

The Transformation of Protestant Theology as a Condition of the American Revolution

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THE EARLY PURITAN UNDERSTANDING OF POLITICS

I begin with my conclusion. One original feature of American Puritanism, along with four modifications of the original Puritan self-understanding, brought Protestant theology to the point where it became unambiguously supportive of the principles of the American Revolution. The original feature was the fierce Puritan spirit of independence from all human authority while being totally devoted to Christ. This made them radical democrats, but with a deep personal sense of moral and religious responsibility. Four changes in Puritan theology followed. First, reason was restored as a legitimate Christian supplement to the authority of scripture. Second, man's imperfect or fallen nature was acknowledged to be unchanged by divine grace. Therefore, limited government and the rule of law were indispensable. Third, the Puritans embraced warlike manliness and wily prudence on behalf of liberty as fundamental Christian virtues. Finally, the Puritans adopted, *as part of their theology*, European social compact theory as taught by Locke and others—the theory that became the principled ground of the American Revolution.

Over the last century religion's place in the founding has been a subject of intense controversy. Michael Zuckert argues in chapter 1, "Natural Rights and Protestant Politics," that the founding is an amalgam or blend of two disparate traditions, Enlightenment reason and Protestant revelation. He implies that the two are not altogether compatible. When Zuckert says bluntly, in his

book *The Natural Rights Republic*, that the principles of the American founding lead necessarily to “the essentially secular character of the society,” he suggests that those principles are not only not religious but are at bottom indifferent or hostile to religion.¹

In fact, however, the founders expected “the society” to be mostly religious, and that meant mostly Christian. The purpose of religious liberty, according to the 1776 Virginia Declaration of Rights, is not to free men from the shackles of religious concern so that they can go out and turn to materialistic concerns like moneymaking with a free conscience. It is for the sake of “religion, or the duty which we owe to our Creator.” It is certainly not for “freedom from religion,” as our current textbooks on civil liberties sometimes suggest. Locke’s argument for toleration was similar to Virginia’s: “For obedience is owed first to God, then to the laws.” Precisely because the care of the soul and obedience to God are the most important things, Locke argues, we should never entrust them to the arbitrary will of another: “no one can so far abandon the care of his own eternal salvation as to embrace under necessity a worship or faith that someone else prescribes.”²

The founding was so far from being based on a break with Christianity that it was supported by the Catholic and Protestant clergy in all thirteen colonies. It is true that the founding principles were taught by Enlightenment writers like Locke. But it is also true, although it is often forgotten, that Locke was a major theologian whose interpretation of Christianity was tremendously influential in Britain and America. Consequently, Christian theology, as it was understood at the time of the founding, fully supported the idea of the equal natural rights of all men and women. One can only be godly when one respects the God-given rights of others, including the right of the ungodly to religious toleration.

Moreover, even apart from specifically Christian doctrine, the founding was based on a theological teaching, as the Declaration of Independence indicates: the laws of nature are also the laws of “nature’s God”; men are “endowed by their Creator” with inalienable rights; America has “a firm reliance on the protection of divine providence”; and Americans appeal “to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions.” The language of the Declaration of Independence alone, to say nothing of many other official documents of the founding, proves that the traditionalists are right to say that the founding was religious, in the sense that it was based on a distinct understanding of God, his laws, his providence, and his judgment in the affairs of men.

But it is also wrong to say that the principles of the founding are *exclusively* Christian. For the idea of *self-evident* truth, and of the laws of *nature’s* God, implies that any reasonable human being, whether Christian or not, can

discover the principles of moral and political truth. The founding was not intended, as were the Puritan settlements of the early 1600s, “to advance the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ” (quoted from the New England Confederation of 1643).³ It was intended to secure the inalienable rights of all mankind.

Theological Transformation, Not Secularization

There is a widespread tendency, shared by many scholars, to see eighteenth-century New England as undergoing a secularization, a turn away from God and religion to merely worldly concerns. Perry Miller’s influential books on the New England mind hammer this point home. Alan Heimert sees the mid to late eighteenth century as an ongoing battle between “rationalist” liberals and faith-based Calvinists. Zuckert’s account, which rightly emphasizes that American Protestants strongly supported the principles of the American Revolution, is a helpful corrective to the “secularization” thesis. (A number of historians also oppose that thesis, for example Nathan Hatch in *The Sacred Cause of Liberty*.)⁴ But Zuckert wavers on the crucial question: Was the change a secularization, or was it a different understanding of what God expects of man? When Samuel Langdon, Puritan preacher and president of Harvard, spoke to the assembled political leaders of Massachusetts in his 1774 sermon on the occasion of their election, he used the natural rights language of Locke and the Declaration of Independence. Zuckert comments: “This is no longer political theology.” But then he backtracks: “or if it is, it is political theology of the sort that Locke himself in his *Second Treatise* and Jefferson in his various writings patronized—natural political theology.” But natural theology, as is well known, is unable to establish by reason the existence of God as judge or particular divine providence—two of the divine attributes mentioned in the Declaration of Independence. My question is: why does Zuckert assume, or tend to assume, that the political theology of the Declaration of Independence “is no longer political theology”?

Zuckert’s wavering is an expression of a deeper problem with his analysis. He does not tell the whole story of the transformation of Puritanism. First, he does not bring out the important changes that Puritan theology had already undergone long before the Puritan encounter with Locke and European social compact theory after 1700. Second, he does not show the logic of these and later changes as they were understood from within the Puritan experience itself. The Puritans did not think of themselves as turning away from Christian political theology, but as approaching more closely the truth of that theology, as they continually wrestled with its meaning in light of the political

and philosophical challenges of a century and a half. Third, Zuckert does not acknowledge sufficiently that supposedly secular Enlightenment writers like Locke, many of whose views certainly were adopted by Puritan divines, were also theological writers in their own right. Locke's political theology was not merely natural but also Christian. In other words, no Zuckertian "convergence between Locke and Protestantism" was necessary, because Locke already was a Protestant theologian.

Puritan theology remained the dominant theology in New England from the time of the first settlement in 1620 to American independence in 1776 and beyond. But the moral and political content of that theology shifted dramatically during that time. This essay will tell the story of how this happened. The gist of it is this: There was an initial faith in the possibility of a perfect community of Puritan saints, animated by Christ's grace and communal love. The trust in the transforming power of divine grace led, logically and inevitably, to Anne Hutchinson's fanatical attack on the Puritan leaders in the name of her own personal experience of God and Christ. Likewise, the trust in a community bound together by no other limits than brotherly affection led to lawless government. Hutchinson was exiled, limits were set on government, and a definite legal code was instituted. The early Puritan hope for a community of love gradually gave way to an awareness that selfish human nature was still alive in New England, no less than in old Europe.

Besides suffering these internal stresses, the Puritans were also squeezed from the outside. The pressure came first from the Indians, who devastated New England in the 1670s. The Puritans had to ask themselves whether a political theology could be true if it focused on prayer and outward acts of piety at the expense of guns and military skill. The manly virtues therefore came to be celebrated as equal to such pietistic virtues as humility, prayer, churchgoing, repentance, and self-denial.

But this Indian attack was followed by another, ultimately more dangerous, attack from Europe. New England had enjoyed *de facto* autonomy since 1620. During most of this early period England was either distracted by civil wars and other domestic turmoils or actively approved of the Puritans. The Americans were therefore mostly left free to govern themselves as independent political communities. But after the monarchy was restored in 1660, England tightened the screws. In the 1680s, representative government was abolished, a royal governor was appointed, and private property was threatened and sometimes seized. Exasperated, Massachusetts rebelled in 1689, jailed the governor, and restored democracy. This revolution was partially rolled back by the new British king. All this led to a rethinking of the proper relationship between man and God.

Into this ferment, books containing the new European social compact theory arrived on the scene, apparently about 1715. Over the next fifty years, this theory was gradually adopted by preachers and by educated Americans in general, not just in New England but throughout the thirteen colonies.

These changes in the Puritans' self-understanding, which began almost at the moment of their arrival in America, developed with a stringent theological-political logic that culminated in the Lockean political theology of mid-eighteenth-century Congregationalism—a theology that most American Christians believed in, more or less, during the struggle with Britain that culminated in independence and the founding.

The Puritan Spirit of Independence

However old-fashioned the Puritans were in their deep Christian devotion, they were radicals in their hostility to all traditional forms of authority, religious and political. They asserted in the Mayflower Compact: "we all came into these parts of America with one and the same end and aim, namely, to advance the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ and to enjoy the liberties of the Gospel in purity with peace." Far from being "extraordinarily deferential" to unelected rulers, as Thomas Pangle has claimed, the Puritans strived to look beyond human authority, directly to God and his revealed word. The only human rulers to whom they were deferential were those freely elected by the people.⁵

The Puritans' refusal to rely on anyone but God—their denial of any human authority not approved by themselves—habituated them to an orderly self-reliance and self-assertiveness. Their conviction that most men are sinners, and that God is relentless in his punishment of sin, made them tough-minded within themselves and equally tough-minded as they confronted the outside world. The novelist Harriet Beecher Stowe observed that the Puritans' God had something in common with the physical terrain of New England:

Working on a hard soil, battling with a harsh, ungenial climate, everywhere being treated by Nature with the most rigorous severity, they asked no indulgence, they got none, and they gave none. They shut out from their religious worship every poetic feature, every physical accessory which they feared would interfere with the abstract contemplation of hard, naked truth. . . . Their investigations were made with the courage of the man who hopes little, but determines to know the worst of his affairs. They wanted no smoke of incense to blind them, and no soft opiates of pictures and music to lull them; for what they were after was *truth*, and not happiness, and they valued *duty* far higher than *enjoyment*.⁶

Thus the Puritans turned their backs on what they regarded as the softer traditions and illusions of traditional Christianity. The Catholic and Anglican churches provided beautiful images of heaven to enchant the soul, as well as comforting priestly hierarchies that seemed to guarantee salvation if followed faithfully. The Puritans' single-minded longing for God without such trappings made them individually tenacious in their pursuits, whether moral, theological, political, or commercial. Their sense of infinite responsibility in fulfilling the duties that God demanded of them developed strong, independent characters. These qualities eventually contributed mightily toward the success of democracy in America.

