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EXPLORING THE RELIGIOUS SOLUTION TO ALIENATION:
Pappenheim, Emerson, Thoreau, and Hawthorne

One of the greatest problems modern man faces is the problem of alienation. However, knowing what it is and the solutions, if any, for it constitute major problems towards its lessening or elimination. Alienation shall be defined as a general feeling of the meaninglessness of life due to the lack of emotionally and mentally satifying relationships, which causes a person to feel separated both within mentally and from others. Looking over some of the writings of Emerson, Hawthorne, and Thoreau, we shall see if they have viable solutions or insights on the problem of alienation as seen in a religious light. For it shall be maintained that only a religious solution, specifically a Christian one, will solve the problem of alienation.

However, objections to a religious solution[1] to alienation need to be considered first before blandly assuming that's the case. Fritz Pappenheim in The Alienation of Modern Man advances arguments against such a possible religious solution to alienation. One of his arguments is that with churches using modern advertising techniques (televangelism comes to mind) that they use alienating techniques to attract converts (P., p. 119). However, even if it was true churches shouldn't use TV, magazines, newspapers, or tracts to presents the claims of Christianity, this wouldn't be an intrinsic problem with the religious solution to alienation, but only an error about how to implement it.

But what has to be also denied is that the use of modern methods of proclaiming the Gospel are going to produce alienation in themselves. For the obvious practical problems in going door-to-door or holding public meetings to present a religious viewpoint to all who need to hear it make the use of modern methods imperative, especially in sparsely populated regions. But this argument also ignores how such media, impersonal as they are,[2]

[1] I shall be using throughout the assumption of Christianity as this religious solution, and avoid dealing with the claims of others religions as possible alternatives.

[2] I have the admit the notoriously widespread campaigns of Jehovah's Witnesses show this is at least partially possible. But does this approach produce, albeit a personal one, produce less "alienation," rejection, or just plain annoyance than more impersonal methods?

point the user to the Real, and how to gain contact with God, who is a Person. For the Christian God doesn't reveal Himself directly to all people's minds as if they were prophets, but normally works through the five physical senses to relay specific information, such as through reading a book (in the case of Christianity, the Bible) to say what should be thought and done to end that state of inner emptiness, i.e. alienation. Of course, at the same time the called person (John 6:44, 65) will have the Holy Spirit--a spiritual force that doesn't use the five physical senses--reaching out from God to gain contact with his or her mind and make spiritual unity with God possible. For the appeal through the five senses alone won't gain unity with God--the Holy Spirit, which is God reaching down to man, is needed as well. Since none of us are prophets, which means God doesn't talk out loud to us through the Spirit today, we need both the appeal through the reading or viewing of inanimate objects (to gain the necessary specific information) as well as the spiritual force reaching out to us (which gives us the personal contact and unity with God that is necessary) to fill our spiritual void, i.e. cure our alienation. For the job of organized religion is to point to the seeker the way to the Real, if it is doing its job properly, and save the seeker much wasted time and effort, if not the very possibility of success, in his quest of gaining personal contact with God.

Another problem Pappenheim sees with a religious solution to alienation is the tendency to make religion easy and comfortable in order to appeal to people (P., p. 119). Again, this isn't an intrinsic problem of true Christianity, for the doctrines of the Sermon on the Mount and the Letter of James are sure to make anyone self-reflective uncomfortable and point the way for the necessity of forgiveness, repentance, and change, if taken seriously. Hawthorne mentions a similar watered-down religion in his day, which is the principle theme in his short story The Celestial Railroad (note especially p. 195), so this isn't a creation of the twentieth century. Indeed, for almost as

[3]Do books cause alienation since no personal contact is made with the reader? If so, this not only torpedoes the written holy scriptures of any religion, but ironically sinks Pappenheim's own book as well for "causing" alienation

long as there have been men, there has been the desire for easy and/or false religion. But when even a skeptic like Mark Twain was willing to say what concerned him weren't the passages of the Bible that he didn't understand, but those that he did, it's obvious this isn't an intrinsic problem with the religious solution to alienation either.

