

The Experience of Authority in Early New England*

(初期ニューイングランドにおける権威の体験)

David D. Hall**

I

The English men and women who emigrated to New England in the 1630s wanted to enact a “Reformation” of church and civil society. Theirs would be a second reformation, carrying to completion the recovery of true religion that Luther, Calvin, and the other great reformers of the sixteenth century had initiated but that like-minded Protestants in England had never been able to conclude, prevented in doing so by the conservatism of English society and, especially, the conservatism of Elizabeth I and her successors James I and Charles I as heads of state. The English people who came to live here permanently—a “wilderness people,” they often called themselves—regarded the literal wilderness of the new world as a place awaiting transformation into the “land of Emanuel.” Such a place was defined by their pledge to “give up ourselves wholly to ye Lord Jesus Christ, to be taught and governed by him in all our relations, conditions, and considerations in this world, avouching him to be our only Prophet and Teacher, our only priest and propitiation, our only King and Lawgiver.”¹ An extraordinary determination to rework church and civil society was needed to sustain the colonists in New England, for the risks they were taking were many. As news drifted back to England of how this “Reformation” was unfolding, most of their contemporaries, even those of Puritan sympathies, thought the changes taking place too radical. Those who watched and worried had good reason for doing so, for the colonists were upending a host of practices and institutions within English society and replacing them with quite different procedures and structures—for choosing ministers and admitting people to the church, for arranging the inheritance of property and definitions of crime, for electing civil leaders to office and setting boundaries to their authority. “When we first set up Reformation in our Church way,”

* This article is a revised version of the special lecture given at Sophia University on 12 January 2006.

**John A. Bartlett Professor of New England Church History, Harvard Divinity School, Cambridge, Massachusetts, U.S.A.

John Winthrop wrote in 1643, "did not this expose us to as greate an hazard as we could run both from abroad and at home? Did not our friends in England many of them forewarne us of it ere we came away? Did not others send letters after us, to deterre us from it? Did not some among ourselves . . . inculcate our inevitable dangers . . . ?"²

What Winthrop recalled of the risks being taken in church affairs was no less true of arrangements within civil society. The merchants, gentry, and ministers who joined the Massachusetts Bay Company were a hard-headed folk, but they wanted something better for themselves than the corrosive selfishness and "oppression" they saw around them everywhere in England. So they said in specifying the reasons for founding a colony in far-off New England, knowing well that such an enterprise could result in bankruptcy or cost them their lives, as it had for many of those involved with the founding of Virginia. But colony-founding also offered them the hope of exchanging a society riddled with conflict and injustice for one that held out the possibility of living together in accordance with a social ethics of righteousness and mutuality—or, as John Winthrop would say in "A Model of Christian Charity" (1630), "the bonds of love."

To an astonishing extent the colonists would fulfill these goals. Among all the settlements in the new world that emigrants from England were creating in the first half of the seventeenth century, only in the case of New England would private and public life be shaped so fully by expectations of reform. Not without conflict and confusion, but steadily nonetheless, the colonists carried these high expectations into action. Practice and principle were fused in the "Fundamentall Orders" drawn up and ratified in Connecticut in 1638, with its provisions that the "General Assembly" be re-elected each year, that no one holding the office of governor do so for two years in succession, and that persons holding this office could serve only as presiding officer, shorn of any veto or vote. Practice and principle were spelled out in the carefully scripted organizing of civil government in New Haven the following year and in the "Body of Liberties" that the Massachusetts government ratified in 1641. At these moments as at many others, the colonists indicated their intention to test the possibilities for living according to "rules" laid down in Scripture. They were testing, too, the possibilities for empowering ordinary people in the affairs both of church and civil society.

In the more intimate setting of towns and congregations the colonists were even more venturesome. Discarding the elaborate apparatus of the Church of England—all hierarchy of officers, as radical Puritans had long imagined doing, but also

ecclesiastical courts and the system of taxation known as “tithes”—local people affirmed the right to choose (“elect”) their own ministers, pay them by voluntary contributions, and decide among themselves who was qualified for church membership. Taking up the task of fashioning local governments, these people assigned political power to all those who were householders, a power to be exercised in frequent community meetings. Though this way of doing things soon shifted to the practice of delegating most administrative work to a smaller group of “townsmen” or “selectmen,” town voters agreed to make this change only after stipulating that certain major decisions must be made collectively.³

No one quite knew what to call the new political order—“Christian Commonwealth” was one term in use by 1638⁴—but in 1640 the men residing in the newly founded town of Providence used a term that would have shocked most of their contemporaries in England, and indeed in Europe, when they declared “unanimously” that their “Bodie Politick . . . is democracie, or Popular Government; that is to say, it is in the Powre of the Body of Freemen, orderly assembled, or the major part of them, to make or constitute Just Lawes . . . and to depute from among themselves such Ministers as shall see them faithfully executed.”⁵

Beyond the structure of church and civil government lay a “social imaginary” of how people in society should live together. This imaginary or moral vision had many elements, but at its heart was a re-casting of social relationships as “mutuality,” that is, a willingness to engage in self-denial for the sake of the collective good. Mutuality went hand-in-hand, therefore, with an emphasis on subordinating self interest to community. The social ethics of the colonists contained, as well, the principle of “righteousness,” or the obligation to observe the whole of the moral law as outlined in Scripture.

These were rules no group of people could have practiced to perfection. All too soon, peace in towns and churches was fractured by conflict and the ethics of mutuality disturbed by self-interest. The two uncontrollable forces that plagued every village community in early modern Europe, illicit sex and excessive imbibing of alcohol, defied the efforts of the authorities in New England to eliminate them. The many young servants who sold their labor to other immigrants became a troublesome source of disorder, as did young people in general by the 1650s. Families moved from one town to another with astonishing frequency, and entrepreneurial town founders rarely lived in the communities they helped to create. Massachusetts and Connecticut each tried to seize land in other colonies, and quarrels over boundary lines persisted for decades. Nor could religious and

political dissidents be kept away despite strong efforts to do so.

Yet the social imaginary of the early years should not be dismissed as mere transitory vision, as some social historians have done, for it persisted as a framework of self-understanding and collective action. Its themes were voiced in many forms—in elegiac verse and autobiographies or commemorative prose, in works of history, in the gift-giving that people specified in wills, in gestures of civil courts to encourage arbitration or of churches to renew a covenant, in letters of advice and, above all, in sermons. Thus Thomas Hinkley's wife was remembered by her husband for her generosity to church and others: "And allwayes gave more than her Rate away, / Yea ever first wou'd pay that pious due, / Then other Debts, and on the Residue / Wou'd wisely live and help ye Poor she knew."⁶ At the very beginning of colonization, a "Pilgrim" separatist named Robert Cushman came from England in 1621 to visit the tiny community at Plymouth. There he preached a sermon on the theme of generosity toward the saints, urging the colonists to seek the "wealth" of others rather than their own.⁷

Many years later, in 1654, another Englishman who had lived briefly in Massachusetts wrote from England chastising the townspeople of Providence for the "divisions," "tumults" and "injustice" that had overtaken them. The purpose of his letter was to refurbish a social imaginary that, in response, the people of Providence reaffirmed themselves:

Is not the fear and awe of God amongst you to restrain? Is not the love of Christ in you, to fill you with yearning bowels, one toward another, and constrain you to live not unto yourselves, but unto him that died for you, yes, and is risen again? Are there no wise men amongst you? No public self-denying spirits, that, at least upon the grounds of . . . equity and prudence, can find out some way or means of union and reconciliation for you amongst yourselves . . . ?⁸

Thus were the colonists summoned to behave like Christians—not as nominal, "neuter," hypocrites but as real Christians who in the "wilderness" of the new world were attempting to live according to a distinctive ethics.

