The weakening of commitment to the Hopedale experiment expressed itself most seriously in challenges to the system of joint-stock property that had been the practical basis of the experiment from the beginning. What had begun as a way of accumulating the money needed to buy the original farm had evolved into the collectivist heart of the village economy. "The Joint Stock capital," reported the Practical Christian in 1855, "is now owned almost entirely by resident stockholders, and is variously parcelled out among the several Industrial Branches so far as best to subserve the general welfare, and to afford the largest amount of subsidiary employment to the resident operatives." In theory, at least, joint ownership gave the members of the community control over their economic and social life.

In practice, however, most members seem to have acquired few if any shares, giving them little interest, pecuniary or otherwise, in the joint stock and creating an inequality of ownership potentially dangerous in a community devoted to all. Undoubtedly, that inequality provoked at least a few to outright hostility to the joint-stock idea. In March 1855, for instance, one critic urged the community to "go up higher" on the grounds that a joint-stock community still allowed room for individualism and selfishness, when in a truly godly society the members should be "to each other like the sons and daughters of a well-ordered Christian family," willing to share and to sacrifice for the good of all members. This inclination toward religious communism was apparently shared by few, but it eventually evoked an editorial from Ballou condemning what he called the "communistic error" of assuming that all property should
be held in common. Perhaps remembering the days of Daniel Lamson, he warned against efforts to "hurry people into socialistic intimacies." Although he had allowed for common-stock communities in his Practical Christian Republic, Ballou doubted that Hopedale was ready or would perhaps ever be ready to advance into the dangerous ground of communism.

A more serious threat to the joint stock came from the opposite direction, from the entrepreneurial instincts of individual members. This included Ballou himself in an odd sort of way. In December 1855 the community approved a plan devised by him for "the establishment of distinct subordinate communes" which in its implications involved a radical decentralization of communal activity. Hopedale had already allowed for the formation of private business associations, but each "commune" in Ballou's scheme was a whole new subcommunity authorized not only to carry on a business or businesses but "to prescribe its own territorial localities, limits, and inhabitancies" and to establish various ways "for promoting the improvement and happiness of its own population." This decision opened the way for the formation in early 1856 of "Commune No. 1," a joint-stock association, by Ballou and nine associates (including his wife, Lucy). Over the next two months, the associates met each week to decide, after opening prayers and hymns, on the details of their new organization.

They discussed such matters as a communal boardinghouse and the nature of their "entertainments," but their main concern was with developing an economic base for the commune. What was especially interesting was their decision to manufacture and sell a "self-acting nipper block," a tackle block that had been developed earlier by Jonathan Whipple, one of the newer members of the community and a member of the commune. In January the commune acquired the rights to the block and began to advertise it as a great labor saver, since "in raising burdens of every description in every situation, it holds fast all that is gained from pull to pull." Probably, the commune had been formed primarily to manufacture the block, the profits from which were to be distributed among its members on the basis of the 4 percent limited dividend sanctioned by Practical Christian socialism.

This whole affair was rather strange. Although Ballou later im-
plied otherwise, he was obviously a leading force behind the creation of the commune. In his history of Hopedale, written in the 1870s, he said that he had intended his plan to strengthen the community and, at the same time, to allow for greater variety and freedom of action on the basis of "congenial companionship in business affairs and in other cherished interests common to those associated together." Yet the very completeness of the commune organization set it apart from the rest of the community. At the least, it reflected a declining sense of unity in the village as a whole. Even though Hopedale's population was still less than three hundred people, its economic progress seems to have created some of the divisive tendencies of the old society. The willingness of Ballou, the resident inspiration, to serve as chief "Intendant" of Commune No. 1 highlighted this tendency, even more so because the new subcommunity included the printing business and with it the Practical Christian.

The weakening of communal unity was underscored when the community, at the same meeting that sanctioned the communes, established a "Judicatory of Commerce," an appointed body with broad authority over wages, prices, and debts within the village. The new act allowed every member "to set up and carry on any laudable business separate from the general Joint Stock" but with the important stipulation that the books and accounts of every business be open for inspection by the Judicatory. After January 1856 no separate business by a member was to be conducted outside the new requirements, a provision that presumably applied to those businesses that had already been established. In preference to direct communal operation of the economy through its joint stock, Hopedale had begun to move toward something like private enterprise under a set of public controls.

