Legend," IV.
		2,3	Kavanagh, XXIX.
			Tales of a Wayside Inn: "Interlude" to "The Theologian's Tale"
		6: 8	"John Endicott," I, i.
	16: 1,2		"John Endicott," I, i.
	20: 11		Journal, Life, I, p. 232.
			Hyperion, III, vii.

It is almost certain that Longfellow was also familiar with the books of the Apocrypha. This is evidenced especially by the poem "Judas Maccabeus" which draws heavily from the literature of the Interbiblical period. Likewise, the poet knew some of the apocryphal books of the New Testament. In writing the Miracle Play found within "The Golden Legend" Longfellow used the apocryphal gospels of James and the Infancy of Christ.

We conclude that Longfellow knew the Bible well. He could translate the New Testament from the Greek. He was familiar with most of it as there are quotations from many of the books somewhere or other in his works. Likewise he was familar with related works written during the same period. He recognized the Bible as great literature, but his appreciation of the sacred book was even deeper. His frequent use of the Bible indicates that it was for him a source of devotional literature, a devotion that came from his earliest days. He read it in faith with eyes ever open for a glimpse of the Eternal within its pages.

Chapter IV

CHRISTUS

Because of the significance of Christus and its relation to the subject under consideration, an entire chapter will be devoted to this work which in the mind of the poet was to be the major venture of his poetical career. There is no other work that so dominated his literary career. The study of Dante and his translation of the Divina Commedia subtended a wider arc in time, but "the interpretation of a great work was subordinate to the development of a theme which was interior to the poet's thought and emotion."[1]

The first hint of the design for this work which was not completed till more than thirty years later came in the only entry in the Journal for the year 1861. Under the date of November 8, we read the following:

> This evening it has come into my mind to undertake a long and elaborate poem by the holy name of CHRIST; the theme of which would be the various aspects of Christendom in the Apostolic, Middle, and Modern Ages.[2]

This work was not completed until 1873, but it seems the theme was not often absent from the poet's mind during this period. In the Introduction to Volume V of the Poetical Works we read:

> The theme in its majesty was a flame by night and a pillar of cloud by day, which led his mind in all its onward movement. .... His religious nature was profoundly moved by it, and the degree of doubt which attended every step of his progress marked the height of the endeavor which he put forth.[3]

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[1] Poetical Works, vol. V, p. 7.
[2] Samuel Longfellow, Life of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, vol. I, p. 388.
[3] Poetical Works, vol. V, p. 8.

It was not strange that Longfellow should turn to such a theme, for he had long had an interest in things religious. He had turned to writing his various Psalms of life, which indicated the ethical turn of his mind. He had been reading deeply the works of Dante. He had been moved by the tender ecclesiasticism of "The Children of the Lord's Supper." Once, while recording a passage in the life of Christ, he had fancied himself a monk of the Middle Ages.

In the summer of 1842, while he was at Marienburg on the Rhine, he made the following significant entry in his Journal:

> Christus, a dramatic poem, in three parts:
>
> | | | |
> |---|---|---|
> | Part First. | The Times of Christ. | (Hope) |
> | Part Second. | The Middle Ages | (Faith) |
> | Part Third. | The Present | (Charity)[4] |

His brother adds that the words in parenthesis were in pencil and were no doubt added later by the poet.

It was not until November, 1849, that his thoughts turned to the actual writing of the theme that had been a constant subject of his meditation. He writes in the Journal on that date:

> And now I long to try a loftier strain, the sublimer Song whose broken melodies have for so many years breathed through my soul in the better hours of life, and which I trust and believe will ere long unite themselves into a symphony not all unworthy the sublime theme.[5]

The following month he wrote "The Challenge of Thor" which he originally intended as "Prologue" or "Introitus" to the second part of Christus. However, he was merely experimenting as this poem was later used as a part of "The Saga of King Olaf."

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[4] Samuel Longfellow, op. cit., vol. I, p. 403.
[5] Ibid., vol. II, p. 151.

Little by little his purpose became clearer in his mind as he spent endless hours thinking it through. In January, 1850, he writes:

> In the evening pondered and meditated upon sundry scenes of Christus. In such meditation one tastes the delight of the poetic vision, without the pain of putting it into words.[6]

At last he began writing the second part of the trilogy, The Golden Legend. In February, 1850, he writes:

> Some half dozen scenes or more are written of "The Golden Legend," which is part second of Christus; and the whole is much clearer in my mind as to handling division, and the form and pressure of the several parts.[7]

The writing of The Golden Legend consumed the better part of of two years. The poet constantly laments his lack of time to devote to the work on account of the pressure of his teaching schedule at Harvard. Endless hours were needed for the work of revision, editing, and retouching, as well as for the actual composition. There were moments when even the poet was discouraged, but at length, near the end of 1851, The Golden Legend was published.

The source material for The Golden Legend came from the story Der Arme Heinrich as told by Hartmann von der Aue, a German minnesinger of the twelfth century. It is interesting to note that as early as November 27, 1839, the possibility of using this work as a basis for a poem had crossed the mind of the poet. His own account of the poem may be read in brief in a letter which he wrote about this time to a correspondent in England:

> I am glad to know that you find something to like in The Golden Legend. I have endeavored to show in it, among other things, that through the darkness and corruption of the Middle Ages ran a bright, deep stream of faith, strong enough for all the exigencies of life and death.[8]

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[6] Ibid., vol. II, p. 157.
[7] Ibid., vol. II, p. 161.
[8] Ibid., vol. II, p. 214.

As told by Longfellow, The Golden Legend is the story of Prince Henry of Hohenack, who falls the victim of a mysterious disease of the mind, which, among other things, keeps him from sleeping. In the midst of one of these sleepless reveries Lucifer comes to him disguised as a travelling physician. Henry tells him that learned doctors of Salerno have told him that there is but one cure for his illness:

> The only remedy that remains
> Is the blood that flows from a maiden's veins.
> Who of her own free will shall die,
> And give her life as the price of yours.[9]

Lucifer laughs and tells Prince Henry that no such maiden could be found. However, he has such knowledge that can cure any illness. He leaves Henry with a potion, which he drinks, only to fall back in a bewitched stupor. Next day, the priests are summoned. They assume some spell is upon him and, instead of trying to help him, they send him forth from his lands and his title as a wanderer. He finds refuge and shelter and Christian love among a family of peasants in the Odenwald. Here under their kindness and care he recovers a little. Their young daughter, Elsie, falls in love with the prince, and dedicates her life to bringing a cure to the Prince. Her family consents, and Prince Henry and Elsie leave for Salerno to show the doctors the means of his cure. Along the way they meet with many adventures. They encounter Lucifer in several forms, usually as some official in the Roman Church. At last the two stand before Friar Angelo, who is Lucifer in disguise, at the school of Salerno. Elsie freely offers herself for the life of her lover. All the while Prince Henry has been willing for her to make this sacrifice for him, but, as he sees her led off to die in order that he might live, he rises up and rescues her from death. He swears

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[9] Poetical Works, Vol. V, p. 146.

that no other maiden shall be his wife but Elsie. With his health now fully recovered he returns to his home to marry the maiden who was willing to give her life for him.

In The Golden Legend Longfellow has attempted to recapture the atmosphere of the Middle Ages. The influence of the Roman Catholic Church predominates as might be expected. We see the sacrament of Confession, the chanting of the Mass, pilgrims on their way to the Holy City, the all-pervading influence of the saints, such as St. Catherine and St. Anthony, the worship of the Virgin Mary, the inner life of a nunnery, the corruption of the monastery, and the monks at their many and varied labors. In order to give an accurate picture of the period, he does not attempt to gloss over the abuses of the Church of the Middle Ages but points out its glaring errors. What he writes is the truth and not of his own invention. In a letter to a friend he discusses the sermon of the friar preached in the square in front of the cathedral:

> I am sure you will be glad to know that the monk's sermon is not wholly of my own invention. The worst passage in it is from a sermon of Fra Gabriella Barletta, —an Italian preacher of the fifteenth century.[10]

It is interesting to notice the source of the "Miracle Play" which is found in the midst of the poem. It is derived from material found in the Apocryphal Gospels of James and the Infancy of Christ. There are other digressions in The Golden Legend besides the sermon of the monk and the miracle play: there is the legend of the Monk Felix which Prince Henry reads, there is the story of Christ and the Sultan's daughter which Elsie tells to Prince Henry, there is the dialogue between the scholars in the school of Salerno that is typical of the age, and there is the story of the Abbess Irmingard and how she became a nun.

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[10] Samuel Longfellow, op. cit., vol. II, pp. 214-215.