Only if we take such statements seriously can we begin to reclaim the radicalism of practice and principle among the colonists as they brought towns, churches, and colonies into being in the 1620s and 1630s. How much they accomplished in attempting a second Reformation and in recasting the institutions of civil society

may be suggested by glancing sideways at the Puritan movement in England once it came into political power in the 1640s. Though we speak of the "Puritan Revolution," Parliament was unable to remake either the national church or the institutions of monarch, Parliament, law courts, and local government. The full flowering of radicalism was held in check because the "Long Parliament" was dominated by moderates and conservatives who, as the 1640s unfolded, became increasingly anxious about the agitation for change within the Army and groups such as the Levellers. For most members of Parliament, it was sufficient that some aspects of "catholic" worship be eliminated and that a handful of erring bishops be removed from office. Otherwise, Parliament wanted a uniform, comprehensive national church along the lines of Presbyterianism, or even a church with some form of Episcopacy. In political life it was enough if the King would agree to certain limits on his authority, and that bishops cease to serve in the House of Lords.

Where radicalism found the space to flourish was elsewhere—among the ministers and lay people who broke with Presbyterianism and Episcopacy to become "Independents," among intellectuals and disaffected artisans whose proposals for change gained them the name of "Levellers," among other intellectuals, most of them ministers, who proposed some scheme of "godly rule" that entrusted the institutions of civil government to "the saints," and of most importance, among the rank and file and some officers of the New Model Army as it became alienated from the Long Parliament and the King, to the point of questioning whether the monarchy should not give way to a republican form of government. Together, radicals in the army and the Levellers fashioned by 1648 a far-reaching program of reform: Parliaments to sit for only six months; elections to take place every two years; eliminating the "negative voice" (that is, veto) of King and House of Lords over measures passed by the Commons; apportioning seats in the Commons more fairly among the English population; opening up the franchise so that many more men (though not everyone) could vote; revamping the criminal code to eliminate imprisonment for debt; simplifying the civil code and making it more accessible by eliminating law French; ending the system of enforced tithes to support the clergy; and allowing liberty of conscience, or freedom to worship as one pleased. Some radicals were republicans who wanted to eliminate the monarchy; others suggested disbanding the House of Lords. At the root of most of these suggestions lay an idea that in 1640s England was far from being widely held: legitimacy flowed upward, from "the people."⁹

Little of this agenda was actually accomplished, although the execution of Charles I in 1649 did usher in a short-lived Commonwealth that was terminated with the restoration of the monarchy in 1660. The English Revolution was like the French of 1789 in that its radicals were a small minority contending against social forces that could not be overcome. The situation in New England was exactly the reverse. Here the radicals were in charge and here, in the "free aire of the new world," no countervailing forces rose up to thwart them. None of the colonists were Levellers. Nor did they know of the Leveller program as they were fashioning their own institutions.¹⁰ Yet with the one major exception of toleration, the program that seemed so daring in England was fulfilled or surpassed on this side of the Atlantic: in a greatly simplified criminal code that ended imprisonment for debt and capital punishment for felonious theft;¹¹ in separating the franchise (or right to vote) from social rank or wealth; in requiring annual elections of General Courts (colony-wide governments) and a system of representation that gave each and every town two or more deputies (representatives); and in denying any one—governor, magistrates, or deputies—a "negative voice" or, when permitting such a practice, granting it to both branches of the General Court, the deputies as well as the magistrate. The reworking of the church was no less extensive: tithes gave way to "voluntary" payments and then to an equitable system of "rates," lay church members gained the right to elect and dismiss ministers and to decide on who should be admitted, and each of these churches became, in principle, autonomous "congregations" (hence "Congregationalism"). Other measures threw up barriers between these churches and political affairs: ministers never held political office and ecclesiastical courts of the kind that had existed in England were not re-created. Indeed the colonists were determined to prevent the abuses in the English system that flowed from blurring the distinction between "temporal" and "spiritual" forms of authority.¹²

Together, ideology and the unspoken consequences of immigration worked other changes. Either legally or in social practice, the English social order con-signed substantially more rights and privileges to the aristocracy and the upper gentry than to those beneath them in rank. It was customary for aristocrats and gentry to intervene in Parliamentary elections and claim seats for themselves or for clients. The same groups were accustomed to nominating clergy to "livings" they controlled. In their role as county magistrates charged with levying taxes on property holders, they acted arbitrarily to reduce the assessments on their own holdings far below the proper amounts. And although some gentry and aristo-

crats were critical of Charles I, many others sought rewards that only the King could provide, especially offices (functions) that generated revenue most of which they could retain for themselves.¹³ To outsiders, as some radicals and Puritans were to the workings of social rank, these ways of doing things smelled of “corruption.”

Puritans were far from being the first to inveigh against such abuses of wealth and power and to call for change—Thomas More had imagined a better society in *Utopia* (1518), and criticism erupted from time to time under Charles, his father James I, and even under Elizabeth, though usually expressed indirectly as criticism of “Popery,” a useful code word for anxieties about the abuse of power and privilege. But again, the effects in New England of ideology and immigration were little short of astonishing. None of these forms of corruption were possible in the colonies. No one in New England used civic office for personal gain. Nor did anyone depend on patronage for such offices, at least not until the end of the century. The people who apportioned taxes were responsible to the town meeting for doing so fairly; and protests seem to have been few. When the colonists had to decide on rules for the inheritance of property, the forms of privilege that sustained an aristocratic system vanished: no entailing of land, no disinheriting of younger sons or daughters. Instead, in law and in social practice most of the colonists distributed their estates equally to every child, male and female, reserving only a double share for oldest sons. Widows were ensured one third of an estate, both goods and real estate. Almost without celebration, the excesses of the English social system and the apparatus of a hierarchical church simply disappeared.

Some of these new ways of civil and church government rested on a simple principle that the minister Thomas Hooker voiced publicly in Hartford in May 1638: “They who have power to appoint officers and magistrates, it is in their power, also, to set the bounds and limitations of the power and place unto which they call them,” giving as the first, most important reason for this rule “Because the foundation of authority is laid, firstly, in the free consent of the people.”¹⁴ These words would have appalled Charles I and the men around him who in England at this very moment were extolling the divine origins of kingship and insisting that the King did not owe his authority to any elected body. Indeed, four years into his reign, which began in 1625, Charles dismissed the Parliament of 1629—it had no authority to meet on its own—and began to rule without the advice or services of any elected body. He extended his way of thinking to the

structure of the Church of England, insisting that a hierarchical system with bishops at its top was the necessary correlate of divine right monarchy. "No bishops, no king" his father James I was said to have asserted, and Charles could only agree. In his vision of the good society authority flowed downward through the king's officers and the bishops. He put his assumptions about the exercise and justice of royal power to the test in how he financed the costs of government and, in matters relating to the church, how he pushed the bishops to stamp out local irregularities or "nonconformity" of the kind that Puritan-minded lay people and ministers had commonly been able to practice.¹⁵

These measures were fresh on the minds of the colonists when they drafted "Fundamentals" to guide the fashioning of civil government in New England. Experience with the "tyranny" of the bishops was fresh, too, among those who took the lead in fashioning the "Congregational Way." The political situation in England was immensely important as background to what would happen in New England, and reverberations from the "English Revolution" were strongly felt in the 1640s and 1650s. Thus it happened that the experience of authority in New England would be of a different kind than it was for most of the people in England—not very different, perhaps, for some servants or within some households, but very different in the small-scale setting of congregations and town meetings, in sessions of civil and criminal courts, in colony governments, and (although this is more difficult to prove) in social relationships as these were shaped by certain ethical rules.

II

The social practices that made the New England colonies so distinctive flowed directly from expectations fashioned out of their English experience filtered through the core elements of the Reformed Protestant imagination. What did they hope to gain by coming, and what did they say to friends and allies back in England about their new way of life? Could they see connections between their venture into the American wilderness and the history of the Christian church since the apostolic age or, much closer to them in their own time, connections with the Protestant Reformation? Were they living in the "final days" foretold in the text that concludes the New Testament? Their thinking about prophecy and church history was, as we will see, the threshold to much of what unfolded in New England.

