THREE FATHERS, MANY SONS

Ecclus. 44:1

by Curtis Dahl*

Your work is for the prevention of crime, the advancement of morals, the spread of intelligence, the relief of distress, the diffusion of comfort, the advancement of pure religion, free from party spirit and sectarian bigotry .... The effects of your work are not confined to a neighborhood, town, county, state, or country. The world is your field. You are erecting a pyramid, to endure through time. You are rearing a moral temple for the Shechinah to beautify and adorn. You are planting a tree, the leaves of which are for the healing of nations; its fruits are various, and it bears fruit every month and day in the year. You are opening a pleasant passway for the intercourse of nations; casting up a highway of holiness, for seamen to return, and come to Zion, with songs of joy and victory. You are constructing a safe and peaceful haven for the storm-worn mariner, to which he may be hailed with sympathy, and welcomed with gratulations of joy and good companionship. It is a work of humanity and piety.

(from The farewell Discourse of Rev. Enoch Mudge, Delivered before the New Bedford Port Society, July 14, 1844 [New Bedford, 1844])

Out of the driving sleet and icy mist of a cold December Sunday a young man named Ishmael, bound on a whaling voyage round the world, pushes his way into the Seamen's Bethel or Whaleman's Chapel in the great old whaling port of New Bedford. As he sits in the silence waiting for the service, he looks around at the black and white marble tablets that tell sad tales of crews lost at sea, of ships that set forth never to return, of young men who died in far-away foreign countries. He muses

*The following article is based on an address delivered on Father's Day, April 20, 1976 at the New Bedford Seamen's Bethel at a service commemorating the bicentennial of the birth of the Reverend Enoch Mudge, first chaplain of the Bethel. I wish to thank Richard Paul, President of the New Bedford Port Society, and Reverend Sydney Adams, the present Chaplain, for inviting me to deliver the address. Mr. Paul was tireless in gathering material about Enoch Mudge, and to his enthusiasm and unstinting help this essay is greatly indebted. It could not have been written without his assistance.
on his own fate on the voyage that lies before him, and he looks at the congregation — ruddy old mariners, sailors’ wives and widows, and even his friend of the night before, the tattooed Polynesian cannibal Queequeg.

Suddenly the door at the front of the Bethel (it is now at the back) opens, and out of the stormy sleet, his tarpaulin hat dripping with wet, his great pilot-cloth jacket heavy with water, “in the hardy winter of a healthy old age” Father Mapple, chaplain of the Bethel, enters in a blast of cold air. Mounting the lofty old-fashioned box-pulpit shaped like a ship’s prow and pulling up the perpendicular side-ladder after him, Father Mapple offers up “a prayer so deeply devout that he seemed kneeling and praying at the bottom of the sea.” Then after a hymn about “the ribs and terrors of the whale,” he preaches in salty language a magnificent “double-stranded” sea-sermon on Jonah. With marvellous rhetoric he retells the tale of the Biblical sailor and the whale and from it he draws two lessons.

One lesson is for all sinful men — a lesson on pride, on “willful disobedience” to the command of God. The other lesson — for himself and all other “pilots of the living God” — is on the need to have the courage “to preach the truth [boldly] to the face of Falsehood.” The first is the lesson that Captain Ahab fails to heed. Fatal pride, blasphemy, unwillingness to bow (note his ivory leg) before God, refusal to take off his “slouched hat” lead him and the crew of the Pequod to destruction. Ahab breaks his instruments, steers by dead reckoning, defies the lightning, proclaims himself lord of the level lodestone, repels that love of Pip and the counsel of Starbuck. But his mad self-reliance brings only disaster. For if we obey God, we must disobey ourselves. Yet Ahab’s titanic, friendless might is his great heroic quality, and perhaps defiance is true worship! The other strand of the sermon relates to Starbuck, the first mate, whose unsupported virtue has not enough iron in it to thwart his monomaniac commander’s blasphemous quest and thus prevent the catastrophe. He will not fire the musket pointed at Ahab’s head. He warns, but in too low a voice. He has not the strength to face down evil, to proclaim to the “city” of the Pequod, “Yet forty days, and Ninevah shall be overthrown.”