There are two pictures given in The Golden Legend of religion in the Middle Ages. We see the hypocritical and false idea of religion reflected in the comments of Lucifer, who usually takes the role of some member of the Catholic order. He was a popular character in medieval legends and has a predominant part in The Golden Legend. We are reminded of the Faust legends, and his presence here gives the story a similar touch. On the other hand, we see the real Christian graces and love practiced toward Prince Henry in the simple farm home of Elsie's parents. The heroine, Elsie, presents "the elements of self-sacrifice, which was the redeeming factor amid the corruptions of the medieval church."[11]

No sooner had The Golden Legend been published than he began to turn his mind to the other two unfinished parts of the Christus, but it was almost twenty years before the second part of the trilogy was completed. Only a few weeks after the publication of The Golden Legend he wrote in his Journal: "The great theme of my poem haunts me ever; but I cannot bring it into act."[12] In the spring of 1856, he began to turn his mind toward the third part of Christus. He writes of "looking over books on Puritans and Quakers; particularly Besse's Sufferings of the Quakers, —a strange record of violent persecution for merest trifles."[13] He felt that here was a good subject for a tragedy. He continued his search of the library for material on this subject and found that all the books told the same sad story of persecution. It is interesting to note that at the same time he contemplated in his Journal the theme for The Golden Legend he also thought of writing a drama on Cotton Mather. Even in 1839, his mind was turning in the direction of his

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11 Ibid., vol. II, p. 212.
12 Ibid., vol. II, p. 211.
13 Ibid., vol. II, p. 275.

great work. On May 1, 1856, he writes, "At home all day pondering the New England Tragedy, and writing notes and bits of scenes."[14] Through November of that year he was still experimenting, but in December he seems to have turned aside from this work to write "The Courtship of Miles Standish." However, he continued his reading along lines that finally led to The New England Tragedies. On December 9 and December 10 he writes:

> Got at the college library Bishop's New England Judged, — a vindication of the Quakers. Not so good as Besse. .... Took out Norton's Heart of New England Rent, — a justification of the Puritans against the Quakers.[15]

It was not until August, 1857, that Longfellow completed the first rough draft of what he called "Wenlock Christison," which later appeared in The New England Tragedies as "John Endicott." Throughout the year 1858 he was working on this poem, moulding and shaping it to suit his taste. It was ten years after this before The New England Tragedies emerged from the office of the printer. It seems this part of the Christus caused the poet many doubts; mistrust of his own work held the poet back from completing it. It is mentioned very little in his Journal, and never once as a part of the Christus during these ten years. It was finally published in 1868 with no indication that it was even a part of Christus. Samuel Longfellow writes of this work:

> Yet the third part of this Trilogy did not altogether satisfy him, and with reason, as representing the modern phase of Christianity. The New England Tragedies may not have been originally written for this use; at least it has the aspect of an after-thought. And his Journal mentions a projected third drama, the scene to be laid among the Moravians of Bethlehem, by which he hoped to be "able to harmonize the discord of the New England Tragedies, and thus give a not unfitting close to the work.[16]

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[14] Ibid., vol. II, p. 278.
[15] Ibid., vol. II, p. 289.
[16] Ibid., vol. II, p. 458.

Whatever may have been his thoughts concerning The New England Tragedies, they were at last published as a part of Christus.

It appeared in two parts: Part I, "John Endicott," and Part II, "Giles Corey of Salem Farms." They are related and yet deal with two different aspects of the religious life of New England.

The first, "John Endicott," is a poetic drama of the persecution of the Quakers in New England by the Puritans, who themselves had come to America for the sake of religious freedom. As the story opens, Edith Christison, a Quakeress, with others of her sect, is ordered to leave the church service on the grounds that she is creating an uproar because she has appeared in the service wearing sackcloth. That evening she and her friends are arrested for disturbing the peace by order of Governor Endicott. Immediately a public proclamation comes from the governor to the effect that Quakers will not be tolerated, defended, sheltered, entertained, aided, or abetted in any way, under penalty of imprisonment. Young John Endicott, the son of the governor, senses the injustice behind all this scene of persecution and comes before his father to intercede in behalf of the Quakers. The governor is distressed by the attitude of his son and only turns a deaf ear to his plea. Furthermore he disowns his son for his rebellious ideas. The Quakers are summoned to stand trial before Governor Endicott. All are sentenced; Edith is ordered to be publicly scourged and banished; her father is sentenced to be hanged. Young Endicott now openly rebels against the decree of his father and is arrested. All are released when an order comes from England forbidding any further persecution of the Quakers. Governor Endicott sees the beginning of the end of his power and dies a lonely, broken old man, longing for the son he himself has disowned. It is "the mournful record of an earlier age" that Longfellow seeks to depict in the hope that it will

teach "the tolerance of opinion and of speech."[17]

The second part, "Giles Corey of Salem Farms," shows another unpleasant aspect of religious life in New England. The theme of this poem is the blot upon the pages of history placed there by the many witchcraft trials held there in days gone by. It is the story of Martha and Giles Corey and their path to death through accusations of witchcraft brought against them by their neighbors. Mary Walcot, ill because of some disease, through the influence of a woman once reported to be a witch, sees the whole cause of her illness to be Martha Corey, the respected wife of Giles Corey. Martha has no time for talk of witches or witchcraft, believing them to be only delusions. However, she is brought to trial on the testimony of this woman and the Afflicted Children. During the trial Mary Walcot claims that she sees a bird sitting on Martha's arm. Giles is brought to the stand and made to admit that on one occasion he found it hard to pray because of the presence of his wife. This is enough to say that she is a witch. Then the magistrates turn on Corey himself and say that he is possessed by Satan because that very day he had defeated a younger man than himself in a wrestling match. Finally, they accuse him of a murder fourteen years before. At the end of the story Martha and Giles both must die as witches. Longfellow points out that to superstitious minds any strange occurence could only be accounted for by something supernatural; anyone who dabbled in the spiritual world was evil and deserved death. According to the poet, this modern expression of religion was a far cry from that which was taught by the Christ.

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17 Poetical Works, vol. V, p. 302.

The third and final part of Christus to be written was Part I, The Divine Tragedy. As early as 1859, Longfellow was thinking of this work in his reading of "Christ's Passion, a tragedy, translated by George Sandys from Hugo Grotius."[18] We read no more of this poem until his biographer tells us that in November, 1870, he is writing The Divine Tragedy, "the long-contemplated, long-postponed, first part of the Christus Trilogy, —postponed, it may be believed, from a reverent hesitation."[19] In the early days of 1871 he writes:

> The subject of The Divine Tragedy has taken entire possession of me, so that I can think of nothing else. All day I am pondering upon and arranging it. I find all society and all hospitalities just now a great interruption.[20]

By January 27, 1871, The Divine Tragedy was completed except for revision. Throughout that year we find him doubtful and perplexed about this work. He writes in November, 1871: "I never had so many doubts and hesitations about any book as about this."[21] However, on December 12, 1871, The Divine Tragedy was published.

Concerning the subject matter and source material for The Divine Tragedy, little need be said. In the previous chapter the Biblical sources for the various scenes in the life of Christ are listed. His biographer has this to say concerning his treatment of characters:

> In this work, in presenting the principal personage he confined himself scrupulously to the words of the English gospels; in other characters he gave free play to poetic invention.[22]

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[18] Samuel Longfellow, op. cit., vol. II, p. 343.
[19] Ibid., vol. II, p. 456.
[20] Ibid., vol. II, p. 457.
[21] Poetical Works, vol. V, p. 19.
[22] Samuel Longfellow, op. cit., vol. II, p. 457.

In such scenes as "Nazareth," "The Garden of Gethsemane," "Ecce Homo," "The Three Crosses," "The Two Marios," and others the language is drawn almost exclusively from the pages of the Bible. In still other scenes, such as "Before the Gates of Machaerus," "Simon Magus and Helen of Tyre," "Pontius Pilate," and "Barabbas in Prison," the poet uses his imagination freely and his own style in writing.