The Puritans of the eighteenth century, such as Rev. Thomas Prince, still spoke of these Puritan practices and convictions with pride:

Purity in churches is opposed to human mixtures, and the freer they are from these, the purer they are; which is the great and professed design of ours who in religious matters make the revelations of God their only rule and admit of nothing but what they apprehend these revelations require, both in discipline and worship as well as doctrines and manners. And freedom in churches is a liberty to judge of the meaning of these revelations, and of professing and acting according to our judgment of the meaning of them; and in particular the free choice of our own pastors and ways of discipline and worship, and our consciences in these things not subjected to any power on earth.⁷

Winthrop's Vision of a Community of Love

To understand better the Puritan point of departure, let us consider the extravagant teaching of John Winthrop's *A Modell of Christian Charity* (1630). Winthrop, more than anyone else, deserves the title of Founder of Massachusetts Bay, the most important of the early Puritan colonies.

Their aim, Winthrop wrote, was nothing less than the building of a perfect community, bound together neither by fear, by law, by interest, or by opinion, but by pure love. Winthrop believed that this was the deepest promise of the Reformation turn to purity of faith and the rejection of all artificial human authority:

[I]n this duty of love we must love brotherly without dissimulation, we must love one another with a pure heart fervently, we must bear one another's burdens, we must not look only on our own things, but also

on the things of our brethren. . . . [F]or this end, we must be knit together in this work as one man. . . .⁸

Their lofty goal, if it succeeded, would make New England a model for all Christendom: "[M]en shall say of succeeding plantations: the Lord make it like that of New England: for we must consider that we shall be as a city upon a hill, the eyes of all people are upon us."⁹

Winthrop called his account *A Modell of Christian Charity* because the religious community they were about to found was to be a model or form for the world to admire and imitate, and its principle was to be *Christian charity*. This charity is the love of God and of man that arises when Christ comes into the soul, causes a "new birth," and transforms a man into a "new creature." "[E]very man is born with this principle in him, to love and seek himself only; and thus a man continueth till Christ comes and takes possession of the soul, and infuseth another principle, love to God and our brother."¹⁰ The first American Puritans were a band of men and women convinced that they had been reborn and re-created through the power of divine grace.

For Winthrop, the "community of pleasure and pain" is thought to be fully attainable. Through Christ, the body of his true church can be made as much one as the body of each individual is one by nature: "First, all true Christians are of one body in Christ. . . . [T]hey must needs partake of each others' strength and infirmity, joy and sorrow, weal and woe, 1 Cor. 12:26. If one member suffers all suffer with it, if one be in honor, all rejoice with it."¹¹

The religious community described here was to be governed by laymen, not ministers. The Puritans regarded politics as something lower than the church. Winthrop called it "mere civil polity."¹² A polity should support the church, but it should be governed by men who understand worldly affairs, not by ministers of God's word. So it is not right to call the Puritan government a theocracy, as is often done. Churches were supported by the government, but churches were forbidden from controlling government. A 1648 Massachusetts law said: "Nor shall any church censure, degrade, or depose any man from any civil dignity, office, or authority he shall have in the commonwealth."¹³ In the end, a civil polity is not the same as a religious community because of the limits of political rule: it cannot touch the soul and salvation, for it can only regulate external conduct. Still, the political community was emphatically a religious community, for only members of Puritan churches were admitted as citizens.

In Winthrop's original plan, there was no religious liberty and, at the beginning, not even the rule of law. Regulation of public morals was so intrusive

that, as Tocqueville remarks, it became “bizarre or tyrannical.”¹⁴ Nathaniel Hawthorne’s novel *The Scarlet Letter* made famous the “A” which adulteresses were required to wear. (This public shaming of adulterous women continued as late as 1788, when the wearing of the “A” was required under the laws of the state of Vermont.)¹⁵ Besides obvious physical injuries like rape, theft, and murder, punishable offenses included fornication, lying, smoking, long hair, blasphemy, sorcery, and witchcraft.

Because of the equality among those who were truly born again in Christ’s law of grace, the Puritans held that government could justly arise only from the consent of the governed. This consent was expressed in the famous Mayflower Compact (1620) made by the Plymouth Puritans, in the Fundamental Orders of Connecticut of 1638, and in the democratic procedures adopted in Massachusetts.¹⁶

Governor Winthrop affirmed the consent principle in his “Defense of an Order of Court”: “no man hath lawful power over another, but by birth [referring to parental rule of children] or consent. . . . No commonweal can be founded but by free consent.”¹⁷ Winthrop was no egalitarian. He held that “in all times some must be rich, some poor; some high and eminent in power and dignity, others mean and in subjection.”¹⁸ But the Puritans did not believe political authority should be hereditary as in England, where the king and aristocracy ruled by right of inheritance. Public election of government officials elevates those who deserve to rule and rightly excludes those who do not. Those whom Jefferson called the “natural aristoi,” those naturally best, would be chosen:

Where God blesseth any branch of any noble or generous family, with a spirit and gifts for government, it would be . . . a sin against the honor of magistracy to neglect such in our public elections. But if God should not delight to furnish some of their posterity with gifts fit for magistracy, we should expose them rather to reproach and prejudice, and the commonwealth with them, than exalt them to honor, if we should call them forth, when God does not, to public authority.¹⁹

As in the Declaration of Independence, consent was required not only in the founding but also in the operation of government. Connecticut’s Fundamental Orders required elections of representatives twice annually in every town; these in turn elected the governor and other officials once a year. Massachusetts had annual elections. Every freeman (church member) was eligible to vote.

A remarkable 1637 document of the Massachusetts town of Newtown shows how democratic the freemen’s conception of government was from the start. First comes a definition of the people’s liberty: “That the people may not be subjected to any law or power among themselves without their consent.” This “power of a popular state” is “unlimited in its own nature,” being “bounded in order only, not in power.” This means that no external human authority can put limits on popular government. Further, such government must operate by majority rule: “there is an inseparable incident to all bodies politic, which are composed of voluntary members, that every one (in his admission) gives an implicit consent to whatever the major part shall establish, not being against religion or the weal public.”²⁰

These instances show that in Puritan New England—for the first time in the modern Western world—democratic principles were being officially advanced and adopted by the governing bodies of actual political societies.

The First Crisis of Puritanism: Anne Hutchinson and the Return to Reason

In theology, early American Puritans emphasized the immediate experience of divine grace as the best access of men to the interpretation of God’s word. The “law of nature,” or the “moral law,” exists. It is discovered by reason. But among true Christians, writes Winthrop, it is replaced by “the law of grace,” or “the law of the gospel.”²¹ The consequence of this view was an early tendency, which we have already remarked, to disparage reason and learning and to elevate the dangerous passions connected with fanaticism and persecution.

This rejection of learning did not outlast the remarkable Anne Hutchinson, whose passionate eloquence nearly overturned the infant Puritan commonwealth. (Nathaniel Hawthorne wrote a sensible short story on this crisis.)²² Hutchinson appealed over the heads of dignitaries like Winthrop to God himself, claiming that they were not fit men to lead the Puritan exodus. She herself claimed to be the privileged recipient of the divine presence. She had the experience and feeling of grace in herself. Was that not the main Puritan criterion of salvation? She claimed that the male leaders were distorting the pure Reformation doctrine by their teaching that one must perform correct works. She took the *sola fidei* slogan literally, and therefore disparaged the authority of the respectable men of learning. She even attracted John Cotton, perhaps the leading minister of the village of Boston, to her teaching sessions. Historian Perry Miller explains what happened: “Cotton, to whom Mrs. Hutchinson had first looked as the sole spokesman of the spiritual interpretation, seeing at last the terrible consequences for social morality of her theories, and

incidentally the possible loss of his social position in Massachusetts Bay, turned upon her with the rest." She was exiled to Rhode Island in 1637.²³

The Hutchinson episode compelled the Puritans to back away from the embrace of irrational spirituality, as their "by faith alone" principle initially led them to do. From now on, Puritan theology was always respectful toward outward signs of Christian righteousness. Not only or primarily one's internal feeling, but external standards of conduct, would be the measure.

Connected with this change was a gradual Puritan readmission of the fruits of human reason to the education of scholars and ministers. Throughout the 1600s, Harvard used products of the philosophical tradition, including the pagan authors, in its curriculum. Aristotle's *Ethics* was particularly admired, usually in the form of later paraphrases. In addition to scripture and grace, the Puritans respected reason as a legitimate path to God's order and law.

In this respect Puritanism returned to the moderate Protestantism that had prevailed in England after the Reformation. Perhaps surprisingly, Puritans also returned to the Catholic tradition of respect for philosophy and science. This led to the paradox, described by historian Norman Fiering, that "In the area of moral philosophy, at least, there is almost no better reference work to which one can turn for enlightenment on seventeenth-century Puritan thinking than the *Summa Theologica* of [Catholic Scholastic] Thomas Aquinas." Fiering reports that many of the standard Catholic commentaries are mentioned and discussed in student notebooks of the period. Thomas Shepard, a first-generation Puritan theologian, quoted Aquinas with approval in his discussion of the moral and natural law. Shepard also made use of Aquinas's division of the law of the Old Testament into moral, ceremonial, and judicial precepts.²⁴

This Puritan return to reason was the first important change in their theology. At first it opened their learning to the tradition of classical moral philosophy. In the eighteenth century, it led to openness to modern authors like Pufendorf and Locke.

The Second Crisis of Puritanism: Limits on Government

At the beginning, the Puritan government in Massachusetts was elected by the body of the church members, called freemen. Once the officials were elected, they expected to be left alone to rule as they saw fit until the next election a year later. They ruled without standing laws. They thought the prudential judgment of government officials was superior to fixed laws that treat everyone the same regardless of circumstances. Here was the classic argument

against the rule of law.²⁵ Winthrop deplored the notion that everyone, ordinary and extraordinary, should have to be judged by the same inflexible rule. He and the other officials were confident that they, as regenerate Christians living under the law of grace, could be trusted to judge each case in accordance with true standards of righteousness. They maintained that a sensible man's prudence on the spot is better than inflexible rules, as long as magistrates are trustworthy, which they would be in a community of believers whose fallen nature had been transformed by grace.

But if love is tainted by private passions and interests, and ordinary human error, then men acting in accord with their private judgment may become arbitrary. That is just what the freemen said of Winthrop and his colleagues. Checks on government were needed. Winthrop and other elected officials dragged their feet, but the freemen demanded and eventually got a written legal code.²⁶ The code of 1641 was called the "body of liberties," and the right of the people to send their representatives to participate in the government was called their "liberty."²⁷ While Winthrop spoke of love, trust in the rulers' wisdom, and Christian charity, the people spoke of liberty and law.