Thomas Weld was perhaps the first of the emigrants to say emphatically what many others were feeling. Writing in 1632 from Massachusetts to some of his former parishioners in Essex, England, all of whom would have fresh in mind the conflicts his ministry had aroused in their village, Weld emphasized how, in his new community, “the greater part are the better part Here are none of the men of Gibeon . . . knocking at our doors distributing our sweet peace or threatening violence. Here, blessed be the Lord God forever, our ears are not beaten nor the air filled with oaths . . . nor our eyes and ears vexed with the unclean conversation of the wicked.”¹⁶ Others, too, contrasted their conflict-ridden situation in England with the fellowship they now enjoyed. Testifying before the congregation in Cambridge, the mariner John Trumbull recalled “hearing many reproaches on saints” and how he had been pained when “many friends set themselves against me” once he “resolved no more to sin,” a decision that led him to prefer “the company of saints.” The fellowship he found among the saints first in old, then in New England was also John Brock’s experience when he came with his family in 1637: “I was encouraged to love the Saints that were called Puritans The Lord . . . heard me to open a Way for us to leave England & to get the Society of a beloved Christian.”¹⁷ So it went for many others: liberated for the first time from all the negative overtones of “Puritan” they relished being with others like themselves who willingly spoke of being “saints” or simply, Christians.

But the liberation they were celebrating much deeper than this. Weld is again a superb informant as he lists the practices the colonists were adopting, and why these new practices were so deeply meaningful:

O how hath my heart been made glad with the comforts of His house . . . wherein all things are done in the form and pattern showed in the mount, members provided, church officers elected and ordained, sacrament administered, scandals prevented, censured, fast days and holy feast days and all such things by authority commanded and performed according to the precise rule.¹⁸

Everyone back in England who shared his letter—it was copied and recopied within a communications network of the “godly”—would have known exactly what he meant: instead of bishops and ceremonies that Puritans deemed “popish remnants,” the colonists were choosing their own ministers, practicing effective church “discipline,” and worshiping in the simplified manner that radical Puritans

had so long extolled as the alternative to the “unlawful” features of the Church of England.

Here indeed was what many of the immigrants most wanted and their ministers looking forward to. “Our people here desire to worship God in spirit, & in trueth,” the minister John Cotton reported from Massachusetts in 1634, noting that a principal reason people gave for emigrating was “that we mighte enjoy the libertye, not of some ordinances of god, but of all, & all in Purity.” Two years later he drew on the language of Christian primitivism in observing that “the body of the members whom we receive, doe in generall professe, the reason of their coming over to us was, that they might be freed from the bondage of such humane inventions and ordinances as their soules groaned under”¹⁹

“Humane inventions” was among the most powerful of the accusations that Protestant reformers in the sixteenth century had levied against Catholicism and that reformers in the Church of England had levied in their turn against the bishops and the Book of Common Prayer. Its power sprang from how a single phrase contained an interpretation of Christian history that the emigrants had absorbed from a host of sources, though perhaps especially a literary product of militant English Protestantism in the sixteenth century, the *Acts and Monuments* or “*Book of Martyrs*” assembled by the English clergyman John Foxe. In it Foxe told how the church as organized by the Apostles had fallen under the control of the Papacy and been corrupted. Foxe assured his readers that true Christianity had survived for centuries on the margins even as the Papacy became more and more obsessed with power, more and more the vehicle of Satan’s hatred of Christ and Christ’s own people. Indeed, for Foxe and his heirs, the Papacy was the living, historical embodiment of the Antichrist. With the Reformation came, at last, the moment when a faithful, refuge people rose up to overthrow the “tyranny” of Rome. The purpose of the Protestant Reformation was thus to enact a return to “primitive” or “first” times when Christ was sole head of the Church, with no hierarchy of officers beneath him.²⁰

Like almost all their fellow Puritans, the emigrants took this interpretation of history for granted. It was easily extended to their own times, as William Bradford of Plymouth did in writing “Of Plimmoth Plantation,” his history of the “pilgrims” who arrived at Plymouth in 1620. The opening paragraph evoked the struggle of radical Puritans, here identified as “the godly,” to recover “the right worship of God and discipline of Christ established in the church, according to the simplicity of the gospel, without the mixture of men’s inventions, and to have

and to be ruled by the laws of God's Word." Bradford regarded the bishops of the Church of England as "unlawful" tyrants and his own small group as heirs to the martyrs of the early church. Many of the people who came to Massachusetts in the 1630s were similarly persuaded that the bishops were "unlawful" and the Church of England in sore need of purging itself of "men's inventions," which meant everything left over from Catholicism. "We came from thence," a colonist explained in 1647, "to avoid . . . the hierarchy, the crosse in baptisme, the holy dayes, the booke of Common Prayer, &c."²¹ Placing their decisions to emigrate in the context of Christian primitivism, the colonists declared that the task they gladly undertook was to complete a reformation left unfinished in England and even on the Continent.

The primitivism of the colonists took on a legalistic edge whenever the colonists voiced their conviction that the "Word"—that is, Scripture—contained "models" for the church and other institutions. Indeed, Scripture had the force of law that the Christian church was obliged to obey. To those in the Church of England who argued against this way of thinking, Thomas Hooker had replied in 1633, the year he emigrated to New England, that the church "must deliver the laws which she hath received from [Christ] her King, not dare to make laws."²² The "Tables of the Law" in Genesis were only the beginning, for both Old and New Testament contained principles for guiding the relationship between church and state, the "due form" of civil government, and, above all, for how the church should be organized:

The partes of Church-Government are all of them exactly described in the word of God being parts or means of Instituted worship according to the Second Commandment Soe that it is not left in the power of men, officers, Churches, or any state in the world to add, diminish, or alter any thing in the least measure therein.²³

Hence the feeling among the colonists that there was one right way of doing things—one set of practices that were "lawful," one right way of reading Scripture for the purpose of restoring simplicity and purity to the church. This indeed was the purpose of the second Reformation.

Some of the colonists felt strongly that Scripture should also serve as a model for civil government and public culture. "There is undoubtedly a forme of Civil Government instituted by God himself," John Eliot declared in *The Christian*

Commonwealth.²⁴ Where this expectation was most fully realized was in law codes and court practice: Leviticus became the source of crimes defined as “capital” (i.e., deserving execution), and the ethos that guided the officers of civil courts was how to preserve and protect “righteousness.”²⁵ Another possibility was that civil culture should defer to the church, or, as it was commonly said, to “godly rule,” that is, assigning civil responsibilities, including the franchise (the right to vote) to those who became church members. The minister John Davenport persuaded the lay men of New Haven to accept this principle. Earlier, in 1631, the same proviso had been adopted in Massachusetts. Yet the vision and practice of godly rule was never this specific in other, no less “Puritan” governments such as Connecticut; and Winthrop himself was on record as contesting the argument that Scripture was the basis of civil society.²⁶

These hopes for godly rule were juxtaposed with a darker, less optimistic awareness of the situation in Europe. Was it possible that the forces of the Antichrist were winning? The founder voiced this anxiety in 1629 in listing first among the “general considerations” for undertaking a new colony the possibility that the “Jesuits” were “rear[ing] up in all places of the world” the “kingdom of Antichrist.” Around them these Englishmen saw plausible evidence that the godly were being defeated: the “desolation” of Protestants on the continent as Catholic armies moved through Germany, the plight of French Protestants in a country dominated by Catholics, and in their own country, the rise to power of bishops who seemed to favor “Popery,” supported by a king who had a Catholic wife. Was this the right moment “to gitt out of the Prelates hands”? “Who knows,” the founders of the Company declared, “but that God hath provided this place [Massachusetts], to be a refuge for manye, whom he meanes to save out of the general destruction.”²⁷ That New England was serving the immigrants as “a hiding place . . . from the rage of persecution” was similarly a theme of John Cotton’s some seventeen years later when he gave thanks to God for “preserving and prospering” the colony “from foraigne plots of the late archbishop [William Laud, executed in England in 1645] and his confederates.”²⁸

Tyranny and “bondage,” followed by deliverance and new-found purity—such was how the colonists understood the sequence, first, of suffering in England as Puritans under the rule of the bishops, and second, of coming to the new world. It was a sequence packed with layers of meaning that would influence the colonists’ decision-making about church order and civil society. How should the “godly” ensure that power remained in the right hands? If Scripture and Christian

history both taught the lesson that the saints were always and everywhere beset by enemies who plotted their destruction, a lesson borne out in the social experience of the colonists back in England, should they use their new-found freedom to put barriers between themselves and the “worldly”? If “tyranny” were an ever-present danger embodied in an expansive, aggressive Catholicism but also in the workings of Crown and Church in England, should they insert in their own forms of church and state some means of protecting “liberties,” and especially the “gospel freedom” of a reformed church? If most of the colonists could be considered as among the “Lord’s free people,” should they be trusted to do what was right, and therefore be given more authority? And if theirs was to be a “Christian Common-wealth,” what was the place in that commonwealth for any king other than Christ?