The problem with people turning religion and faith into a tool to gain personal ends, not caring about the objects of their faith (P., p. 120) isn't an intrinsic problem with a fundamentalist Christianity. For it's the modern spirit ofpragmatism (William James' view of faith and religion come to mind especially) and liberal, higher critic theology that's largely at fault here. To maintain what matters is the sincerity with which the conviction is held, not its truth or falsity empirically or metaphysically, is the source of this particular problem philosophically, and it isn't part of Biblical Christianity (John 17:17; 14:6; I Cor. 15:12-19). To the extent this problem is caused by people wanting an easy, practical faith, that's merely the problem of the preceding paragraph repeated.

A much more serious challenge to a religious solution to alienation is to say that the feeling of separation from God isn't intrinsic to mankind. For this is what Pappenheim's statements on pages 111-112 amount to. For when he says the feeling of separation hasn't been the only definition of sin in mankind's history, and deny's Tillich's definition, he's saying the different definitions used for sin throughout history show mankind hasn't always felt the same degree of alienation that's caused by being separate from God. But, such a flat denial that this separation of man from God is the cause of alienation doesn't prove this to be so. The differing concepts of sin throughout history don't prove that deep need wasn't always there.

So now, why does Pappenheim issue such a flat denial? He maintains the amount of alienation has increased in the modern era, instead of being a continuous problem for mankind whose intensity hasn't changed much through

the ages. While I'll concede that the amount of alienation has increased in modern society, this is due to people throwing away religion, not due to the rise of a commodity basis for society (P., 116-117, 134).[4] For while something has happened to make alienation worse today than it was in the medieval period, this involves how the typical medieval serf or baron believed there was a purpose to life, and that Christianity had accurately described what it was, not due to the rise of capitalism. For it's the rise of unbelief and secularism that is at fault here, not capitalism.[5]

But now, a brief critique of the view capitalism's commodity organization of economics has caused alienation is needed, for Pappenheim maintains that this is the source of alienation, not unbelief. This view first maintains that socialism of some type is necessary as a solution (P., p. 134), a view that since asserted by Pappenheim has suffered the disastrous blow of the pragmatic unworkability of state socialism and centralized planning. For the economic debacle the USSR and eastern Europe are mired in was not caused by war, famine, or pestilence (unlike many of the reasons for the case in the 1917-20 Russian economic collapse, or the economic depression following the Black Plague in the fourteenth century), but self-inflicted in peacetime, even amidst the bountiful Russian bumper crops for the harvest of 1990. It's a practical showing of Ludwig Von Mises' thesis that rational economic calculation is impossible in a socialist, centrally planned state since only through markets and the price system can you actually know what the demand and supply for anything is, which then allows for economic calculation.[6] The long waits in front of Russian stores are more likely to be increasing alienation, not reducing it.

But tossing aside the pragmatics of the situation, will a much lower standard of living that results from the elimination of capitalism be a worth-

[4]Really what is being attacked to a large degree here is the division of labor, which exists just as much in a modern socialist state as a capitalist state. The number of "intrinsically meaningless" factory jobs in the USSR isn't much different from that in any other industrialized society.

[5]This view is premissed on that the increasing standard of living provided by capitalism and the Industrial Revolution doesn't necessarily have to oppose the achievement of spiritual goals. For since both Abraham and Job were rich, this shows the problem spiritually with wealth lies more with what is done with what one has and the morality of how it was earned, not so much having it to begin with. The shortening of the workweek from 70-80 hours to 40 in the past 200 years could

