CHAPTER 3

An Enlightened Ministry

Reconstructing and Exploring the Library of Convers Francis

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From time to time, staff of the Andover-Harvard Theological Library (AHTL) would notice books inscribed "C. Francis," with special bookplates reading, "Theological School in Cambridge. Bequest of Convers Francis, D.D." Sometimes inscriptions of varying lengths would accompany the signatures. Books with these markings would surface routinely during projects to move older collections offsite. So many were sent to the conservation department over the years that a stock of replacement bookplates was maintained for books that needed to be rebound with new pastedown pages. The frequent appearance of these books hinted at a large collection donated by someone worthy of attention.

Beyond the lovely autographs, these books might appear unremarkable. In fact, they might be lumped into a category of books so many librarians find troubling: too recent to be automatically trans-

ferred to special collections, yet too outdated to be of much interest to the current student body. Occasionally identified as duplicates, some were selected for withdrawal. A curious librarian or patron could quickly learn from Wikipedia that Convers Francis was a Unitarian minister and Harvard Divinity School professor closely associated with the founding of American Transcendentalist thought in the mid-nineteenth century, yet, despite these important affiliations, no systematic effort had been made to record the provenance of these books in the online catalog.

Librarians familiar with the contents of the Archives Workroom at AHTL might be able to connect the inscribed books to a bound, manuscript *Catalogue of the Francis Library* from 1864, but twentieth-century library work prioritized textual content over copy-specific features like inscriptions or provenance, and the list probably seemed of little practical use since the books had already been cataloged and integrated into the AHTL collections. Actually, the manuscript catalog might have seemed more notable for the fact that it was written in part by Charles Ammi Cutter, well known to librarians as a pioneer of book classification.

Despite the lack of attention given to it, today even a quick scan of the manuscript catalog suggests that the donation of Francis's books must have expanded the existing divinity school's library significantly. A large proportion of titles are in German or French and, in addition to the expected sermons and works of theology, there are titles on non-Christian religions and titles that suggest a propensity for the contemporary study of philosophy. If his library gift could be reconstructed and studied as a collection, what could be learned about Convers Francis as a minister, scholar, and educator?

Before deciding to embark on a project to reconstruct his library, a review of existing biographical material for Francis was undertaken, carefully noting references to his relationship with books, reading, and scholarship.

Convers Francis (1795–1863)

There is no critical biography of Convers Francis, and an autobiographical manuscript covering his early years has been lost. The main sources are biographical "sketches" and Guy Woodall's publication of Francis's journals (Woodall 1993, 51).

The geography of Convers Francis's career was two towns in Massachusetts: Watertown, where he was minister of First Parish Congregational (Unitarian), 1819–42, and Cambridge, where he was Parkman Professor of Pulpit Eloquence and Pastoral Care at Harvard Divinity School, from 1841 until his death in 1863. His father, a baker in Medford, Massachusetts, recognized his son's interest in learning and surprised him one day by asking if he would like to go to college. As it turned out, his father had been planning for this for some time, had consulted with others, and had arranged for him to start at a nearby preparatory school (Weiss 1863, 16; Vaughan 1944, 5). After graduating from Harvard College in 1815, he remained in Cambridge to study for the ministry. He was awarded an AM degree in 1818, and soon thereafter was examined and approbated to preach. In 1819, he began his twenty-three years of ministry in Watertown, followed by a return to Cambridge in 1842 to begin his twenty-one-year career as a professor at Harvard Divinity School.

Francis was a bibliophile's bibliophile. He loved books: he read them, collected them, loaned them, borrowed them, discussed them, and wrote them. In his autobiography, he confesses that his love of books began at an early age: "I had a sort of passion for reading whatever came in my way; and often, when I was wanted for work, in and about the house, I was found somewhere by myself over a book" (Newell 1866, 7). He not only read for himself but also read to others, including an elderly school mistress and his uncle James, who was blinded by smallpox. At first, his uncle requested Baptist classics, but later Winchester's *Dialogues on Universal Salvation* (Weiss 1863, 8–9; 11–12). Thus, at an early age, he was learning to read a wide range of other points of view beyond what he would have selected for himself. The size and scope of his personal library was perhaps the greatest evidence of his bibliophilia:

> Books were his only luxury. He laid in wait for them in catalogues and auction-rooms and carried off many a rarity whose titles betrayed no values to less instructed purchasers. There are more curious books in his library of seven or eight thousand volumes, than in most other collections of twice or twenty times the size. (Weiss 1863, 51)

In addition to reading books in his own library, the charging lists preserved in the Harvard University Archives show that he charged an average of sixty books per year between 1842 and 1852, his first ten years at Harvard as a professor, and an average of forty books

per year after that (Woodall 1981, 282). Many, if not most, of the conversations within his circle of friends were about books. Indeed, "If you met him in the cars, you met also a queer book in his pocket. He would take it out and tell you all about it with a sparkle of fondness, as if it was a favorite child he had in charge" (Weiss 1863, 52).

Francis was also a scholar's scholar. He was well versed in the classics and was especially fond of Cicero, Plato, Sophocles, and Tacitus. He could read Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, as well as French, Italian, and Spanish (Woodall 2000). He could also read German, a relatively uncommon skill among New Englanders in his day. His facility with the language allowed him to access German literature, philosophy, theology, and biblical studies without translations. "By 1835 he had read Herder's *Spirit of Hebrew Poetry*, Berger's *Einleitung in das neue Testament*, De Wette, Ilgen, Eckermann, Bauer, Corrodi, and other Germans" (Pochmann 1957, 581 n. 685). He authored numerous articles, sermons, addresses, and tracts for the American Unitarian Association. All his books were histories, the best known being *Life of John Eliot*. With an established reputation as an historian, he became an active member of the Massachusetts Historical Society, "which he greatly aided in the preparation of its collections" (Vaughan 1944, 16). When Francis returned to Harvard to teach, he was already widely known and respected as a scholar, having received the honor of Doctor of Divinity in 1837 in recognition of his achievements.