Perhaps, as Ballou hoped, this new scheme would have encouraged variety and individual ambition while also assuring that property would serve the good of all. Essentially, it made all business in the village subject to the Constitution of the Practical Christian Republic, including those provisions that limited profits to 4 percent, wages to no more than those of a first-class operative, and prices to the "fair cost value" of the products. Perhaps, Hopedale might have demonstrated that Christian socialism could work in an increasingly complex world. If it did anything, however, this new experi-
ment added to an accumulation of forces that in 1856 suddenly reduced the dreams for a paradise of Christian socialism to dust.

Like most upheavals, this one had its beginnings in previous years. An innocent cause was Ballou’s good friend and successor as president, Ebenezer D. Draper. There is no question that Draper, one of the original founders, was deeply devoted both to the community and to Practical Christianity, but that became part of the problem. Having decided to devote much of the profits from his loom-temple business to the good of the community, he apparently purchased most of the joint stock issued by the community to finance the construction of its school, barn, and other improvements, in the process making himself the community’s largest stockholder and creditor; in 1850 the census listed him as a temple maker with only $1,200 in property, but this did not include his share of the $35,000 in community assets credited to Ballou.9

Draper’s experience and income gave him a reputation as a businessman that was not entirely deserved. An inherited patent was the basis for his success, and it is noteworthy that when he later ventured out to do business in the great world he failed. Certainly, he did not bring a particularly businesslike government to Hopedale either as its treasurer or as its president, and neither did his successor as treasurer, Lemuel Munyan, whom Ballou later described as financially “not a favorite of success.”10 The annual financial reports of the two men were models of accounting simplicity. On the one side of the ledger, they added up the physical assets of the community and the money owed to it; on the other side, they added up the joint stock and other forms of indebtedness; the difference between the two sums meant either gain or loss.

The key determinant of yearly success or failure was the amount of money available to pay the 4 percent dividend on the joint stock. It was only when the balance on the positive side was large enough to meet the full dividend that Draper and his associates believed they had experienced financial success. In his report for 1854, for instance, he reported community assets of $60,441 and liabilities of $59,090, leaving a surplus of $1,351; with the addition of certain other sums, he concluded that the community had made net profits more than sufficient to pay the $1,821 due for dividends on the $39,350 worth of joint stock in the community.11
In the same report, however, Draper took an anxious look at the financial crisis that had recently begun to afflict the outside world with bankruptcies and unemployment, using it to underscore “the necessity of looking at home to see if we cannot improve our condition by more labor, more economy, and by more knowledge of the things in which the financial success of an individual and a Community consists.”

It is notable that in this call for a community belt-tightening, Draper chose to mention particularly the financial success of individuals, one sign of changing times. When in September the Practical Christian listed the virtues of the community, it included a reference to Hopedale as “a suitable sphere of individual enterprise and responsibility, in which each one may by due self-exertion elevate himself to the highest point of his capability.” Although individual enterprise had always had some place in Practical Christian socialism, the idea of personal elevation through “self-exertion” seemed out of place in a community dedicated to cooperative effort and fraternal love.

The meaning of such references began to come clear when Draper made his next annual report to the community in January 1856. After noting that Treasurer Munyan was not yet ready to report on the financial affairs of the community, the president gave his attention to information that had been collected, for the first time, on the individual financial standing of the members. It revealed how much individual possession and enterprise had grown in the village. Draper reported that private property had a total value of $146,000, while the debts of individuals amounted to $53,000, a tidy balance of nearly $93,000.

Intentionally or not, the timing and manner of this report intensified the shock generated in February when Munyan finally reported on the community’s financial state. The treasurer estimated the total assets of the joint stock as $65,275, an 8 percent increase over the previous year, but he also reported a more than 10 percent increase in liabilities to $65,420. Although the deficit was a modest $145, it was immediately noted that this did not include the $1,652 needed to pay the 4 percent dividend on the joint stock, nor did it include any allowance for the depreciation of community assets, an accounting item that had previously been ignored. Further investi-
gation disclosed some new problems, particularly that Dudley Chapman, the soap wizard, had over the previous several years secretly contracted debts for which the community was liable.\textsuperscript{14}

However one read the community's balance sheet, it was not good, but neither was it a sign of financial ruin. Part of the deficit could be attributed to the troubles experienced by the outside economy in 1854–55 and part to the spending made for improvements, notably for the community school and for the great new barn. There seemed nothing that the members could not resolve. They arranged, for instance, to pay Chapman's debts, in exchange for which he agreed to repay the community in installments at no interest. They also decided to levy a special tax on their property and income in order to pay the 4 percent dividend, money that would remain largely in the village, since most of the stock was owned by residents.\textsuperscript{15} Basically, the community seemed well on its way to resolving the crisis and to continuing the progress it had been making since its beginning. There seemed no reason why it could not have continued for an indefinite time.