So Melville in Chapters VII — IX of his great novel Moby Dick (1851) turns into magnificent fiction his own actual experience. For he himself as a young man had come to New
Bedford to go awhaling. He, too, while waiting in a bleak December for his ship the *Acushnet* to finish fitting out in Fairhaven just across New Bedford harbor, had probably gone one stormy Sunday to attend church at the New Bedford Port Society’s Seamen’s Bethel.¹ For the Bethel was and is a real place indeed, though in Melville’s time there was probably no lofty ship-pulpit, and the service that he heard was probably not so rhetorically perfect as that which in his imagination he created to be the epic invocation and thematic foreshadowing of his novel. Though the pews face the other way now and though time has removed the observatory that once sat on the top of the tower, the building still stands much as Melville saw it in 1840² and described it a decade later. With its companion, the Mariners Home next door, it still ministers to the spiritual and physical needs of the sailors of New Bedford.

But what of vigorous old Methodist-sounding Father Mapple? Was he a character wholly created by Melville, or was there a real Father Mapple? Certainly there was no one at the New Bedford Bethel by that name. Certainly much about him was quarried out of Melville’s rich imagination. With his sailor-like yet Old-Testament-prophet air, with his vigor and sincerity and salty speech, he is surely one of the great created characters of American fiction. Yet who sat as model to Melville the portraitist? Obviously no great artistic creation needs a specific model; all such are amalgams, composites, of what the author has seen and lived and been. Melville had had much experience with sea-preachers in Liverpool and New York,³ as well as in New Bedford. We must not insist on one specific model.

Yet Father Mapple is not all fiction; he did have a famous prototype, a prototype who would have been known to many, perhaps most of Melville’s readers when *Moby-Dick* appeared in 1851. That prototype — if we must choose one — was the famous Methodist sea-preacher Father Edward Thompson Taylor, chaplain of the Seamen’s Bethel in Boston. Taylor had a great reputation. No one came to Boston without going to hear him.

². For a clear history of the changes in the building see Wayne J. Rebello, “A History of New Bedford’s Seamen’s Bethel” (typewritten, New Bedford, 1974).
³. See esp. his description of dock-side preachers in Chap. 35 of *Redburn*.
He was a tourist attraction, like Fanueil Hall or Old North Church. Dickens went to hear him. Harriet Martineau praised him. Emerson said that he was "the work of the same hand that made Demosthenes, Shakespeare, and Burns."\(^4\) Walt Whitman went to hear him several times and each time was moved to tears.\(^5\) By 1851 Melville, who had married Lizzie Shaw of Boston and who himself had relatives there,\(^6\) had surely heard him on one of his frequent trips to the city.

Like Mapple, Taylor had in his youth been a sailor, before he had entered the Methodist ministry. Like him, he used salty sea-terms and vivid sea-imagery to preach to his sailor audience. Like Mapple, too, he had not only great sincerity and force of character but also wit and humor. He was a robust, colorful, outgoing character with not a little of the play-actor in him. In the pulpit he had great skill. He could build up excitement to an intense pitch and then break it at just the right time with a telling epigrammatic remark. He was, Edward Everett once said, "a walking Bethel."