He was a founding member of the Transcendental Club, a place for free and unfettered discussions of what were often controversial topics, at the time including Transcendentalism itself—a relatively new and, some believed, radical spiritual philosophy. As a senior member, Francis often moderated these discussions, since he was known for having a generous spirit that was "free of intellectual prejudices and dogmatism" and a manner with an "amiable, neutral, and mollifying quality" (Woodall 1993, 46). His reputation for being able to moderate discussions of controversial subjects was a significant reason for his professorial appointment at the Harvard Divinity School. At the time, Unitarians were divided into liberal and conservative camps:

> In many ways Francis seems to have been the perfect appointment for a denomination split between reason and intuition, Christian revelation and freedom. He was a tolerant moderate Transcendentalist, grounded in institutional loyalty, which meant that he could be trusted by radicals and conservatives alike." (Harris 2017, 128–9)

His moderation was also manifest in his broad-minded style of teaching. Drawing on encyclopedic and wide-ranging knowledge, he would present students diverse points of view and expected them to draw their own conclusions based on their reading and thinking. This approach was both lauded and derided. Some students wanted answers and found him to be "too all sided" (Harris 2017, 124). Others saw his method as a major contribution to a tradition of critical thinking at Harvard Divinity School. After his death, his sister (author and poet Lydia Child) described his manner of teaching and its impact:

> I think few appreciate duly the liberal influence of my brother in his teachings at the University. He never sought to impress his own opinions, or the doctrines of any sect, upon the minds of his pupils; but presented questions from various points of view, and left their minds free to decide which aspect was the true one. Sectarians complained of this, and he had many difficulties to encounter in consequence of their opposition; but he had his reward in the liberalizing effect of his system. (Child 1982; 426)

A notable exception, however, was the subject of slavery. He would not tolerate any argument defending what, to him, was an abominable institution: "I said all I could to encourage them in their resistance to this sin of our land, and told them I hoped every member of the School would go forth into the ministry prepared to set his face as a flint against this terrible iniquity" (Woodall 1982, 258).

Francis's wide circle of intellectual and book-loving friends relied both on his knowledge of books and on the volumes in his library, especially for titles that were hard to find:

> In his acquaintance with books, of which he had a large, and, in many respects, rare collection, accumulated through many years, he had few equals; and admirable was the heartiness with which he communicated his knowledge, and the generous alacrity with which he lent his treasures to all who sought his counsel, suggestion and help. (Newell 1866, 21)

Many of his closest friendships began or were cemented at the Transcendental Club, including Amos Bronson Alcott, Theodore Parker, Frederic Henry Hedge, and Ralph Waldo Emerson.

Francis and Alcott often disagreed. Francis continued to hold more orthodox Christian beliefs and felt Alcott's opinions too often

lacked tangible evidence. Still, there was mutual personal appreciation. In fact, Alcott considered Francis one "by whom great principles are honored among us" (Woodall 1993, 47). Francis often loaned Alcott books from his library, including his rare copy of Dr. Henry More's poems, when Alcott wanted to translate "Cupid's Conflict" (1647) for submission to *The Dial*—the journal of the Transcendental Club (Woodall 1993, 48).

His friendship with Theodore Parker began in 1832, when, twenty-one years old and "in homely and awkward dress," Parker appeared on Francis's doorstep and introduced himself: "I am told that you welcome young people, and I am come to ask if you will be kind to me and help me, for I have come to Watertown to try and keep a school. I long for books and I long to know how to study" (Weiss 1863, 67). Francis not only helped Parker establish his school, but later he helped him enter Harvard Divinity School and preached at his ordination. Francis served Parker as a guide to German scholarship. Parker became so proficient that he was able to tutor German and translate German works while a divinity school student. To prepare for his monumental 1843 translation and commentary on De Wette's work (published as *A Critical and Historical Introduction to the Canonical Scriptures of the Old Testament*), Parker read hundreds of German books and consulted Francis's library (Pochmann 1957, 215–16). After Parker became a minister in West Roxbury, Massachusetts, there were years of lively correspondence about subjects such as the basis of religious authority, the composition of the Pentateuch, the nature of Christ, and spiritual philosophy. Despite disagreements (Parker was far more radical) they remained friends. In 1859, Parker wrote Francis:

> I thank you also for the interest you then took in my studies, —for the loan of books, your own, and those from the college library, which I had then no access to. I remember also, with great delight, that, in the conversations of the little club, your learning and your voice were always on the side of progress and freedom of thought. (Newell 1866, 19)

Francis and Frederic Henry Hedge shared a special interest in German language and philosophy. Hedge had studied in Germany as a youth and was so proficient in the language he became known as "Germanicus." Both Francis and Parker looked to Hedge for expertise on the philosophy of Immanuel Kant, which became the fountain-

head of American Transcendentalism (Pochmann 1957, 144; Grady 2000; Harris 2017, 125).

Francis knew Emerson from early in his ministry, when Emerson preached for him in Watertown (Myerson 1978, 20). He much admired Emerson's views, knowledge, and exquisite style of writing and speaking. Despite their differences, when he overheard someone question Emerson's sanity, he replied, "I wish I were half as sane" (Myerson 1978, 20). He read everything Emerson wrote and attended many of his lectures, including his famous "Divinity Address" (1838)—Emerson's foundational presentation of Transcendentalist theology. "It was books and the ideas they inspired that joined Francis and Emerson most closely and was at the foundation of their mutual admiration" (Woodall 1993, 31). They discussed philosophy, theology, ethics, literature, and other subjects and authors of substance. Francis helped with Emerson's publication of Thomas Carlyle's *History of the French Revolution*, prompting Emerson to write to Carlyle, "To one other gentleman I have brought you in debt, —Rev. Convers Francis … who supplied from his library all the numbers of the *Foreign Review* from which we printed the work. We could not have done without his books, and he is a noble hearted man who rejoices in you" (Woodall 1993, 32).

He had a close relationship with his sister, Lydia Maria Child—one based largely on books and scholarship. Throughout their lives, they mutually supported, encouraged, and inspired each other (Weiss 1863, 17). She wrote her first book, *Hobomok* (1824) at the Francis home in Watertown. Child was an outspoken abolitionist. She advocated for women's rights, Native American rights, and opposed American expansion. Francis shared her views and supported her work but was never the activist she was (Goodwin 2001; Teets-Parzynski 2000). One of her books, *The Progress of Religious Ideas, Through Successive Ages* (1855), showed unusual (for that time period) respect for non-Christian religions, describing each religion "in its own light." In writing of "the beauties and the blemishes" of each faith—including Christianity—she promoted tolerance for all religions (Harris 2017, 131). Her more conservative brother was "not altogether pleased" with her criticism of doctrinal theology, yet still "seems to rejoice in my book" (Child 1982, 278).

Having confirmed that books were central to the intellectual life and influence of Convers Francis, could an analysis of his library further enhance the understanding of Francis as a well-read and broad-minded scholar, teacher, minister, or bibliophile? Would an

analysis enhance the understanding of the impact of his bequest upon the Harvard Divinity School?