These themes pervade the sermons, letters, and treatises of the 1620s and 1630s in which the colonists reflected on their “times”—the warfare between Christ and Anti-christ as mirrored in the troubled state of England and Europe, the horrors of “tyranny” and the sufferings of the godly, the imperative of all things being “lawful,” and the craving for deliverance from so many particular evils—the unlawful “ceremonies” of the Church of England, the improper role of the civil state in things “spiritual,” the tyranny of persecuting bishops, the contempt in English culture for those who gained the nickname of “Puritans.” Preaching a series of sermons in Boston in the winter of 1639 on chapter 13 of the Book of Revelation, John Cotton lingered on the “monsters” he associated with “tyranny,” or the power to oppress the saints and overturn divine law. And as Cotton’s actions in the 1630s had already demonstrated, the image and idea of fleeing from “tyranny” and gaining unexpected freedom were powerful incentives for building a new order of church and state and civil society.²⁹

Imagining that new order, the colonists returned again and again to those parts of the New Testament where St. Paul instructed congregations on the meaning of fellowship. From his epistles, and especially the letter to the Ephesians, they borrowed the word “edification” for their own church covenants. Paul had likened the church to the body of Christ, and the body of Christ to a temple constructed out of “living stones” (Ephesians 4), his point being that the church was constructed out of materials that had been transformed by the Holy Spirit to become in some sense one with Christ. Fellowship was about this oneness, or being joined together in a “body.” To edify or be edified was to practice the mutuality of the saints. It was to “Love the Church and people of God,” and

“cherish . . . kindness and charity” in their life together. So the newly founded church in Boston affirmed in asking each member “to walke with this Church and the members There of in brotherly Love and unto mutuall Edification; and succor; according to God,” promising in return “Likewise to walke towards you in brotherly love and holy watchfulness to the mutuall buildinge up of one another in the Fellowship of the Lord Jesus.”³⁰

These hopes for a new order had other sources besides Scripture and an understanding of church history. For several centuries a tradition of social criticism had flourished in England, its themes a multitude of complaints—that the rich were ignoring the poor, that the clergy were greedy, that those who overcharged for services or hoarded grain in situations of scarcity were engaged in “oppression.”³¹ Within the literature of complaint, wealth was often depicted as a doorway to wasteful “luxury” and the craving for wealth an incentive to selfishness or corruption among those in high places, be it in church or state. Time and again, this literature reminded people that the riches of this world were impermanent and therefore of little value compared to the riches that were found in heaven. None of these themes was necessarily radical, just as none was uniquely Puritan.³² The one concept or moral rule that did have radical possibilities was a concept with a strong source in the law, though it also turns up in More’s *Utopia*, in the sixteenth-century literature of complaint and, of more importance, in the Bible: the term “equity.” The word is astonishingly prevalent in New England, used in many different contexts as a synonym for “fairness,” “justice,” or “equal.” Debating the merits of a Massachusetts law allowing the colony to turn back immigrants, John Winthrop (in favor) and Henry Vane (opposed) each used the term. In his reflections on whether the colonists should adopt the “laws of Moses,” John Cotton said that any such laws must observe the “general rules of equity.” Thomas Hooker used the word several times in a single letter commenting on political events. Preparing a new digest of the colony’s laws in 1658, a committee in Plymouth Colony described the “good and wholesome lawes” handed down by God as “grounded on principles of morall equitie as that all men Christians espetically ought always to have an eye thereunto in the framing of their politique Constitutions.”³³ Whatever the context, the term seems to have had unusual power as a standard against which to evaluate the distribution of power and material sources within civil society.

What matters, then, is not how “Puritan” the word may have been, but its consequences in New England as the colonists fashioned local and colonial gov-

ernments, prepared codes of law and set courts in motion, arranged for the distribution of land and other material resources, and brought together “visible saints” into covenanted communities.

III

Let me make these themes more specific by examining the history of one such covenanted community, the congregation that was organized in Cambridge (formerly Newtown), Massachusetts in early February 1636. This case history will serve another purpose, to ask whether the “Congregational Way” was exclusive or inclusive, a question that has a larger significance in the debates, both old and recent, over the nature of religion and society in early New England: was Puritan “communalism” exclusive or inclusive, hierarchical and authoritarian or participatory and in some measure democratic?

As a first step in February 1636, Thomas Shepard, who had been a minister in England and would now become the minister in new-world Cambridge, asked the civil magistrates for “approbation” and solicited the presence and approval of the “elders of all the neighboring churches.” These steps signaled Shepard’s willingness to cooperate with other churches and the civil government at a moment when some congregations were insisting on the principle of strict autonomy.³⁴ At the beginning of the ceremony, the prospective ruling elder, a lay officer of the church, presumably Edmund Frost, prayed. “After this, Mr. Shepard prayed with deep confession of sin, &c., and exercised out of Eph[esians]” 5:27: “that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.” The other clergy who were present recommended that the proper number of persons needed to “make a church” was seven. Thereupon, Shepard and six or seven others “declare[d] what work of grace the Lord had wrought in them” and “gave a solemn assent” to the church covenant. After being offered the right hand of fellowship, Shepard exhorted the “rest of his body, about the nature of their covenant, and to stand firm to it,” and he himself was ordained.³⁵

By the end of this remarkable day it was clear to everyone that the church in Cambridge would be selective or “gathered” in its membership. Thereafter, no one could join unless she or he testified convincingly about the “work of grace,” a process known as making a “relation,” and affirmed a commitment to the church

covenant. Henry Dunster, a minister who moved to Cambridge in 1640 to preside over newly-founded Harvard College, specified the nature of such a church in his relation to the church. The "Lord hath commanded there should be a difference between [the] precious and the vile, hence two sorts should be held out: (1) unbelievers, (2) [the] disobedient; . . . faith and obedience [are] the soul and body of the church." For Dunster, the church covenant marked the boundary between the obedient and the disobedient, the pure and the unclean: "you that have been baptized and have made a covenant . . . to forsake the devil, away then with pride, world and lusts of flesh . . . give up yourselves to Christ so for obedience."³⁶

Shepard spoke of the church in the same way. For his sermon text in February he chose verses from Paul's letter to the Ephesians in which he urged the Christian community to "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness" and, in the verse that Shepard singled out, called on Christians as a body to be "a glorious church . . . holy and without blemish." Shepard's first act on the day the church was organized had been to pray "with deep confession of sin," a means of self-cleansing that, like the passage from Ephesians, the process of offering a relation, and his own re-ordination to the office of ministry, underscored the difference between pure church and fallen world. More, the manner in which his congregation was organized made clear to the "great assembly" that gathered for the event the great benefit of having come to Massachusetts, for at long last the colonists could purge their congregations of the corruptions of the Church of England and restore the "primitive" or lawful form of the church as defined in St. Paul's letters.³⁷