while trade to end alienation.[7] The problem then is whether this in fact will follow. Due to the modern division of labor, a socialist society that is industrialized will have reptitive, intrinsically meaningless factory jobs as well.[8] The next problem is who should decide such a trade is worthwhile, and whether it should be forced on others by the government's central planners? The poor Irish immigrant Thoreau lectured to was convinced coming to America was worthwhile because "here you could get tea, and coffee, and meat every day" (T., p. 257). Thoreau was convinced such luxuries (?) were worthless, and that the Irishman was wasting his life (literally) by working so hard and so many hours to obtain them. But in this difference lies a value judgment,[9] and to impose by force Thoreau's[10] code on those who disagree (apparently the vast majority in the Western world, who could if they really wanted to, work less and have more leisure time in return for a lower standard of living) would involve that alleged key sin of a liberal democracy to commit: "Imposing your morality on others." Also, since occupational choice is much broader today and generally involves much easier work physically that produces a much higher standard of living than in the not-too-distant past, when 90-95% of the population was confined by necessity to (generally) subsistance agriculture and 70-80 hours of hard, grubby manual labor that too often was barely enough to keep people alive, one could readily argue that the trade of a much higher standard of living for an increase in alienation is worth it.

Also, assuming that the commodity basis of society makes everyone is selfish, detached calculator who doesn't care about human relationships is a type of psychological egoism. It ignores how many people choose to be and allow people more time to think about God if they put it to this use.

[6]Ludwig Von Mises, Socialism An Economic and Sociological Analysis (Indianapolis: LibertyClassics, 1981), p. 112-130, 186-194, 473-478.

[7]Thoreau's cry of "Simplify, simplify" matches this impulse (T., 173).

[8]The rise of the service sector and the need for more education for more jobs has reduced the number of mind-numbing, repetitive factory jobs. Also, the rise of "Japanese" management methods such as quality circles alleviate some of the alienation resulting from such jobs.

[9]Too many socialists believe "all is relative" (i.e. no values are better than others) up until the economic organization of society gets discussed.

[10]Thoreau himself would never coerce people into obeying his morality.

and will be self-sacrificing under capitalism, especially within their families and as shown by the billions of dollars given to organized charities. Such an argument assumes people are hopeless automatons programmed by their environment, instead of having the free will not to be selfish. The many stories in the capitalist West of parents sacrificing to their children, whether it be for a college education or the raising of a handicapped child, wives caring for an invalid husband, of children caring for elderly parents, and so forth hardly show altruism is dead. Also, it can be easily maintained that selfishness is a constant tendency of human nature (barring spiritual rebirth) under any economic system. Putting a businessman behind a government desk doesn't suddenly make him virtuous and unselfish since he no longer can make a profit. The actions of elites in socialist countries (the nomenklatura's special privileges in the USSR come to mind), and the epidemic of bribe taking by bureaucrats high and low in communist, ex-communist, and socialist Third world countries (far worse than in the capitalist West, where average citizens can easily go a lifetime without paying one for a needed government service) gives evidence human nature is fundamentally immalleable. Changing the economic organization of society is unlikely to change human nature, as 74 years of communist rule and social engineering in Russia have shown. Only through a voluntary individual act of free will (in Christianity, a spiritual rebirth) can begin to limit such selfishness.

As it has been pointed out by one critic of the Marxist view of alienation: "It is sometimes contended in support of (the malleableness of human nature), that members of so-called 'primitive societies' display towards each other the kind of empathy and altruism that communism both requires and would call forth. Such societies, however, do not prove that human beings could be as communism requires them to be in order to have a chance of success. Granted that members of such societies display an endearing propensity towards an endearing propensity towards altruism and mutual aid vis-à-vis

other members. But such altruism is confined to a very small number of other people all of whom are very well known to everyone. Moreover, such altruism is typically conjoined with extreme hostility or else indifference towards those who are not members of the society. Communism, to be effective, requires that individual members be disposed to regard anonymous, unknown others with as much regard as close relations and kin. How is it possible to identify closely with people whom one does not even know? It is true that saints manage to do something like this. But can we and should we pin our trust upon the possibility that all could become as saints?"[11]

I fully admit the arguments for and against a commodity-capitalist cause of alienation could easily extended. My purpose in attacking Pappenheim's views briefly to to clear the air so I can focus on the religious solution to alienation. For if in fact Pappenheim was right, that a religious solution to alienation doesn't exist, but that changing the economic organization would be the solution, I would be going off on the wild goose chase to focus on the religious views of Thoreau, Emerson, and Hawthorne in this light.