The Case for Reconstructing the Convers Francis Library

Book historian David Pearson explains that the analysis of the books in a person's library "shows up the interests and tastes of the owner, and the texts which may have influenced his thinking" (Pearson 1998, 2). Therefore, if his books are understood to be possible influences upon Francis himself, the books deposited in the library of the divinity school (now AHTL) had the potential to influence contemporary and future students.

Researchers of early Transcendentalist thought and Unitarian history might be interested in knowing what books Francis read. The written correspondence between those in Francis's intellectual circle includes countless references (often incomplete or ambiguous) to books and authors; a list of the contents of his library could enhance understanding of their discussions. For those researching the history of the study of religion, an analysis of Francis's books deposited with the divinity school would provide insight into theological education of the time. If the contents of his library were compiled, Francis's collection could be compared with other private or institutional collections to uncover differences or similarities.

Because Francis wrote in his books, a study of the tangible evidence of his interactions would also be of interest to book historians. Often one cannot tell whether a former owner actually read a book as opposed to just collecting it, but if Francis left such evidence regularly, these books would represent a rich source for the study of nineteenth-century American book history.

The possibilities for research are tantalizing, but how could one study the Francis Library when the collection had been dispersed and untraced for more than a hundred years? Only a handful of the Francis books had been noted in online catalog records over the years, usually updated when more substantial cataloging work was needed. Almost all remaining books remained hidden in plain sight on library shelves.

A recent project to identify the scattered books at Harvard from the library of philosopher William James faced similar challenges yet forged ahead. The project's architect articulates some of the reasons for libraries to identify books of significant provenance that have been dispersed within larger institutional libraries: books can be guarded against theft or loss, the chance of modern readers adding their own marks or annotations to the original owner's is reduced, inadvertent withdrawal is avoided, removal to improved physical preservation conditions can be prioritized, and losses to the material book object through rebinding or excessive handling can be prevented (Algaier 2020, [53]–63). Of these, the threat of inadvertent withdrawal looms large for Francis's books as libraries face pressure to remove print holdings, particularly if the title is available in digital form.

Knowing that the Francis books should have all been given a bequest bookplate and that Francis routinely wrote his name in his books, one way to identify the books from his library would be to review each book physically, one by one. This method was deemed impractical, since the majority of books printed before 1863 (the year of Francis's death) and still circulating are permanently housed in offsite storage. (Almost all AHTL special collections materials were temporarily stored offsite during 2018–21 due to building renovations.) Instead, the manuscript catalog of the original Francis Library was determined to be the best starting point from which to produce a working bibliography with the most likely shelf locations for each. But does this list represent the bulk of Francis's library at the time of his death or only a subset of his collection?

Researching the Gift to the Divinity Library

The *Annual Reports of the President and Treasurer of Harvard College: 1863–64* records the facts of the gift:

> Rev. Dr. Convers Francis having intimated to his children his desire that a part of his library should be given to the University, they have with much care selected about two thousand six hundred valuable works, not in our libraries, and placed two thousand of them in Divinity Hall, and six hundred in Gore Hall. (Harvard College 1865, 6)

It is not obvious why some books were routed to Divinity Hall (which housed the divinity library) and others to Gore Hall (the library of Harvard College), since both gifts include religious works such as sermons (*List of Books Bequeathed* 1886). Later in the report of the Treasurer, they are described as "valuable French and German books" (Harvard College 1865, "Treasurer's Report," 2). The report confirms that, as is commonly the case, it was the family that selected books for donation. It also suggests two important points: first, it may be reasonably assumed that titles already held at Harvard, even if of great importance or value to Francis, would not likely be included in the books donated; and second, that the gift represented a trove of resources previously unavailable to students.

Knowing that his library was estimated to contain about seven to eight thousand volumes, it is clear that only some of the books that belonged to Convers Francis would be identified by the manuscript catalog. Harvard would have received less than half of them. While the project at hand focuses on identifying the books that were given to Harvard Divinity School, researchers interested in the larger, more complete library of Convers Francis will be glad to learn of several other sources.

Seven years after the death of his sister, at least a portion of the books not given to Harvard were sold, along with Child's, at auction. The collection was large enough (1,901 lots) and important enough to warrant a printed catalog but, unfortunately, the auction company did not distinguish between the books of Francis, Child, and "selections from another private library" integrated for the purposes of the sale (*Catalogue* [1887] 1970, 2). The collector George S. Davis appears to have purchased more than a dozen of these books, noting the inscriptions of Convers Francis and later ownership by Child and, for some, noting that the books were part of Child's working library for her book, *The Progress of Religious Ideas* (Davis 1890). Again, it is uncertain whether this lot represented the totality of Francis's books still with the family in 1887 or if, once more, portions were retained or otherwise dispersed. Despite the fact that the auction list includes materials from a third, unnamed collector, it nonetheless suggests the possibility of integration of books between Convers Francis and Lydia Child. The auction catalog does not routinely note inscriptions by Francis or Child, but one wonders if some of those books might bear markings of both, a topic that might also interest scholars of Child.

At least one scholar has reviewed the auction catalog for a study of German influences within American scholarship, noting the broad range of German titles present but observing that "The more recent German theologiual [sic] writers of the Tübingen School are conspicuously absent" (Pochmann 1957, 581 n. 685).

Finally, Francis also donated books to the divinity library during his life. A preliminary scan of early accession records reveals more than two hundred gifts—the earliest in 1827 and the bulk during 1840–50, while he was teaching at the school. Were these books so important Francis thought the school should have them? Or were these books of lesser value and with which he could easily part? One must also wonder whether Francis routinely gave away books to friends, colleagues, or students. Books in these categories might reasonably be excluded if his library is defined as the collection at the time of his death, but they, too, provide insight into his reading habits and relationships with books, as would records of books he borrowed.

The Project Plan

While it is somewhat disappointing to realize that the gift to the divinity library represents a mere portion of the whole collection of books having belonged to Francis, it is, at the same time, encouraging that a contemporary catalog recording bibliographic citations for the books survives with information on at least two thousand pieces from his collection. Convinced that such a project would be worthwhile, a plan was formulated to track down and reunite the books of the Francis Library in a virtual way, to offer initial observations and analysis of the collection, and to suggest possibilities for future research.