The only other parts of Christus that need to be mentioned are the "Introitus," the "Interludes," and the "Finale." The "Introitus" deals with the prophet Habakkuk, as the representative of all the prophets who foretold the coming of the Messiah. Between The Divine Tragedy and The Golden Legend there appears the "First Interlude," entitled "The Abbott Joachim." The abbott, a member of the Benedictine order, contemplates the mystery of the Trinity and prays that the Holy Ghost might use him in the Master's service. Between The Golden Legend and The New England Tragedies is the "Second Interlude," entitled "Martin Luther." The poet here describes the man who protested the errors committed by the Roman Catholic Church during the Middle Ages as described in The Golden Legend. The entire work closes with the "Finale," entitled "St. John." In The New England Tragedies we see that, even with errors corrected and reforms accomplished, men have come far short of the spirit in religion that was intended by Jesus. We see St. John, old and weary, wandering over the face of the earth. He has seen kingdoms rise and fall; he has seen the world grow old; but he sees that evil, and hate, and war still pace the earth. He wonders if Charity has failed, if Faith has been of any avail, and if Hope has been blown out like a light by the clashing of creeds and the strife of many beliefs. Then, he remembers the One who walked in Galilee long before

and realizes that, though men have failed to do what the Master intended through the Church, He left one great principle by which He would accept them. This indeed is the great theme of the Christus:

> Not he that repeateth the name,
> But he that doeth the will. [23]

Thus it was that in 1872 the complete Christus appeared. The dream of the poet for more than thirty years had come true. He had completed the one great work that every poet hopes to write sometime in his poetic career.

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[23] Poetical Works, vol. V, p. 438.

Chapter V

THE POET AT WORSHIP

In the Journal and the letters of Longfellow we learn that the early habits of regular attendance at services of worship on Sunday continue throughout his life. The poet looked forward eagerly to the Sabbath, which he regarded as a day of rest for all men, and "the truce of God between contending cares."[1] To him it was like "a stile between the fields of toil where we can kneel and pray, or sit and meditate."[2] The day passed by quickly, and all too soon he found himself once more in the midst of the clash and clang of daily activities. The church bell alerted his mind to thoughts of the worship service. There may be a trace of his Puritan background in the remark: "Do you know I seldom stay home from church without thinking of that pretty little poem of Goethe, where he says a truant boy was chased over field and through forest by a church bell."[3] Yet there was no feeling of compulsion that led him to a worship service. It was not merely a matter of habit, nor a matter of curiosity. One year, while he was a student at Bowdoin College, a Consociation of ministers was held on the campus on Christmas Day, with services morning and evening. Longfellow did not attend, but he felt no pangs of conscience for his absence, for he says, "I cannot find anybody who was present that remembers the text of the sermon. So much for going out of idle curiosity."[4] In his Journal he often mentions

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1 Samuel Longfellow, Life of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, vol. II, p. 311.
2 Ibid., vol. II, p. 216.
3 Ibid., vol. I, p. 320.
4 Ibid., vol. I, p. 36.

services that he attended; some of his comments are enthusiastic, others not so enthusiastic. On those Sundays when he was not permitted to attend public worship because of ill health or inclement weather, he would sit at home and read a sermon of one of the great preachers of the day, such as Theodore Parker, Dr. Channing, and others. In his letters we learn that he also attended services away from home in various places he was visiting; in Nahant, where the family spent a month each summer; in Pittsfield; and in Washington, D.C.

It is interesting to notice that kind of sermon Longfellow liked to hear. Those qualities that would appeal most to the mind of a poet were eloquence, imagination, and beauty of language. However, Longfellow looked for more. He once said, "To me, a sermon is no sermon in which I cannot hear the heart beat."[5] He felt that this quality was in large measure given by the minister himself. Of one young minister he said, "I think ____ has found his true vocation, for he preaches with heart and unction."[6] He liked the sermon which was "a good discourse upon the gospel, with unction, without which a sermon is not a sermon."[7] He liked the sermon that was practical and was designed to meet the needs of life. He had no time for the sermon that was full of logic and obscure phrases. These sermons were like "the huge Grecian porticos on modern houses, leading to no dwelling of the gods, but to narrow staircases within the homes of ordinary men."[8] His eager mind looked for little gems of wisdom from the lips of the preacher, which he often quoted. He wanted a sermon to come to the point and deal with the issue squarely.

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5 Ibid., vol. II, p. 116.
6 Ibid., vol. II, p. 310.
7 Ibid., vol. II, p. 304.
8 Ibid., vol. II, p. 69.

Longfellow felt that the "war sermon" with its patriotism had no place in the pulpit. During the "unrighteous" Mexican War he heard a sermon against that war, on which he made this comment: "If all the clergy in the country had done this three months ago, the war would not have been. It is melancholy to see how little true Christian feeling there is on the subject."[9] The great conflict of 1861-1865 broke in upon Longfellow's peaceful life . . . . He remarked in his Journal one Sunday, "I was glad the pulpit did not thunder a war sermon today. A truce of God once a week is pleasant. At present the North is warlike enough and does not need rousing."[10]

Of all the ministers he knew and heard, the one who impressed him the most was the Rev. Ichabod Nichols, who in the poet's boyhood was the pastor of the First Parish of Portland, Maine.

> He was a man of high intellectual power, an elevated reverential spirit, and a great dignity of character and presence, whose retiring disposition alone kept him from being more widely known.[11]

Later, Rev. Nichols became the pastor in Cambridge, where Longfellow was teaching at Harvard. The poet eagerly anticipated the sermons of Dr. Nichols. Once he expressed disappointment that he was not in his pulpit. His sermons were laden with thought and "with enough material in them for a dozen small clergymen."[12] At his death Longfellow commented in his Journal, "No one here has any idea how great a mind is gone."[13]

There were other ministers whom Longfellow heard and deemed worthy of mention in his Journal. One of these was the Rev. James Walker, professor and later president of Harvard College.

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9 Ibid., vol. II, p. 42.
10 Ibid., vol. II, p. 365.
11 Ibid., vol. I, p. 13.
12 Ibid., vol. I, p. 294.
13 Ibid., vol. II, p. 330.

Usually Longfellow felt that Dr. Walker preached a fine strong sermon, but there was one flaw he noticed in his preaching. Dr. Walker used too much logic and hairsplitting argument. He frequently heard Emerson, whom he called the Chrysostom and Sir Thomas Browne of his day. He felt at timesthat Emerson was too obscure, speaking in "oracles darkly." However, he admired his beautiful voice, his depth of thought, and the mild melody of his language. Of Emerson he says, "He lets in a thousand new lights — side lights and cross lights — into every subject."[14] Another comment reads like this: "Emerson is like a beautiful portico, in a lovely scene of nature."[15] Of the famous Dr. Channing he remarked, "He preached a most eloquent sermon and preached it most eloquently."[16] Once he heard Henry Ward Beecher and had this to say, "The Doctor is eighty years old, but still erect, with a full strong voice, and a vigorous gesture."[17]

His church attendance was not limited to the Unitarian Church of which he was a member. On occasion he attended services in the Episcopal Church and "found something august in this service, which has been repeated for so many centuries in so many churches."[18] Once he was casually chatting with an Oxford divine from whom he gathered that he could not conceive of any religion out of the pale of the Church of England. Longfellow expressed the hope that he had misunderstood the gentleman.

One afternoon he attended a Negro church where he heard an old bald-headed Negro minister preach a sermon on Noah. On another occasion

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14 Ibid., vol. II, p. 67.
15 Ibid., vol. II, p. 132.
16 Ibid., vol. I, p. 71.
17 Ibid., vol. II, p. 228.
18 Ibid., vol. II, p. 132.

he describes hearing a Quakeress from England, a Miss Priscilla Green, "who spoke with a sweet voice and a very clear enunciation, very deliberately, and breaking now and then into a rhythmic chant, in which the voice seemed floating up and down on wings."[19] He was much impressed and stated that he could have sat and listened to her for an hour longer. One of the most colorful figures of his day was Father Taylor, the sailor preacher of Boston, whom Longfellow heard at least three times. The first occasion was in the company of Charles Dickens, who was then visiting in this country. On another occasion Longfellow says he preached "a very striking, rhapsodical, forcible, and sometimes pathetic sermon."[20] The third time he heard him "thundering away" to the sailors in his little brick Bethel, where he "inclines a little more to 'screeds of doctrine' and is perhaps less poetical and less nautical than of yore."[21]

On at least two occasions, Longfellow, prompted by curiosity over some remarkable stories of 'spiritual manifestations' attended the meeting of some spiritualists where an old lady, supposedly guided by the spirit of her son, did some remarkable drawings. It made no great impression on the poet.