In his great moments he could make his sailors feel the ship alive under them as he stood on his quarter deck, and the saltiness of the sea; could raise the storm and create such peril by his magic that there were times when the old salts would lose track of Sunday in the Bethel, shout "long boat, long boat," and be ready to cast her loose. Then he would turn his vision on the instant into their souls' peril and cry out to them to be saved. He could do this as no other man could, while still he had the deep-hearted, whole love for the men he would win, which is the mother-milk of all true preaching. He could say stern things to them when he must, as a father may to his children, but no other man must say them to his boys in his presence and in his Bethel. So when a man one day deplored their ignorance he turned on him and said: "Jack knows more than you do; he holds the whole world in his hand as you hold an orange." And when one of his boys in the meeting once told them what trouble he had gone through fighting the devil, he said: "All right Jack, that shows you are worth tempting or he would let you alone; he does not care for chaff."\(^7\)

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6. Oliver Wendell Holmes' poem "The Last Leaf" is a playful description of Major Thomas Melville, Herman's grandfather, the last man in Boston to wear the old tricornered hat. See Leyda. *passim.*
One cannot imagine him not sometime preaching on Jonah and the whale. And though the Boston chapel no more than the New Bedford one had a ship-pulpit, it did have hanging behind the minister a vivid painting of a ship in a storm. If one must find a “source” for the fictional Mapple — and it may be a mistake to subject great literature to such dry-as-dust theorizing — Taylor must be the choice.

But such a choice overlooks one central fact. When on that stormy, sleety December Sunday in 1840 — probably Sunday, December 27 — young Melville went to church, it was not to Father Taylor’s chapel in Boston but to the Seamen’s Bethel on Johnnycake Hill (just up the street from a dozen or so houses of ill repute) that he went. It is this chapel with its black and white tablets that he describes in his novel. He did not hear the fictional Father Mapple or the real Father Taylor. Almost certainly he heard a sermon from the Rev. Enoch Mudge, another Methodist, first Chaplain and Agent of the New Bedford Port Society, pastor of the Bethel, and director of all the soul-saving and body-saving activities for which that Society had been

8. There was a long tradition of sermons on Jonah delivered to or written for sailors going back at least as far as those of the English preacher to seamen, John Ryther, who in 1672 published *A Plat for Seamen; or, The Seamen’s Preacher*. An edition of this book had been published in Cambridge, Massachusetts as recently as 1806. See my “Jonah Improved: Sea-Sermons on Jonah,” *Extracts* (Newsletter of the Melville Society), no. 19 (September, 1974), pp. 6-9.


10. Leyda, I, 111. That December 27, 1840 was indeed stormy as Melville indicates in the novel is supported by an entry in the log of the Ship Charles, Barzillia Morselander, master, which was anchored in the Acushnet River waiting to be docked: “First part commences with a thick snow storm and wind @S. East.” For this reference I wish to thank Bruce Barnes, curator of the Melville Whaling Room, New Bedford Free Public Library. The Charles had just returned from a three-year whaling voyage. Is it not, then, the probable inspiration for Melville’s ship Grampus “reported in the offing this morning” just back from “a three years voyage” (Chap. III)?

11. Surely we can call the urgently personal, deeply sincere, relatively informal, and emotionally persuasive Father Mapple a Methodist!
founded in 1830. So in a real sense Father Mudge is the real progenitor of Father Mapple.

Enoch Mudge was no Mapple and no Taylor. He did not have their rhetoric and fire; he did not play to the audience. He was not a dramatic preacher. Indeed, he commences his Temperance Address, in Poetry, Delivered before the Seamen at theBethel, July 16, 1837 with an amusing half-humorous, modestly self-deprecatory comparison of himself to Taylor:

Ladies and Gentlemen, I'm come to-day,
To talk of Temperance in an easy way;
The theme you oft have heard from abler men,
In strains more eloquent, and bolder pen.
Some possibly, to come, have taken pains,
Expecting to hear Taylor's glowing strains,
Pleading in lofty flights the Temperance cause,
To see the vivid pictures which he draws;
At his eccentric strokes to weep or laugh,
From his exuberant fount rich treats to quaff.
Pray be content the goblet to receive,
From one, who now the best he has, will give.
In his "old mossy bucket" he will bring
A draught of pure cold water from his spring.