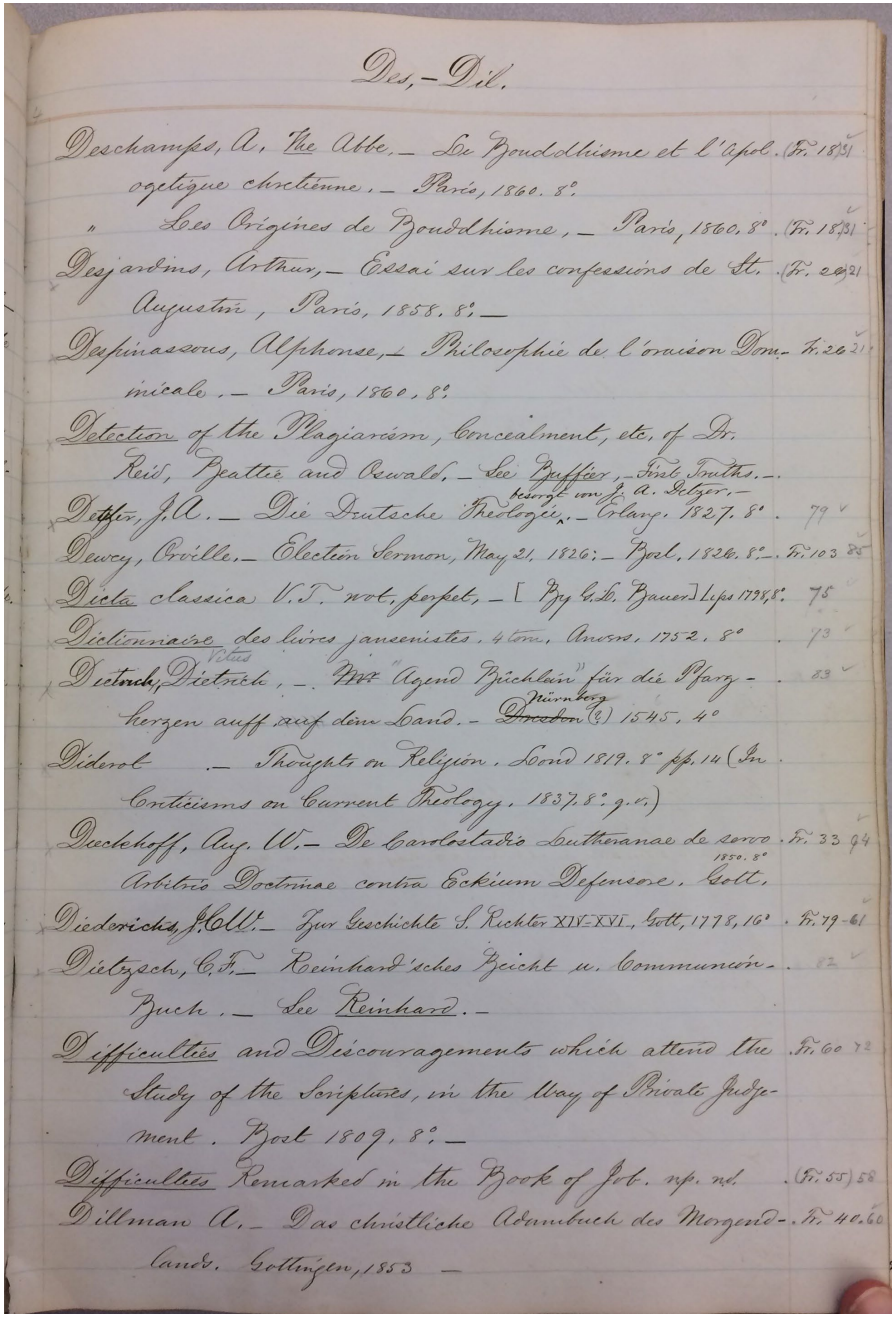
The project had the following goals: transcribe the manuscript catalog to produce a basic bibliography in digital form, taking advantage of existing metadata in the online catalog whenever feasible to facilitate analysis of the collection in various ways (e.g., by year, place of publication, subject headings, classification), and to identify likely locations for each item. As library volumes are physically verified to be from Francis (or definitively ruled out), both the bibliography and online catalog would be updated to enable either serendipitous or purposeful discovery.

Transcription of the Manuscript Catalog and Identifying Likely Matches in the Online Catalog

The manuscript catalog of books given by Francis's family to Harvard Divinity School was jointly written by librarians Charles Noyes (A–L, W–Z) and Charles A. Cutter (M–V) in the summer of 1864, with additions recorded in October of the same year. The catalog is arranged alphabetically by author or title without contemporary notation of shelf marks, suggesting the books were also arranged physically in this manner. Users were directed to individual titles within 152 bound volumes of pamphlets through an assigned "tracts" number, suggesting that bound pamphlets were a distinct subcollection of the Francis Library. While the manuscript catalog surely served as a useful tool for navigating the collection in the nineteenth century, the ability to analyze it and reuse its contents today is limited by its analog nature.

Because it was assumed that, due to loss over the past hundred years, not every book with a citation in the manuscript catalog could be located, adding notes about Francis's ownership in the online catalog alone would be insufficient to represent the bibliographical details of the gift. Therefore, a spreadsheet for the complete bequest (or as complete as is possible) would serve as the primary clearinghouse for citations, shelf locations, and any other notes. Microsoft Excel was chosen for simplicity and ubiquity, with the expectation that the data could be transformed into a database or to other formats in the future.

Photographs of the manuscript catalog were taken to make remote work possible. Tedious at first, transcription speed increased as familiarity with the handwriting of Noyes and Cutter grew. Typical entries in the catalog include author, title, number of volumes, edition, place of publication, date, format (size), and tracts number (if applicable). To facilitate its use, the librarians employed cross references from alternate forms of names and between certain titles and authors. In some cases, entries had been made for individual volumes within larger multipart works, or for individual (but substantial) sections of single-volume books, with references directing the user to the location of the host item. In the interest of completeness and for potential use in future problem-solving, the cross references were also transcribed.



Des, – Dil.

Deschamps, A. The Abbe. – Le Bouddhisme et l'Apologetique chretienne. – Paris, 1860. 8°. (Fr. 18) 31

" Les Origines de Bouddhisme, – Paris, 1860. 8°. (Fr. 18) 31

Desjardins, Arthur, – Essai sur les confessions de St. Augustin, Paris, 1858. 8°. – (Fr. 26) 21

Despinassous, Alphonse, – Philosophie de l'oraison Dominicale. – Paris, 1860. 8°. Fr. 26 21

Detection of the Plagiarism, Concealment, etc. of Dr. Reid, Beattie and Oswald. – See Buffier, – First Truths. –

Detzer, J. A. – Die Deutsche Theologie, besorgt von J. A. Detzer. – Erlang. 1827. 8°. 79

Dewey, Orville. – Election Sermon, May 21, 1826. – Bost. 1826. 8°. – Fr. 103 85

Dicta classica V. T. not. perpet. – [By G. L. Bauer] Lips 1798, 8°. 75

Dictionnaire des livres jansenistes. 4 tom. Anvers. 1752. 8° 73

Dietrich, Dietrich, Vitus. – Mr "Agend Büchlein" für die Pfarrherzen auff auf dem Land. – ~~Dresden~~ Nürnberg (?) 1545. 4° 83

Diderot. – Thoughts on Religion. Lond 1819. 8° pp. 14 (In Criticisms on Current Theology. 1837. 8°. q. v.)