By March, however, a powerful reason why it might not do so had suddenly presented itself in the form of Ebenezer Draper's brother, George, one of the newest members. The brothers Draper constituted the contrasting stuff of a Victorian moral drama. Although George shared Ebenezer's interest in abolitionism and temperance, he was formed by a different experience that allowed little room for ideals of nonresistance or dreams of brotherhood. Ballou later described him as "a natural born man of the world," given to money-making and impatient of high ideals. In the 1830s he had been employed by the Uxbridge cotton mills, whose bankruptcy in 1837 may have been a significant influence on the formation of Hopedale. While Ebenezer Draper and others from Uxbridge became involved in Practical Christianity, George struggled to rise in the world of business, eventually becoming superintendent of the Otis Company textile mills at Ware, Massachusetts. On the way up, he had patented some improvements in the loom temple invented by his father and manufactured by his brother. In 1853 he decided to go into partnership with Ebenezer in the temple business at Hopedale, and the next year he was admitted as a member of the community; his wife, however, refused membership since she had no use for Practical
Christian socialism. Less than a year after his admission, he began to expand his business by forming a partnership with Warren Dutcher of Vermont, the inventor of an improved temple, whom he persuaded to come to Hopedale; it may have been the formation of this company that inspired the scheme to manufacture the Whipple tackle block.  

Plainly, George Draper had big plans, but they were not for Ballou's Practical Christian Republic. What he originally intended is not clear, but his essential inclination became evident with Hopedale's financial crisis in early 1856. By then, Ballou later estimated, he and his brother had acquired about three-quarters of the whole joint stock. By then, too, he surely understood the basic character and implications of community ownership. In September 1855 the Practical Christian published an account of the community that he undoubtedly read with great interest, especially where it mentioned that because of the nonresistant aversion to government, the joint stock had not been legally incorporated and so was simply a general partnership founded on "conscience, honor, and discretionary precaution." For an ambitious, sharp-minded businessman like George Draper, this character presented both an opportunity and a threat.  

On the positive side, the joint stock afforded him a chance to acquire control of a village whose productive assets exceeded the value of the stock; Hopedale was a developing town with waterpower, facilities, and skilled labor useful in the manufacturing business. The essence of Draper's business genius was a strong acquisitive instinct combined with a shrewd ability to determine the potential value of capital assets. On the negative side, the general partnership left stockholders like himself liable for any and all debts of the community, a danger given concrete form by the financial revelations of early 1856. Moreover, community policies that would inevitably affect business were determined by a majority vote of members in their meetings. The fear that community concerns would intrude on his interests was deepened by the decision to establish the Judicatory of Commerce with its powers to examine accounts and to influence wages and prices of any business operation in the village.  

The only reason for accepting this situation had to be a deep com-
mitment to Practical Christian socialism, but there was no such re-
straint on Draper's calculating mind. Ballou had envisioned a soci-
ety in which everyone would be content with rewards for their
talents within the limits acceptable to a small-town middle class,
but the idea of limiting income to the wages of a first-class operative
and dividends to 4 percent was intolerable to Draper.

How does nonresistance deal with such a Napoleon? The question
became threateningly real when George persuaded his brother to
join him in a coup against the community. After watching the mem-
bers struggle to devise a solution to the financial crisis, the Drapers
suddenly announced at the end of February that they were with-
drawing their investment from the joint stock. As they owned three-
quarters of the stock, their withdrawal meant the dissolution of the
joint-stock association. In theory, the community had means to de-
fend itself, particularly a provision in its bylaws limiting stock re-
demptions to no more than 4 percent of its joint stock per year. 19 If
only because nonresistance denied such a provision any legal basis,
however, the Drapers had the commanding position, one further
strengthened by the argument that the community would eventu-
ally fail anyway; the contrast between private success and com-
munal failure reported earlier by Draper and Munyan had had its
effect. And so the community surrendered rather than attempting to
resist even by nonresistant means.

