"CONSERVATIVE REVOLUTIONARIES" - A STUDY OF THE RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL
THOUGHT OF JOHN WISE, JONATHAN MAYHEW, ANDREW ELIOT AND CHARLES
CHAUNCY

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ABSTRACT

The careers of Massachusetts Congregationalist pastors John Wise (1652-1725), Jonathan Mayhew (1720-1766), Andrew Eliot (1718-1778) and Charles Chauncy (1705-1787) extended over a crucial period of religious and socio-political change between 1680, just 47 years after the first settlement of Massachusetts, and 1787, only four years after American independence. Detailed study of the four New England ministers thus provides a unique opportunity for consideration of important historical issues, including: 1), causal connections between religious thought and activity and the origins of the American Revolution; 2), 18th century meanings and understandings of the key concept of liberty; and 3), the extent to which allegedly more liberal theological thinkers directly influenced revolutionary ideology in 18th century New England.

This dissertation is the first work to compare and contrast the lives and ideas of all four influential Massachusetts ministers in ways that facilitate direct contributions to these important areas of academic debate. Beginning with an account of Wise, which serves as an historical benchmark for those of the three later figures, it does so primarily through individual case studies of them and through substantial reinterpretations of their intellectual legacies.

The major new conclusions to emerge from this study are that Wise, Mayhew, Eliot and Chauncy were more conservative figures than scholars have often portrayed and that a traditionalist, dissenting, Protestant worldview was more significant in shaping their religious and political thought than contemporary philosophical influences. Their understandings of liberty, which were foundationally spiritual in origin and definition, were central to this Weltanschauung. They thus provide clear evidence of the extent to which the four ministers' "revolutionary" ideas and inclinations, such as they were, were arguably consistent with those of many similar intellectual leaders in 18th century New England, in that they were stimulated and informed more by religious than by strictly political motivations and concerns.

Keywords: John Wise; Jonathan Mayhew; Andrew Eliot, Charles Chauncy; American Revolution; Religious History; Colonial America; Massachusetts Congregationalism; Liberty

For my family, who have given so much to make it possible for me to pursue my studies, and especially, with much love and affection, for Kirsten, Nathalie and Stephanie.
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1. Presenting Problems.
The careers of Massachusetts Congregationalist pastors John Wise (1652-1725), Jonathan Mayhew (1720-1766), Andrew Eliot (1718-1778) and Charles Chauncy (1705-1787) covered 107 years of New England history. They were clearly from different generations; Wise was in the last of his 45 years as pastor at Chebacco in 1724-5, when Chauncy began active service at Boston churches before finally securing appointment at First Church in 1727. But their combined ministry was also continuous. It extended over a crucial period of socio-political and economic change between 1680, just 47 years after the first settlement of Massachusetts, and 1787, only four years after American independence had finally been secured. It embraced within its ambit such key developments in Massachusetts political and religious history as the 1686-9 Dominion of New England Government of Sir Edmund Andros (1637-1714), the “Great Awakening” that began in 1740 and the American Revolution (1775-1783). It included, not least, an era of major intellectual transformation, as the relatively uniform Calvinist “standing order” of the 1680s was displaced over time by a much more diverse theological landscape in which Congregationalist Calvinists, Arminians and even universalists came to co-exist with people of differing theological views in other denominations.

Notwithstanding the challenges presented by the sometimes widely differing contexts in which they lived and worked, detailed study of Wise, Mayhew, Eliot and Chauncy thus enables fruitful consideration of important historical issues. Moreover, the historiography of colonial American religion and politics focuses attention on three in particular that have taxed historians for decades:

a. First, Wise and Mayhew have often been portrayed as proto-revolutionary “forerunners,” who produced works that ultimately helped shape the ideology of the American Revolution. Eliot and Chauncy have further been seen as active revolutionaries themselves who contributed practically, as well as ideologically to the patriot cause. So all have been linked with the major historical debate over causal connections between religious (and especially New England Congregationalist) thought and activity and the origins of the Revolution.

b. Second, to the extent that scholars have periodically viewed these four pastors as significant ministerial contributors to revolutionary and pre-revolutionary ideas of liberty, they have figured in historiographical controversies over 18th century meanings and understandings of that contentious term and ideal.