Dieckhoff, Aug. W. – De Carolostadio Lutheranae de servo Arbitrio Doctrinae contra Eckium Defensore. Gott. 1850. 8° Fr. 33 94

Diederichs, J. C. W. – Zur Geschichte S. Richter XIV–XVI. Gott, 1778, 16° Fr. 79–61

Dietzsch, C. F. – Reinhard'sches Beicht u. Communion-Buch. – See Reinhard. – 82

Difficulties and Discouragements which attend the Study of the Scriptures, in the Way of Private Judgement. Bost 1809. 8°. – Fr. 60 72

Difficulties Remarked in the Book of Job. np. nd. (Fr. 55) 58

Dillman A. – Das christliche Adambuch des Morgenlands. Gottingen, 1853 – Fr. 40. 60

Image 1: Page from the *Catalogue of the Francis Library* (1864) (Andover-Harvard Theological Library Special Collections).

The catalog was written in attractive, nineteenth-century hand, but, unfortunately, Noyes and Cutter liberally employed abbreviations for names, places, and common theological terms. Early in the project, it became clear that exact transcription of the manuscript would not be practical for the sake of time; the abbreviations in German proved particularly difficult for the transcriber. Instead, the initial transcription in Excel became a tool primarily for identifying books in the online catalog. More detailed review of each entry would be deferred until later, ideally with book in hand.

Later librarian annotations were also recorded. These include notes correcting original entries, as well as those indicating books known to have been lost or withdrawn. (In scattered places an ink stamp appears over entries marking "Duplicate Sold.") Almost all entries include a later shelf location, presumably added during or after the integration of the Francis Library into the larger divinity collection. In fact, the spreadsheet could be sorted by shelf marks to arrange the books "virtually" as they would have been on shelves in the early 1900s.

The next step was searching for titles in Harvard's online catalog—HOLLIS—and appending the spreadsheet with current system numbers and current shelf locations. Here the abbreviations used by Noyes and Cutter, pragmatic and sufficient for the pre-electronic era, became a challenge. For example, the librarians routinely recorded only the first initial with an author's last name. These conventions would have presented no problems for the manuscript catalog's first users, but they cause frustration for someone keyword searching across an expansive online database. For the majority of entries, however, a few keywords with the year of publication were adequate to reveal obvious or very likely matches.

Even in cases where a bibliographic match was found in HOLLIS but without a current location at AHTL, the system number was recorded for the ease of retrieving bibliographic details. When no good matches were found, WorldCat was consulted to identify errors made by Noyes and Cutter or during transcription from manuscript to spreadsheet. In cases where no good match presented itself in HOLLIS, but for which there was a record in WorldCat, this was noted so that metadata could be recorded from that source later. Also during this stage, if a matching title was found to have a link to Google Books, the digitized copy was reviewed to see if it was an obvious Francis book and the entry was marked for future review.

Next, the system numbers were fed into the reporting tool that is part of Harvard's integrated library system, Alma. Metadata was extracted from relevant catalog fields to supplement the roughly transcribed data with regularized, more complete, and other available information, including subject metadata. As online catalog records are updated to include the Francis provenance, researchers should be able to return this sort of metadata directly from the public HOLLIS interface, though the results will exclude any titles lost, withdrawn, or not yet identified. Finally, another report supplied hyperlinks to the Google Books scans of Francis's books, as identified earlier.

Initial Analysis of Bibliographic Data

In all, 3,184 entries were transcribed to the Excel spreadsheet. Of these, 482 lines were categorized as cross references and 15 as duplicate entries. Of the 2,687 unique entries in the manuscript catalog, matches in HOLLIS were made for 2,606 entries, and an additional 58 entries not matched with an existing HOLLIS record were identified in WorldCat. For those entries with matching records in HOLLIS, 169 bibliographic records indicated their only possible locations were at Harvard libraries other than AHTL. Remarkably, only 23 entries had data too incomplete (or in error) to match with an existing record in HOLLIS or Worldcat. The number of unique entries represents titles as opposed to volumes; some titles are in multiple parts, and about 900 titles are contained within 152 bound tracts volumes.

The associated bibliographic metadata pulled from Harvard's integrated library system included country/state of publication, language, publication year(s), author, title, edition, imprint statement, physical description, Library of Congress classification, and subjects. Once the metadata was appended to the spreadsheet, Excel pivot tables could easily be used to generate statistics related to the content of the Francis Library.

Here it is important to note a caveat about using catalog data for such analysis. The data available will only be as good as the catalog records, which can be inconsistent both in quality and completeness. To illustrate this point, fewer than half of the associated bibliographic records contain Library of Congress classification data, and more than two hundred records have no subject headings. The language metadata retrieved in this initial report represents only the primary

language of the item. However, additional data to identify multilanguage works and translations could be retrieved for future studies. Ideally, all data would be verified as books are reviewed physically.

Based on this initial analysis, the international nature of the collection is apparent. In terms of primary language, about 36 percent of the collection is in English, but almost the same number of books are in German (32 percent), followed by French (19 percent), and Latin (12 percent). About 80 percent were printed abroad and, in fact, more than one-third was published in Germany alone. These statistics attest to Francis's strength in multiple languages, interest in Continental scholarship, and perhaps some familiarity with the international book trade.

Was Francis collecting modern books or acquiring antiquarian volumes? About 31 percent of the titles in the Francis Library were published between 1841 and 1863, during Francis's career as a Harvard professor, though roughly 25 percent were printed before 1800. These calculations on language, place of publication, and dates are simple examples; data points could be combined to support more complex analyses.

Analyzing the collection based on subject metadata proved difficult because so many records lack this information. An analysis of the records that do contain subject data suggests philosophy is a predominant topic in the Francis Library. Apart from the subject metadata, a simple scan of the catalog entries reveals a library of diverse topics. In addition to the expected printed sermons and abolitionist tracts, his collection contains works on Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, and pantheism, and works by Kant, Schleiermacher, Swedenborg, Maimonides, Confucius, and Plato.