> It all came to nought; the wonderful thing is that she should have the patience to make them. Strange, fantastic patterns, like odd mosaics; and certainly not well enough done to require the intervention of any ghost.[22]

Later, he went to hear a Mrs. Hatch, another medium. Of her he says:

> A pretty woman, with long sunny locks, and a musical voice. The theory is that it is not she who speaks, but that spirits speak through her. Adroit spirits they were, and answered or parried very cleverly the puzzling

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19 Ibid., vol. II, p. 304.
20 Ibid., vol. II, p. 96.
21 Ibid., vol. II, p. 232.
22 Ibid., vol. II, p. 236.

questions put by sundry people. I was not much edified, but thought her very superior to her audience.[23]

The poet derived the most benefit from the service that spoke of beauty. He did not feel that the choir should "howl" the anthem, for, as he says, "Who likes to sit in those narrow pews with his knees crooked, and then have every nerve in him quiver in agony?"[24] In another service he found the chanting of the Beatitudes as a call to worship to be very touching. One of those qualities that he found admirable in the young preacher Kavanagh was that he desired the organist of his church "to relinquish the old and pernicious habit of preluding with triumphal marches, and running his fingers at random over the keys of his instrument, playing scraps of secular music very slowly to make them sacred."[25] The poet wanted only that type of music which contributed to the mood of devotion.

What kind of a man did Longfellow expect his minister to be? Perhaps those qualities are best summarized in his picture of the young preacher, Kavanagh:

> He preached the doctrines of Christ ..... holiness, self- denial, love; ..... He did not so much denounce vice, as inculcate virtues; he did not deny, but affirm; he did not lacerate the hearts of his hearers with doubt and disbelief, but consoled, and comforted, and healed them with faith. .... The only danger was that he might advance too far, and leave his congregation behind him. .... His words were always kindly; he brought no railing accusation against any man; .... But while he was gentle he was fire. He did not refrain from reprobating intemperance because one of his deacons owned a distillery; nor war because another had a contract for supplying the army with muskets. ....[26]

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[24] Ibid., vol. II, p. 310.

[25] Prose Works, vol. II, p. 359.

[26] Ibid., vol.II, pp. 357, 358.

This glimpse into the worship habits of the poet gives us an insight into the soul of a man who was genuinely and sincerely religious. He felt his need of worship. As he worshipped, his soul searched eagerly for those things that lifted him to God. Elements foreign to that worship he frowned upon. He felt the duty of the minister and the purpose of the sermon were to teach and present the great truths of religion. He did not attend church to be critical of the sermon or the minister, but his critical, alert mind was ever ready to point out those things that added to or detracted from the service. This is the picture of the poet at worship.

Chapter VI

THE POET'S VIEWS OF DEATH AND IMMORTALITY

What were Longfellow's views on death and immortality? In any treatment of the religious nature of a person, we must consider these topics. Early in the biography by his brother, Samuel Longfellow says of the poet, "His ideas of life, of death, of what lies beyond were essentially cheerful, hopeful, and optimistic."[1] There is nothing that leads us to believe that he ever essentially departed from these views. For the most part he was quiet and calm in regard to these matters, except, as he says, when he was "troubled only when at times a horrible doubt cut into the cool surface of my soul, as the heel of a skate cuts into smooth ice."[2]

There is no man alive who does not face the reality of death a number of times throughout his life in his immediate family and in his circle of intimates and friends. However, Longfellow came face to face with death more frequently in his immediate family circle than the average man.

The first great crisis in his life came with the death of his first wife, Mary, in Rotterdam, November 29, 1835. She had become ill while they were in Amsterdam in October. They had stayed there for a full month hoping that she would recover. In Rotterdam she fell ill again and died, leaving the poet alone at the age of 28. Eight years later he married Miss Frances Appleton, who had a great influence upon the whole course of his life. Some of his most productive years, poetically speaking, came during his life with her. But here as well there came

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[1] Samuel Longfellow, Life of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, vol. I, p. 14.

[2] Ibid., vol I, p. 241.

moments of sadness. In September, 1848, their little daughter, Fanny, grew ill of a fever and died. In quick succession there followed in 1849 and 1851 the deaths of his father and mother respectively. But the greatest tragedy of all came on July 9, 1861. His wife was sitting in the library sealing up some packages of curls which she had just cut from the heads of her little girls. A lighted match which had fallen on the floor suddenly ignited her light summer dress. [illegible]. The shock was so great that she died the next morning. It was the tragedy that had the greatest effect on the life of the poet. During the remaining years of his life Death came and walked among many of his intimate friends: Felton, Sumner, Hawthorne, Dana, Agassiz, and others. Nearly every close friend preceded him in death. With these deaths in mind, it is necessary to learn what the attitude of the poet was toward death and immortality.

Early in his poetic career, even before death had played any significant part in his life, he treats the theme of mortality in "Autumnal Nightfall:"

> Leaves, that the cold night wind bears
> To earth's cold bosom with a sigh,
> Are types of our mortality,
> And of our fading years.[3]

Long after the passing of his friend and brother-in-law, George W. Pierce, in 1835, he said, "I have never ceased to feel that in his death something was taken from my own life which could never be restored."[4] On the death of the pianist Schlesinger, he remarked, "I shall hear him no more! No more! How those words sound like the roaring wind through melancholy pines!"[5] "They speak with us on earth no more," he says in the poem "Footsteps of Angels," as he thinks of those who have passed on.

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[3] Poetical Works, vol. I, p. 293.
[4] Ibid., vol. I, p. 25.
[5] Samuel Longfellow, op. cit., vol. I, p. 325.

In a group of sonnets which he entitles "Three Friends of Mine," he laments the death of Felton, Agassiz, and Sumner, all of whom he had entertained often in his home. No longer is that privelege, for he says:

> Something is gone from nature since they died,
> And summer is not summer, nor can be. [6]

At the death of his father he commented on the funeral as the saddest act in human experience, no matter what a person's views of life and death may be.

Longfellow never tried to rebel against the fact of death as some poets have done. In the poem "The Two Angels," written on the occasion of the birth of a young daughter and the death of the young wife of the poet Lowell, he pictures two angels, Life and Death, hovering over the town, each with his own special errand to perform, and each sent from God. The poem closes with these words:

> Angels of Life and Death alike are His;
> Without His leave they pass no threshold o'er;
> Who, then, would wish or dare, believing this,
> Against his messengers to shut the door? [7]

In his sonnet "Nature" he compares the call of the sleep of death to us to the call of the nurse to the child who is reluctant to leave his playthings and go to bed, but, because he is sleepy and her leading is so gentle and so full of promises to be fulfilled on the morrow, he has gone to bed before he realizes it. The idea that the summons of death is gentle is re-echoed on one of the sonnets from "Three Friends of Mine." In the lines addressed to Charles Sumner he says:

> Thou hast but taken thy lamp and gone to bed;
> I stay a little longer, as one stays
> To cover up the embers that still burn. [8]

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[6] Poetical Works, vol. III, p. 200.
[7] Ibid., vol. III, p. 32.
[8] Ibid., vol. III, p. 199.

In the poem about the death of Richard Henry Dana entitled "The Burial of the Poet" he says, "We laid him in the sleep that comes to all."[9] Longfellow accepted the fact of death and never attempted to flee from it, regarding it as a peaceful sleep that was the common lot of man. He felt that his mother had only passed from this life for a moment into another room.

This is even more in evidence in the deaths of those who were the closest to him. Three days after the death of his first wife, he left Rotterdam for Heidelburg; on the way he strayed into a Roman Catholic church where he found that the service and the chanting and the music of the organ cheered and soothed him. The following Sunday found him in the cathedral of Bonn. In religion he found comfort. Unlike Paul Flemming, the hero of Hyperion, when "death cut down the sweet blue flower that blossomed beside him," he did not bow his head and wish to be "bound up in the same sheaf with the sweet blue flower."[10] There was no morbid brooding over what had passed forever from his life. There was no sacrifice of his own career to his sorrow. Instead he had already learned the secret that Paul Flemming had to learn through experience, that which is the theme of Hyperion:

> Look not mournfully into the Past. It comes not back again. Wisely improve the present. It is thine. Go forth to meet the shadowy Future, without fear, and with a manly heart.[11]

He did not give up his journey through Europe in mournful resignation, but he made friendships with German scholars and with William Cullen Bryant.

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9 Ibid., vol. III, p. 256.
10 Prose Works, Vol. II, p. 28.
11 Ibid., vol. II, p. 275.