Winthrop said he "could not help but bewail the great differences and jar-rings" that divided early Massachusetts. But he had to admit that the people thought themselves "very unsafe, while so much power rested in the discretion of magistrates." That is, Winthrop had to admit what was after all an item of faith with the Puritans: that most of human nature was corrupt. He was reluctant to admit that selfishness was present in his own "city on a hill," which he had hoped would be a perfect community of love. But the incessant quarrels proved that even New England was flawed. "So hard a matter it is, to draw men (even wise and godly) from the love of the first fruit of their own inventions."²⁸

Plymouth, the earliest Puritan colony, actually began as a communist community, under their original charter; all property was owned by the people in common. William Bradford, governor of Plymouth almost from the beginning, described what happened. With no one in particular responsible for producing the needed goods and services, colonists evaded work in the fields whenever they could. Famine resulted. Men stole from each other "by night and day." Over half of the original settlers had died of starvation and disease when in desperation they "assigned to every family a parcel of land." Bradford wrote of this reform:

This had very good success, for it made all hands very industrious. . . . The women now went willingly into the field, and took their little ones with them to plant corn, which before would allege weakness and inability. . . .

The experience that was had in this common course and condition, tried sundry years, and that amongst godly and sober men, may well evince the vanity of that conceit of Plato's and other ancients, applauded by some of later times: that the taking away of property, and bringing in community into a commonwealth, would make them happy and flourishing; as if they were wiser than God. For this community (so far as it was) was found to breed much confusion and discontent and retard much employment that would have been to their benefit and comfort. . . .

Let none object this is men's corruption, and nothing to the course itself. I answer, seeing all men have this corruption in them, God in his wisdom saw another course fitter for them.²⁹

In this light, the Plymouth men's turn to private property, and the Massachusetts freemen's demand for liberty, are nothing more than an acknowledgment that the demands and pretensions of perfect love are inappropriate for imperfect, selfish human nature. Winthrop and the other early Puritan leaders believed that "a family is a little commonwealth, and a commonwealth is a great family." But they soon came to agree with Aristotle: a political community cannot be a large family because the family is the natural limit of a community based on love.³⁰

In this way the logic of Puritan experience led the Puritans to this second change in their political theology. No longer expecting the imperfections of this world to be cleansed by divine grace, they adopted governments limited in their powers by the rule of law, thereby anticipating some of the main features of post-1776 governments in America.

PURITAN THEOLOGY ENDORSES MARTIAL VIRTUE

The Third Crisis of Puritanism: King Philip's War and the Puritan Embrace of Self-Defense

Early New England Puritanism stressed the virtues of humility, prayer, orthodoxy in belief, correct modes of worship, fasting, and self-denial. As we have seen, the Puritans came to respect the discoveries of human reason, for they regarded reason as a gift of God. But they had not fully thought through what this meant.

In 1675 a great war began in New England, known as King Philip's War after the chief who led it. The Indians, seeing the wilderness relentlessly taken

by English settlers, decided to drive them away once and for all. They staged a massive attack in which families were slaughtered and towns destroyed. In casualties per capita, it was the most destructive war in American history.³¹ This terrible war caused a crisis in Puritan theology. Two rival interpretations of the war agreed New Englanders had sinned and that the war was a divine punishment. But what was the sin?

Increase Mather, speaking for the Puritan traditionalists, argued that their sins were "great unthankfulness for, and manifold abuses of, our wonderful peace . . . ; ill entertainment of the ministry . . . ; the apostasy of many from the truth unto heresies and pernicious errors; inordinate affection and sinful conformity to this present evil vain world." His remedy was for the government to "appoint . . . a day of public humiliation, with fasting and prayer, throughout this whole colony; that we may set ourselves sincerely to seek the Lord, rending our hearts, . . . and pursue the same with a thorough reformation."

The government accordingly undertook measures for "suppression of those proud excesses in apparel, hair, etc. . . ; against such as are false worshippers, especially idolatrous Quakers." Laws were passed to imprison Quakers ("and there to have the discipline of the house applied to them"), to punish long hair and luxurious clothing, excessive drinking, swearing, abuse of the Sabbath, disrespect for parents, and more.³²

Samuel Nowell presented the alternative view to this conventional Puritanism in his sermon *Abraham in Arms*. Nowell says little about the virtues of contrition, humility, and self-denial praised by Mather. Nor does he complain about the decline in orthodoxy or the rise of idolatry. Instead, he speaks of the need to cultivate the art of war. Nowell builds his argument on a story from the book of Genesis. A group of armed men had kidnapped Abraham's nephew Lot. Abraham organized and trained an informal militia, a sort of rival gang, to rescue Lot and defeat his enemies. For this exploit, Nowell notes, Abraham received a blessing from Melchizedech, a priest of God, a priest who was "eminently a type of Jesus Christ." Nowell concludes, "Frequent trainings for the instructing of men in military discipline that they may be ready and expert for war, is a commendable practice, yea a duty which God expecteth of all God's Abrahams in their respective places."³³

Nowell supports his argument with both scripture and reason. He mentions the law of nature, "which teacheth man self-preservation," and among other passages he quotes Luke 22:36, where Jesus says, "he that hath not a sword, let him sell his garment and buy one." For Nowell, "God helps those who help themselves." As Nowell matter-of-factly remarked, "God can work miracles, but when ordinary means may be had, he will not work miracles."³⁴

Nowell's sermon is full of the "don't tread on me" prickliness that characterized the American Revolution. Let us "learn to defend ourselves, or resolve to be vassals," he writes. He expresses contempt for the biblical Issachar, who prefers base slavery to hard-fought freedom: "It is a base spirit that of Issachar, a strong ass between two burdens, he saw that rest was good, and the land was pleasant, and bowed his shoulders to bear, and became a servant to tribute. . . . Low spirited men, let them have Issachar's lot, that make his choice."³⁵ Issachar as an image of slavish submission to unjust authority was used on more than one occasion in the sermons of the eighteenth century leading up to the American Revolution.³⁶

Nowell also hinted at another, more controversial, use of military skill:

There are our rights, both as men, and as Christians, our civil rights and liberties as men and our religious liberties and rights as Christians; both which we are to defend with the sword, as far as we are able, or to commit ourselves to God in the way of duty in doing of it. There is such a thing as liberty and property given to us, both by the laws of God and men; when they are invaded, we may defend ourselves. God hath not given great ones in the world that absolute power over men, to devour them at pleasure, as great fishes do the little ones; he hath set rulers their bounds. . . . He that rules over men must be just, that is, should be so, ruling in the fear of God: therefore kings are commanded to read the book of the law, because it is a boundary of their authority, as well as of the people's liberty.³⁷

Nowell is carefully but firmly indicating the possible need to rise up and oppose the encroachments of England on the liberties and properties of New Englanders. That is, he is speaking of the right of revolution. He does so in the name of "our rights both as men and as Christians." Here, for the first time that I know of, we see in a Puritan sermon an appeal to the rights of men, that is, natural or human rights. We see here, stated with manly clarity, the link between the natural and divine right to liberty and property, and the right to revolution, that became the faith of most Americans by 1776. I do not know whether Nowell had read any of the European authors who had written on the subject. He may have picked up this language from the many Whig pamphlets that were published in England in these years, some of which must have circulated in America.³⁸ In Nowell's sermon, it seems, we hear the opening salvo of the century-long struggle between England and America over who should rule.

The theological difference between Mather and Nowell had its counterpart in the practical reaction of two exemplary New Englanders. Mary Rowlandson, captured by the Indians in King Philip's War, later published a widely read narrative of her sufferings. She sees in her trials divine punishment for her sins, such as being careless of the Sabbath. She prays for relief, which eventually comes. She is passive, humble, remorseful, repentant.³⁹

Her contrast with Benjamin Church could not be more striking. Captain Church had hunted down and killed King Philip, the leader of the Indian forces. Church's son published an account of his father's exploits some years later. Unlike Mary Rowlandson, Church was not a man of passive piety trusting in God to save him, but rather "a person of uncommon activity and industry," an enterprising, courageous, wily, and tough Indian fighter. He was the embodied spirit of Nowell's *Abraham in Arms*. Church studied Indian methods of fighting and used them effectively against the enemy.⁴⁰ Benjamin Church was a Christian, but he did not rely on prayer or divine intervention to get things done. He said that "calling to mind that God is strong, I endeavored to put all my confidence in him." What that meant in practice was that he made good use of his God-given talents to defeat the enemy and put a stop to the wanton murder of the colonists.⁴¹

It was Nowell's view, not Mather's, that won out among New England Puritans in the succeeding years. It was not Mary Rowlandson but Benjamin Church who became the model American Christian in wartime. Because Nowell, Church, and their fellow Puritans trusted in reason and experience, and in a God who wanted men to make full use of reason and experience, they were able to learn the lesson of King Philip's War. From then on, Protestant Christian piety was no longer a merely private relation between the individual and God. It became inseparable from patriotism and military valor.