1According to Harry Stout’s classification based on years of ministerial education, Wise, who graduated from Harvard in 1673, belonged to the second and Chauncy (1721), Eliot (1737) and Mayhew (1744), to the fourth generation or cohort in the New England ministry. See Stout, The New England Soul (New York, 1986), p. 5. On Chauncy’s 1724-1727 period of ministerial trials, see Edward M. Griffin, Old Brick; Charles Chauncy of Boston, 1705-1787 (Minneapolis, MN: 1980), pp. 22-4.
c. Last but not least, Wise, Mayhew, Eliot and Chauncy have generally been labelled as progressive and unorthodox theologians. They have accordingly featured quite prominently in historical debates about intellectual change and the extent to which more liberal thinkers directly influenced shifts not only in theological, but in political (including revolutionary) thought in 18th century New England.

This dissertation will be the first work to compare and contrast the lives and ideas of all four influential Massachusetts ministers in ways that will facilitate direct contributions to these important areas of academic dialogue. Starting with an account of Wise, which will serve as an historical benchmark for those of the three later figures, it will primarily do so through individual case studies, and thus through substantial reinterpretations of their theological and political legacies and influence. This chapter will begin with an extensive review of some of the key historiographical issues at stake, which will especially focus on connections between religion and the American Revolution and on revolutionary and pre-revolutionary ideas of liberty. It will conclude by outlining the dissertation's main arguments and some of the methodological considerations that inform them.

The major new conclusions to emerge from this study are that Wise, Mayhew, Eliot and Chauncy were more conservative figures than scholars have often portrayed and that a traditionalist, dissenting, Protestant worldview was more significant in shaping their religious and political thought than contemporary philosophical influences. Their understandings of liberty, which were foundationally spiritual in origin and definition, will be shown to have been central to this Weltanschauung. They thus provide clear evidence of the extent to which the four ministers' "revolutionary" ideas and inclinations, such as they were, were arguably consistent with those of many similar intellectual leaders in 18th century New England, in that they were stimulated and informed more by religious than by strictly political motivations and concerns.

A. Religion and the American Revolution.

1. Early Studies.
The formative influence of religion on colonial American society has long been recognized. But until the late 1960s, the religious background to the American Revolution was arguably neglected. Jack Greene's 1968 essay on "The Reappraisal of the American Revolution in Recent Historical Literature" listed nothing about the subject until the 1950s, when he chronicled a number of works

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exploring "the psychology of American resistance" in addition to Carl Bridenbaugh's *Mitre and Sceptre*.

3 Jack Greene, "Introduction: The Reappraisal of the American Revolution in Recent Historical Literature," in Jack Greene (ed.), *The Reinterpretation of the American Revolution, 1763-1789* (New York, 1968), pp. 2-74; Carl Bridenbaugh, *Mitre and Sceptre*: *Transatlantic Faiths, Ideas, Personalities, and Politics, 1689-1775* (New York, 1962). See esp. Greene (ed.), pp. 40-44, esp. p. 44; p. 23. Although more recent editions may be listed in endnotes and in the attached bibliography, works are cited in the main text by year of original publication. "Religion" is here generally understood in broad and largely "substantive" terms, as by sociologist Bryan Wilson, who has defined it as "the invocation of the supernatural," or as "those beliefs and procedures that relate to non-empirical ends and to supernatural categories." See Bryan Wilson, "The Debate over "Secularization," "Encounter, 45:4 (1975), pp. 77-84, p. 83: *Religion in Sociological Perspective* (Oxford, 1982), pp. 41-2. The "American Revolution" is here defined in somewhat traditional and avowedly "restricted" terms as what John F. Wilson has described as "the period of overt hostilities...from the battle at Lexington and Concord in 1775...to the declaration of peace in 1783," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History, 23:3* (1993), pp. 597-613, p. 599. No attempt is made to summarize or even to outline major themes in the massive scholarship on revolutionary causation in general in this dissertation. It is recognized, however, that the recent contributions of scholars who have urged broader reconsideration of the American Revolution in terms of developments within the Atlantic world as a whole and even wider geopolitical contexts, have encouraged the reconceptualization of more conventional historiographical definitions and questions. See, for example, the helpful collection of essays edited by Eliga H. Gould and Peter S. Onuf, *Empire and Nation: The American Revolution in the Atlantic World* (Baltimore, MD: 2005). For a more general overview, see further, Sylvia Frey, *Causes of the American Revolutions,* in Daniel Vickers (ed.), *A Companion to Colonial America* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 508-29.