He lived and worked in no romantic world of mystic white whales or monomaniac Ahabs. Indeed, he had never even been to sea; and though he wrote and preached for seamen, one must look hard in his books to find sea-imagery. Nor did he preach to the Dickenses and Thackerays and Martineaus of the world. But though no “Jeremy Taylor in butternut,” in his quiet, competent way he may have done far more for his hundreds of mariner “sons” than any Mapple or even Taylor could. His able, conscientious hard work, his executive ability, his talent for writing, his genius for getting on with all kinds of people, whether Port Society directors, his fellow clergymen of New Bedford, the ship-masters and shipowners of the city, or sailors and their wives, laid the foundations of the successful ministry that the Port Society still continues after so many years. During his twelve years as the Bethel’s first chaplain, his solid, long-

12. For the founding of the Port Society see Rebello and the one hundredth anniversary address by Zephaniah W. Pease printed in the New Bedford Morning Mercury, May 19, 1930, pp. 5-6.
13. (New Bedford, 1837).
wearing merits endeared him to the hearts of all New Bedford. He had that dedication and courage which Father Mapple in his sermon asks to be given to all "pilots of the living God."

Enoch Mudge was a Methodist of the Methodists. He was, it is said, the first native-born Methodist minister in all New England. He did not come to New Bedford as a neophyte preacher. When he arrived in 1832, he was already a man of considerable experience. Born in Lynn, Massachusetts, April 28, 1776, he had been accepted into the Methodist ministry at the age of 17 or 18 in 1793. For forty years he had served Methodist churches. He had ridden circuits in Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and wintry Maine. Deciding to marry, he had settled in Orrington, Maine, then like all Maine a part of Massachusetts. He had later held pastorates in Boston; Portsmouth, New Hampshire; East Cambridge; and Newport and Providence, Rhode Island.

14. Where not otherwise indicated my information on Mudge is taken from Pease; James R. Joy, "Enoch Mudge," DAB* XIII, 304-305; S. W. Coggeswell, "The Rev. Enoch Mudge," Methodist Quarterly Review, 43 (July, 1861), 423-447; Alfred Mudge, "Rev. Enoch Mudge," Memorials: Being a Genealogical, Biographical, and Historical Account of the Name of Mudge in America (Boston: A. Mudge and Son, 1868), pp. 216, 345-369; and articles in the New Bedford Evening Standard of December 29, 1930 and January 5, 1931. His activities while chaplain of the Bethel are well indicated by the printed Annual Reports of the New Bedford Port Society, copies of which are in the Society’s files.
It may, moreover, have been his Methodist contacts with — who else but Father Taylor himself! — that led to his appointment in New Bedford. It has not, I think, been hitherto noticed how close a relationship seems to have existed between Father Taylor and Father Mudge. When the New Bedford Port Society hired the Rev. Mr. Mudge in 1832, he was preaching at Ipswich. Earlier he had ridden a circuit centered in Rhode Island but embracing much of southeastern Massachusetts, probably including New Bedford. He had been, as has been said, stationed as Methodist pastor in both Providence and Newport. So he was doubtless well known personally and by reputation to those who appointed him to this new ministry. But he also had been minister at Duxbury from 1829-1830. The man whom he had replaced in that church seems to have been none other than Father Taylor, who was called to the Boston Bethel on its organization in late 1829 or early 1830. Is it not possible, then, that Father Taylor was consulted by the new New Bedford Port Society on who would be the best man for chaplain of their Bethel and that he recommended his friend Enoch Mudge? The proof is not conclusive, but the evidence points that way. Such a theory is supported by the fact that on May 2, 1832, as the Port Society’s records and Samuel Rodman’s published diary both tell us, it was Father Taylor who preached the sermon at the installation of Mudge as Chaplain and Agent here in the Bethel. His sermon was, Rodman records, “appropriate, touching, and powerful.”

The preface to Mudge’s *Temperance Address in Poetry* also indicates that Taylor later came to New Bedford to speak at Temperance meetings.