One historian of New England sermons writes that Nowell's sermon "would lay down the main lines of martial preaching in time of war for the century to follow."⁴² Nowell taught that God requires men to train and to kill in defense of their lives and liberties. His was a fighting Christianity that was quick to repel evil and stood firm in defense of civil liberty.⁴³

The Fourth Crisis of Puritanism: Despotism, Rebellion, and the End of the Puritan Commonwealth

Meanwhile, a threat to American liberties was brewing in England more dangerous than the Indians. King Charles II and his successor, James II, attempted to convert England into a monarchy on the model of Louis XIV's

France. Parliament, which had given the monarchy such trouble, would be dispensed with.⁴⁴ The colonial side of this policy was unveiled with full explicitness in the 1680s. After many lesser encroachments after the restoration of the monarchy in 1660, Britain finally abolished the New England democracies outright and appointed a royal governor, Sir Edmund Andros. He ruled the newly formed "Dominion of New England" without the consent of the governed. This hated government proved to be short lived. Historian Jack Greene writes:

Embittered over the loss of their charter, alarmed at the loss of representative government, and resentful of the efforts of Andros to levy taxes without the consent of a legislature, to alter the system of land tenure so that property titles would be held by a grant from the Crown, to encourage the growth of Anglicanism in the colony, and to enforce the Navigation Acts strictly, the Puritans were ripe for revolt.⁴⁵

The Glorious Revolution in England overthrew James II in 1688. In 1689, the Bostonians, encouraged by this news, overthrew and imprisoned Governor Andros in a rehearsal for the American Revolution eighty-five years later. This first American revolution produced justificatory tracts as in the 1770s, but there was as yet no talk of the equal rights of mankind. The natural rights argument was beginning to be widely known in Britain at this time—Locke's *Two Treatises of Government* was published in 1690—but, other than Nowell's brief mention, it had not yet penetrated into America. As in the 1770s, the cry was, "no taxes shall be levied on the subjects without consent of an assembly chosen by the freeholders for assessing the same."⁴⁶ But the Puritan writers generally did not go beyond an appeal to the rights of Englishmen in defense of their cause. The two pamphlets justifying the overthrow of Andros were *The Revolution in New England Justified* and *The Humble Address of the Publicans*.⁴⁷

By 1700 the Puritan commonwealth had lost much of its sectarian religious character, for Britain required citizenship and toleration to be extended to most residents. The democratic and religious spirit remained strong in Massachusetts, but the political community gained an identity of its own apart from the Puritan convictions that continued to pervade, if less intensely than before, the lives of the people.⁴⁸ A new vocabulary of liberty had begun to be heard, as we already saw in Nowell. Earlier, Robert Child, a non-Puritan, had petitioned the government to secure for all colonists—whether church members or not—"civil liberty and freedom."⁴⁹ Could this growing concern for liberty and property rights be consistent with or intended by God's will?

The Puritan commonwealth had failed. Winthrop's original vision of a brotherhood of loving fellow Puritans had faded away long ago. But the appeal to the rights of Englishmen had done New Englanders little good. Locked in Britain's embrace they had neither communal piety or political liberty. What was God's will for New England under these new conditions?

Some Puritan preachers bewailed the increasing turn to liberty understood as rights against government rather than as the freedom gained through faith in Christ. In 1673 Uriah Oakes affirmed that a religious people are likely to be as stout asserters of their liberties as any. Nevertheless,

I would dissuade from an extreme and undue affection of liberty. Here is a great cry in the country at this day about civil liberties: these and those (in the frightful imaginations of some men) are about to rob us of our liberties. . . .

Again, the loud outcry of some is for liberty of conscience: that they may hold and think and practice what they will in religion. This is the Diana of some men, and great is the Diana of the libertines of this age.⁵⁰

But Oakes was wrong. The "frightful imaginations of some men" correctly anticipated the British attack on New England liberties. And "liberty of conscience," the right to free exercise of religion (at least for Protestants), was required by British law.

In 1700, Samuel Sewall of Boston published a condemnation of the enslavement of blacks. He wrote, "It is most certain that all men, as they are the sons of Adam, and coheirs; and have equal right unto liberty, and all other outward comforts of life. . . . So that originally, and naturally, there is no such thing as slavery." Sewall used the word *naturally*, but his argument was based on scripture: God "hath made of one blood, all nations of men, for to dwell upon the face of the earth" (Acts 17:26).⁵¹ Sewall was speaking of the natural right to liberty, but he did not yet have a full understanding of that notion.

A new spirit was alive in Protestant Christendom, in Europe as well as America. That spirit was not yet modern in the sense of the political philosophy of Locke and the Enlightenment, of which little was heard in New England's first century. But New England was resolutely democratic and promoted individual self-reliance to a higher degree than Christendom had yet seen. Massachusetts and Connecticut were unable to be Puritan commonwealths. Nor did they wish to be. They were ripe for a theology that could make sense of the confusing new situation, in which Britain ruled America partly without its consent. That theology was provided by John Locke and other European

writers who taught the doctrine of the social compact. Its ultimate implication was the necessity for independence of Britain.

THE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY PURITAN DISCOVERY OF NATURAL RIGHTS

The "New Learning" Comes to America

At some point around 1715, Puritans began to discover what some called the "new learning." It seems that the leading seventeenth-century European writings penetrated Connecticut earlier than Massachusetts. This may be due to Jeremiah Dummer, Connecticut's agent in England. In 1714, Dummer sent Yale a gift of a collection of modern books. Prior to that time, according to Samuel Johnson, the students had heard "of a new philosophy that of late was all the vogue, and of such names as Descartes, Boyle, Locke, and Newton, but they were warned against thinking anything of them, because the new philosophy, it was said, would soon bring in a new divinity and corrupt the pure religion of the country."

But after Dummer's gift, Johnson said, he "had all at once the vast pleasure of reading the works of our best English poets, philosophers, and divines, Shakespeare and Milton, etc., Locke and Norris, etc., Boyle and Newton, etc. . . . All this was like a flood of day to his low state of mind. . . . And by the next Thanksgiving, 1715, I was wholly changed to the New Learning."⁵² Locke and Newton began to be taught at Yale (by Johnson and a fellow tutor) the following year.

One of the first sermons, perhaps the earliest, to mention a "new learning" philosopher as an authority was John Bulkley's *The Necessity of Religion in Societies* (1713). Bulkley too was from Connecticut. This sermon defends the Christian religion as both true and useful. It contains such traditional Puritan themes as the "depraved . . . nature of man in his fallen state" and the need for government to fund "an establishment for the support of the gospel."⁵³ But we are surprised to find Machiavelli called a "great politician." He is quoted with approval three times, as someone who supports religion as "tending to the prosperity and welfare of civil societies."

John Wise was the first American to publish a full account of the social compact theory that would eventually become the theory of the American founding. He did so in his 1717 book, *A Vindication of the Government of New-England Churches*. This book is one of the most remarkable published in America in the entire eighteenth century. Other than Nowell, hardly any other

Puritan had spoken of our individual rights "as men." No one had discussed in print the equality and liberty of human beings in a state of nature, or had argued that the purpose of government should be limited to protecting people against injury. Suddenly, in Wise's book, the social compact theory of the founding appears entire.

In *The Necessity of Religion in Societies* (1713), quoted above, the Connecticut minister John Bulkley asserted that

Rulers are designed by God to be a shield and defense to those under them in their just rights and liberties; such as by the laws of GOD and their own (consonant thereto) are settled upon them. . . . As for men's civil rights, as life, liberty, estate, etc., God has not subjected them to the will and pleasure of rulers; nor may they . . . invade or disturb their free enjoyment of them. . . . [T]he divine law (natural or positive) . . . [determines] that the enjoyment of them be free and undisturbed.⁵⁴

No philosopher is cited in support of this claim. We do not know whether Bulkley had read Locke yet. At any rate, twelve years later, in 1725, Bulkley published an account of Locke's basic doctrine in an article defending the colonists' right to occupy the territory of America in spite of the Indians' being there first. As far as I have been able to tell, this article, Bulkley's preface to *Poetical Meditations*, is the first American publication that explains Locke's argument. It may be the first to mention his name. (Perhaps the first mention of Locke by an American governmental body was Daniel Dulaney's 1728 *Right of the Inhabitants of Maryland to the Benefit of English Laws*,⁵⁵ published at the request of the Maryland House of Representatives.)

The Adoption of the New Political Theology

Wise's was the only New England publication that discussed the social compact theory of the founding before 1720. After that date, several writers besides Bulkley picked up the typical lines of argument. Outside of clerical circles, James Franklin, Benjamin's older brother, began publishing excerpts of *Cato's Letters* in his newspaper. ("Cato" was John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon, English writers who popularized the social compact theory of Locke, Algernon Sidney, and others in a series of essays that were widely reprinted in America.) The following year, Benjamin Franklin printed passages from *Cato's Letters*, number 15 and 31, in his *Silence Dogood* papers in Boston.⁵⁶ In 1722, John Mather published a defense of the English colonists' right to acquire land in America without the permission of the Indians. His argument

was like Bulkley's already mentioned, but without reference to Locke and without as clear an understanding of the argument as Bulkley.⁵⁷ These, along with Wise's book, were the earliest appearance in New England of what became the theory of the American Revolution.

By the 1730s and 1740s, a few other preachers began to pick up these Lockean themes. Jared Eliot of Connecticut cites Locke on government in a 1738 sermon:

We are in the first place to consider man as in a state of nature. Some have thought that none of mankind were ever in that state, because history furnisheth us with no instances. But as a great writer well observes, that affords no argument; because government is before history and records.⁵⁸

Elisha Williams gave the first extended presentation of John Locke's argument for religious toleration in an eloquent 1744 piece. Williams's four-page summary of Locke's account of the origin and purpose of government is one of the clearest and most complete given by any American in the eighteenth century. "[H]erein [I] have given a short sketch of what the celebrated Mr. Locke in his *Treatise of Government* has largely demonstrated; and in which it is justly to be presumed all are agreed who understand the natural rights of mankind." Williams goes through the arguments for equality, liberty, and consent (arbitrary government being "where the people don't make their own laws").⁵⁹

Williams's statement gives the first full-scale argument for the free exercise of religion, not only as a natural right discovered by reason, but also as a requirement of scripture. One of Williams's main arguments is this:

That the sacred scriptures are the alone rule of faith and practice to a Christian, all Protestants are agreed in; and must therefore inviolably maintain, that every Christian has a *right of judging for himself* what he is to believe and practice in religion according to that rule: Which I think on a full examination you will find perfectly inconsistent with any power in the civil magistrate to make any penal laws in matters of religion.⁶⁰

Zuckert sees in Williams's simultaneous appeal to both faith and reason a blending of Protestantism and Lockeanism. It is more accurate to say that Protestant theology had become more sensitive to those passages in Scripture, and those themes in the Christian theological tradition, that support the conclusions of reason. Christianity itself had come to be seen as reasonable, as a religion that teaches the law of nature discovered by reason.