But first, it's advisable to describe the Christian view of man's dilemma, and why he feels alienated. The reason why man feels no purpose to life exists is that he lives 70 or so years of physical existence, and dies. And if there was no afterlife, an individual's life is a mere flicker of flame in the darkness of eternity that both preceded and succeeded his death. Alienation is caused by realizing physical activities done daily such as eating, sleeping, working, talking, and so forth in themselves don't solve the problem of wondering what's the point of it all if that's all there is. For meaning is gained by permanence--eternal life brings this life its meaning. What is temporary won't satisfy eternal longings. After all, if we live 70 years and then die, cease to exist forever, and are

[11]David Conway, A Farewell to Marx An Outline and Appraisal of His Theories (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1987), p. 208-209.

forgotten, why does our life matter then? Why strive to be moral, loving, and caring when the eventual cooling of the sun some billions of years from now dooms all you have done and what humanity has done to darkness and worthlessness? Since a materialistic universe doesn't care whether or not humanity continues to exist, why should we struggle to survive when as even a species we are doomed to death and non-existence? Only a religious frame of reference with the concepts of eternal life and union with God, can alleviate such a bleak, dismal outlook.

The best description of alienation that the Bible contains is found in Ecclesiastes, where King Solomon writes about the futility of life without God. "'Meaningless! Meaningless!' says the Teacher. 'Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless'"(Eccl. 1:2). He asked what all the work man does really accomplish? (Eccl. 1:3). Human wisdom and knowledge gave no meaning to life, "For with much wisdom comes much sorrow, the more knowledge, the more grief" (Eccl. 1:18). Hedonism and pleasure-seeking accomplished nothing either (Eccl. 2:1-3). Achievement and work accomplished nothing (Eccl. 2:4-9, 11, 17, 24-26), for among other things what you earn could end up being handed over to a fool after you die (Eccl. 2:18-19), or a stranger (Eccl. 6:1-2). He reflected how all people, good or bad, wise or foolish, met the same fate: death (Eccl. 9:1-3; 11:8). Men die just like animals and become dust (Eccl. 3:19-21). Thus, Solomon concluded, without God, life would be meaningless, so he said near the end of Ecclesiastes (12:13): "Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man."

Now, with this Christian concept of alienation in mind, let's examine the writings of Emerson, Thoreau, and Hawthorne. Do they have a religious solution to alienation, and if so, how does it compare to the Christian solution?

Ralph Waldo Emerson held to a type of mystical pantheism that is very similar to much Hindu thought: "Who shall define to me an individual? I

behold with awe & delight many illustrations of the One Universal Mind. I see my being imbedded in it. As a plant in the earth so I grow in God. . . . I can even with a mountainous aspiring say, I am God, by transferring my Me out of the flimsy & unclean precints of my body . . ." (his emphasis, E., p. 68). ". . . (T)he currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part or particle of God" (E., p. 189). See also E., p. 198.[12] However, Emerson is troubled still by the problem of evil, temptation, and moral struggle, despite seeing himself as being unified with God and being God: "A believer in Unity, a seer of Unity, I yet behold two. Whilst I feel myself in sympathy with Nature & rejoice with greatly beating heart in the course of Justice & Benevolence over overpowering me, I yet find little access to this Me of Me." (E., p. 68). For Emerson wasn't always able to feel he was at one with God, and often didn't like himself (E., November-December 1841, p. 107; May 13, 1822, p. 38; June 9, 1838, p. 73). Although Paul was speaking of unity with a God who is transcendent, not just immanent as Emerson's, he had a similar spiritual experience somewhere along the line: "Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (Rom. 7:24-25).[13]

He saw material things as manifesting the spiritual world. "There seems to be a necessity in spirit to manifest itself in material forms; and day and night, river and storm, beast and bird, acid and alkali, pre-exist in necessary Ideas in the mind of God, and are what they are by virtue of preceding affections, in the world of spirit (Compare Rom. 1:20; Heb. 8:5, 9:23--EVS). A Fact is the end or last issue of spirit" (E., p. 201-202). Hence "All is one" to Emerson since it has all a common origin in Spirit. However, this doctrine--let us call it "emanation"--is different from the traditional Judeo-Christian view of creation by a transcendent God in that both the spirit and what material things it manifests as are both God, and are part of the same reality, ultimately. Matter and Spirit fade one into another along a continuum

[12]Many today would call Emerson a New Ager!