But there were those hours which no society could fill. However, there came in these moments the "sense and assurance of the spiritual presence of her who had loved him and loved him still, and whose dying lips had said, 'I will be with you and watch over you.' "[12] He frequently quoted the hymn that had been her favorite and had soothed her last hours. His greatest comfort came in the fact that he felt the presence of his wife very close to him. It was his belief that the dead returned to earth as spiritual beings. In August, 1838, he writes about a "calm and holy quiet" when "the thoughts of the departed and ministering angels who so soon unfolded their wings" came upon him.[13] He felt that among these was his wife Mary. This is the theme of "Footsteps of Angels." He was sure that the "Being Beauteous" was a "saint in heaven." He says of her:

> With a slow and noiseless footstep
> Comes that messenger divine,
> Takes the vacant chair beside me,
> Lays her gentle hand in mine.
>
> And she sits and gazes at me
> With those deep and tender eyes,
> Like the stars, so still and saint-like,
> Looking downward from the skies.[14]

Though often depressed and lonely, he lays aside his fears as he remembers that "such as these have lived and died."[14] He met this tragedy as he met all similar ones in his life with a silent, tender, religious faith. As he thought about the death of Mary, and others who in the prime of life must leave the earth, he sees the figure of Death not only as the Reaper of the bearded grain of old age, but as the Reaper of the flowers of youth. In "The Reaper and the Flowers" he says:

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[12] Samuel Longfellow, op. cit., vol. I, p. 215.
[13] Ibid., vol. I, p. 291.
[14] Poetical Works, vol. I, pp. 26,27.

"My Lord has need of these flowerets gay,"
The Reaper said and smiled;
"Dear tokens of the earth are they,
Where He was once a child." [15]

He has the assurance that they will bloom in the fields of light, and that the Reaper came not in cruelty and in wrath, but that he was an angel sent by God to take the flowers away.

There is no doubt that the poet believed in a world beyond this life. In 1830, at the age of 23, he already had a firm grasp of this conviction. There was a "religious feeling" in his duty as a poet. He saw that the ancient poets had dreamed of an immortality, but "their heaven was an earthly heaven, ... where the prerogative of the soul is not that it should grow better, but that it should merely live longer." [16] He felt that the view of immortality to the modern poet was different:

> But to the modern poet the world beyond the grave presents itself with all the force of reality, and yet with all the mystery of a dream. It is a glorious certainty to some, an appalling certainty to others. Thitherward the confiding spirit turns, as to the 'shadow of a great rock in a weary land;' or fearing, trembling, doubting, shrinks back and yet aspires, denies, and yet believes. [16]

The hero of Hyperion, Paul Flemming, expresses the belief of the poet in immortality as in the solitude of his thoughts he turns his mind toward the future and its meaning for life:

> Oh, that thou didst look forward to the great hereafter with half the longing wherewith thou longest for an earthly future, ... Thou glorious spiritland! Oh that I could behold thee as thou art, the region of life and light and love, and the dwelling place of those loved ones whose being has flowed onward, like a silver-clear stream into the solemn main, into the ocean of Eternity. [17]

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15 Ibid., vol. I, p. 23.
16 Samuel Longfellow, op. cit., vol. I, pp. 182, 183.
17 Prose Works, vol. II, p. 108.

As he contemplated the world beyond, Longfellow likened this world to the "negative of the world to come, and what is dark here will be light hereafter."[18] In Kavanagh, the young minister looks at death not as an experience to be feared but as one to be welcomed:

> We walk here, as it were, in the crypts of life; at times, from the great cathedral above us, we can hear the organ and the chanting of the choir; we see the light stream through the open door, when some friend goes up before us; and shall we fear to mount the narrow staircase of the grave, that leads us out of this uncertain twilight into the serene mansions of the life eternal?[19]

Longfellow was sure of a resurrection from the dead. In the poem "Flowers" he sees the tender expanding buds as the "emblems of our own great resurrection" and "of the bright and better land."[20] When he looked at the spot in Mount Auburn Cemetery that would be his final resting place, he had no feeling of dread. In "God's Acre" he said that a burying ground could be called by no better name, for to him death was really like God's harvest:

> Into its furrows shall we all be cast,
> In the sure faith, that we shall rise again
> At the great harvest; when the archangel's blast
> Shall winnow, like a fan, the chaff and grain.[21]

For him one of the great joys of eternal life would be the reunion with those who had preceded him in death, who were waiting for him somewhere ahead. In "Auf Wiedersehen," written in memory of his friend Fields in 1881, he uses the common words of farewell between men in every day conversation as the words of farewell between two friends parting forever on the earth. It is only "Until we meet again." He says:

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18 Samuel Longfellow, op. cit., vol. II, p. 382.
19 Prose Works, vol. II, p. 389.
20 Poetical Works, vol. I, p. 29.
21 Ibid., vol. I, p. 70.

But when death intervening
Rends us asunder, with what ceaseless pain
We wait for the Again! [22]

In "Resignation" he is sure that one day he will again see the form of his little daughter Fanny, no longer a child but a fair maiden. This world beyond was more than a place of reunion; it was a place of release from the cares of life. To him "The Old Clock on the Stairs" with its ceaseless refrain of "Forever — never, Never — forever" seemed to say:

Never here, forever there,
Where all parting, pain, and care,
And death, and time shall disappear,
Forever there, but never here! [23]

Without any question, the great, almost overwhelming tragedy in his life, the death of his second wife in such a sudden, tragic manner, left wounds that not even time could heal completely. The shock of the disaster nearly crushed him. However, he bore his grief with courage and in silence. It was a long time before he could even bring himself to speak of it. To his brother he wrote, "And now , of what we are both thinking, I can write no word. God's will be done." [24] Once, when asked about the deeper matters of life, death, and judgment, he replied, "To these dark problems there is no other solution possible, except the one word, Providence." [25] He never questioned the working of God that would permit such a great tragedy to enter his life. But suffer he did. Once a visitor expressed the hope that he would be enabled to "carry his cross" with patience. He replied, "Bear the cross, yes; but what if one is stretched upon it?" [24] It seemed as if all of the spirit had gone out

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[22] Ibid., vol. III, p. 278.
[23] Ibid., vol. I, p. 233.
[24] Samuel Longfellow, op. cit., vol. II, p. 369.
[25] Ibid., vol. II, p 257.

of him. He had no urge to work at the task of writing poetry. The thoughts that were in his mind and heart he could not record. He sought comfort in solitude and in his young children. Always the unseen presence of Mary Appleton seemed with them. Finally, after some months, feeling the need of some continuous occupation for his mind and thoughts, he turned to the translation of Dante which he had laid aside. This occupied many of his otherwise empty hours until 1866. When he did return to writing poetry of his own, much of it indicated the sorrow that lay deep in his heart. During this period of his life such poems as "The Divine Tragedy," "Three Friends of Mine," "Nature," "Auf Wiedersehen," and "The Bells of San Blas" were written.

How deeply that sorrow was embedded in his life is reflected best in a poem that was not found until after his death, written eighteen years following the tragedy that claimed the life of his beloved Frances. One day he was looking through the pages of an illustrated book of Western scenery. His attention was drawn to the picture of a mountain upon whose lonely and lofty summit the snow lay in such long furrows that it made a crude but clear image of a cross. As he looked first at that cross and then at the picture of the one who had left him so suddenly and so tragically, he wrote the lines that bear the title "The Cross of Snow." He speaks of the gentle face of the one who had never left his memory, and whose pure soul was led through a martyrdom of fire that she so little deserved. As he contemplated the cross on the side of the mountain, created by the deep ravines, and the cross in his own life, created by her death, he wrote:

Such is the cross I wear upon my breast
These eighteen years, through all the changing scenes
And seasons, changeless since the day she died.[25]

Even through this tragedy he never gave up his hope in immortality. We might expect the last days of a man whose heart had been so wrung with grief to be spent in bitterness, self-pity, or even despair. However, the tragedy of darkness and loneliness did not crush his spirit. His religious faith and courage lifted him above the blackness of circumstances into the light of hope. The last lines he ever wrote were in the poem "The Bells of San Blas," penned just two weeks before his own death, which occured March 24, 1882. They show us in a summary way the whole outlook of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow on death and immortality:

Out of the shadow of night
The world rolls into light;[27]
It is daybreak everywhere.

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[26] Ibid., vol. II, p. 273.
[27] Poetical Works, vol. III, p. 292.

Chapter VII

THE POET LOOKS AT LIFE

The whole tenor of a man's poetry is determined to a great extent by his philosophy of life. Longfellow enjoyed life; he knew how to live. His hours were never spent in brooding over his sorrows or his failures. There were those hours when grief overtook him and left him immersed in sorrow too deep for words, but he knew that life was not to be wasted. It was to be lived. Each day he strove to bring forth something that was useful to those around him and to those who would come after him. His view of life was never pessimistic, but full of the brightest optimism. With these thoughts in mind, I shall now deal with the poet's attitude toward life.

Longfellow never deceived himself about the brevity of life. He knew that life was short, and he never tried to hide that fact from himself or from others. He saw Time as a mower swinging a scythe through the grass, with the days flying by like the grass falling beneath the swing of the scythe. Each day he regarded as a "white milestone" which "we rush by with such speed that they look like grave-stones."[1]

The poet also knew that life is not all sunshine and flowers. He knew that "into each life some rain must fall."[2] A favorite theme of the poet is found in the poem "Maidenhood," where he describes a girl in all the beauty of youth with a carefree attitude toward life. To her he speaks these words of warning:

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[1] Samuel Longfellow, Life of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, vol. II, p. 278. [2] Poetical Works, vol. I, p. 66.