The view of Christianity that many American ministers adopted had been presented in John Locke's *Letter on Toleration* (1689) and *Reasonableness of Christianity* (1695). Many political scientists today know Locke mainly through the *Two Treatises of Government*, which do not speak much about Christianity. But Locke was a major theologian, and he was respected as such throughout the eighteenth century. In the *Letter on Toleration*, Locke argued that the core of Christianity is its moral teaching: "he who wishes to be a soldier in Christ's church ought to declare war on his own pride and lust; otherwise, without holiness of life, purity of morals, kindness and mildness of mind, he vainly seeks for himself the name of Christian. . . . For in the Gospel, if the Apostles are to be believed, no one can be a Christian without charity, without faith that works through love, not force."⁶¹ Locke gave a full exposition of the argument behind this conclusion in the *Reasonableness*. In that book, there are three main duties of every Christian. The first is faith that Jesus is the Christ, the savior, and the king whose laws must be obeyed. Second is repentance. "These two, faith and repentance, i.e. believing Jesus to be the Messiah, and a good life, are the indispensable conditions of the new covenant, to be performed by all those who would obtain eternal life" (para. 172). But third, genuine repentance requires obedience to the law of Christ (or at least a sincere effort), which is stated in the Sermon on the Mount, and includes the law of nature (181).

Locke's theological argument was based on the Protestant view, affirmed by Elisha Williams, that scripture alone is the authority for Christians. Locke also accepted the Luther-Calvin notion of the two kingdoms, of this world and the next. Far from denying the authority of Christianity, Locke insisted that man's duty to God is higher than to man: "For obedience is owed first to God, then to the laws" (*Toleration*, 127). The goal of a Christian is life eternal—a goal not attainable in this world.

The Great Awakening

Puritan theology had always insisted on the primacy of faith as the basis of true Christianity. However, we have seen that during the 1600s it became increasingly open to the insights of reason. By the third decade of the 1700s, however, Puritan "New Lights" like Jonathan Edwards, who emphasized faith and "the heart, rather than the head," had grown increasingly critical of theologians who seemed to rely so much on reason that they neglected faith. As Edwards said, "Some make philosophy, instead of the Holy Scriptures, their rule. . . ."⁶² Edwards, George Whitefield, and other like-minded preachers began an influential movement called the Great Awakening, lasting from about 1739 to 1742.

Those "Old Lights" on the other side like Charles Chauncy, who emphasized the importance of reason in Christianity, accused their opponents of "enthusiasm." Chauncy wrote, "While the passions are uppermost, and bear the chief sway over a man, he is in an unsafe state."⁶³

By the end of the Great Awakening, important differences remained, but both sides came to see that their common ground was greater than the opinions that divided them. After all, few Old Light "rationalists" rejected the authority of scripture and the primacy of faith. Few New Light "enthusiasts" rejected the importance of reason.⁶⁴ Historian Harry Stout writes,

Even as New Lights admitted that true religion required, in Tennent's words, a "right Reason" that governed "our own fickle and often partial and byass'd Fancies and Humours," so Old Lights conceded that reason alone, "without Revelation, and the Assistances of God's Spirit" was "not sufficient" to transform the soul.⁶⁵

For our purposes, however, what deserves to be noted is that the two sides did not disagree in any important respects on the questions of political theory that we have discussed. By the mid-eighteenth century, the "Calvinists" were no less devoted to the new understanding of politics than the "rationalists." "Calvinist" Levi Hart and "rationalist" Samuel West both spoke of the social compact origin of civil society, the state of nature, the laws of nature, and the need for government by elected representatives. Both found support for their political theory in reason and philosophy as well as in Scripture. (Hart cited the Lockean poet Alexander Pope, and West cited Locke himself.)⁶⁶

The Consensus after 1760 on Reason

By around 1760, what had been a radical and unusual position when John Wise proclaimed it in 1717 had become the consensus of New England preachers. They manfully rejected that effeminate Christianity which Machiavelli denounced, according to which the splendor of eternity makes political life unworthy of serious attention. Consider this ringing affirmation of liberty by the Reverend Jonathan Mayhew in 1750, from what has been called "the most famous sermon preached in pre-Revolutionary America":

Tyranny brings ignorance and brutality along with it. It degrades men from their just rank into the class of brutes. It damps their spirits. It suppresses arts. It extinguishes every spark of noble ardor and generosity in the breasts of those who are enslaved by it. It makes naturally strong and

great minds feeble and little, and triumphs over the ruins of virtue and humanity. This is true of tyranny in every shape. There can be nothing great or good where its influence reaches. For which reason it becomes every friend to truth and humankind, every lover of God and the Christian religion, to bear a part in opposing this hateful monster.⁶⁷

Abraham Williams's 1762 Massachusetts election sermon rehearses the following arguments: the need to "surrender to the society the right they before had of judging in their own case, and of executing those righteous judgments," a right which one has in the state of nature; the limited purpose of civil society (namely, the regulation of "men's outward behavior," "that they may be secure in the enjoyment of all their rights and properties righteously acquired"); the difficulty of knowing the law of nature due to carelessness, prejudice, and vice; and the "rights of conscience." These are arguments stressed by Locke in his *Two Treatises* and *Letter on Toleration*.⁶⁸

In a 1766 Thanksgiving sermon William Patten speaks of sentiments entertained by the great Mr. Locke, which he has very clearly expressed, in his essay on government. . . . After consulting the doctrine of passive obedience, he proceeds thus:

"Here, 'tis like, the common question will be made, who shall be judge whether the prince or legislature act contrary to their trust? This, perhaps, ill-affected and factious men may spread among the people, when the prince only makes use of his just prerogative. To this I reply, the people shall be judge; [for] who shall be judge whether his trustee or deputy acts well, and according to the trust reposed in him, but he who deposes him, and must, by having deposed him, have still a power to discard him, when he fails in his trust? If this be reasonable in particular cases of private men, why should it be otherwise in that of the greatest moment, where the welfare of millions is concerned; and also, where the evil, if not prevented, is greater, and the redress very difficult, dear, and dangerous."⁶⁹

Jason Haven touches the same theme in his election day sermon in 1769, which made its way into "the hands of so many people in this province."⁷⁰

The doctrine of passive obedience and non-resistance, which had so many advocates in our nation a century ago, is at this day generally given up as indefensible, and voted unreasonable and absurd. The unreasonableness and absurdity of it, hath indeed been proved by some of the greatest reasoners of our age.

"Wheresoever law ends," says the great Mr. Locke, "tyranny begins, if the law be transgressed to another's harm. And whoever in authority exceeds the power given him by law, and makes use of the force he hath under his command, to compass that upon the subject which the law allows not, ceases in that to be a magistrate; and, acting without authority, may be opposed as any other man, who invades the right of another."—"Here, 'tis likely, (continues he) the common question will be made, who shall be judge, whether the prince or legislature act contrary to their trust? [The rest of section 240 of Locke's *Second Treatise* is transcribed here, as in the Patten sermon just quoted.]⁷¹

Peter Whitney's Fast Day sermon quoted the same passage in 1774:

But when [rulers] . . . encroach on the natural and constitutional rights of the people; when they trample on those laws, which were made, at once to limit their power, and defend their subjects: in such cases the people are bound not to obey them, but resist them as public robbers and the destroyers of mankind and of human happiness. Says the great Mr. Locke in his treatise upon government: "Wheresoever law ends, tyranny begins . . . who invades the right of another." And in these cases the people must be judge of the good or ill conduct of their rulers; to the people they are accountable.⁷²

John Lathrop reaches the same conclusion on the basis of a different Lockean passage in a 1774 sermon. He speaks of the right of self-defense against individuals or nations who would deprive a man of what he has a right to, citing Locke's *Second Treatise*, chapter 3 (on the state of war) in support.⁷³

Simeon Howard, in his 1773 Artillery Sermon, cites Locke on the state of nature:

In a state of nature, or where men are under no civil government, God has given to everyone liberty to pursue his own happiness in whatever way, and by whatever means he pleases, without asking the consent or consulting the inclination of any other man, provided he keeps within the bounds of the law of nature. Within these bounds, he may govern his actions, and dispose of his property and person, as he thinks proper. Nor has any man, or any number of men, a right to restrain him in the exercise of his liberty, or punish, or call him to account for using it. This however is not a state of licentiousness, for the law of nature which

bounds this liberty, forbids all injustice and wickedness, allows no man to injure another in his person or property, or to destroy his own life.⁷⁴

I have quoted Howard's entire paragraph in order to answer historian Bernard Bailyn, who is among the most influential of a group of scholars who deny Locke's primacy as an authority for the founders and for New England theology. Stephen Dworetz has provided the most comprehensive list to date of the many references to Locke in the New England sermons of this period.⁷⁵

During the 1770s, Samuel West, Judah Champion, Nathaniel Whitaker, and Samuel Stillman—a Massachusetts Puritan, a Connecticut Puritan, a Presbyterian, and a Baptist—also cite Locke as their authority on the equal liberty of human beings in a state of nature. Champion paraphrases the *Second Treatise*, sections 77 (origins of society) and 123 (defects of the state of nature), and transcribes section 23 (no one can voluntarily enslave himself).⁷⁶

John Tucker's 1771 Election Sermon gives an unusually full account of the origin of legitimate political power. He is attempting to prove that government and taxation without representation are slavery:

All men are naturally in a state of freedom, and have an equal claim to liberty. No one, by nature, nor by any special grant from the great Lord of all, has any authority over another. All right therefore in any to rule over others, must originate from those they rule over and be granted by them. . . . To suppose otherwise, and that without a delegated power and constitutional right, rulers may make laws, and appoint officers for their execution, and force them to effect, i.e., according to their own arbitrary will and pleasure, is to defeat the great design of civil government, and utterly to abolish it. It is to make rulers absolutely despotic, and to subject the people to a state of slavery. . . .

It is essential to a free state, for without this it cannot be free, that no man shall have his property taken from him, but by his own consent, given by himself or by others deputed to act for him. Let it be supposed then, that rulers assume a power to act contrary to this fundamental principle, what must be the consequence? If by such usurped authority, they can demand and take a penny, by the same authority they may take a pound, and even the whole substance of the subject, so as to make him wholly dependent on their pleasure, having nothing that he can call his own; and what is he then but a perfect slave?⁷⁷

In support, Tucker transcribes several sentences from "Locke on Civil Government," including these, which were quoted again and again during the

revolutionary period: "[N]obody hath a right to take their [men's] substance, or any part of it from them, without their own consent. For I truly have no property in that which another can by right take from me when he pleases, against my consent."⁷⁸

Locke, to be sure, was not the only political writer respected by the revolutionary divines. Other writers, both modern and classical, are also quoted. But Locke's name appears more often by far than anyone else's in the period leading up to the revolution.⁷⁹

The Consensus after 1760 on Revelation

The purpose of this essay is to demonstrate that the political theology of the American Revolution was grounded on both revelation *and* reason. No "blending" or "amalgam" of Protestant theology with secular rationalism was needed, because scripture was understood to teach the same political principles as philosophy. The preachers quoted in the last section relied as much on their interpretation of scripture as on the writings of Locke, Sidney, Hoadly, Trenchard and Gordon, and other European "Whig" thinkers. Besides, the first three of these writers were far from presenting themselves as mere "rationalists" in their writings. Locke was a theologian in his own right, as we have already noted; Sidney relied heavily on scripture in his book; and Hoadly was a bishop of the Anglican church.