[13]Compare E., October 19, 1836, p. 64.

instead of having an immense gap inbetween the two, as exists in the Christian conception of dualism. "That is, as there is no screen or ceiling between our heads & the infinity of space, so is there no bar or wall in the Soul where man the effect ceases & God the cause begins" (E., p. 65). Thus, Emerson believes in God, but has a clearly different concept of It from the Christian, Jewish, or Islamic views.

Emerson believes very much people today can find morality and God by their own efforts in nature. The opening paragraph in Nature clearly states this view: "The foregoing generations beheld God and nature face to face; we, through their eyes. Why should not we also enjoy an original relation to the universe? . . . Let us demand our own works and laws and worship" (E., p. 186-187). See also E., second paragraph, p. 201; and p. 254. People should go out to find a meaningful religion that tells them who they are and what God is by their own efforts, not by relying on past written relevation like the Bible: "The world seems to them to exist for him, and they have not yet drunk so deeply of his sense, as to see that only by coming again to themselves, or to God in themselves, can they grow forevermore. It is a low benefit to give me something it is a high benefit to enable me to do somewhat of myself" (E., p. 247). Emerson clearly believes the moral laws of the universe that apply to humanity can be discovered by examining nature: "Have Mountains, and waves, and skies, no significance but what we consciously give them, when we employ them as emblems of our thoughts? The word is emblematic. Parts of speech are metaphors, because the whole of nature is a metaphor of the human mind. The laws of moral nature answers to those of matter as face to face in a glass. . . . The axioms of physics translated the laws of ethics (E., p. 200-201). See E., p. 205, 242 also. Thus, Emerson is very much an advocate of what could be called "do-it-yourself" religion and finding your own moral code through the contemplation of nature.

As a result his emphasis on self-reliance, and finding religious and moral values on your own, he is very critical of organized religion. "For

to the common eye, pews, vestries, family prayer, sanctimonious looks & words constitute religion, which the devout man would find hindrances" (E., p. 56). "Once leave your own knowledge of God, your own sentiment, and take secondary knowledge, as St. Paul's, or George Fox's, or Swedenborg's, and you get wide from God with every year the secondary form lasts, and if, as now, for centuries,--the chasm yawns to that breadth, that men can scarcely be convinced there is in them anything divine (E., p. 254). He denies miracles (E., p. 246), the written revelations of times gone past (E., p. 248), and says much preaching is spiritually dead (E., p. 250-251). In a general period time of widespread revivals throughout much of America in this general time (1838), he still said: "I think no man can go with his thoughts about him, into one of our churches, without feeling, that what hold the public worship had on men is gone, or going. It has lost its grasp on the affection of the good, and the fear of the bad" (E., p. 252).[14] Clearly, Emerson saw organized religion as a negative, spiritually dead force.

So now, how would Emerson relate his own religious beliefs to solving the problem of alienation? Judging from the above evidence, he clearly saw original self-effort necessary to have a good religion for yourself. Alienation--the splitting of the self into two or more parts--is overcome by realizing you are a part of God, and that everything else you know of is ultimately also. The knowledge of morality is assumed to be gained automatically through the contemplation of nature's order and beauty. And then by doing and thinking on this moral code derived mystically from nature, you realize you are God to the extent this is done. As shown above, Emerson had his own doubts and moral struggles in achieving (as he saw it) his unity with God, but clearly believed this was the way to go in ending the loneliness caused by viewing the self as atomized from all others.

Emerson's view differs from the Christian concept of unity with God in that while God will come to live within a person through the Holy Spirit

[14] I suspect Emerson was projecting his attitudes and those of like-minded intellectuals upon the masses here. For in antebellum America, 1795-1837 has been labeled the Second Great Awakening, and the U.S. was swept by old time fundamentalist Protestant revivalism and religion.