Another great advantage of new-world Cambridge was that the church members were liberated from the prejudices and conflicts that had made for so much difficulty in England. There, the people who called themselves "the godly" or sometimes "Puritans," and who wanted to reform not only the church but also social custom and social practice, had found themselves on opposite sides from conservatives who liked things as they were. In some towns the reformers had gained the upper hand, but never without arousing resistance and conflict. People in new-world Cambridge recalled those conflicts in the relations they made as candidates for membership, simultaneously evoking the pleasures of fellowship with the "people of God" who practiced among themselves an ethic of "love."³⁸ The story told by William Manning in his relation was typical, a narrative of choices, at once religious and social, that he and others like him had faced in their mother country. "Going to prentice" as a boy in a town "where there was bad

examples," Manning found himself drawn into "vain company" and became a reader of "vain books." Hearing of persons in the same community who "lived more restrainedly and civilly than I did," he "thought I would leave off my bad company and join myself to such as they were." The more he became "acquainted with them that were godly," the more he was drawn to their fellowship: "I began to cleave to them . . . [and] I saw I did love those who love Christ." Concurrently, Manning began to visit "a minister's house" where his newfound friends "fell to examine me." His wife (for by now he had married and was living elsewhere) did not welcome these new friends or the "grief and trouble" that arose as Manning wrestled with the questions about faith and practice they put to him: "she being a carnal woman did rather reprove me." Yet he was persuaded that "no work [was] more necessary than [the work of the Lord], because whatever is not of faith is sin," and he persisted in seeking fellowship with like-minded people.³⁹

The aggressiveness of the "profane" toward the "saints" but, on the other hand, the pleasures of fellowship with the "Lord's people"—these two patterns of experience in England would shape the emigrants' expectations for the church in new-world Cambridge and make it easier for them to accept, even welcome, the strictness of a "gathered" membership. Like Manning, others remembered how they had suffered "under many scoffs and scorns" once they decided to withdraw from the company of the profane. For many, too, the outcome of affiliating with the godly was a new range of experiences, chief among them the "sweetness" of fellowship with those who were God's people. It seemed to the emigrants that such people had "the privileges of saints," privileges that in the felt world of lived religion included a more favorable relationship with sickness, more satisfaction from participating in the routines of worship, and more benefits for children who were sheltered "under covenant of godly parents." All of these possibilities and expectations lay behind a Cambridge newcomer's testimony, "I loved Sabbaths and saints," and resonate in Nathaniel Sparhawk's assertion, "I had no rest but desired to come to New England to enjoy [the ordinances] in purity." Goodwife Champney summed up these expectations: "I saw the Lord's people were the most happy in the world."⁴⁰

The same experience of conflict in England, together with the same sensations of being released from conflict and corruption, informed Shepard's idealization of the gathered church. A sermon series on the parable of the ten virgins (Matthew 25:1-13) he began to preach in June 1636 is charged with his vision of the church as a special kind of community, the "kingdom of heaven on earth" where all "true

members" were "canonized . . . in the name of saints." We have in New England, Shepard declared, "pure, chaste, virgin churches, not polluted with the mixture of men's inventions, not defiled with the company of evil men." Urging his congregation to hold fast to this principle, Shepard insisted that they not "open the doors for all comers." Looking back on the period of his English ministry, Shepard recalled as one of the chief reasons for coming to New England his "judgment . . . of the evil of . . . mixed communion and joining with such in sacraments." Now, church and ordinances had been purified: "when in a sacrament we see profane people approach to it, it troubles us, it grieves us, [but] when we come to a place where we may be persuaded of the uprightness of all, it is very sweet." Here too, he told the church members, a new kind of fellowship had come into being, a church in which everyone has "their conversation in heaven, and walk as men come down from heaven, and returning thither again; and that as it were already in heaven."⁴¹

The lifeblood of this fellowship was a "public spirit" or an ethic of love or mutuality: all within the bonds of the covenant were committed to "the public good of the church," to "seek the good of the whole kind; all out to love one another, [all] desire . . . the welfare of the whole." Within this fellowship another normative tradition was "peace" and a third, "liberty," not the lawless liberty that left human selfishness unchecked but, as Shepard would argue in sermons of the 1640s, the liberty that flowed from self-denial and service to others and, at a deeper level, from covenanting to obey the authority of God's law. The true Christian community was "free" because it was a disciplined community.⁴²

These were no mere paper rules, but principles the congregation attempted to practice. Early on, the challenge of doing so was made all the greater by the economic turbulence that accompanied colonization, especially the devastating inflation that set in during the late 1630s.⁴³ Shepard responded by reaffirming the ethic of mutuality. "Much troubled about the poverty of the churches," he asked the church members to "look over the congregation, and consider such a brother's or sister's estate; one is poor and low, another falling, another very much altered."⁴⁴ Urged on in this manner, the congregation in Cambridge organized in December 1638 a regular contribution "[for] the supply of the wants of the Church of Christ," stipulating as well a second beneficiary, "and the needy people of Cambridge."⁴⁵ Some of this "supply" was contributed at Sunday services and some by a "dear friend" of Shepard's, the wealthy Roger Harlakenden, who, on his deathbed in 1638, willed forty pounds to Shepard, twenty pounds "to the

pore brethren of our congregation,” “and to our Elders that which is in their hands.” Herbert Pelham gave a cow in 1640, the same year that Thomas Bittlestone, who died in November, left five pounds to Shepard and, provisional on his wife and only child dying without heirs, a third of his estate to the church, undoubtedly to support its practices of charity. Gift-giving persisted well after the economic crisis eased. Shepard himself left five pounds “unto the Elders to be equally divided” in his will of 1649. Four years later William Wilcox made bequests to Elder Frost, Shepard’s son Thomas, the church’s new minister, Mitchell, and the members of his “meeting.” Frost and Mitchell were among the beneficiaries in four other wills of the mid-to-late 1650s, and in 1664 the widow Elizabeth Betts made extensive bequests to Mitchell, Frost, the other ruling elder Richard Champney, and Shepard’s sons. Three years earlier, the childless Thomas Beale made a gift to Mitchell and, subject to various contingencies, willed a generous share of his estate to the church.⁴⁶

Once the economic crisis eased, it is likely that church members who slipped into poverty or became disabled came to rely on the town for support. But in other ways the congregation sustained a distinctive set of practices. Members were uniquely entitled to participate in two rituals, the sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Among themselves they used “brother” and “sister” as terms of address.⁴⁷ Resuming a well-established tradition among the godly in England, some withdrew into private meetings where they discussed the Bible and revisited the sermons they were hearing. From time to time, the church members held “private fasts.”⁴⁸ In their households most used a catechism Shepard had written especially for them. At moments of illness or life crises, the members relied upon each other for prayer, which most regarded as efficacious. When a young woman was afflicted in the late 1650s with a “distemper” that her family eventually attributed to the malice of a neighbor, “many prayers [were] made for her” and an “elder” came to pray by her bedside. The sympathies of the church also encompassed the older woman and church member who was accused of witchcraft; two deacons and twenty-one lay members (twelve of them women) testified to the Middlesex County Court that “she hath always been a diligent hearer of and attender to the word of God.”⁴⁹ Another important practice arose out of the structure of the “Congregational Way,” which empowered the men (but not the women) who were church members to participate in deciding whom to admit as members and how to administer church discipline.⁵⁰ But in every other respect the benefits of membership were shared among all who passed into

covenant, those who were servants or widows or persons of modest means no less than those who were of high status.⁵¹

Shepard's understanding of "saint," together with the social economy of salvation he urged on the congregation, worked to make the congregation surprisingly inclusive. However much the congregation celebrated certain privileges as theirs alone, they also reached out to those around them who had not yet come into the covenant. They did so at Shepard's urging. "Many complain," he declared about 1640:

that New England hath so little love, non-members are not visited, not regarded . . . O, take heed of this; nothing beautifies a Christian in the eyes of others more than such love [for non-members] . . . O excel here; visit poor families, sit one half hour and speak to discouraged hearts, show kindness to strangers, such you were: I will warrant God will bless you; this was the glory of Christ, full of grace and truth.⁵²

In his own sermons Shepard preached to everyone, modeling for would-be saints the processes of repentance for sin and self-denial and telling the reluctant or faint-hearted that Christ was inviting them to come to him. He understood his ministry as addressed to "visible" Christians, a category that included those who were blinded by a false sense of "security" or on other grounds were "hypocrites." All such he was seeking to arouse or awaken. He made this clear in his explication of the parable of the ten virgins, which he interpreted as referring to the visible church at the time of Christ's return to earth to separate true saints from those who had been deceived about themselves. As in this story of the five virgins who had enough oil in their lamps and the five who did not, so in his congregation and, more largely, in the visible church as a whole, some were prepared and others unready. Hence the main purpose of his ministry, to instruct (and exhort) those who were spiritually "dead" to the ordinances of preaching and the sacraments on how to resume a vital Christianity.