In support of the righteousness of the use of violence in defense of the rights of life, liberty, and estate, two passages from the Old Testament were frequently quoted. One was Jeremiah 48:10, "Cursed be he that keepeth back his sword from blood." Another was Judges 5:23, "Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty." Nathaniel Whitaker chose the Meroz passage as the theme of his 1777 sermon, *An Antidote against Toryism*.⁸⁰

By far the favorite New Testament passage quoted in support of the right to revolution was Romans 13:1: "Let every soul be subject to the powers that be. . . ." Other frequently cited passages included 1 Peter 2:13–14, "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake"; Titus 3:1, "Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work"; and Galatians 5:1, "Stand fast therefore in the liberty with which Christ hath made us free."⁸¹ Philips Payson's 1778 Election Sermon was devoted to Galatians 4:26, 31: "But Jerusalem, which is above, is free, which is the mother of us all. So then, brethren, we are not children of the bond woman, but of the free."⁸²

In his powerful 1776 Massachusetts Election Sermon, delivered on the eve of independence, Samuel West rightly notes that Romans 13 "has been made use of by the favorers of arbitrary government as their great sheet-anchor and main support." West then observes, "A very little attention, I apprehend, will be sufficient to show that this text is so far from favoring arbitrary government, that, on the contrary, it strongly holds forth the principles of true liberty." In the passage in question, the apostle Paul writes, "The powers that be are ordained of God; and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation; for rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. . . . [I]f thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doth evil." Samuel West comments:

If the apostle, then, asserts that rulers are ordained of God only because they are a terror to evil works and a praise to them that do well; . . . if the sole reason why they have a right to tribute is because they devote themselves wholly to the business of securing to men their just rights, and to the punishing of evil-doers,—it follows, by undeniable consequence, that when they become the pests of human society, when they promote and encourage evil-doers, and become a terror to good works, they then cease being the ordinance of God; they are no longer rulers nor ministers of God; they are so far from being the powers that are ordained of God that they become the ministers of the powers of darkness, and it is so far from being a crime to resist them, that in many cases it may be highly criminal in the sight of Heaven to refuse resisting and opposing them to the utmost of our power. . . . Hence we see that the apostle Paul, instead of being a friend to tyranny and arbitrary government, turns out to be a strong advocate for the just rights of mankind. . . . [This passage] ought, perhaps, rather to be viewed as a severe satire upon Nero, than as enjoining any submission to him.⁸³

West's explanation of Romans 13, the classic biblical text that had been cited in favor of passive obedience to all governments, was not unique to the American founding era. The same argument had been presented at length in Jonathan Mayhew's 1750 sermon. It had been made in John Milton's *Defence of the People of England* (1651), Algernon Sidney's *Discourses Concerning Government* (1698), and Locke's *Two Treatises*.⁸⁴ Other European theological writers had developed a similar argument, at least as early as "Junius Brutus's" *Defense of Liberty against Tyrants* (1579).⁸⁵

For the idea of religious liberty, a favorite passage was "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."⁸⁶ Another was John 18:36, Christ's kingdom is "not of this world."⁸⁷

In sum, the constant theme among New England preachers during the founding era was that God gives us two ways to learn his laws: reason, or the exercise of our own observation and thought to figure out what the rules are that promote human well-being; and revelation, or scripture (sometimes called "the sacred oracles"), which teach us our rights and duties by divine authority. On the occasion of the ratification of the Massachusetts Constitution of 1780, Samuel Cooper gave a sermon to the assembled dignitaries in which he made this characteristic observation:

We want not, indeed, a special revelation from heaven to teach us that men are born equal and free; that no man has a natural claim of dominion over his neighbours, nor one nation any such claim upon another; and that as government is only the administration of the affairs of a number of men combined for their own security and happiness, such a society have a right freely to determine by whom and in what manner their own affairs shall be administered. These are the plain dictates of that reason and common sense with which the common parent of men has informed the human bosom. It is, however, a satisfaction to observe such everlasting maxims of equity confirmed, and impressed upon the consciences of men, by the instructions, precepts, and examples given us in the sacred oracles; one internal mark of their divine original, and that they come from him "who hath made of one blood all nations to dwell upon the face of the earth," whose authority sanctifies only those governments that instead of oppressing any part of his family, vindicate the oppressed, and restrain and punish the oppressor.⁸⁸

Secularization?

It is commonly said by historians that eighteenth-century Puritanism underwent a secularization, a lowering of the standards from the high spiritual goals of the early Puritan "errand into the wilderness." Perry Miller is the most famous of the many who have made this argument. Zuckert more or less follows it in chapter 1 of this volume. He writes, "In the Mayflower Compact the secular is for the sake of the sacred," while, in contrast, the Declaration of Independence "affirms a wholly this-worldly end for political life."

I am suggesting something quite different. If I am right, the secular continues to be for the sake of the sacred. What happened was not a *secularization* but the opposite: a *sacralization* of what had previously been held worldly and low. For the eighteenth-century Christians whom we are discussing, the earlier Puritans had mistakenly limited the sacred to the realm of human life that is focused on the next world, or that presupposed the transformation of the human soul by divine grace: the church, worship, prayer, and the virtues of love, self-denial, and humility. The Congregational preachers of the 1760s and 1770s were convinced that the realm of the sacred includes what some (but by no means all) earlier Christians would have considered merely secular. Thus Elisha Williams speaks of "the sacred rights of conscience," which of course includes the natural right not to be a Christian. (One should be clear, however, that this is a natural right against the coercion of other men, not a right against God.) Samuel West's 1776 sermon says, "this ought to be looked upon as a sacred and inalienable right, . . . viz., that no one be obliged to submit to any law except such as are made either by himself or by his representative." These rights, in their view, had been neglected, in part because of deliberate misinterpretations of Christian doctrine by power-seeking priests in alliance with oppressive kings and aristocrats.⁸⁹

"Secular" writers like Jefferson shared this understanding. Jefferson used the word *sacred* three times in his "rough draft" of the Declaration of Independence.⁹⁰ Just as in early Puritanism, the secular is for the sake of the sacred. But the sacred now includes respect for the God-given liberty of all.

By 1776, Puritanism was not dead. But it had changed. God was still in his heaven, but the law of God most emphasized in discussions of politics was the law of nature.⁹¹ The sacred cause of Winthrop's city on a hill had been rejected, for divine grace does not change the earthly nature of entire political communities. But the "sacred cause of liberty," as Samuel West called it, had taken its place. From now on, Christianity in America would include devotion to the principles of the Declaration of Independence. Catholics too would agree on this, as John Carroll, the first Catholic bishop of the United States, appealed to the natural rights of all men—"the luminous principles on which the rights of conscience and liberty of religion depend"—in his pleas for full citizen rights for Catholics. Jews also endorsed the doctrine of the revolution. The Jewish congregation in Newport, Rhode Island, addressing President Washington during his visit in 1790, said that the government of America, protecting "liberty of conscience" and securing "the blessings of civil and religious liberty," is "the work of the great God."⁹²

Many scholars today find this view of things unbelievable. Like the early Puritans, they cannot easily conceive of Christianity as a religion that

commands toleration, or promotes the killing of wartime enemies. Many Christians today seem to pride themselves on the irrationality of their faith and its irrelevancy to the realistic cares of political life. They feel that what they call the spiritual dimension of Christianity is somehow compromised when Christians take the moral commandments of Christ to be largely identical to the law of nature, as the Christians of 1776 did.

If it is claimed that those who thought of themselves as Christians in the founding era were not really Christian, then one must confront the paradox of a nation that sincerely professes a religion whose leading tenets they have grossly misunderstood. I believe it is more in keeping with the historical facts to say that the Christians of the founding era held a different understanding of Christianity, perhaps erroneous, but perhaps superior to the one that prevails today.

Alexis de Tocqueville visited the United States during the 1830s. He reported that all religious denominations here shared the republican consensus that is evident from the sermons I have quoted from. That of course included the "liberal" Christians found in the vicinity of Boston, who by then had openly embraced Unitarianism, as well as the Baptists, Presbyterians, and Methodists, who were of the more Calvinist and Evangelical variety.

The Catholic prayer with which I will conclude could easily have been a Protestant prayer, or (omitting the reference to Christ at the end) even a Jewish prayer. Tocqueville says he heard this prayer at a "political gathering [in "one of the largest towns in the Union"] whose purpose was to come to the assistance of the Poles to get arms and money to them."

God Almighty! God of Hosts! thou who didst maintain the hearts and guide the arms of our fathers when they sustained the sacred rights of their national independence; thou who made them triumph over an odious oppression and granted our people the benefits of peace and freedom, O Lord! turn a favorable eye toward the other hemisphere; regard with pity an heroic people who today struggles as we did formerly for the defense of the same rights! Lord, who have created all men on the same model, do not permit despotism to come to deform thy work and to maintain inequality on earth. God Almighty! watch over the destiny of the Poles, render them worthy of being free; that thy wisdom reign in their councils, that thy strength be in their arms; spread terror over their enemies. . . . God Almighty, answer our prayer today; save the Poles. We ask this of thee in the name of thy much loved son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who died on the cross for the salvation of all men. Amen.⁹³

This prayer sums up the transformed political theology of Puritanism, which became the predominant political theology shared by the majority of Americans at the time of the revolution.