5 Among later works, Akers singled out Perry Miller's 1961 article, "From the Covenant to the Revival," with Bridenbaugh's *Mitre and Sceptre*. Greene also included Edmund Morgan's "The Puritan Ethic and the American Revolution." But none of these were large-scale treatments of the topic. Bridenbaugh examined the significance of the Anglican Episcopate controversy. He concluded that this contributed to alienation from Britain among American dissenters, although not decisively so. When matters came to a head between 1760 and 1765, the issue helped fuel
unrest over the Stamp Act, but the controversy was ultimately secondary to the more general disquiet provoked by other measures. Bridenbaugh did, however, point out "the importance of this concrete religious issue in the coming of the Revolution" and showed how "debate over the episcopacy question between 1689 and 1760 already had helped to alienate many American dissenters from the mother country long before 1763."6

Miller's brief treatment of connections between religion and the Revolution is best viewed as a late supplement to his major works on Puritanism. As Philip Goff has pointed out in a helpful review article, a key objective of Miller's massive and persistently influential study of 17th and 18th century Puritanism was to demonstrate "the influence of thought upon human action" and to show how "New England's religious ideas created the social atmosphere and inspired the behavior of Puritans, not vice versa." But The New England Mind (1939, 1953) actually chronicled a progressive process of Puritan "declension," even disintegration over the course of the first century after initial settlement in face of competing, secularizing forces. Despite such a chronicle of decline, however, when tracing religious influences on revolutionary causation, Miller actually reverted to themes of Puritan continuity and even renewal. Thus "what carried the ranks of militia and citizens was the universal persuasion that they, by administering to themselves a spiritual purge, acquired the energies God had always....been ready to impart to His repentant children." Revolutionary days of prayer and humiliation, accompanied by "jeremiad" sermons, reflected beliefs that moral reformation was necessary to victory, and that resistance to British corruption would aid the process. The clergy was central in urging both the need to repent and the promise of better days to come.8 In his 1967 article for the William and Mary Quarterly, Morgan highlighted similar concerns, but placed them within a broader Puritan ethical framework. In revolutionary America, he argued, long-standing commitments to industry, frugality and simplicity were seen to be threatened by British measures, and they were resisted for the sake of self-improvement, as well as self-interest.9

ii. The Heimert Thesis.
Goff has suggested that because Alan Heimert was Miller's student and shared his commitment to show the influence of religious ideas on societal and even revolutionary outcomes, "the specter of Perry Miller hovers over" Religion and the American Mind from the Great Awakening to the

6Greene in Greene (ed.), p. 23.
8Miller, "From the Covenant to the Revival," esp. p. 333; Cf. Greene in Greene (ed.), pp. 41-2, esp. p. 42: "[for Miller] the Revolution was an internal fight against American corruption as well as an external war against British tyranny."
9Morgan, op. cit.; Greene in Greene (ed.), p. 41.
Revolution (1966). But Heimert ultimately came to different conclusions from his Harvard mentor. In the bibliography to his pioneering study, he cited a number of earlier works relating to his theme. However, the paucity of significant references listed by Akers and Greene and the limited range of arguments addressed by them suggest the extent to which Heimert was breaking new ground.

Heimert defined his subject from the outset as "the Great Awakening and the Revolution, and the continuities in American thought in the decades between them," and he focused on two key movements, which he labelled "Calvinism" and "Liberalism," or "Pietism"/"Evangelicalism" and "rationalism." By drawing on "nearly everything published in the colonies" during his period, and reading such sources "not between the lines but, as it were, through and beyond them," Heimert aimed to delineate "the sequence of ideas, and their myriad interrelationships, in the period between the Awakening and the Revolution." But he did not offer "a diagnosis of the causes of the Revolution," although he obviously intended to shed light on them; nor did he seek to establish "the personal virtue" of any individual or group. Instead, much like Miller, he would describe "the life of the [American] mind in which all participated."