Francis clearly owned books on non-Christian religions, but did he read them? Several books were recalled from storage and reviewed, including Francis's copy of Godfrey Higgins's 1829 work, *An Apology for the Life & Character of the Celebrated Prophet of Arabia, Called Mohamed*, located in Tracts 53. The volume, containing three titles on disparate subjects, was purchased by Francis in 1837 "at the sale of Dr. Prince's library." Within his copy of *An Apology*, which is an assertive defense by a British non-Muslim against Western critics of Mohammed, there are abundant marks in the margins (lines, *X*s, *N*s, etc.) and scattered annotations. While one must exercise caution in attributing marginalia to a particular past owner, especially when a book has been part of a circulating library or known to have belonged to more than one individual, the markings here appear

consistent with those found in other books from Francis (see "Initial Analysis Using Scans of Francis Library Books," below). In one instance, responding to the author's description of a narrative from the Qur'an, Francis has noted, "There is no such account." In another place, the author notes a Qur'anic source in a footnote which Francis brackets with his note, "Misquotation." In other places, Francis has countered or supplemented the author's arguments with references to other works. If these marks indeed are by Francis, they demonstrate his engagement with this text beyond simple reading. As just one example, this volume affirms the potential research value of the Francis Library.

A scan of the catalog entries also reveals that the works by German scholars of the Tübingen School (a Protestant movement of the early to mid-1800s inspired by Georg W. F. Hegel and led by Ferdinand Christian Baur) noted as "conspicuously absent" from the Francis/Child auction catalog had, in fact, been donated to the divinity school (Pochmann 1957, 581 n. 685). At least two dozen titles by Baur, David Strauss, Eduard Zeller, and Adolf Hilgenfeld were included in the bequest.

Other curious titles reflect Francis's wide-ranging interests. These include an 1833 account of a cross-country journey to Oregon, a book of early life science from 1770, at least two books on phrenology, and even a 1732 tract on vampires. Undoubtedly, some of these unexpected titles have remained at AHTL because they were bound together with other works.

Identification of Francis Library Volumes via Google Books

Once the manuscript catalog was transcribed with the most likely shelf location for each, the obvious next step was to order the list by call number and begin to examine books physically to confirm their provenance. Unfortunately, due to ongoing building renovations during 2018–21, almost all materials were being stored offsite. The COVID-19 pandemic further reduced opportunities to request materials from storage. Would there be a way to continue the project remotely?

Here the work was aided by Harvard's participation in the 2008 Google Books scanning project. Any book out of copyright then in the circulating collection and in stable condition was scanned, with a link added in the online catalog. (Since the scanning project, many of these books have been transferred into Special Collections based on their age.) As a result, several hundred books from the original Francis Library can easily be verified through bookplate or inscription and examined for annotations without recalling them from storage. Interestingly, when following the links to scans from HOLLIS, twenty-six items from the Francis Library were found now to be part of the collections of other Harvard libraries.

Initial Analysis Using Scans of Francis Library Books

For a preliminary exploration of the evidence of use left by Francis in his books, one hundred of the roughly three hundred Francis Library titles verified via Google Books were reviewed for inscription and other data. Some examples of notes inscribed by Francis are given below to entice future researchers.

The review of scans confirmed that Francis routinely recorded his name and the year in his books (86 percent). Unfortunately, the review also confirmed that some inscriptions may already have been lost: Nine books in the survey appear to have been rebound with endpapers (where Francis routinely left his inscriptions) replaced. When present, the date accompanying Francis's signature was included in the spreadsheet to support future analysis of acquisition dates of the books.

Overall, 33 percent of the scans reviewed show some kind of inscription apart from his name—almost all initialed "C. F." when present. Seven percent include notes about the provenance of the item such as where the book was purchased, previous owners of the book, or from whom the book was acquired (e.g., "Bought at the sale of Rev. George Ripley's Library"; "From the library of Dr. Gesenius, purchased for me, at the sale of his books, through Mr. Radde, bookseller in N. York"; "bought in Baltimore").

Some 6 percent include notes on authorship or publication history (e.g., "The author of this account of Vanini, as I learn from Oettinger, *Bibliographie Biographique*, was Wilhelm David Fuhrmann"; "this 2d vol. was first published as a separate work in 1805 at Paris").

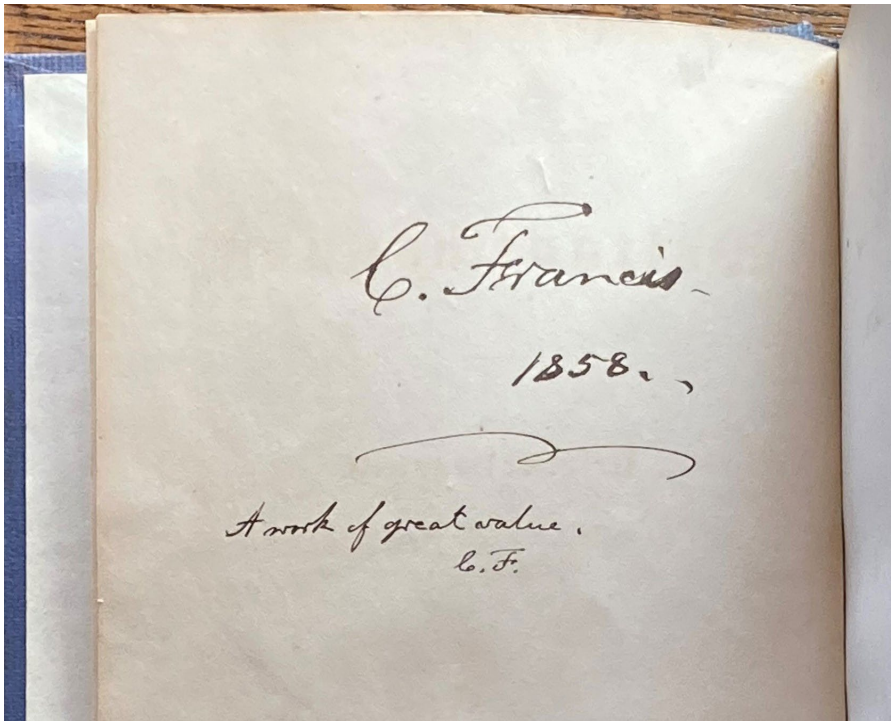


Image 2: Autograph inscription with date and comment. (Andover-Harvard Theological Library Special Collections 17 Carriere, M. Carriere, *Die philosophische Weltanschauung der Reformationszeit, in ihren Beziehungen zur Gegenwart*, 1847.)