But Mudge had had wider interests even than those of the Methodist ministry. He had played a role in fostering religious and civil liberty. In 1811-1812 and again in 1815-1816 he had got himself elected from Orrington to the Massachusetts General


16. The “Seamen of New Bedford,” he says, “have especially been disappointed when their old, and much esteemed friend, Mr. Taylor, lectured, in not being able to get seats.... They had been led to expect an address on the subject of Temperance, from Mr. Taylor the last time he visited the place, but his engagements did not permit” (p. 2).
Court in order to fight successfully for passage of the Freedom of Religion Bill that took away the Puritan churches' special rights and gave equal rights to the Baptist, Methodist, and other churches. He had been a delegate from his native Lynn to the Massachusetts Constitutional Convention of 1819. In Orrington he had even had himself purposely arrested for performing a marriage ceremony in defiance of the Puritan ministers' insistence that they alone had the right to solemnize marriages. Taken to court, Mudge was honorably cleared of all guilt. He had thus struck another blow for the equal treatment of all religious denominations. In another case Mudge had been sued for defamation of character by one of a group of young people whom he had called down for their loud late-night partying. Again he was cleared and indeed complimented by the judge for his action. Mudge had the courage to insist on his right of free and unfettered speech — even at two in the morning!

He had also been and was to be throughout his later life much interested both in education and poetry. He had taught school as well as preached at Orrington. In 1824 he had published a Methodist catechism, and in 1829 he had published *A System of Bible Class Instruction.* Though formal classes at the New Bedford Bethel did not begin until after his retirement, his interest in teaching was undoubtedly useful to him as chaplain. Less practical perhaps, but an art that he evidently loved his whole life long, was the writing of poetry. He was not, I fear, a good poet, though he was a pious and facile and prolific one who interestingly followed literary fashions of his time. To celebrate July 4, 1808, for instance, he wrote two "Odes on Independence" and an "Ode on Science" in eighteenth-century style which were published with the Independence Day oration he delivered at the same occasion. In 1818 he published a *Camp Meeting Hymn Book.* (One thinks of Father Mapple reading out the words of the hymn in the Whaleman's Chapel.)

17. *A System of Bible-Class Instruction, Adapted to the Use of Teachers and Students of Bible Classes* (Boston, 1829).
few years later he published in Lynn (though the attribution is disputed) a descriptive landscape poem in heroic couplets, in the style of Timothy Dwight’s “Greenfield Hill,” entitled Lynn, A Poem.  

His amusing and effective poetical temperance address I have noticed already. He published numerous poems in periodicals. When he died, he left two bound manuscript volumes of poems totaling five hundred pages in all. One cannot, alas, greatly bemoan their disappearance.

For Enoch Mudge’s real poetry was not in words but in deeds. Accomplished and many-faceted though he had been before he came to New Bedford, he demonstrated even greater and more valuable assets after he had accepted the call and become Chaplain and Agent of the New Bedford Port Society. He was a conscientious preacher. He was indefatigable in searching out and helping young sailors on the docks, on the ships, in the sailors’ boardinghouses. We are told that even Polynesians (“Canakers”) — shades of Melville’s tattooed cannibal Queequeg! — profited from his services. He brought loving succour and comfort to sick sailors and sailors’ wives and families. He held daily office hours at the Bethel (there was no Mariners Home then); any sailor could go to him for counsel and help. He fought the sailors’ legal battles for them, adjusted disputes between sailors and shipowners, got sailors their rightful pay, arbitrated between them and their debtors, watched out for their welfare — and all without angering the captains and owners and businessmen with whom he had to deal. He supervised the first sailors’ boarding house run by the Port Society. And he worked hard and with considerable success for the cause of temperance and good morals in New Bedford. Indeed, as his Temperance Address and the early reports of the Port Society show, temperance or abstinence, both at sea and on shore, was one of the most urgent objectives of the Bethel. It was obviously good for the sailors — but was equally good for the shipowners who did not wish their ships lost because of the

20. Lynn: A Poem (Lynn: Charles F. Lummus, 1830). Attributed, wrongly I believe, by the Boston Public Library to Alonzo Lewis. Another poem, entitled “Elegy,” appears on pp. 27-28 of Timothy Merritt’s lugubriously entitled A Short Account of the Christian Experience and Happy Death of Emily Spare, an Orphan (Boston, 1819).

drunkenness of officers or crews. Both benefited from Mudge's work.