Heimert's agenda was also revisionist, however. He aimed to demonstrate that rather than being a conservative social influence, as some had assumed, "evangelical religion embodied a radical and even democratic challenge to the standing order of colonial America," and entailed "revolutionary potential" as early as the writings of the revivalist theologian Jonathan Edwards. In fact, the "evangelical impulse" became "the avatar and instrument of a fervent American nationalism," contributing "radical and emphatic definitions of liberty and equality" that stood in direct contrast to those of Lockean and theological "Liberalism," which ultimately had more conservative consequences. On the principle that affective rhetoric was central to fuelling and

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11Heimert, pp. 570-5.
12Ibid., pp. 2, 3, 10.
13Ibid., pp. 11, 21.
14Ibid., pp. 21, 23.
15Ibid., p. 23.
16Ibid., pp. 12-14, esp. p. 12.
17Ibid., pp. 14, 16-17. "Lockean" liberalism obviously refers to the thought of English philosopher John Locke (1632-1704).
informing revolutionary developments, Heimert also aimed to document such trends with keen attention to their media of communication.18

The author structured his argument carefully and systematically over two parts, dealing with "Awakening" and "Revolution" respectively, although his presentation is often complex and elusive.19 Paying greater attention to "Liberal" attitudes and distinctives in his second part, Heimert argued that Liberals’ adaptation of traditional covenant theology to Lockean social contract theory and their advocacy of individualism and "enlightened self-interest" tended towards the protection of the sociopolitical status quo. Calvinists, by contrast, espoused a much more radical vision, based on a moralistic understanding of freedom and notions of a good [millennial] society informed by liberty and fraternity.20 Such distinctives were apparent in revolutionary rhetoric, where Calvinists stressed "British depravity and the blessings of liberty," for example.21 Their understanding of "perfect liberty" had clearly millennial overtones but came to be immediately identified with freedom from British law.22 Calvinists were early revolutionaries, although they became somewhat confused and divided, as events unfolded.23 In general, the Revolution encouraged evangelical political involvement, and Calvinists increasingly advocated democratic ideas.24

Not surprisingly in light of the scale and boldness of Heimert’s endeavour, early reviews were very mixed, and the complexity of Religion and the American Mind has continued to render its critical assimilation problematic.25 The first and arguably most problematic concern raised by

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18Ibid., p. 18.
19Ibid., pp. 25-236, 237-552.
20Ibid., pp. 239-453, passim.
21Ibid., p. 454.
22Ibid., pp. 455-7, 459.
23Ibid., pp. 474, 481.
24Ibid., pp. 510-11, 513-14. Heimert saw the later religious revivals of c.1800 as, p. 534, "an overt expression of social discontent and political aspiration." Republicanism and even Enlightenment thought reflected Calvinist influences, and Heimert ended, p. 546, by claiming that "the evangelical tradition [also] infused the ideology of Jacksonian democracy." Thus Great Awakening Calvinism, as the author defined it, shaped not only the "mind" of the American Revolution, but that of the early Republic and later.
reviewers was Heimert’s broad-brush definitions of the theological/intellectual movements that he sought to describe. As William McLoughlin noted, Heimert made little distinction between religious and secular “Liberalism,” and he tended to ignore the fact that even “the Calvinists were sharply divided between the educated and the uneducated, the communitarian (or theocratic) and the individualistic, the corporate and the voluntaristic, the presbyterian...and those who insisted upon absolute congregational autonomy.”26 In a largely negative review, Morgan addressed the problem of labelling more directly, adducing significant evidence that Heimert’s theological identifications had been misleading in a number of cases.27 Bernard Bailyn took his analysis one step further, offering three biographical studies designed to indicate the intellectual and psychological complexities involved in assessing the views of three New England “Liberals,” Eliot, Mayhew and Stephen Johnson (1724-1786).28