Many inscriptions could be roughly categorized as referencing or quoting published reviews of the book (e.g., "The *North British Review* says, 'We recommend this work emphatically to the attention of our philosophical readers.' And the *Literary Gazette* calls it 'a masterly treatise'"), the comments of other scholars about the author at hand ("Dr. Parr (& who shall venture to question Dr. Parr's dictum?) declares that this book 'abounds with deep erudition & masterly reasoning'"), quotations or references from related works, and the occasional direct evaluation by Francis himself ("A work of great value").

Reviewing scans for annotations or other markings can be challenging. Still, even cursory skimming revealed that at least 62 percent of the sample set contain some kind of marking of text. The most common marks are *X*s, *N*s, and simple single vertical lines in the margins. At least fourteen titles were observed to have notes on rear endpapers or other annotations to the text, including the occasional correction of an author's Latin. These initial findings suggest that researchers may indeed wish to conduct a more thorough evaluation.

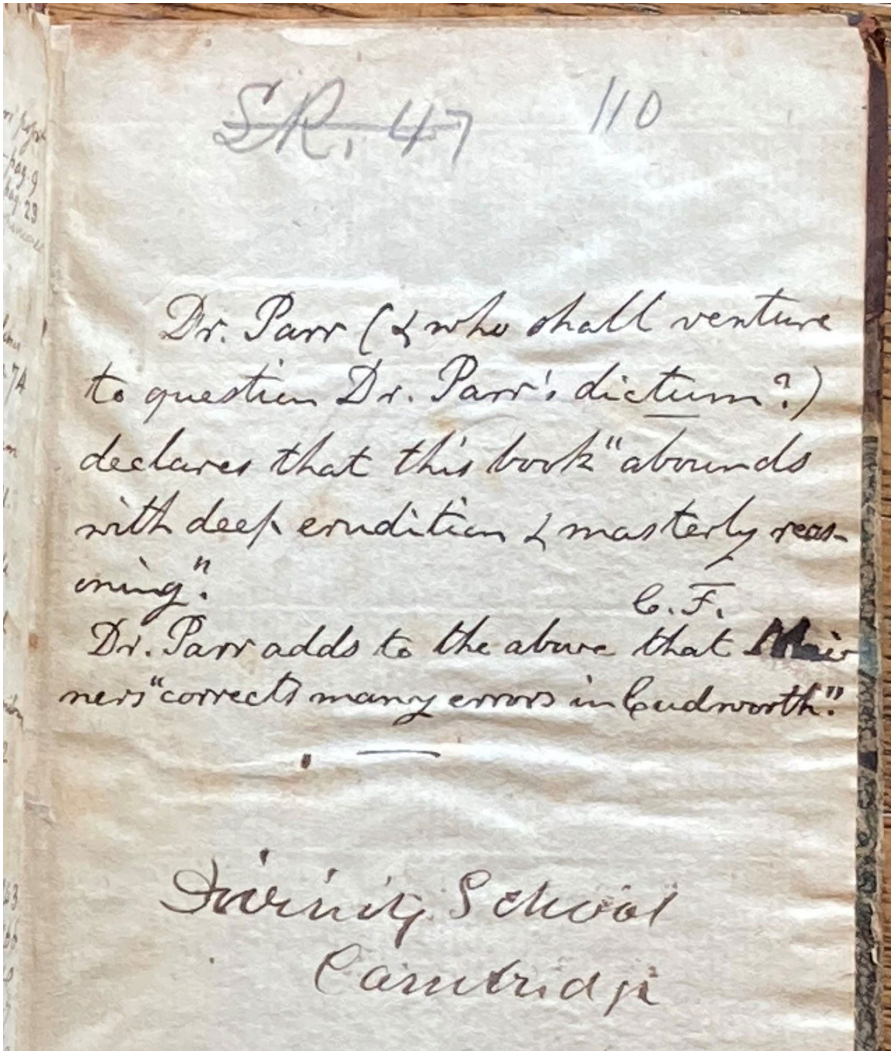


Image 3: Inscription referencing the opinion of English minister (and book collector) Samuel Parr. (Andover-Harvard Theological Library Special Collections 110 Meiners, Meiners, C. *Historia doctrinae de vero Deo omnium rerum auctore atque rectore*, 1780.)

It is important to note that, though some annotations can be readily identified by comparing them with Francis's signed inscriptions, other markings are more ambiguous. Further careful, in-person examination is warranted.

In an attempt to record binding information based on the digital surrogates, it was found that as many as one-third of the scans reviewed appear to indicate later rebinds. In one instance, Francis