Month by month, year by year, the effects of his evangelism were revealed in the ever-growing number of persons who affiliated with the church, a process abetted by Shepard's insistence that the congregation practice the "judgment of charity" in admitting new members. Always aware of the difference between the visible church on earth and the invisible company of the elect in heaven, he tolerated a considerable elasticity in judging who was a "visible" saint, turning

away but a single person among all those for whom relations of the work of grace survive, a man who was subsequently admitted during his successor's pastorate.⁵³ Although we cannot be certain of the figure, it seems likely that, by the mid-1640s, seventy percent of the townspeople were church members, the same level of membership that was reached in nearby Dedham as it probably was in most congregations.⁵⁴

The gathered church was thus a crucial site for displaying the values and practices of the second Reformation. Some of these values, but especially "equity," also affected civil society. When the townspeople of Cambridge were deciding how to divide up their "common" lands, they relied on two principles, "proportionality" and "equity." According to the first, land was handed out unequally, with more going to families who ranked highest in wealth and less to those with little property. According to the second, *every* household was entitled to receive an equal share, or enough to ensure that household's economic independence. No one was left landless in new-world Cambridge; and by the mid-1640s, every male householder was allowed to participate in local government, as most did, with many holding one or another town office (about half of the men in the town served in this capacity during their residence). Cambridge had its social elite, but the largest number of householders were men of middling status who, in contrast to their situation in England, held property in freehold and participated actively in civil government.⁵⁵

IV

In their own times—that is, in the early seventeenth century—the Puritan movement was commonly viewed as anti-authoritarian and seditious because of its refusal to accept the authority of the bishops in the Church of England. Its enemies in England—James I and his son Charles I and their courtiers, together with many of the bishops and aristocracy—regarded the movement as unwilling to accept the authority not only of bishops but also of the king (who was, we must remember, the official head of the Church). Conjuring up an imaginary Puritan who could not abide authority, the Crown and its agents did their best to tar all who had any sympathy for the movement with the brush of "sedition" and sectarianism, calling them names such as "Brownist," "Morellian" or "Separatist," code words for the impulse to turn things upside down.

In more recent centuries, this image of the Puritans has been forgotten, its place taken by another that represents the Puritans as hyper authoritarian. This transition owes a great deal to Protestant liberals who turned against Calvinism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries: especially the Unitarians of New England, but subsequently a great many Protestants both in American and Britain. Equating the Calvinist doctrine of predestination with cruelty and determinism, Protestant liberals insisted, on the contrary, that every individual had moral agency. The early twentieth-century historian V. L. Parrington exaggerated this critique of Calvinism in his survey of American culture, *Main Currents of American Thought*. There he characterized “Calvinism” (for him a synonym for Puritanism) as a “reactionary theology” teaching a concept of God that, in his words, was a “composite of oriental despotism and sixteenth-century monarchism.” Within such a system the individual “is no better than an oriental serf at the mercy of a Sovereign Will that is implacable, inscrutable, the ruler of a universe predetermined in all its parts.”⁵⁶ This reading of Calvin’s teachings as modeling an “arbitrary” or “deterministic” God (and hence providing no space for human initiative) was reiterated in the 1930s by the great intellectual historian Perry Miller. And like Parrington, Miller wanted to overturn the story—much reiterated in nineteenth-century New England by Congregationalists—that Puritanism (or Congregationalism) was a key source of the American democratic tradition. In his first book, *Orthodoxy in Massachusetts, 1630-1650*, he emphasized how traditional the colonists were in resisting the radicals of their day who began to plead for liberty of conscience.⁵⁷

A third version of authoritarianism has become prominent in our own day, although its roots stretch back into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: the Puritans as authoritarian because they wished to regulate people’s everyday lives to an excessive extent. This is one way of reading Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter*, with its portrait of a community punishing (seemingly with relish) a woman who broke the moral code. The dark-colored, monotonous dress of the women in *The Scarlet Letter* mirrors the social conformity that Hawthorne imputed to the colonists. His interpretation is echoed in more recent scholarship on the Puritan family and its modes of child-rearing (the “breaking of the will” thesis popularized by John Demos),⁵⁸ and finds another echo in interpretations of witch-hunting that describe it as a means of punishing disruptive people, most of whom were women.⁵⁹ We are in the presence of one or another (or all three) of these lines of argument whenever we come upon historians who characterize

religion or culture in early New England as “orthodoxy,” almost always adding an indispensable adjective, “rigid.”

One reason for questioning these versions of Puritan authoritarianism is that some nineteenth-century observers had a quite different understanding of the Puritans, an understanding more in line with that of the Stuart kings. In *Democracy in America*, Alexis de Tocqueville recognized not only that social “equality” existed among the founders of New England but also that, in their towns and colony governments, the colonists practiced the “sovereignty of the people.” From Tocqueville’s perspective, the local processes of town governments “gave scope to the activity of a real political life, thoroughly democratic and republican.”⁶⁰ Much closer to our own time, the social historian Darrett Rutman insisted in the 1960s that town governments in New England gradually increased their share of authority at the expense of central government. Rutman viewed this process of dispersal as one that subverted the corporate ideals of the founders; he was arguing against the concept of an all comprehensive, authoritative New England “mind.”⁶¹ Though Rutman went astray in his rejection of intellectual history, his work is an important demonstration of the limited authority of the central government. Tocqueville and Rutman thus ask us to recognize features of New England life that disrupt the story of authoritarianism.

In the final pages of this essay, let me sketch three ways of expanding the arguments I have made in this essay. Again, the purpose of doing so is simple: to challenge the image and idea of Puritan authoritarianism, and to recover some of the radical features of early New England religious and political life.

What do we learn if we explore how civil government actually functioned? Let me answer this question by drawing on some recent work on Tudor-Stuart England, all of which suggests that the people at the top of government (the king; his council; magistrates and aristocrats) depended on the willingness of local officials to implement the rules and regulations enacted by King, Council and Parliament in England. The same holds true for New England, perhaps even more so. Eventually, all exercises of authority that arose at the center turned into local requests; eventually, all moral rules enacted by the center—for example, that alcohol be regulated or the poor provided for—became local actions.⁶² What we have learned from historians of local communities in England is that much did not happen: tax levies went uncollected, juries refused to convict or judges redefined the crime, vestries looked the other way when a local minister refused to wear the surplice . . . so it went, year after year, decade after decade. The machinery of government

was, in the end, a machinery that was easily blunted, even paralyzed, by indifference, inefficiency, or in some instances, resistance. The “most rewarding” approach to the uses of authority, the historian Cynthia Herrup has remarked, is when they are “examined as mechanisms of a fluid functional partnership between various interests in society.” From her perspective (and from mine), “government” becomes a “repeated exercise in compromise, co-operation, co-optation and resistance.”⁶³ The same mediations occurred in New England. Were someone to write a history of taxation in the seventeenth century, such a history would reveal the compromises forced upon every town constable as he struggled to collect the “rates” due from each household.⁶⁴ A more striking illustration of these mediations concerns how dissenters were punished. Recent scholarship on the Quakers and Baptists in late seventeenth-century New England shows that the fines imposed on them by county courts were rarely exacted, for the simple reason that doing so would have thrown those families onto the town system of welfare, thus raising everyone’s taxes.⁶⁵ As for the regulation of morals, the one careful study of parent/child relations using court records shows that parents had little voice in deciding whom their children married or in regulating their premarital sexual conduct.⁶⁶ So much for “discipline”!