Oh, thou child of many prayers!
Life hath quicksands, —Life hath snares!
Care and age come unawares![3]

In "The Golden Legend," Henry says to Elsie as they journey toward Rome:

This life of ours is a wild aeolian harp of many a joyous strain,
But under them all there runs a loud perpetual wail, as of souls in pain.[4]

To Longfellow, these somber strains give a real meaning to life. Without them a person does not really learn what life is all about. The poet sees Life as a goblet, filled to the brim, in his poem "The Goblet of Life." Into each goblet were placed leaves of fennel which gave to the wine a bitter taste, but they had the quality of giving new strength and daring to the gladiator or the soldier. In the goblet of life we need the bitter with the sweet, for the former gives a quality to life not achieved by the latter. We need to learn that all of life is not the sweet and the sparkling; there must also be the fennel.

And he who has not learned to know
How false its sparkling bubbles show,
How bitter are the drops of woe,
With which its brim may overflow,
He has not learned to live.[5]

This truth the poet learned through his own experiences. His prayer was for strength to meet his portion of woe. He accepted them both as coming from God, and they made him a better person.

The greatest concern of the poet was for the present. He did not spend his days looking mournfully into the past, for he realized that it was gone. He did not stand with eyes cast fearfully toward the future.

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[3] Ibid., vol. I, p. 78.
[4] Ibid., vol. V, p. 220.
[5] Ibid., vol. I, pp. 75-76.

In a letter to George Greene in 1837, he writes: "My friend, learn to enjoy the present, that little space of time between the great past and the still greater future."[6] Later, he wrote to the same friend, "I find no other way of keeping my nerves quiet than this,—namely to do with all my might whatever I have to do, without thinking of the future."[7] He urged those who found themselves in the midst of youth to enjoy it while its fragrance was all about them, for it would not stay. This is the theme of "It Is Not Always May."

There is no poem that catches his philosophy of life like "The Psalm of Life," which he wrote while still a young man. Its subtitle is "What the Heart of the Young Man Said to the Psalmist." The poet did not see life as an "empty dream," and the goal of life the grave. He did not feel that the destined "end or way" of life was either sorrow or enjoyment. He felt that life was "real" and "earnest." Time, it is true, fleets away, and the beating of our hearts reminds us its end is the grave. However, the soul of man was never meant to return to the dust of the earth. Therefore, since life is a battle, the poet urges youth not to be like "dumb cattle," without a hope, but like "a hero in the strife." A man is not to spend his time trusting the future, or looking back into the past, but to act in the living present. The real purpose of life, says Longfellow, is:

> To act, that each tomorrow
> Find us farther than today.[8]

Our actions can be the incentive that another man may need to spur him on to reach the highest possible attainment. We can see in the lives of

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6 Samuel Longfellow, op. cit., vol. I, p. 249.
7 Ibid., vol. I, p. 303.
8 Poetical Works, vol. I, pp. 20-22.

great men indelible "footprints on the sands of time." Therefore, the poet says:

> Let us, then, be up and doing,
> With a heart for any fate;
> Still achieving, still pursuing,
> Learn to labor and to wait.[9]

Longfellow felt that each life should produce something of value, something that would last and endure. The hero of Hyperion, Paul Flemming, wished to bring forth something permanent out of this fast-fleeting life. This was the ideal of "The Village Blacksmith," toiling day after day at the bellows and the anvil. He had learned the secret of a useful life, for

> Each morning sees some task begin,
> Each evening sees it close;
> Something attempted, something done,
> Has earned a night's repose.[9]

In "To a Child" Longfellow expresses the idea that there is "true beauty in utility."[10] No life is of value that does not find its place in service. There is a purpose and a plan for each life. In "The Builders" he says that we are all "architects of Fate" working amid the "walls of Time." Our material is time, our todays and our yesterdays. As we build we must remember that everything is of some value. Those things that are not as striking or magnificent as some other things merely go to help hold the latter in place. Care must be taken by the builder of even those parts of his life unseen and unnoticed by the public eye, for what escaped the gaze of man did not escape the sight of God. He cautions each builders

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[9] Ibid., vol. I, p. 66.
[10] Ibid., vol. I, p. 213.

> Let us do our work as well,
> Both the unseen and the seen;
> Make the house, where Gods may dwell,
> Beautiful, entire, and clean.[11]

Longfellow believed that the goal of one's life is achieved only by work, and the mind that works must be the mind that is at peace with itself. He says, "We lead but one life here on earth. We must make that beautiful. And to do this, health and elasticity are needful; and whatever endangers or impedes these must be avoided."[12] Even in the 19th century life moved at a rapid pace, and the poet realized that the life that really counted was not like that stream that noisily leaped over shallow waterfalls in its "inconsiderate haste," but like the "Songo River" that wound through the countryside in a calm and unhurried way, like a school boy on a quest for hazel nuts. This way of life shows a "quiet self-control," that "link together soul and soul."[13] This becomes a source of strength when the sufferings and woes of life creep in on a man. That strength was the secret of Longfellow's optimistic attitude toward life even in the midst of personal tragedy. Van Wyck Brooks says of him:

> Longfellow's soul was not an ocean. It was a lake, clear calm, and cool. The great storms of the sea never reached it. And yet this lake had its depths. Buried cities lay under its surface. One saw the towers and domes through the quiet water. One ever seemed to catch the sound of church bells ringing. ....[14]

These depths of strength, a deep moral insight, and a strong religious feeling gave the poet a tranquility of soul that enabled him to do his work and achieve his goal.

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[11] Ibid., vol. I, p. 273.
[12] Samuel Longfellow, op. cit., vol. II, p. 181.
[13] Poetical Works, Vol. III, p. 98.
[14] Van Wyck Brooks, The Flowering of New England, p. 511.

Longfellow saw everything in life as a round in the ladder which one must climb to achieve one's goal, even "the low design, the base design, ... the longing for ignible things, ... all thoughts of ill, ... all evil deeds."[15] In "The Ladder of St. Augustine," he sees that all of these things must be trampled under foot if we are to ascend. From a distance the pyramids appear as if they are a solid mass of rock, but on drawing nearer we see they are but gigantic flights of steirs, each stone a little higher than the last. From afar the mountains seem to be a solid bastion pointing upward to the sky, but as we climb we find their sides are crossed by a network of paths. The mistakes of the past can be used to climb upward if we will consider them as a "path to higher destinies." We also must remember that:

> We have not wings, we cannot soar;
> But we have feet to scale and climb
> By slow degrees, by more and more,
> The cloudy summits of our time.[15]

Here again the lives of great men can serve as our pattern, for he says:

> The nights by great men reached and kept
> Were not attained by sudden flight,
> But they, while their companions slept,
> Were toiling upward in the night.[15]

We have seen that the poet knew that life was short, and that it was not always bright and gay, full of sunshine and flowers. He saw life as a battle, and the soul that went out to fight this battle had to be calm and serene to achieve success. There was a task for each person alive, to leave something of value to the world. The failures of the past were not to crush the spirit out of a person, but they were to be used as steppingstones to higher and nobler achievements. But did a man ever reach perfection? Did a man ever come to that place where he could be satisfied that he had achieved life's goal? The poet's answer

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[15] Poetical Works, vol. III, p. 21.

to these questions is found in "Excelsior." It is a picture of a "man of genius, resisting all temptations, laying aside all fears, heedless of all warnings, and pressing right on to accomplish his purpose."[16] This man had as his motto, "Excelsior," i.e., "Higher." He passes through an Alpine village with the motto written upon his banner, but the people cannot understand the meaning of the strange word, "Excelsior." They try to persuade him to stop in the village, but the domestic scene of the fireside and the offer of love from a maiden hold no attraction for him. He heeds no warning about the pass or the avalanche. There is something even higher than the prayers and the meditations of the monks. His gaze and his goal is higher. At last he is found half-buried in the snow, still clutching his banner with its motto, "Excelsior." The poet does not feel the youth had failed. As he says in the foreword to the poem:

> Filled with these aspirations, he perishes; without having reached the perfection he longed for; and the voice he heard in the air is the promise of immortality and progress ever upward.[16]

Longfellow realized that in this life a man could not reach perfection, but he saw that the only place where all of life's dreams could come true was immortality. This was his ultimate goal as he looked at life.

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[16] Ibid., vol. I, p. 79.