Although their own evidence may be debatable, simply by highlighting such difficulties, reviewers clearly raised significant questions of Heimert’s argument. If the reader cannot be sure that the author identified the positions of key participants correctly, or that the two schools of thought that he emphasised were as consistent or united as he suggested, Heimert’s whole thesis is seriously threatened. And there are other problems. His treatment of “Calvinism” was highly selective, for example, focusing on a few key elements of doctrine, which he subsequently traced in broad political terms. He might have constructed a quite different picture had he concentrated on others - “original sin” instead of “New Birth,” for example, or “irresistible grace” instead of millennialism. At the same time, although Heimert largely drew on elite sources, his interpretations of them were sometimes so unconventional, as Gordon Wood has reiterated, that they require a considerable suspension of disbelief without further explanatory contextualization.29 Such problems seem compounded by the fact that the author made little effort to trace the reception of key ideas at more grassroots levels. Thus while Heimert laid considerable stress on the impact of “affective” preaching, for example, he did not convincingly detail how Calvinist homiletics related to immediate events or to broader currents in American society, or how the ordinary man or woman responded to clerical rhetoric.30

26McLoughlin, p. 108.
28Bailyn, esp. pp. 87-139.
30Heimert, p. 660, listed a number of references to “People” in his Index, but they mostly relate to ideological and theological conceptions.

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Such omissions tend to render Religion and the American Mind an abstract and somewhat disembodied work, despite its ambitious and far-reaching claims. Combined with the analytical and factual questions that reviewers have pinpointed, they also suggest that this may ultimately be an unconvincing study. Yet Heimert has continued to receive credit for the undeniable fact that he almost single-handedly raised a number of significant issues that have continued to exercise scholarship on religion and the American Revolution.\(^{31}\) As shall be seen, subsequent historians have not only explored key Heimertian emphases in greater detail. At least one has effectively sought to rehabilitate aspects of the author's approach in his own pioneering research.

iii. Post-Heimert Scholarship.

Often taking their cue from Heimert, more recent scholars have attempted to trace many different connections between religion and the American Revolution. But they can usefully be considered under the very broad and far from mutually exclusive categories of millennial, political and institutional, and cultural and rhetorical linkages. None of the arguments advanced by key authors in these areas has led to the kind of radical re-conceptualization of the field that Heimert promised but arguably failed persuasively to deliver. But as Goff has demonstrated in his overview of post-Heimert scholarship, each has brought added light to a complex and sometimes rather obscure field of study, especially following the American bicentennial celebrations of 1976.\(^{32}\) It is for that reason that six further, arguably "seminal" works will here be reviewed in some detail with a view to sketching a significant part of the historiographical context within which this dissertation will develop its thesis.\(^{33}\)

a. Millennial Themes.

One area in which Heimert's influence has been clear, even where scholars have departed from his specific conclusions, has been in studies of the millennial dimensions of revolutionary and pre-revolutionary American thought and ideology. A number of more recent authors have explored this element of Heimert's thesis, and done so quite provocatively.

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\(^{31}\)See, for example, Melvin B. Endy, Jr., "Just War, Holy War, and Millennialism in Revolutionary America," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 42 (1985), pp. 3-25, esp. p. 3. See also, Goff, *op. cit.*, Wood, pp. 177-78.

\(^{32}\)Goff, pp. 705-21.