NOTES

1. Michael Zuckert, *The Natural Rights Republic* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1996), 26.
2. Virginia Declaration of Rights (1776), in Kurland and Lerner, *Founders' Constitution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 1:7. David M. O'Brien, *Constitutional Law and Politics*, vol. 2: *Civil Rights and Civil Liberties*, 4th ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 2000), 655 (chapter title, "Freedom from and of Religion"). John Locke, *Epistola de Tolerantia: A Letter on Toleration*, ed. Raymond Klibansky, trans. J. W. Gough (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), 127, 67 (I have modified the translation slightly).
3. The New England Confederation, May 19, 1643, in Henry Steele Commager, ed., *Documents of American History*, 9th ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1973), 26.
4. Perry Miller, *The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1939). Perry Miller, *The New England Mind: From Colony to Province* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1953). Alan Heimert, *Religion and the American Mind: From the Great Awakening to the Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1966). Nathan O. Hatch, *The Sacred Cause of Liberty* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977).
5. Thomas L. Pangle, "The Constitution's Human Vision," *The Public Interest* 86 (Winter 1987), 78. The New England Confederation, in Commager, *Documents of American History*, 26.
6. Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Oldtown Folks* (orig. pub. 1869; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1966), ch. 29, 392, 402.
7. Thomas Prince, *Election Sermon* (1730), in A. W. Plumstead, ed., *The Wall and the Garden: Selected Massachusetts Election Sermons, 1670–1775* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1968), 208.
8. John Winthrop, *A Modell of Christian Charity* (1630), Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society (Boston: Little and Brown, 1838), 3rd series, 7:45, 46.
9. *Ibid.*, 47.
10. *Ibid.*, 41.
11. *Ibid.*, 40.
12. *Ibid.*, 45.
13. Massachusetts General Court, *The Laws and Liberties of Massachusetts* (repr. of 1648 ed.; Birmingham: Legal Classics Library, 1982), under the heading "Ecclesiastical."
14. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, ed. and trans. Harvey C. Mansfield and Delba Winthrop (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), I.1.2, p. 39.
15. *Laws of Vermont*, ed. Allen Soule, *State Papers of Vermont* (Montpelier: Secretary of State, 1964), 72:38–39.

16. Mayflower Compact, in Kurland and Lerner, *Founders' Constitution*, 1:610. Fundamental Orders of Connecticut, in Commager, *Documents of American History*, 22–24.
17. John Winthrop, "Declaration in Defense of an Order of Court" (May 1637), in *Winthrop Papers* (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1929–), 3:423. Also Thomas Hooker: "There can be no necessary tie of mutual accord and fellowship come, but by free engagement." Hooker, *A Survey of the Summe of Church-Discipline* (1648), pt. 1, 47, quoted by John Witte, "How to Govern a City on a Hill: The Early Puritan Contribution to American Constitutionalism," *Emory Law Journal* 39 (1990): 47.
18. Winthrop, *Modell of Christian Charity*, 33.
19. John Cotton, *Certain Proposals Made by Lord Say . . . with the Answers Thereto*, in Edmund S. Morgan, ed., *Puritan Political Ideas* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1965), 165.
20. "Libertye and the Weale Publick reconciled" (1637), in Thomas Hutchinson, ed., *The Hutchinson Papers* (New York: Burt Franklin, 1967), 1:74–76.
21. Winthrop, *Modell of Christian Charity*, 34.
22. "Mrs. Hutchinson" (1830), in Hawthorne, *Selected Tales and Sketches* (New York: Penguin, 1987), 14–21.
23. Miller, *New England Mind: Seventeenth Century*, 390–91.
24. Norman Fiering, *Moral Philosophy at Seventeenth-Century Harvard: A Discipline in Transition* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1981), 66. This book is also the source for the previous paragraph. Thomas Shepard, *Theses Sabbaticae, or The Doctrine of the Sabbath* (London, 1649), in *The Works of Thomas Shepard* (orig. pub. 1853; repr. New York: AMS Press, 1967), 3:44–47, 51–53.
25. Plato, *Statesman*, 294a–c.
26. John Winthrop, *Journal*, May 22, 1639, September 4, 1639, and November 12, 1641, in James K. Hosmer, *Winthrop's Journal: "History of New England," 1630–1649* (1908; repr. New York: Barnes & Noble, 1946), 1:302–5, 1:323–24, 2:49–52.
27. *Winthrop's Journal*, May 22, 1639, 302. Massachusetts Body of Liberties, in Morgan, *Puritan Political Ideas*, 178.
28. *Winthrop's Journal*, September 4, 1639; June 5, 1644; May 3, 1644; and October 30, 1644; 1:323, 2:170–72, 2:189, 2:211–17.
29. William Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation, 1620–1647* (ca. 1650; New York: Modern Library, 1981), 132–34.
30. Winthrop, "Defense of an Order of Court," in *Winthrop Papers*, 3:424. Aristotle, *Politics*, book 2, 1260b–1264b. Founder James Wilson discusses early American communism in Plymouth and Virginia in "History of Property," *Works of James Wilson*, ed. Robert McCloskey (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967), 2:718.
31. Richard Slotkin and James K. Folsom, *So Dreadfull a Judgment: Puritan Responses to King Philip's War, 1676–1677* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1978), 3.
32. Increase Mather, *A Brief History of the War* (1676), in Slotkin and Folsom, *So Dreadfull a Judgment*, 102–5; the government's response is in Morgan, *Puritan Political Ideas*, 226–33.

33. Samuel Nowell, *Abraham in Arms* (1678), in Slotkin and Folsom, *So Dreadfull a Judgment*, 274–77.
34. Nowell, *Abraham in Arms*, 282–84. Algernon Sidney, *Discourses Concerning Government*, ed. Thomas G. West (1698; repr. Indianapolis: Liberty Classics, 1990), ch. 2, sec. 23, p. 210. Benjamin Franklin, *Writings* (New York: Library of America, 1987), 1201 (from *Poor Richard*, 1736).
35. Nowell, *Abraham in Arms*, 288.
36. Samuel Cooke, *A Sermon* (Election Sermon, Boston, 1770), in Plumstead, *The Wall and the Garden*, 331. Samuel Sherwood, *A Sermon, Containing, Scriptural Instructions to Civil Rulers, and all Free-Born Subjects* (New Haven, 1774), in Ellis Sandoz, ed., *Political Sermons of the America Founding Era: 1730–1805* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1990), 378. Simeon Howard, *A Sermon Preached to the Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company in Boston* (1773), in Charles S. Hyneman and Donald S. Lutz, ed., *American Political Writing during the Founding Era, 1760–1805* (Indianapolis: Liberty Press, 1983), 1:197. Thomas Bradbury, *The Ass: or, the Serpent, A Comparison between the Tribes of Issachar and Dan, in their Regard for Civil Liberty* (orig. pub. London, 1712; repr. Newburyport, Mass., 1774), in Hyneman and Lutz, *American Political Writing*, 1:240–56. A pre-Nowell use of Issachar is John Oxenbridge, *New England Freemen Warned and Warmed, to be Free Indeed* (Boston, 1673), 27.
37. Nowell, *Abraham in Arms*, 282–83. In the next sentence, Nowell mentions the example of Ahab's theft of Naboth's vineyard.
38. See Anonymous, *Touching the Fundamentall Lawes* (London, 1643), in Joyce Lee Malcolm, ed., *The Struggle for Sovereignty: Seventeenth-Century English Political Tracts* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1999), 274–75 ("God and nature hath ordained government for the preservation of the governed." The people delegated power to the king "for the people's preservation, yet it was never intended that by it he might compass their destruction, contrary to the law of nature; whereby every man, yea everything is bound to preserve itself"). William Ball, *Constitutio Liberi Populi, Or, The Rule of a Free-born People* (London, 1646), in Malcolm, *Struggle*, 287, 292–93 (men have "original freedom"; according to the law of nature, "All power and authority is given for preservation, and edification, nothing for destruction and desolation"). John Goodwin, *Right and Might Well Met* (London, 1649), in Malcolm, *Struggle*, 319, 326, 330 (the "law of nature and necessity" justifies overthrow of a king who attempts to deprive subjects of "lives and estates" and "the kingdom's liberties"). William Allen, *Killing Noe Murder* (1657), in David Wootton, ed., *Divine Right and Democracy: An Anthology of Political Writing in Stuart England* (New York: Penguin, 1986), 373 (the laws of God and nature permit men to defend themselves by force against those who threaten their lives and properties; that includes the tyrant, "the common robber of mankind").
39. Mary Rowlandson, *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God, . . . Being a Narrative of the Captivity and Restauration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson* (1682), in Slotkin and Folsom, *So Dreadfull a Judgment*, 316–69.
40. I do not mean that Church imitated the Indians' willingness to kill innocent women and children. I mean that he, as Rev. Oliver Peabody recommended in a 1732

sermon, believed that Christian soldiers should "study their enemies" and "be exercised and skilled in the . . . manner of fighting used by savages in the wilderness," including the ability to "fight in the woods." Oliver Peabody, *An Essay to Revive and Encourage Military Exercises, Skill, and Valour among the Sons of God's People in New-England: A Sermon Preached before the Honourable Artillery-Company* (Boston, 1732), in James A. Levernier, ed., *Souldiery Spiritualized: Seven Sermons Preached before the Artillery Companies of New England, 1674–1774* (Delmar, N.Y.: Scholars' Facsimiles, 1979), 27, 34.

41. T.C., *Entertaining Passages Relating to Philip's War . . . with Some Account of the Divine Providence towards Benj. Church Esqr* (1716), in Slotkin and Folsom, *So Dreadfull a Judgment*, 370–470. The quotations are on 395 and 397.

42. Harry S. Stout, *The New England Soul: Preaching and Religious Culture in Colonial New England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 83.

43. Here are some sermon titles from the years that followed: *The Man of War* (1699). *Good Soldiers Described and Animated* (1720). *An Essay to Revive and Encourage Military Exercises, Skill, and Valour among the Sons of God's People in New England* (1732). *Martial Wisdom Recommended* (1737). *The Expediency and Utility of War, in the Present State of Things, Considered* (1759). *The Importance of Military Skill*. These titles are listed in Levernier, *Souldiery Spiritualized*, appendix B.

44. Richard Ashcraft makes a persuasive case against Charles II in *Revolutionary Politics and John Locke's Two Treatises of Government* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), ch. 1.

45. Jack Greene, ed., *Settlements to Society, 1607–1763* (New York: Norton, 1975), 184.

46. Town of Ipswich, statement of August 23, 1687, quoted by T. H. Breen, *The Character of the Good Ruler: Puritan Political Ideas in New England, 1630–1730* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), 144. John Wise may have written it.

47. Anonymous, *The Revolution in New England Justified* (Boston, 1691), and Anonymous, *The Humble Address of the Publicans of New-England* (London, 1691).