This Napoleon, at least, was an honorable man. Ballou was able
to persuade the Drapers to assume the debts of the community in
exchange for its productive assets at a fair appraised value; the com-
munity was permitted to retain about ten thousand dollars in prop-
erty, chiefly in the form of the Hopedale school, public square, cem-
etery, and the unsold portions of the village site. Although the
agreement evoked considerable controversy, it was approved on 8
March 1856 by the members, fifteen to one. Notable, though, was
the fact that five of the ayes were cast by George, Ebenezer, and
Anna T. Draper, and by Ebenezer's brother-in-law, Almon Thwing,
and his wife, while fourteen of the thirty members attending this
meeting abstained. To implement the bargain, the community's
constitution was amended in several places; eliminated were the re-
striction of property ownership in the village to members only and
the pledge to provide everyone with "adequate employment, edu-
cational advantages and protection from the evils of poverty, ignorance and vice." And so a revolution against Christian socialism in favor of private enterprise was accomplished with the reluctant support of Ballou and the acquiescence of a majority of the members.

The results were soon apparent. Less than a month later the Drapers consolidated their control of the manufacturing facilities of the village by forming the Hopedale Machine Company with two other members of the community, Joseph B. Bancroft and William Stimson. This company and the Dutcher Temple Company formed earlier became the basis for George Draper's fortune. Although Ebenezer Draper was a partner in both companies, he apparently agree to let his brother have most of the manufacturing assets of the old community in exchange for possession of most of its lands. By 1858 he had laid out the old domain into large house lots and small farms of from two to twenty acres, advertising that the domain was now "opened for settlement" to "persons of liberal and reformatory ideas and tendencies, sympathizing with the fundamental principles and objects of the Hopedale Community." In part because the presence of the Home School increased the sale value of his property, Ebenezer lent the school more than four thousand dollars, which was still owed to him at the end of 1860.

Conspicuously absent from this scene, however, was Commune No. 1, whose members had been notably aloof from the proceedings leading to dissolution; other than Ballou, only one of its members was even at the meeting that voted to dissolve the joint stock. It may have been their interest in this subcommunity that persuaded Ballou and the others to acquiesce so readily in the termination of the larger experiment. For a brief time after dissolution, the commune continued to exist under the sanction of the revised constitution, but if its members expected to continue their new association they were soon disappointed. They were unable to make money from the printing business, and the Whipple tackle block, on which they had staked their future, proved to have flaws that limited its sale. On 6 April, a few days after they had tried to boost their spirits by engaging in a "charade" on the theme of Whipple's invention, they held their last recorded meeting as a commune.

The Practical Christian community itself survived as a shrunken
presence within the village it had created. Gone were its savings bank, Industrial Army, Fire Insurance Company, Council of Religion, and industrial branches. By the end of 1857 its joint stock had shriveled from $41,300 in 1855 to only $7,600; presumably, most of the $33,700 in liquidated stock belonged to the Drapers. During the same period its assets declined by $40,671 to less than $15,000; three years later they were little more than $3,000, much of this later decrease resulting from the sale of village house lots to pay debts owed by the community. As its property shrank, so did its membership; at least nineteen persons formally resigned, including Dudley Chapman, who, three years after the disclosure of his part in the financial crisis, finally concluded that his presence in the community was “an offense and a stumbling block.” Chapman continued his soap business in the village, however, and in 1862 paid off the last of the $2,154 he owed the community for assuming his debts six years before.24

By far the most important departing member was the last of Ballou’s original ministerial colleagues, William Henry Fish. Fish, who had been doing missionary work in upstate New York, decided not to return to Hopedale when he learned of the change. In May 1856 he dismissed the effort to establish socialism in any form as premature, since few people seemed as yet to be sufficiently developed in wisdom and goodness “to live and labor together.” The millennium of Christian brotherhood, Fish said, would have to wait until that distant time when man’s “slowly unfolding and slowly progressing nature” had finally prepared him for the fraternal life. Although he had planned to make Hopedale his last resting place, Fish now determined to cast his lot with the great outside world.25 For him and for others, the Hopedale Community, once the rising star of Bethlehem, had become a dying ember in an ever more worldly Hopedale village.

The community might have survived as more than an ember if Adin Ballou had tried harder to sustain it. Whatever his private bitterness toward the Drapers, Hopedale’s founder and resident inspiration made no effort to rally his followers against them. Instead, he allowed the brothers to convince him that he had no choice but to salvage what he could from impending ruin. After he had arranged for them to take over the debts of the community, he accepted dis-
solution with the conviction that at least he had protected his followers from indebtedness. His close friendship with Ebenezer, the last and most generous of his original supporters, was probably the key influence on his behavior, even though it was his successor’s casual financial management that had contributed to the financial crisis.