Furthermore, Father Mudge was a first-rate administrator. He did his job well. Not one of the Annual Reports issued during the twelve years he was chaplain and agent give any indication of the least friction between him and the Board or members of the Port Society. On the contrary, year after year he is praised for his "faithfulness," for being the "sailors' friend"; his work is viewed with "feelings of the deepest satisfaction." The Board evidently felt that it had picked the right man and supported him enthusiastically.

One of the most interesting and important of the services Mudge inaugurated at the Bethel was keeping a Register of ships' crews. Often this was the only available record of what had happened to a sailor or where he was. At first the men came to the Bethel before shipping out and registered themselves. Later it was the chaplain's duty on the departure of any vessel to go to the Custom House and secure a copy of the official crew list. In one year alone, according to an early report, Father Mudge himself registered over 2,500 names. Over the years more than 75,000 entries were recorded in fifty bound volumes now deposited in the Whaling Museum vault. This was an incalculable service to the sailors. As the 1840 Annual Report says:

22. Fifth Annual Report (1835), p. 10. The good feeling was reciprocal. In his Farewell Discourse (p. 11) to the Port Society Mudge, looking back on "twelve years of harmonious effort," remarks that "no dissonance or jarring note has ever been heard to disturb the general harmony," expresses his "heart-felt satisfaction enjoyed for the whole course of the time" he has been with them, and thanks them for the "unanimity" with which they welcomed him into the work and the "cordial and friendly attention and encouragement" all in New Bedford have accorded him. In this valedictory Mudge concisely explains the several functions of the Bethel: distributing Bibles, doing missionary work, working for temperance and moral reform, holding Sabbath services, relieving distress among seamen and their families, and diffusing information through the distribution of tracts and the keeping of the Register. He emphasizes particularly the interdenominational character of the work.

23. For many years after Mudge's death the volumes of his Register were thought lost, but in 1954 during repairs to the Bethel made necessary by damage from a hurricane they were happily discovered in a chest in an unused room in the tower (New Bedford Standard-Times, January 27, 1956).
The correspondence carried on by our Pastor, to communicate to the friends of seamen, information collected in the Register in the Reading Room, is daily becoming more extensive and interesting. There have been entered on the Register more than twenty-five hundred names during the last year. In many cases the pages of that book are the only source whence a heart-broken parent can learn the fate of a beloved but erring son; and that too, when to elude pursuit he may have changed his name. So minute is the information sought and Registered. Among our seamen, are men of almost every clime and country. The yearning hearts of parents are poured forth in

"Thoughts that breathe and words that burn,"

for those that are dearer to them than life. Here and here only, in the unostentatious Reading Room of our Bethel can the ardent desires for tidings of many of these be gratified. The advantages of the Register can be fully appreciated only by those who have felt them. 24

Mudge was tireless in answering queries and seeking to put worried relatives in touch with their missing sailor sons or brothers. Many hundreds of people were benefited by his loving service.