48. David S. Lovejoy, *The Glorious Revolution in America* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1972), chaps. 7, 8, 10, 13, has a fuller account of the events summarized here.

49. George L. Haskins, *Law and Authority in Early Massachusetts* (New York: Macmillan, 1960), 55.

50. Uriah Oakes, *New England Pleaded With* (Cambridge, Mass., 1673), 51–52.

51. Samuel Sewall, *The Selling of Joseph: A Memorial* (Boston, 1700), in M. Halsey Thomas, *The Diary of Samuel Sewall, 1674–1729* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1973), 2:1117.

52. Samuel Johnson, *His Career and Writings* (New York, 1929), 1:6–7, 2:186, quoted in Claude M. Newlin, *Philosophy and Religion in Colonial America* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1962), 23–24.

53. John Bulkley, *The Necessity of Religion in Societies* (Boston, 1713), Evans 1598, 4, 63.

54. *Ibid.*, 19, 38, 46.

55. Daniel Dulaney, *The Right of the Inhabitants of Maryland to the Benefit of English Laws* (Annapolis, Md., 1728), Evans 39881, 2, 9–10, 30.

56. Bernard Bailyn, *Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (enlarged ed.; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992), 43. John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon, *Cato's Letters: Or, Essays on Liberty, Civil and Religious, and Other Important Subjects*, 2 vols. (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1995).

57. J. M. [John Mather], *The Original Rights of Mankind Freely to Subdue and Improve the Earth, Asserted and Maintained* (Boston, 1722), Evans 2346.

58. Jared Eliot, *Give Cesar His Due, Or, The Obligation that Subjects are under to their Civil Rulers*, Election Sermon (New London, Conn.: T. Green, 1738), 27.

59. Elisha Williams, *The Essential Rights and Liberties of Protestants* (1744), in Sandoz, ed., *Political Sermons*, 51–118. The quotations are on 59.

60. *Ibid.*, 55.

61. Locke, *Letter on Toleration*, 59.

62. Johnathan Edwards, "Thoughts on the Revival of Religion" (1742), in Alan Heimert and Perry Miller, ed., *The Great Awakening: Documents Illustrating the Crisis and Its Consequences* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1967), 264–65.

63. Charles Chauncy, *Enthusiasm Described and Caution'd against* (1742), in Heimert and Miller, 249.

64. *Ibid.*, 246; "The increase of learning in itself is a thing to be rejoiced in, because it is a good, and, if duly applied, an excellent handmaid to divinity." Johnathan Edwards, *A History of the Work of Redemption* (1739), in Heimert and Miller, 23.

65. Stout, *New England Soul*, 215, quoting Gilbert Tennent, *Irenicum Ecclasticum* (Philadelphia, 1749), 369, 371. Similarly from the "Old Light" side is Samuel West, *A Sermon Preached at the Ordination* (Boston, 1764), Evans 9869, 20: "Can any imagine that he faithfully preaches Christ, who very seldom in his discourses mentions his name; and who never insists on the doctrine of atonement, with which the New Testament so much abounds? . . . Where the doctrines of mere natural religion are insisted on to the neglect of the peculiar doctrines of revelation, we can at most expect to find only a few fashionable, civil gentlemen, but destitute of real piety. As on the other hand, where the distinguishing doctrines of Christianity alone are insisted upon, we shall find that men are very apt to run into enthusiasm. A true Gospel minister should seek to avoid both these extremes. When he insists on moral virtues, he should enforce them with Christian motives. He should preach up the perfections of God, to regulate our devotion; the doctrine of atonement and regeneration, to bring us to Christ, and social virtues as the effects of a Christian temper."

66. Levi Hart, *Liberty Described and Recommended* (Hartford, Conn., 1775), in Hyneman and Lutz, *American Political Writing*, 306–11; Samuel West, *On the Right to Rebel against Governors* (Boston, 1776), 410–37. Donald Weber, *Rhetoric and History in Revolutionary New England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 1 (criticizing the view promoted by "many secular academics themselves partisans of the Enlightenment" who portray "the Revolution as a secular, rational, political movement").

67. Jonathan Mayhew, *Discourse Concerning Unlimited Submission and Nonresistance to the Higher Powers*, Boston, 1765, in *Pamphlets of the American Revolution*, ed. Bernard Bailyn (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1965), 1:214. The "most famous sermon" statement is made by the editor on 204.

68. Hyneman and Lutz, *American Political Writing*, 1:3–18.

69. William Patten, *A Discourse Delivered at Halifax* (Boston: Kneeland, 1766), 17–18, quoting Locke, *Second Treatise*, sec. 240.

70. *Boston Weekly Newspaper*, November 23, 1769, quoted in Steven Dworetz, *The Unvarnished Doctrine: Locke, Liberalism, and the American Revolution* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1990), 181.

71. Jason Haven, *A Sermon* (Boston: R. Draper, 1769), 41–42. The first quotation is from sec. 202 of Locke's *Second Treatise*.

72. Peter Whitney, *Transgression of a Land*, Fast Day Sermon (Boston: John Boyle, 1774), 16–17, quoting Locke's *Second Treatise*, sec. 202. The full quotation from Locke is in the Haven passage just quoted.

73. John Lathrop, *A Sermon*, Artillery-Election Sermon (Boston, 1774), repr. in Levernier, *Souldiery Spiritualized*, 8.

74. Simeon Howard, *A Sermon* (Boston, 1773), in Hyneman and Lutz, *American Political Writing*, 1:187.

75. Bailyn, *Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*, 28. Dworetz, *Unvarnished Doctrine*, exposes Bailyn's error on 111–12.

76. West (Boston, 1776), in Hyneman and Lutz, *American Political Writing*, 1:413. Judah Champion, *Christian and Civil Liberty*, Election Sermon, printed at the request of the Assembly (Hartford, Conn.: E. Watson, 1776), 7–8. Whitaker (1777) and Stillman (1779) in Frank Moore, ed., *Patriot Preachers of the American Revolution* (New York: Charles T. Evans, 1862), 198, 264.

77. John Tucker, *Election Sermon* (1771), in Hyneman and Lutz, *American Political Writing*, 1:162–63, emphasis added.

78. Hyneman and Lutz, *American Political Writing*, 1:163, from Locke, *Second Treatise*, sec. 138.

79. Donald S. Lutz, *Origins of American Constitutionalism* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988), 143.

80. Nathaniel Whitaker, *An Antidote against Toryism* (1777), in Frank Moore, ed., *Patriot Preachers of the American Revolution* (New York: Charles T. Evans, 1862), 186–231. Both passages are quoted by Samuel West, *On the Right to Rebel*, 439. In Virginia, Presbyterian Samuel Davies quotes the Jeremiah passage in *The Curse of Cowardice* (1758), in Daniel C. Palm, ed., *On Faith and Free Government* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1997), 94.

81. The first three of these passages are cited in Abraham Williams, *An Election Sermon* (Boston, 1762), in Hyneman and Lutz, *American Political Writing*, 7. Also Samuel West, *On the Right to Rebel*, in Hyneman and Lutz, 410, 423, 424. Daniel Shute quotes Romans 13 in his 1768 Election Sermon, in Hyneman and Lutz, 112. John Tucker preached an election sermon (1771) on 1 Peter 2 in which he discusses Romans 13; see

Hyneman and Lutz, 158, 161, 165. Simeon Howard, *A Sermon Preached to the Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company in Boston* (1773), Hyneman and Lutz, 186, preached on Galatians 5:1. Gad Hitchcock, 1774 Election Sermon, quotes and discusses Romans 13, in Hyneman and Lutz, 285. Peter Whitney, *The Transgression of a Land Punished by a Multitude of Rulers* (Boston, 1774), 15–19 (on Romans 13). Zabdiel Adams's 1782 Election Sermon discusses Romans 13, in Hyneman and Lutz, 541–43.

82. Philips Payson, *Election Sermon*, in Hyneman and Lutz, 523. Elisha Williams quotes the same passage to the same effect in *Essential Rights and Liberties of Protestants*, in Sandoz, *Political Sermons*, 86.

83. West, *On the Right to Rebel*, 423–25.

84. Mayhew's *Discourse Concerning Unlimited Submission*, 1765, was entirely devoted to Romans 13, in Bailyn, *Pamphlets of the American Revolution*, 215–47. Milton, *Defence of the People of England*, ch. 3, in John Alvis, ed., *Areopagitica and Other Political Writings of John Milton* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1999), 166–67. Sidney, *Discourses Concerning Government*, ch. 3, sec. 10, pp. 370–73. Locke quotes Romans 13 in *Two Treatises*, I.92 (contrary to Zuckert's assertion that Locke does not quote Romans 13 in the *Treatises*).

85. Junius Brutus, *A Defence of Liberty against Tyrants: A Translation of Vindiciae contra Tyrannos* (orig. pub. 1579; English trans. pub. 1689; London: G. Bell, 1924) (Romans 13 discussed at the end of the First Question). Benjamin Hoadly's interpretation of Romans 13 was in effect plagiarized by Mayhew in his interpretation of Romans 13: Bailyn, *Pamphlets*, 208.

86. Zabdiel Adams, *Election Sermon* (1782), in Hyneman and Lutz, 556.

87. Abraham Williams, *Election Sermon* (1762), in Hyneman and Lutz, 7.

88. Samuel Cooper, *A Sermon Preached before his Excellency John Hancock* (1780), in Sandoz, *Political Sermons*, 637.

89. John Adams, *Dissertation on the Canon and Feudal Law*, in *Works of John Adams*, ed. Charles Francis Adams, 10 vols. (Boston: Little, Brown, 1865), 3:463.

90. "We hold these truths to be sacred and undeniable"; the "most sacred rights of life and liberty" of slaves; and "we pledge to each other our . . . sacred honor." Samuel West, *On the Right to Rebel*, in Hyneman and Lutz, 1:438. *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, ed. Julian P. Boyd (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950), 423, 426–27 (my emphasis).

91. "The Constitution of the God of nature." Williams, *Election Sermon* (1762), in Hyneman and Lutz, 15.

92. John Carroll, "To John Fenno of the Gazette of the United States," June 10, 1789, in Thomas O. Hanley, ed., *The John Carroll Papers* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1976), 1:365. Anson P. Stokes, *Church and State in the United States* (New York: Harper, 1950), 862.

93. Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, I.2.9, p. 277.