In any case, Ballou was slow to recognize the full extent of the disaster. Six months after the change he confessed that he had been “deeply pained, mortified and discouraged for many months,” and at the end of the year he wrote privately that he had abandoned his hopes for cooperative association: “Few people are near enough right in heart, head, and habit to live in close social intimacy.” Only later, however, would he recognize that what in his Autobiography (1890) he called the “revolution of 1856” marked the beginning of the end for Practical Christianity. Moreover, in these earlier years he was often preoccupied with his own affairs. As late as 1859 he continued to advertise that he was prepared to sell a modified version of the Whipple tackle block, the last remnant of the failed Commune No. 1; the defects in the original had led to more costs than sales, forcing him to improve it at “great cost and pain.” And he became more preoccupied with the Practical Christian, taking on full responsibility for the newspaper in the spring of 1856 when William Heywood became principal of the Home School. Under the circumstances, he was probably not disposed to condemn the Draper brothers for their pursuit of individual gain.

It was understandable, then, that his first public reaction to the change was to abandon his earlier hopes for cooperative ownership of property even in the joint-stock form. Associated property would be desirable and workable if human nature were ready for it, but not even reformers had proved that they could unite in meaningful association. Realistically, most of the world belonged to individual property. In May 1856 he wrote that capital had become the dominant power in the material realm: “Those who hold the property of the world are becoming more and more its governors. We cannot set this power at nought and defy it, if we would.” It was foolish to preach indifference to property, he said, if only because the preacher himself was fed and clothed by property owners.

Ballou was not yet ready to abandon his hopes for the Practical
Christian Republic, however. In November 1856, when he first public­ly expressed his feelings about the change, he said that he had first been humiliated and crushed by it but that further reflection convinced him that the Hopedale Community had attempted too much. He was willing, therefore, to work with simpler, less completely organized forms of association and with individuals in the hope of eventually raising them to a higher plane. With characteristic optimism, he tried to convince himself that dissolution had freed true Practical Christians from local distractions to carry on a more comprehensive campaign to spread their principles.29

Ballou even retained some of his old dream for Christian socialism, envisioning the formation of societies whose wealthier members would voluntarily limit the personal use of their property to their basic needs, reserving the surplus for the benefit of the less fortunate; when the rich and able could be persuaded to avoid extravagant consumption, there would be enough wealth available to eliminate all forms of poverty. In the summer of 1857 he published a lengthy editorial urging the members of the Practical Christian Republic, at Hopedale and elsewhere, to commit themselves to the grand goal of guaranteeing to

every orderly citizen of this Republic a comfortable home, suitable employment, adequate subsistence, congenial associates, a good education, proper stimulants to personal righteousness, sympathetic aid in distress, and due protection in the exercise of all natural rights. . . . Good homes in good neighborhoods for all who try to be worthy of them; this is the way to regenerate human society, and render the earth a manifold Eden.30

Without the complexities of overorganized communities, these benefits could be assured through a simple commitment to the stewardship of property required in Ballou's model republic.

The times offered some support for Ballou's hopes. The mid 1850s brought an upsurge of religious feeling and reform that peaked in the months after the Panic of 1857. Moreover, Ballou could find some particular hope in spiritualism. Several months after the failure of the Hopedale Community, he visited Southold, Long Island, where he encountered Thomas Lake Harris, who was later to establish religious communities first in western New York and then in
California. Ballou was profoundly impressed by this "Spiritual Medium, Poet and Lecturer," remembering years later that Harris had had a vision that "was sublimely grand and holy, and agreed so closely with my highest aspirations, that I could but accept it as substantially true." He returned to Hopedale with renewed confidence in the future. Perhaps the days of miracles had not passed.

In 1858 he gave some support to the Harmonial Township Association, organized by New Englanders with the aim of acquiring tracts of land to provide "a home for all settlers on reasonable terms, free from the trickery of monopoly and speculation." And he continued to hope that he could at least begin to convert the world to Practical Christianity, that he could, as he said later, "be a modern John the Baptist, preparing the way for a better future and making ready for the coming of the divine kingdom." Perhaps the unstable and disappointing times would renew and complete the spiritual revolution that had molded him in the 1830s. Indeed, the later 1850s were preparing a profound revolution that would significantly alter his world. It was not a revolution that would benefit Practical Christianity, however. In fact, the coming upheaval was to extinguish even the tiny flame that had been left burning at Hopedale.