Chapter VIII

THE CHURCH OF HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW

In an earlier chapter we have seen that Longfellow was a member in good standing throughout his life of a Unitarian Church. Unitarianism was the religious profession of his father, who had been an intimate friend of Dr. Channing in college. Although he maintained this relationship through college days and through all of his poetical years, there is every indication from the writings of Longfellow that he was not a Unitarian in the strictest sense of the word.

It seems he held Trinitarian views. At the close of The Divine Tragedy we find the apostles repeating the Apostles' Creed in full as an Epilogue to the first part of the Christus. Within this creed may be found every orthodox element in Christianity. Had Longfellow held strictly Unitarian views, it is doubtful if he would have included this creed in his work. In some "Elegiac Verse" written in 1881, a year before his death, we find these lines:

> How can the Three be One? you ask me; I answer by asking,
> Hail and snow and rain, are they not three, and yet one?[1]

The poet here has pondered the matter in his own heart and has arrived at the conclusion that there is a Trinity.

There are many specific references to the Second Person of the Trinity that lead us to believe that he felt Christ was divine. For example, the broad outline of The Divine Tragedy is based upon the three Feasts of the Passover that are found in the Gospel of John. If any

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[1] Poetical Works, vol. III, p. 276.

one of the four gospels declares the divinity of Christ, it is the Johannine writing. In The Divine Tragedy Nathanael declares, "Thou art the Son of God!" Peter claims, "Thou art greater than a prophet!" In the scene with Nicodemus, Christus declares:

> And as Moses
> Uplifted the serpent in the wilderness,
> So must the Son of Man be lifted up;
> That whosoever shall believe in Him
> Shall not perish, but have eternal life.[2]

In the scene with the Samaritan woman, Christus makes his own claim as to his Messianic identity. In "The Coasts of Caesarea Philippi" we find the great declaration of Peter: "Thou art the Christ! Thou art the Son of God!"[3] Had the poet held other views, it would have been a simple matter to eliminate those passages that did not agree with his own personal theology.

There are other poems in which the divinity of Christ is clearly presented. In "The Saga of King Olaf" from Tales of a Wayside Inn, we find these words of challenge by the Norse god Thor to Christ:

> Thou art a God too,
> O Galilean!
> And thus single-handed
> Unto the combat,
> Gauntlet or Gospel,[4]
> Here I defy thee!

The rest of this poem deals with the combat between these two "gods." In Kavanagh as he paints his picture of the young minister, who seems to to be his ideal of what a minister ought to be, he says, "He preached the doctrines of Christ."[5] In a long speech in the Tales of a Wayside Inn,

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[2] Ibid., vol. V, p. 68.
[3] Ibid., vol. V, p. 76.
[4] Ibid., vol. IV, p. 55.
[5] Prose Works, vol. II, p. 357.

the Theologian states many of the views of the poet in respect to theology. There is one passage on the person of Christ. We see here the beliefs of the poet about Christ in contrast to what some others thought of Him:

> Ah! to how many Faith has been
> No evidence of things unseen,
> But a dim shadow, that recalls
> The creed of the Phantasiasts,
> For whom no Man of Sorrows died,
> For whom the Tragedy Divine
> Was but a symbol and a sign, [6]
> And Christ a Phantom crucified!

The very use of the word "Divine" in the title of The Divine Tragedy indicate Longfellow's belief about Christ.

Of all passages that might be quoted to show Longfellow's belief in the divinity of Christ, one stands out above all the others. It is to be found in the "First Interlude" of his great work, Christus. It is entitled "The Abbott Joachim" and contains the meditations of an abbott in a monastery on a rocky coast concerning the Trinity. To the abbott this matter was clear:

> Open and manifest to me
> The truth appears, and must be told;
> All sacred mysteries are threefold;
> Three persons in the Trinity,
> Three ages of Humanity,
> And Holy Scriptures likewise three,
> Of Fear, of Wisdom, and of Love;
> For Wisdom that begins in Fear
> Endeth in Love; [7]

Then, in three lengthy verse paragraphs, the abbott describes each Age of Humanity, beginning with the Age of the Father, followed by the description of the Age of the Son, and in turn by the Age of the Spirit. Concerning the Age of the Son, which concerns us here more than the other two ages, he says:

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[6] Poetical Works, Vol. IV, pp. 110-111.
[7] Ibid., Vol. V, pp. 135-136.

Then reigned the Son; his Covenant
Was peace on earth, good-will to man;
With Him the reign of Law began.
He was the Wisdom and the Word,
And sent his Angels Ministrant,
Unterrified and undeterred
To rescue souls forlorn and lost,
The troubled, tempted, tempest-tost,
To heal, to comfort, and to teach.
.....
He is the Light Divine, whose rays
Across the thousand years unspent
Shine through the darkness of our days,
And touch with their celestial fires,
Our churches and our convent spires.[7]

Likewise, in this Trinitarian view, the Age of the Spirit has its place as well:

These Ages now are of the Past;
And the Third Age begins at last.
The coming of the Holy Ghost,
The reign of Grace, the reign of Love
Brightens the mountain-tops above,
And the dark outline of the coast.
.....

Love is the Holy Ghost within;
Hate the unpardonable sin;
Who preaches otherwise than this,
Betrays his Master with a kiss![7]

There is no doubt that Longfellow believed in the Trinity.

The question may be asked: If Longfellow believed so fully in the doctrine of the Trinity, why did he embrace the Unitarian Church all of his life? The answer seems to lie not in the theological doctrines of that church, but in the freedom of thought he found within the confines of this particular denomination. The narrowness of sectarianism did not give him the real freedom his soul demanded. He wrote on one occasion to his friend George Wells on the subject of religion:

> Men, indeed, have thrown a veil of mystery over this beautiful subject, and have made it difficult for the way-faring man to walk in the light and liberty of religion; and I am confident that human systems have done much to deaden the true spirit of devotion and to

> render religion merely speculative. Would it not be better for mankind if we should consider it as a cheerful and social companion, given us to go through life with us from childhood to the grave, and to make us happier here as well as hereafter; and not as a stern and chiding task-master, to whom we must cling at last through mere despair, because we have nothing else on earth to which we can cling?
> I conceive that if religion is ever to benefit us, it must be incorporated with our feelings, and become in every way identified with our happiness. And hence I love that view of Christianity which sets it in the light of a cheerful, kindhearted friend, and which gives its thoughts a noble and liberal turn.[8]

To Longfellow the narrowness of doctrinal details did not capture the real spirit of Christianity. He claimed once that he found more of the soul of Christianity in the lectures of a German philosopher than in the "sermons of all the rebel crew of narrow-minded, dyspeptic, so-called orthodox preachers who rail against German philosophy."[9] On the other hand he was not what one would call a strict liberal. He liked to hear a good orthodox sermon. He rather stated his place in the scheme of things religious when he said of a certain preacher whom he had just heard: "He stands on the outpost of the Orthodox army, as Mr. Huntingdon does on the outpost of the Unitarian."[10] Longfellow no more felt at home in the complete liberalism of Unitarianism than he did in the strict orthodoxy of many of the churches of his day.

There was no narrowness in the spirit of Longfellow toward any church, for he worshipped in many churches of various denominations. It distressed him one day to hear of an architect in New York who had declined "after prayerful consideration" to design a Unitarian church, which, according to the poet, he refused to do because he deemed Unitarians not to be Christians. Longfellow commented: "There is the

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8 Samuel Longfellow, The Life of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, vol. II, pp. 54-55.
9 Ibid., vol. II, p. 35.
10 Ibid., vol. II, p. 309.

meanness and the narrowness of the metter, that his soul does not embrace all sects of Christians."[11] He felt that every church that worshipped God was a part of a greater whole. When the young minister in his novel, Kavanagh, turns from the Catholic church to embrace Protestantism, Longfellow remarks:

> He had but passed from one chapel to another in the same vast cathedral. He was still beneath the same ample roof, still heard the same divine service chanted in a different dialect of the same universal language.[12]

To the poet there was more to religion than the mere recital of creeds. There was no true religion that did not manifest itself in the living of a life. He had the Theologian speak these words in the Tales of a Wayside Inn:

> Must it be Calvin and not Christ?
> Must it be Athanasian creeds,
> Or holy water, books, and beads?
> Must struggling souls remain content
> With councils and decrees of Trent?
> .....
> For others a diviner creed
> Is living in the life they lead.[13]

We see this as his theme in The Golden Legend. It was not the church with all of its creeds that helped Prince Henry in his struggle with his soul, but it was the goodness of the peasant family who said of him: "We have nothing to give him but our love."[14] The essentials of true religion that Longfellow believed in seem to be summed up in the words that describe the Theologian in Tales of a Wayside Inn:

> He preached to all men everywhere
> The Gospel of the Golden Rule,
> The New Commandment given to men,
> Thinking the deed and not the creed,
> Would help us in our utmost need.