(John 14:16; 15:1-8; 16:7-15; Col. 1:27), the person still isn't God, but is a Son of God (John 1:12). For in the Christian concept, God is everywhere but not everything, which means He surrounds us, but is not us. As a result, God is both transcendent and immanent in the Christian conception. For while God's "Main Presence" is in Heaven above (Rev. 4:2-5:7; compare Isaiah 55:8-9), humanity is surrounded by God on earth (Acts 17:28): "for 'In him we live and move and have our being' . . ." And through the Holy Spirit in a converted mind, God can be not only within man, but unified with Him. Thus while some similarities exist between Emerson's views and the standard orthodox Christian view as how unity with God overcomes alienation, strong differences also exist. Nonetheless, both see a religious solution as the only individually satisfying way to end alienation.

Now Thoreau in Walden doesn't speak on the subject of religion with the kind of frequency Emerson does in his journal and some of his addresses, essays, and poems. Nonetheless, it is possible to deduce Thoreau was a pantheist like his close friend and fellow Transcendentalist, Emerson, but it seems that instead of calling of overarching Principle "God," he calls it or refers to "Nature" often. As a Christian would turn to the Bible to learn about God, he would turn to observing nature. Through nature, he got close to God: "I cannot come nearer to God and Heaven than I live to Walden even" (T., p. 249). He didn't see a need for written revelation, when compared to the beauty and activity of nature: "What at such a time are histories, chronologies, traditions, and all written revelations?" (T., p. 334). He felt no need for organized religion, for among other things you could know you were forgiven through nature's revelation (T., p. 337). His pantheism is implied in the following passage: "Nearest to all things is that power which fashions their being. Next to us the grandest laws are continually being executed. Next to us is not the workman whom we have hired, with whom we love so well to talk, but the workman whose work we are" (T., p. 204). His

His allusions to things in nature being sacred, such as Walden's "sacred" water (T., p. 248; compare p. 325), imply his pantheism also. His many mentions of the Hindu Scriptures would also present circumstantial evidence for this point as well (T., p. 266, 305, 325, 344).

His solution to alienation involved a renunciation of anything above the basic necessities. The money expended on obtaining luxuries that please the bodily senses wasted time that could be spent improving the mind: "We spend more on almost any article of bodily aliment or ailment than on our mental aliment. . . . This town has spent seventeen thousand dollars on a townhouse, thank fortune or politics, but probably it will not spend so much on living wit, the true meat to put into that shell, in a hundred years" (T., p. 186). By reducing his wants (T., p. 157), he could spend more time at study: ". . . I found, that by working about six weeks in a year, I could meet all the expenses of living. The whole of my winters, as well as most of my summers, I had free and clear for study" (T., p. 156). He saw it as a burden to inherit a farm because of all the extra work necessary to care for such a large amount of material goods, which really aren't necessary (T., p. 108). So much effort was spent on work for material things, spiritual things are neglected: ". . . (W)e are still forced to cut our spiritual bread far thinner than our forefathers did their wheaten" (T., p. 134). He wants to be free of commitments that would consume his time (i.e. his life), not merely of the state ordering his actions, but free not to care about material things most of the time: "As long as possible live free and committed. It makes but little difference whether you are committed to a farm or the county jail" (T., p. 167).

So now, with all this free time gained by minimizing his wants, what did Thoreau want to accomplish? He wished to meditate and think about the meaning of life, and see what it was like under conditions of "rigid economy, a stern and more than Spartan simplicity of life and elevation of purpose" (T., p. 173).

"I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately (that is, lead a self-reflective life), to front only the essential facts of life (to not to have to spend any more time earning a living than necessary, which meant the elimination of all luxuries), and see if I could not learn what it had to teach (that is, learn more about what the meaning of life could be from such an experience), and not, when I came to die, discovered I had not lived (that is, lived a life of much greater ignorance and of lower quality due to not thinking about it and experiencing fewer possible ways to have lived it)" (T., p. 172). To Thoreau's thinking, the search for the Truth is more important than any final destination--a final Revelation, that is. For when he says that he left the woods for as good of a reason he came (T., p. 343), this statement when considered in the context of the whole book shows he doesn't think he has the final Revelaion of life meaning, unlike (say) Muhammed or Jesus, but is still searching. True, he asserts his views strongly and makes scathing attacks on mid-nineteenth century American life, but the book makes no claims to having the final word on the meaning of life. Like Emerson, he wants individuals to carve out a meaningful religion or philosophy for themselves, instead of just imitating him.