One other activity of Chaplain Mudge ought also to be mentioned. He distributed Bibles, newspapers, and tracts to ships, and, more interesting, he himself wrote tracts for seamen. (Perhaps his were the tracts Aunt Charity in Moby-Dick puts in each seaman's bunk on the Pequod!) In 1836, for instance, according to the Seventh Annual Report of the Port Society, Mudge wrote, published, and distributed two thousand copies of an as yet unidentified work entitled Tracts Addressed to Seamen and Their Wives and an equal number of his still extant volume A Series of Lectures Particularly Adapted to Young People, and Now Published for the Special Use of Seamen. 25 Though he did not preach in nautical lingo as Father Taylor did, Mudge too believed in adapting his discourse to his hearers. As a great exemplar of that technique he cited in his tiny book, The Parables Illustrated in a Precise and Perspicuous Manner (Boston, 1832), Jesus himself, who, speaking to the fishermen of Galilee, talked of nets and fishes. 26 Yet in the twelve lectures "published for the special use of seamen" there is surprisingly

25. P. 14. The Lectures were published in New Bedford.
little sea-language or sea-imagery. The lectures had probably been written before Mudge came to New Bedford and were now only revised for seamen. However, what is interesting about the book is that it has a striking passage that deals with evil old Ahab. It stresses the horrible sinfulness of blasphemy, of refusing to serve God, of disobedience to God. It talks of the merit of the true man who stands up bravely against tyranny. Furthermore, it frequently uses colors connotatively, particularly black as opposed to white, though the values are always fixed and not ambivalent as in Melville’s great chapter on “The Whiteness of the Whale.” There is even mention of spotted leopards, which reminds one of Melville’s description of Parsee

27. Lecture XII is an exception. There (p. 106) a sinner is said to be “like the poor mariner who is taken from the wreck where many of his shipmates have perished, and he is saved in the moment when the last ray of hope was ready to expire. Others more nearly resemble such as are saved by clinging to a spar, or broken plank, and are driven ashore half-drowned, and nearly exhausted, but just capable of being resuscitated by the efforts of benevolence, and the miraculous interposition of God’s mercy.” Mudge goes on to talk of other Christians who “go safely into port, though, as in a cloudy and dark night” because “they have a pilot that is perfectly acquainted with their situation, and carries them safely, though not comfortable, through all the dangers that surrounds [sic] them.” See also in Lecture III (p. 27) the passage about the mariner who congratulates himself because he “makes his passage in mild and pleasant season, before the storms and tempest of winter overtake him, to shatter his bark, and endanger his life.”


29. “Blasphemies” are mentioned on p. 54, just after the discussion of Ahab. The prayer on p. 101 asks that we be “sensible of the great criminality of indulging enmity in our hearts against God.” Lecture IX: “The Difficulty of Reclaiming an Old Transgressor” has several passages that might apply to Melville’s old Captain Ahab. The old transgressor is described as being “so inflamed with pride that like Lucifer, his father in iniquity, he is ready to set himself against God” (p. 77). Such men have “heaven daring wickedness with boasting pride” (p. 78). However, Mudge’s “old transgressor” is unlike Melville’s Ahab in that he has “vile lusts” and is “burning with evil concupiscenses” (p. 77), whereas the sin, if sin it be, of Melville’s lofty captain is wholly spiritual.

30. Obadiah and Micajah are praised, both for standing up staunchly against King Ahab (pp. 53-54).
Fedallah's yellow boat crew. Indeed, many of the themes are close to those of Father Mapple's great sermon, and a little of Mudge's hell-fire rhetoric resembles Melville's. So we are back once again to Melville and Father Mapple. The Rev. Enoch Mudge's book is certainly not the source of Moby-Dick, but it does hint that Melville's depiction in his novel of a seaman's preacher was not purely imaginary but based on observed facts. And — who knows? — perhaps Father Mudge did preach on King Ahab on that memorable snowy December 27, 1840, when a young man from New York sat among his hearers! Unlikelier things have happened.