And what do we learn if we ask how ordinary people participated in politics? The traditional answer has been, by having the right to vote, which by definition excluded women and some of the poor. Or, the traditional answer has been that participation was thwarted by censorship and “elite” control of the media. But in recent work historians of “communication” in early modern England have recovered the many ways in which political criticism was voiced at a time when, in theory, censorship and the forceful suppression of dissent were the norm. The same situation existed in New England, where gossip, rumor, petitions, and the circulation of manuscript critiques allowed for vigorous debate even though, in other respects, the civil government suppressed some forms of public debate.⁶⁷ It is going too far to call these possibilities for participation “democratic,” yet in recognizing their existence we move toward recovering the “public sphere” that existed in the seventeenth century.

And what happens if we introduce the term “popular religion” and rethink the nature of theology? As I have tried to show in *Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment*, ordinary people in early New England could be fully religious without having to march exactly to the beat of the ministers. Moreover, the world view of these people could encompass contradictions. For Perry Miller, the New En-

gland “mind” was highly ordered; for me and for many others, that “mind” must be understood as open-ended. We understand, as Miller and his generation did not, that the “authoritarianism” of Puritan theology rests on a classic error, that predestination was the rock on which the preaching of the clergy was built. Never in their sermons, treatises or catechisms did the ministers deprive humans of free will. On the contrary, they insisted that the affective (inward) and intellectual response of humans to the Word, or gospel, was logically a part of the “means” through which Christ and the Holy Spirit enacted the process of redemption. Indeed, the more closely we study Puritan theology in any of its forms—“practical,” systematic, scriptural—the clearer it becomes that the once-daunting topos of “predestination” or divine sovereignty co-existed with other motifs that foregrounded the voluntary response of humans to the divine initiative. Perry Miller was on to something when he argued that the Puritans went further in this direction than Calvin himself, although he misstated their motives for doing so and cast Calvin himself in an exaggerated light. Purged of its errors, Miller’s account of Protestant scholasticism with Samuel Willard’s *Compleat Body of Divinity* (1726) as its key source, properly emphasizes the dialectic of divine initiative and human response.

Were we to bring together all these lines of work, we would, I think, find it impossible to reiterate the image and idea of the Puritans as excessively authoritarian. What such interpretations ignore is the elasticity that flourished in social practice—an elasticity manifested in the near complete absence of death sentences for adultery and the total absence of sentences for children’s disobedience, manifested again in the acceptance of dissident groups at the local level, in the hundreds of accusations of witch-hunting that courts ignored or dismissed, and in the possibilities for political opposition. But of more importance, such interpretations ignore what I have argued in this essay, that the colonists were astonishingly radical in seeking to refashion authority: be it in churches or civil society or in how material resources were distributed.

Notes

- 1 Edward Winslow, *New Englands Salamander, Discovered* (London, 1647); repr., *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, 3d ser. 2 (1830): 128; Edward Lambert, *History of the Colony of New Haven* (New Haven, 1838), 101 (the Milford town covenant).
- 2 *Winthrop Papers*, 6 vols. (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1929—), 4:409.
- 3 Based on town records; but see also Roger Thompson, *Divided We Stand: Watertown, Massachusetts, 1630-1680* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001).
- 4 [John Davenport], *A Discourse about Civil Government in a New: Plantation Whose Design is Religion* (Cambridge, MA., 1663), 9. See below, note 26, for the authorship of this text.
- 5 Samuel Greene Arnold, *History of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations 1636-1700* (Providence, R.I., 1894), 148.
- 6 "Governor Hinckley's Verses on the Death of his Second Consort," *New England Historical and Genealogical Register* 1 (1847): 92-93.
- 7 [Robert Cushman], *A Sermon Preached at Plimmoth in New England December 9, 1621*, ed. Charles Deane (Boston, 1870), 8.
- 8 William R. Staples, *Annals of the Town of Providence* (Providence, R.I., 1843), 98-99, 106-08.
- 9 See, e.g., H. N. Brailsford, *The Levellers and the English Revolution*, ed. Christopher Hill (Nottingham: Spokesmen Press, 1976).
- 10 Yet the largely positive responses to Cromwell, the execution of Charles I, and other measures of reform are indicative of the colonists' radicalism. See James M. O'Toole, "New England Reactions to the English Civil Wars," *New England Historical & Genealogical Register* 129 (1975): 1-17.
- 11 Edgar J. McManus, *Law and Liberty in Early New England: Criminal Justice and Due Process, 1620-1692* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1993).
- 12 For the working out of church-state relations in Massachusetts, see David D. Hall, *The Faithful Shepherd: A History of the New England Ministry in the Seventeenth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1972), chap. 6.
- 13 See, e.g., Ann Hughes, *Politics, Society and Civil War in Warwickshire, 1620-1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).
- 14 "Two Sermons of Thomas Hooker," *Collections of the Connecticut Historical Society* 1 (1860): 20.
- 15 This program is fully described in Julian Davies, *The Caroline Captivity of the Church: Charles and the Remoulding of Anglicanism 1625-1641* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992).
- 16 Thomas Weld to his former parishioners, no date but late summer 1632, in Everett Emerson, *Letters from New England: The Massachusetts Bay Colony, 1629-1638* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1976), 97. The "men of Gibia" is an allusion to Esther 10:3.
- 17 *Thomas Shepard's Confessions*, ed. George Selement and Bruce C. Woolley (*Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts* 58 [Boston, 1981]), 106-07; Clifford K. Shipton, ed., "The Autobiographical Memoranda of John Brock, 1636-1659," *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society*, n.s., 53 (1943): 97.
- 18 Emerson, *Letters*, 96-97.
- 19 Sargent Bush, Jr., *The Correspondence of John Cotton* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina

- Press, 2002), 183, 217.
- 20 William Haller, *Foxe's Book of Martyrs and the Elect Nation* (London: Cape, 1963); T. D. Bozeman, *To Live Ancient Lives: The Primitivist Dimension in Puritanism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988).
- 21 William Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation* (New York: Modern Library, 1981), chap. 1; Winslow, *New-Englands*.
- 22 George H. Williams et al., eds., *Thomas Hooker: Writings in England and Holland 1626-1633* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1975), 327.
- 23 Williston Walker, *The Creeds and Platforms of Congregationalism* (New York, 1893), 203.
- 24 (London, 1659), sig. B2v.
- 25 See, e.g., Gail Sussman Marcus, "'Due Execution of the Generall Rules of Righteousnesse': Criminal Procedure in New Haven Town and Colony, 1638-1658," in David D. Hall, John M. Murrin, and Thad W. Tate, eds., *Saints and Revolutionaries: Essays on Early American History* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1984), 99-137.
- 26 *Records of the Colony and Plantation of New Haven From 1638 to 1649*, ed. Charles J. Hoadly (Hartford, 1857), 11-15. Davenport spelled out his thinking in *A Discourse about Civil Government in a New Plantation Whose Design is Religion*. This text was attributed to John Cotton, but Davenport was actually its author. See Bruce E. Steiner, "Dissension at Quinnipiac: The Authorship and Setting of *A Discourse about Civil Religion in a New Plantation Whose Design is Religion*," *New England Quarterly* 54 (1981): 14-32.
- 27 *Winthrop Papers*, 2:114.
- 28 Winslow, *New-Englands Salamander*, 120.
- 29 John Cotton, *An Exposition upon the Thirteenth Chapter of the Revelation* (London, 1655), 72 and passim. I borrow the expression "new order" from David Little, *Religion, Order, and Law* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969).
- 30 *The Records of the First Church in Boston 1630-1868*, ed., Richard D. Pierce, *Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts* 39 (Boston, 1961), 5.
- 31 See Helen C. White, *Social Criticism in Popular Religious Literature of the Sixteenth Century* (New York: Macmillan, 1944).
- 32 Margo Todd, *Christian Humanism and the Puritan Social Order* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), argues for "humanist" sources of the Puritan ethical program.
- 33 [Thomas Hutchinson], *A Collection of Original Papers* (Boston, 1769), 67, 89, 93; see also 297; *Winthrop Papers*, 4:80-82; Worthington C. Ford, "Cotton's 'Moses His Judicials,'" *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, 2nd ser. 16 (1902): 282, 283; David Pulsifer, ed., *Records of the Colony of New Plymouth* (11 vols., Boston, 1855-61), 72; [John Davenport] *An Answer of the Elders* (London, 1643), 73. References in the Bible include Proverbs 1:3 (KJV): "To receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity." The meaning of this passage, as glossed in the Geneva Bible, is: "To learn to submit ourselves to the correction of those who are wise. By living justly and rendering to every man that which belongs to him."
- 34 Richard S. Dunn, James Savage, and Laetitia Yeandle, eds., *The Journal of John Winthrop 1630-*