Alienation, for Thoreau, is conqurered by a moral, philosophical, self-reflective life, though not one especially religious, in which the journey for truth, unencumbered by the need for material things or having to care for a family's needs, allows the individual to feel whole since he (or she) isn't torn by the needs to earn money by constant mind-numbing work that makes it hard to think about life's meaning. Union with God is strongly equated with a union with nature, and mystical experience of some kind.

Now Hawthorne stands in sharp contrast to Emerson and Thoreau on many subjects, including the subject of religion generally. The most obvious evidence for this is Hawthorne's opposition to Transcendentalism, which is found in his short story, The Celestial Railroad: ". . . (The evil giant) makes it his business to seize upon honest travelers and fatten them for

for his table with plentiful meals of smoke, mist, moonshine, raw potatoes, and sawdust. He is a German by birth, and is called Giant Transcendentalist; but as to his form, his features, his substance, and his nature generally, it is the chief pecularity of this huge miscreant that neither he for himself, nor anybody for him, has been able to describe them" (H., p. 194). His descriptions in this same story of how "old fashioned" pilgrims choose to ignore the railraod between hell and heaven in favor of walking the old rugged spiritual path (H., 189, 190, 198, 201), indicate that Hawthorne still took seriously much of the Puritan's worldview of men uniting with a transcendent God in a higher spiritual state (in Heaven).

However, although Hawthorne opposed Emerson's Transcendentalism, he attacked anything in traditional Christianity that made religion or achieving spiritual values supposedly easy. His whole description of how the railroad made the route to Heaven easier is full of the use of irony, caricature, and understatement to show the delusion of thinking spiritual values and character can be easily achieved. For example: "The engine at this moment took its station in advance of the cars, looking, I must confess, much more like a sort of mechanical demon that would hurry us to the infernal regions than a laudable contrivance for smoothing our way to the Celestial City. . . . The passengers being all comfortably seated, we now rattled away merrily, accomplishing a greater distance in ten minutes than Christian (the hero of Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress--EVS) probably trudged over in a day" (H., p. 188-189). With a Mr. Smooth-it-away giving his "practical, open-minded" advice to the author (Hawthorne uses the first person "I" throughout for his protagonist), the nature of this tale's main point becomes rather obvious. Hawthorne was merciless in criticizing hypocritical liberal clergy who made religion easy in order to please the many, and those who today would be called the spreaders of the gospel of health and wealth: "In justification of this high praise I need only mention the names of the Rev. Mr. Shallow-deep, the Rev. Mr. Stumble-at-truth,

that fine old clerical character the Rev. Mr. This-today, who expects shortly to resign his pulpit to the Rev. Mr. That-tomorrow; together with the Rev. Mr. Bewilderment, the Rev. Mr. Clog-the-spirit, and, last and greatest, the Rev. Dr. Wind-of-doctrine" (H., p. 195). The problems Pappenheim saw (P., p. 119-120) in the tendencies to make religion easy and comfortable, Hawthorne saw in his own day and mercilessly satirized in The Celestial Railroad. However, as Hawthorne's descriptions of the faithful old-fashioned pilgrims show that he may not have been attacking institutional, organized religion per se as abuses within it that wanted to make religion smooth, easy, and comfortable. For he attacks an easy "Christianity", not Christianity per se.