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11 Ibid., vol. II, pp. 63-64.
12 Prose Works, vol. II, p. 354.
13 Poetical Works, vol. IV, pp. 110-111.
14 Ibid., vol. V, p. 161.

> With reverent feet the earth he trod,
> Nor banished nature from his plan,
> But studied still with deep research
> To build the Universal Church,
> Lofty as in the love of God,
> And ample as the wants of man. [15]

He had found no church that met these qualifications except the Unitarian Church, where he felt that his soul was at home. In many respects he was not strictly Unitarian, but there he found the spirit of true Christianity that delighted him, won him, and held him. There was a freedom in this circle that he could not find in any similar group. It might be said that Longfellow was a New Testament Christian in the truest sense, and that he found what he believed to be close to the true religion of Christ only in the Unitarian Church.

His religion was always expressed in his life and character. His mother wrote of him, that he was remarkably "solicitous always to do right."[16] His sister said of him: "True, high-minded, and noble, — never a mean thought or act, injustice in any shape he could not brook."[16] One of his students at Bowdoin College said of him: "He was never insincere, but his ready and hearty sympathy with every honest effort would betray him into language that had its degree of truth in his feelings."[17] Of his home in Cambridge, a visitor once wrote:

> He left the house wherein the presence of the Master is a perpetual sunshine — where never a peremptory word is spoken, and yet there is a perfect, loving obedience — with the feeling that it was good for a man to have been there.[18]

At the conclusion of the biography by his brother, we find these words of praise, that he was "the good son, devoted husband, affectionate father; the generous, faithful friend."[19] Samuel Longfellow further says of his brother:

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15 Ibid., vol. IV, p. 22.
16 Samuel Longfellow, op. cit., vol. I, p. 9.
17 Ibid., vol. I, p. 180.
18 Ibid., vol. II, pp. 416-474.
19 Ibid. vol. II pp 472-474

> The key to his character was sympathy. This made him the gentle and courteous receiver of every visitor, however obscure, however tedious; .... Through this sympathy thousands of grateful hearts had been touched, comforted, and lifted, — made more gentle, more courageous, more full of holy trust in God, of faith in immortality.[19]

This sympathy of Longfellow manifested itself in humanitarianism. He was impressed at the sight of a man giving a pair of new shoes to a wet, cold, little beggar girl and regarded the act as a beautiful charity. Once he spent the better part of two days working to have the fine of a poor German woman remitted, who was accused of stealing apples from a tree not in an enclosure. On reading of a poor Negro sentenced to the gallows for murder, he expressed the hope that it would be the last execution they would hear of in Massachusetts. His soul revolted against anything that even hinted of violence. He took his place in the active crusade against slavery when he published his "Poems on Slavery." He believed slavery to be an "unrighteous institution, based on the false maxim that Might makes Right." He felt that his stand against slavery was "righteous" and that everyone has a perfect right to express his own opinion on this subject as on every other subject. He did not wish to see any violence or any illegal method employed to abolish slavery. This was his wish: "Let us do all we can to bring about this will, in all gentleness and Christian charity. And God speed the time."[20] He likewise abhorred those chapters in the history of the Church that spoke of violence; the worst aspects of this he speaks of in "Torquemada," which deals with the Spanish Inquisition, and in The New England Tragedies, which deal with the witchcraft trials in New England and the persecution of the Quakers. His earnest prayer

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[20] Ibid., vol. II, p. 8.

to God was one of thanksgiving for the disappearance of violence from the realm of religion. This was expressed in the words of the Theologian in Tales of a Wayside Inn:

> "Thank God," the Theologian said,
> "The reign of violence is dead,
> Or dying surely from the world;
> While Love triumphant reigns instead,
> And in a brighter sky o'erhead
> His blessed banners are unfurled.
> And most of all thank God for this;
> The war of waste and clashing creeds
> Now end in words, and not in deeds,
> And no one suffers loss, or bleeds,
> For thoughts that men call heresies."[21]

It is refreshing to find a man like the poet Longfellow. His vast store of learning and knowledge did not make of his religion something cold and formal, or one that was made up of so many theological clichés. Theology had no meaning to him unless it was expressed in practical living. He searched the world around for those things in every creed that spoke to his soul. These he made a part of his own belief. Those things that were opposed to what he believed was the highest and the best in Christianity he did not hesitate to criticize and to refrain from adopting them for himself. Only in the shadow of the Unitarian Church did he find that freedom of belief that he desired. His worship was translated into the life he lived, and into the poems he wrote. The important thing to him was not so much the name of the church to which he belonged, but that the ideas and principles of Christ might be expressed in the living of his life. The last two lines of his great poem Christus seem to sum up all that we have been trying to say in this chapter:

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[21] Poetical Works, vol. IV, p. 109.

Not he that repeateth the name,
But he that doeth the will. [22]

This was Longfellow's desire. This to him was the purpose of Christianity. This was the only type of religion that appealed to him. This was the church of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

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[22] Ibid., vol. V, p. 439.

SUMMARY

Religion occupied a primary place in the life and works of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. From his earliest childhood it surrounded him in the influences of his home. As he grew to manhood it was his constant companion. He eagerly read the Bible and used it as a source book in many of his writings for figures of speech, quotations, and allusions. The first part of his great poem Christus is drawn almost exclusively from his knowledge of the Bible and from the life of Christ.

Longfellow early developed the habit of public worship, which His interest did not lie in the worship services of only one church, to him was always more than just a habit. It was an experience that but he went wherever he felt the needs of his soul could be met. drew him closer to the God for whom his soul was truly seeking. He loved the beauty and the solemnity of the Catholic service. He was impressed by the devotion of its followers, but he did not hold to anything that approached bigotry or fanaticism. He found in the Roman Catholic Church, in its worship and its traditions, another rich source of material for his writings. It seems that he was always looking for those things in every religion that best expressed the great truths of religion.

Religion was more than a creed to which a man gave mental assent. To him a faith that was not expressed in works was no faith at all. He tried to express that faith in the way he lived each day. He knew that life was short, and that not all of life was sunshine. Life was a battle to be fought. Each man tried to leave behind him

something of value to posterity. A man could never reach perfection in this life, but the realization of all of life's dreams lay ahead in the realm of immortality. Longfellow believed firmly in a life beyond this life. He never tried to dodge the fact of death, which came many times to his immediate circle of relatives and friends. Through the darkest days of despair, when he could have become bitter, he kept his faith in the resurrection and immortality.

Throughout his life he continued his membership in a Unitarian Church. Was he a Unitarian in the strictest sense of the word? It is doubtful as the little theology that he held to did not follow Unitarian lines. As we have seen in his writings, he believed in the Trinity and in the divinity of Jesus. What was the thing that held him in this particular church? He found here a freedom of thought that was more congenial with the thoughts of his own soul than he could find in the narrow creeds of many other denominations. He shunned anything that suggested bigotry, insincerity, or hypocrisy. He felt that Christianity was best expressed in the lives of its adherents who manifested to the world the spirit of Christ. For him this type of Christianity could only be found in the Unitarian Church.

The life and works of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow stand as a monument to a man with a deep and abiding faith in God, a sincere devotion to the teachings and principles of Jesus, a dedication of himself to the service of God and his fellow man, and a glorious hope of immortality.

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VITA

The writer of this thesis was born April 5, 1924, near Charles Town, West Virginia. He attended the Charles Town Graded School through the fifth grade. In 1935, his family moved to Winchester, Virginia. He was graduated from the Handley High School of Winchester in June, 1942.

In the fall of 1942, he enrolled as a student at the University of Richmond, Richmond, Virginia. At the end of one semester he was called into the service. He served in the United States Army Air Corps for three years. He was assigned to the Sixteenth Weather Region as a weather observer. During this time he was stationed in Florida, Illinois, Montana, and at Norman Wells, Northwest Territory, Canada.

Following his discharge in February, 1946, he returned immediately to the University of Richmond to prepare for the ministry. He received the Bachelor of Arts Degree in June, 1949. It was his decision to return to the University of Richmond to work toward a graduate degree in English. That year he completed his residence work toward a Master of Arts degree.

During his last three years at the University of Richmond he served as pastor of Vaughn Summit Mission, Page County, Virginia.

In the fall of 1950, he entered the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, where he received the Bachelor of Divinity degree in May, 1953. Since June, 1953, he has been serving as pastor of the Hebron Baptist Church, Gore, Virginia.