Convers Francis Biography

Convers Francis

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Biography

Convers Francis (9 November 1795-7 April 1863), Unitarian minister, biographer, and historian, was born in West Cambridge, Massachusetts. He graduated from Harvard College in 1815, continued as a divinity student, and was ordained in 1819 at Watertown. Francis took time from his pastoral duties to contribute to religious periodicals and to write *An Historical Sketch of Watertown* (Cambridge: E. W. Metcalf, 1830) and a *Life of John Eliot* (Boston: Hilliard, Gray, 1836), the apostle to the Indians. His house at Watertown was frequented by his friends, including his sister, Lydia Maria Child, Emerson, and Theodore Parker, whom Francis tutored prior to his entering the Harvard Divinity School. In 1836 Francis became a member of the Transcendental Club and, as the eldest member, its moderator. Francis left Watertown in 1842 to become Parkman Professor of Pulpit Eloquence at Harvard, a post he held until his death. Francis never approached the social radicalism of Parker or the intellectual radicalism of Emerson because he was more interested in working from within existing institutions than attacking them, in crusaderlike fashion, from without.