Many of Hawthorne's protagonists in his stories suffer from a terrible sense of internal alienation due to guilt caused by sin they had committed, which in turn alienates them from those around them. For instance, young Goodman Brown manages to resist giving in to Satan at the last moment with the following words: "'Faith! Faith!' cried the husband, 'look up to heaven, and resist the wicked one'"(H., p. 99). However, the rest of his life was still ruined, for he became permanently suspicious, gloomy, and distrustful of others, including his wife and the minister, due to suspecting they could really be the followers of Satan. The crushing guilt Reben Bourne feels over lying about burying his wife's father is alleviated only after the failure of his farm (H., p. 18), his moving out into the deeper woods towards where Roger Malvin's bones laid (H., p. 22), the death of his only son and child, and his confession of guilt to his wife (H., p. 26). Ethan Brand, whose own unpardonable sin was the result of coldheartedly ruining a young woman's life and soul through "a psychological experiment" (H., p. 28), felt totally alienated from his fellow men, and that his deed deserved a fiery death by suicide in this life and fiery torment in the next (p. 285-286, 287). Although the exact cause of Father Hooper's wearing of the black veil remained a mystery, whether it be for secret sin or sorrow (H., p. 109), it clearly stood for his sense of alienation from all men due to this cause, and how he justified

wearing it by pointing out all people hide their innermost thoughts from others just as he did (H., p. 114). Even the fanatical sense of being mortal, limited, and imperfect which Georgiana's birthmark drove her husband into (H., p. 204, 205), although driven by devotion to science and not the Bible, still reflected the life of someone who felt a crushing compulsion that ended up ruining his life completely. Thus, Hawthorne tells the stories of protagonists who feel a crushing guilt or compulsion due to perceiving an evil in themselves and/or others that ends up ruining their lives and totally alienating them from others.

So now, how would Hawthorne solve the problem of alienation? It could well be he would simply want people not to strive for perfection fanatically, but settle for a balanced, average, moderate, ordinary life that avoids extremes. However, I do believe he would still want people to strive morally, as his positive portrayal of the old-fashioned pilgrims in The Celestial Railroad show, but if they fail, they should forgive themselves and others, which is the kind of grace the Christian God offers to Christians who occasionally fail (I John 1:8-10). Christ didn't intend His way to be impossible to follow: "For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matt. 11:30). Since Hawthorne dwells on evil, sin, temptation, and guilt so much in his stories I can't take it he was trying to trivialize or deflate evil to get rid of it. This latter interpretation strikes me as projecting twentieth century moral relativism back upon Hawthorne by those who deny an absolute evil exists themselves. He felt it was a very serious issue that had to be faced, not smoothed over by Emersonian-style optimism, but was troubled by how some whose guilt over committing evil or being tempted by it was so great their lives were ruined by it. They had too limited a concept of Christianity's offer of forgiveness. Instead, I take him as saying people whould realize they are average mortals who will sin, won't always be successful resisting evil, and who should realize they should forgive themselves and (perhaps) realize God is willing to forgive them. Thus, alienation could be solved by

by people realizing they are imperfect mortals who will sin, avoiding great, overpowering compulsions, and by forgiving yourself and others (and accepting God's forgiveness it would seem), they will live a happier life since they will have fewer internal personality conflicts, guilt trips, and fewer problems emotionally and mentally bonding with others.

Thus, we can see the three principal writers we have studied--Emerson, Thoreau, and Hawthorne--do use at least partially religious solutions to alienation that bear at least some resemblance to Christianity's. Emerson visualizes a pantheistic union of God and man, while Hawthorne endores, it seems a more traditional Christian notion of humanity's spiritual union with a transcendent God, and forgiveness for self and others, although (by implication) the two would still be distinct in some corporeal sense even in heaven. Thoreau, although a pantheist like fellow Transcendentalist Emerson, doesn't emphasize union with God so much as a solution as a continually moral, philosophically-awakened, reflective life focused on seeking truth and a mystical contact while experiencing nature. While none of these writers, with the possible exception of Hawthorne, would endorse a traditionally Christian view of solving alienation, they still would seek a religious or (moreso for Thoreau) individual moralistic solution to solving alienation, as opposed to Pappenheim's secular and collectivistic solution. While Thoreau shares Pappenheim's contempt for commercial activity, he doesn't see socialism or some other forciably-imposed collective solution as the answer. For even in a secular age, the religious solution to alienation is worth a second look, for the essence of man hasn't changed appreciably in the past few thousand years, and he still needs a union with his Maker and revealed answers to life to know its meaning.