The Experience of Authority in Early New England

- 1649 (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1996), 60-61, 72 ; Hall, *Faithful Shepherd*, 124-26.
- 35 *Journal of John Winthrop*, ed. Dunn et al., 168-70; I have modernized the spelling, capitalization, and punctuation.
- 36 *Shepard Confessions*, ed. Selement and Woolley, 159.
- 37 *Journal of John Winthrop*, ed. Dunn et al., 169.
- 38 Mary Rhinelander McCarl, "Thomas Shepard's Relations of Religious Experience, 1648-1649," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser. 48 (1991): 451.
- 39 *Shepard Confessions*, 93-94, 96-97.
- 40 *Ibid.*, 107-09, 83, 63, 64, 191.
- 41 *The Works of Thomas Shepard*, ed. John T. Albro (3 vols., Boston, 1853), 2:65, 622, 70, 22-23. *God's Plot: The Paradoxes of Puritan Piety, Being the Autobiography & Journal of Thomas Shepard*, ed. Michael McGiffert (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1972), 57.
- 42 Thomas Shepard and John Allin, *A Defence of the Answer . . . made unto the Nine Questions or Positions sent from New-England* (London, 1645), 80; Thomas Shepard, *Subjection to Christ, in All His Ordinances and Appointments, The Best Means to Preserve our Liberty* (London, 1652), repr., Shepard, *Works*, ed. Albro, 3:293, 287.
- 43 Bernard Bailyn, *The New England Merchants in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1955), 22-23.
- 44 *God's Plot*, ed. McGiffert, 12; Shepard, *Works*, ed. Albro, 3:329.
- 45 Lucius R. Paige, *History of Cambridge, Massachusetts 1630-1877* (Boston, 1877), 254-55; how some of the money was distributed is indicated, 256-57.
- 46 Paige, *History of Cambridge*, 254; Thomas Shepard (Middlesex Probate Records 28:3-4); William Wilcox (Middlesex Probate File 24867); Sarah Simmes (1653) to Mitchell, the two ruling elders, and Deacon Stone (Middlesex Probate File 22067); Roger Bancroft (1653) to Mitchell and Frost (Middlesex Probate File 981); Robert Daniel (1655) to Elder Frost (Probate File 5939); Edward Goffe (1657) to Mitchell and Frost (Middlesex Probate File 9283); Elizabeth Betts (Middlesex Probate File 1659) Thomas Beale (Middlesex Probate File 1423). Wills survive for relatively few of the townspeople, so the number of gifts may well have been greater. I am grateful to Robert Rogers for providing transcripts of these wills.
- 47 The words "brother" and "sister" occur as terms of address in Shepard's notebook of "confessions"; e.g., "Brother Green's wife," and occur as well in the wills that make bequests to members of the church. See also Paige, *History of Cambridge*, 255; *The Records of the Town of Cambridge (formerly Newtown) Massachusetts 1630-1703* (Cambridge, 1904), 62-63.
- 48 *The Diary of Michael Wigglesworth 1653-1657 The Conscience of a Puritan*, ed. Edmund S. Morgan (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1965), 59, 60, 62, 67, 101.
- 49 *Witch-hunting in Seventeenth-Century New England: A Documentary History, 1638-1692*, ed. David D. Hall (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1991), 138; Paige, *History of Cambridge*, 363-64.
- 50 A practice Shepard and Allin validated in *Defence of the Answer*, 92-94.

- 51 The social breadth is evident from the data assembled in Bruce Chapman Woolley, "Reverend Thomas Shepard's Cambridge Church Members 1636-1649: A Socio-Economic Analysis" (Ph.D. diss. University of Rochester, 1973).
- 52 Shepard, *Works*, ed. Albro, 2:450, a quotation I owe to Woolley, "Reverend Thomas Shepard's Cambridge Church," 22.
- 53 Shepard and Allin, *Defence of the Answer*, 13, 189-96; McCarl, "Thomas Shepard's Relations of Religious Experience," 434.
- 54 The Dedham percentage may be found in Kenneth Lockridge, *A New England Town: The First Hundred Years, Dedham, Massachusetts 1630-1730* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1970); the percentage for New England as a whole is suggested in Alison Games, *Migration and the Origins of the English Atlantic World* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1999), 140.
- 55 The statements in this paragraph rest on my research in Cambridge local records; but see also William I. Davisson and Dennis J. Dugan, "Land Precedents in Essex County, Massachusetts," *Essex Institute Historical Collections* 106 (1970): 252-76.
- 56 Vernon Louis Parrington, *The Colonial Mind*, included in *Main Currents of American Thought* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1930), 13-14.
- 57 For commentary on Miller's depiction of Calvin's theology as "arbitrary," see David D. Hall, "Understanding the Puritans," in *The State of American History*, ed. Herbert J. Bass. (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1970), 330-49.
- 58 John Demos, *A Little Commonwealth: Family Life in Plymouth Colony* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), an argument that has subsequently been disputed by other historians of the New England family.
- 59 Carol F. Karlson, *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman: Witchcraft in Colonial New England* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1987).
- 60 Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (2 vols., New York: Knopf, 1948), 1:40, 46.
- 61 Darrett B. Rutman, "The Mirror of Puritan Authority," in *Law and Authority in Colonial America*, ed. George A. Billias (Barre, MA.: Barre Publishers, 1965); Rutman, *Winthrop's Boston: A Portrait of a Puritan Town, 1630-1649* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1965).
- 62 Thus, the effort to limit the number of persons licensed to sell alcohol conflicted with the policy of giving licenses to widows and other poor people as a form of social welfare.
- 63 Cynthia B. Herrup, "The Counties and the Country: Some Thoughts on Seventeenth Century Historiography," in *Reviving the English Revolution*, ed. Geoff Eley and William Hunt (London: Verso, 1988), 290. See also Herrup, *The Common Peace: Participation and the Criminal Law in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Anthony Fletcher, *Reform in the Provinces: The Government of Stuart England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986).
- 64 A statement based on extensive reading on town records.
- 65 Jonathan Chu, *Neighbors, Friends, or Madmen: The Puritan Adjustment to Quakerism in Seventeenth-Century Massachusetts Bay* (Westport, CT.: Greenwood Press, 1985).
- 66 Roger Thompson, *Sex in Middlesex: Popular Mores in a Massachusetts County, 1649-1699*

The Experience of Authority in Early New England

(Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1986).

- 67 David Zaret, *Origins of Democratic Culture: Printing, Petitions, and the Public Sphere in Early Modern England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); Adam Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture in England, 1500-1700* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000). In a forthcoming essay (2006) in the *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* I list some of the scribally published statements that are part of this story.