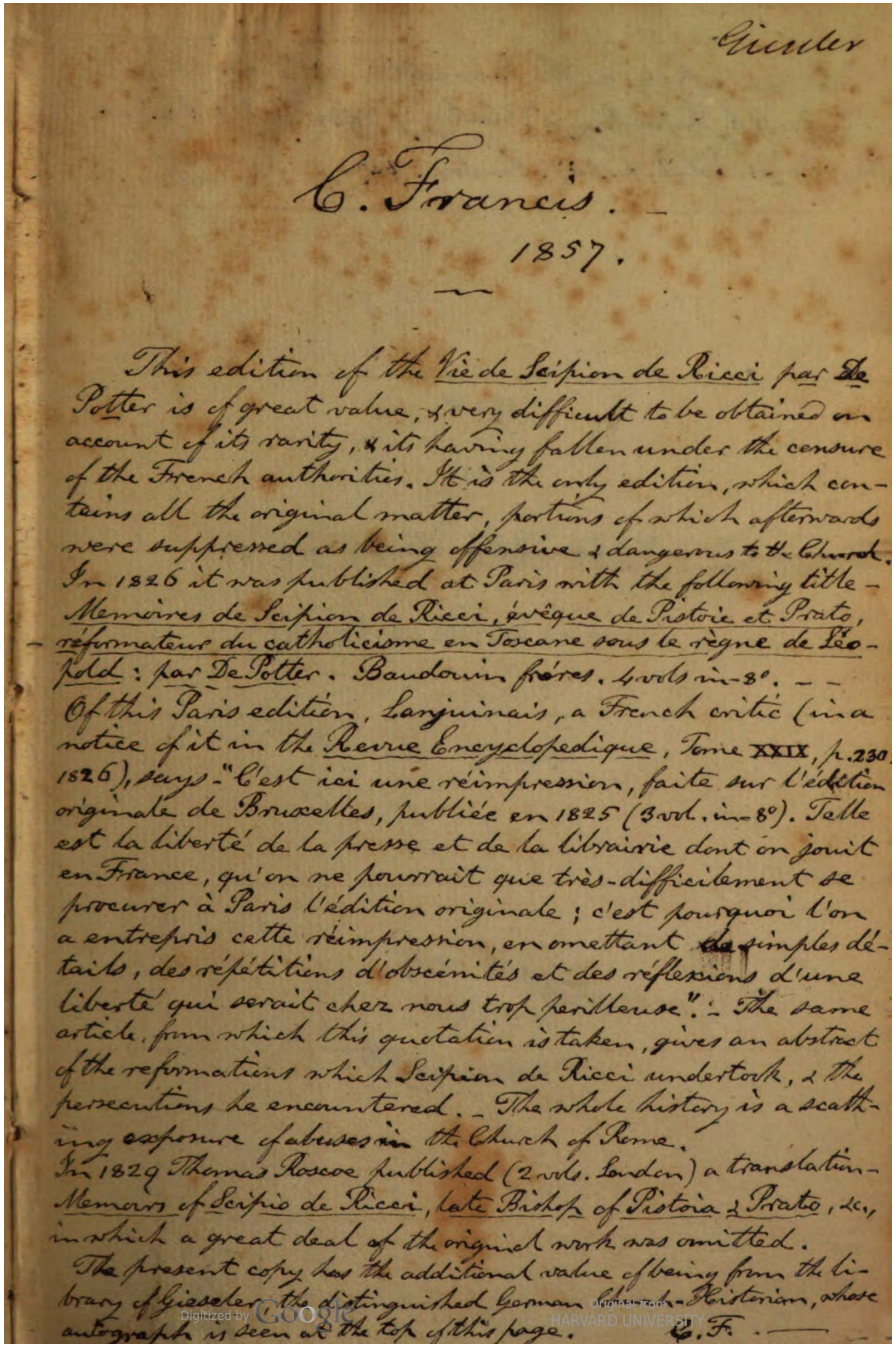


Image 4: Inscription detailing the book's rarity, publication history, history of censorship, reviews, and with note on the book's previous owner. (Andover-Harvard Theological Library Old Div C Ricci v. 1, L. De Potter, *Vie de Scipion de Ricci, évêque de Pistoie e Prato, et réformateur du catholicisme en Toscane, sous le règne de Léopold*, 1825. Google Books image via HathiTrust: hdl.handle.net/2027/hvd.32044029913894.)

notes that his book containing two titles was bound in 1853 but, alas, the book now lives within nondescript black buckram covers. Further study of physical items might reveal Francis's binding preferences as either typical or atypical for his time and location, though it seems likely that much evidence may already have been lost.

Next Steps and Project Conclusions

The spreadsheet with transcription of the manuscript catalog data, supplemented with likely shelf locations and metadata from the current online catalog, provides a solid starting point for future research on the Francis Library. The file can be updated with additional information (confirmed location, presence of annotations, inscriptions, markings, bindings, etc.) as Francis books are identified during other routine library activities. Ideally, the transcription of the manuscript (having been created in some haste) would be reviewed and corrected at the same time. Though cost constraints prevent a systematic search for Francis volumes at this time, the library can provide interested researchers with the spreadsheet data in progress and accept new evidence from researchers when available.

In addition to gradually updating the spreadsheet of citations, records in the online catalog should also be updated to include entries for Convers Francis as the former owner. A collection-level record can provide a place to describe the Francis Library at AHTL, its context, and biographical information about Convers Francis, while also providing guidance to users on ways to find the books in the online catalog (or elsewhere) (Nicholson 2014, 32, 39).

A practical question that arose during the project is whether the identified Francis books in the circulating collections should be transferred into Special Collections. It was decided that the books would be evaluated for transfer on a case-by-case basis, prioritizing books with inscriptions or annotations. Some books might be allowed to continue circulating, or perhaps be restricted to in-library use.

This project affirmed suspicions that the Francis Library has deep potential for research in Unitarian history, the history of the study of religion in America, Transcendentalist thought, and nineteenth-century book history. Even though the Francis Library is but one part of the larger reading life of Convers Francis, the collection of more than two thousand titles represents a significant portion for

analysis. Even before all the books can be physically examined, the creation of a digital file to facilitate analysis represents a significant step towards the goal to "reconstruct" the library of Convers Francis.

The Legacy of the Francis Library: An Enlightened Ministry

Shortly after Francis began his new role as professor at Harvard Divinity School, his good friend Theodore Parker wrote him: "the School already wears a new aspect, as it has a new soul; that you stimulate the dull and correct the erratic and set right such as have prejudices inclining to narrowness if not bigotry" (Weiss 1863, 39). Mark Harris argues that Francis's teaching brought a transition in Unitarian thought "from a rational liberal Christian revelation to a broader pluralism" (Harris 2017, 135). In his memoir of Francis, William Newell writes, "Without accepting their views and conclusions, he was ready to give a hearing to the thinkers and scholars of other lands, and to receive whatever truth, new or old, they had to offer; to prove all things, and to hold fast the good" (Newell 1866, 12).

The initial analysis of the Francis Library demonstrates the multilingual and multifaith nature of his collection and confirms Francis's role as an advocate of this "broader pluralism"—the broadening of theological dialogue in New England beyond the English-speaking world, the broadening of dialogue within Unitarianism, and broader engagement with non-Christian ideas. One imagines Francis would be pleased with how AHTL collections have evolved over time, maintaining historic strength in Protestant theology (with a particular strength in Unitarian Universalism) but expanding to include diverse faith traditions, reflecting Harvard Divinity School's guiding principles that "Scholars of religion should employ critical analysis, multiple disciplines and be reflective about their own positionality and that of others" and "should have a deep and broad understanding of more than a single religious tradition" (Harvard Divinity School, n.d.). Thus the Francis Library represents a contribution to the liberal tradition of Harvard Divinity School—a tradition of scholarship not confined by boundaries of language and creed. Convers Francis stood firmly in this tradition of learning and scholarship.

In 1815, shortly before Francis began his ministerial studies, William Ellery Channing wrote a pamphlet soliciting funds to establish what soon became Harvard Divinity School. In it, he argued that "an enlightened age requires an enlightened ministry" and that an enlightened ministry "is the only barrier against fanaticism" (Channing 1815, 6–7). Though not a household name like his friend Ralph Waldo Emerson, it is clear that Convers Francis was influential as a teacher and colleague, exemplifying the educated minister sought by the School's founders.

His friend and colleague John Weiss wrote of Francis, "His favorite seal displayed a book underneath the motto, *Qui studet orat* (He prays who studies)" (Weiss 1863, 52)—a fitting maxim that captures the love for books and learning and the "enlightened ministry" he sought to practice.

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