Father Mudge did his job well. He was loved by the sailors. He was respected by the other New Bedford ministers, who might have held this "interloper" suspect. When he retired in 1844 because of ill health, in an unprecedented action the Board of Selectmen of the Town of New Bedford formally voted a highly laudatory commendation of him. And the Board of the Port Society spread on its minutes several pages of encomium of

31. The most striking passage is in the same Lecture IX cited above, pp. 76-77: “Sin is an enormous evil, and is represented in the most disagreeable colors in the scriptures, to show its horrid enormity. White is used as an emblem of purity. Thus the saints are represented as clothed in white raiment — As having washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Sinners are represented as polluted, stained and spotted with various colors as black, crimson, and scarlet, in opposition to white. The Ethiopian's skin is black, and as this is the most perfect opposition to white, it is the fittest emblem to set forth the deep depravity and foul pollution of an old transgressor's heart and life. He has a sinful nature in common with all other sinners, whereby he is prone to go astray from his youth. And he has actually been going astray from God, who is the fountain of purity, and he has been polluting himself with crime, until he has become double-dyed ... The stains of his guilt deepen, as he sins against more light, and clearer knowledge ... The leopard's spots brighten in his character. He is spotted with every vice and stained with every degree of crime.” Because, in contrast, Melville's symbolism of colors stresses their ambivalence, he can see the Ethiopian (the magnificent Dagoo) as in some ways better than the white characters. In his prayer at the end of the Lecture (p. 85) Mudge recurs to his images: "Our souls have been stained with the deepest pollution. Verily, our stains have been like the Ethiopian's skin, and the Leopard's spots."

32. See particularly that on p. 54.
33. Pease, p. 5.
his work and deeply sincere regret at his departure. Leaving New Bedford to spend his declining years in his native Lynn, he was universally lauded. Yet perhaps, had he then been able to know of it, he would have treasured even more richly than these praises a little verse written upon his death in 1850 by a sailor whom he had converted and who had gone on to become a Methodist minister:

Sailor ahoy. What cheer, my lad?  
What news from home? Why, news that’s bad.  
Our home-coast light is gone —  
That fine old light that shone so clear  
And told of shoals and quicksands near  
Good Father Mudge, to sailors dear,  
Has bid farewell our town.

No more his beacon bright will gleam,  
No more of home shed radiant beam  
To sailors coasting there.  
You know, my maties, where he stood,  
By yonder headland, o'er life's flood,  
And pointed us to Heaven and God;  
You know his life-boat — Prayer.

Thus all Americans, but particularly Methodist Americans, can be proud of three “Fathers,” all three chaplains of

34. Manuscript in Port Society records. “In Mr. Mudge have been found united,” it begins, “in a remarkable degree the qualities which are desirable in the delicate and responsible position which he has hitherto occupied.” It proceeds to praise “the success of his labors,” “his efficient and successful ministration of that concern for the spiritual and temporal welfare of the seamen of this district which led” to the foundation of the Port Society, his fidelity in his work, and his ability to cooperate with the other ministers of New Bedford. On the occasion of Mudge’s retirement Samuel Rodman commented in his Diary (p. 261) that Mudge had “most acceptably and usefully” filled his post at the Bethel for twelve years.

35. Quoted by Pease, p. 5.

36. The term “father” was widely applied to chaplains of seamen’s Bethels probably for three reasons: (1) the word was not uncommonly applied in the early nineteenth century to elderly Protestant clergymen; (2) the sailors of the time were young, Mudge estimating that the average age of those he served was not over 23; and (3) these men gave their sailor “sons,” many of whom were runaways or castaways who had not seen their real parents for years, warm paternal love and care.
seamen's Bethels, all preachers of the Word of God to mariners, all men of high character, deep faith, and tremendous energy. Two were real people, the third in part an artistic blending of the other two. But all three, fictional or actual, have given their hundreds or thousands of sailor and landsmen "sons" love and help and inspiration. Father Taylor, Father Mudge — and Father Mapple too — have exerted tremendous influence on many lives. They have been "leaders of the people by their counsels" and "wise and eloquent in their instructions." It becomes us well, as Ecclesiasticus says, "to praise [these] famous men, and our fathers that begat us."