\(^{33}\)Key works to be explored under the listed categories include, in alphabetical order by author: Ruth H. Bloch, *Visionary Republic: Millennial Themes in American Thought, 1756-1800* (Cambridge, 1985); Patricia U. Bonomi, *Under the Cope of Heaven: Religion, Society, and Politics in Colonial America* (Oxford, 1986); Nathan O. Hatch, *The Sacred Cause of Liberty* (New Haven, CT: 1977); Rhye Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790* (New York, 1988); Harry Stout, "The New England Soul." Although none is obviously without precursors, each can lay claim to somewhat "seminal" status in its field and is reviewed on that basis. Other works are referenced as appropriate, but selectively so. Jonathan C. D. Clark, *The Language of Liberty* (Cambridge, 1994) will be considered separately under the heading "Ideas of Liberty."
Among the most influential has been Nathan Hatch in his 1977 study, *The Sacred Cause of Liberty.* Focusing on the 1740-1800 period and eschatology in its broadest sense, Hatch sought to show that "the convergence of millennial and republican thought forms" was "a central theme in the complex relationship between religion and politics in Revolutionary New England." By contrast with Heimert's picture of a "Calvinist"/"Liberal" divide among clergy, he urged their political unity, based on "a common vision of a Christian republic," which became "a new foundation...for the tottering structures of Puritan collective identity." His sources were the published sermons of Congregationalists, and he deliberately excluded political tracts. Central to the millennial/republican convergence which Hatch advocated was an ideology of "civil millennialism" that arose as an "amalgam of traditional Puritan apocalyptic rhetoric and 18th century political discourse" envisioning a religious millennium as "an extension of the civil and religious liberty established in America." But this did not flow out of Great Awakening or Edwardsean millennial thought, as Heimert had concluded. The latter was more concerned with timeless piety, Hatch argued, it tended to preclude political means and it was soon disappointed when the pace of religious revival began to slacken. Instead, civil millennialism found its origins in the Seven Years' War, which gave the New England clergy "a broader basis for millennial hope that could encompass all of society."

Hatch pursued this argument by seeking to show how "the real center of New England's intellectual universe" became "the ideals of liberty defined by the 18th century Real Whig tradition." "Republican political values" emerged as "religious priorities," and liberty as the criterion of progress. Moreover, when hostility to British "tyranny" grew in the aftermath of the Stamp Act crisis and the early years of the Revolution, Britain was apocalyptically demonized and the American colonies assumed the mantle of "freedom's last asylum," even "the divine agent to

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36 Ibid., pp. 9, 16.

37 Ibid., pp. 9, 19.

38 Ibid., pp. 22-3.

39 Ibid., pp. 24-5, 29, 30, 32, 35.

40 Ibid., p. 36.

41 Ibid., p. 63.

42 Ibid., pp. 70, 72.
initiate the millennium." In such an ideology, republicanism thus came to echo earlier Puritanism, as did "the British pattern of opposition ideology" elucidated by Bailyn and others.

In some ways, Hatch's thesis was thus as far-reaching as Heimert's, although it has not attracted as much negative criticism. A major problem with *The Sacred Cause of Liberty* is that it posited such a politicization of Christian millennialism as not only informed by "Real Whig" ideology, but ultimately merging into "Christian republicanism." Yet despite the skill of the author's presentation, it remains difficult to believe that Congregationalist ministers who had been schooled in contemporary theological orthodoxy could have interpreted traditional eschatology so dramatically, or that their rhetoric would have been received in such a light by ordinary churchgoers. The suspicion thus persists that if Hatch had paid greater attention to the peculiarly religious content of New England sermons, he might have developed a different, more conventional and perhaps even more conflicting analysis. At the same time, the very limited range of the author's primary sources raises questions of the broader applicability of his argument, especially to events in the early republic, and his failure to offer much by way of deeper historical background tends to divorce his exegesis of intellectual trends from more everyday realities, much as Heimert's does.

Thus while Hatch's study succeeds in suggesting interesting points of congruity between New England Congregationalist eschatology and Whig and republican thought, it does not necessarily make the author's case that a hybrid "civil millennialism" became a significant force in the politics of the American Revolution or the early republic. Although *The Sacred Cause of Liberty* takes a less ambitious view of the import of Great Awakening millennialism than *Religion and the American Mind*, it also ignores subsequent divisions among the New England clergy and so probably overstates the role of civil millennialism as a focus of clerical agreement. In that sense, Heimert's much more general thesis, however flawed, may continue to offer a more comprehensive and nuanced account of links between religion and the American Revolution.

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43Ibid., pp. 83, 86, 88, 91.


46This often seems forgotten, perhaps because of the hostility from leading historians which Heimert's work has attracted.
The extent to which Hatch effectively politicized New England millennialism was usefully highlighted by Ruth Bloch. Contrasting their work with that of other scholars who "so narrowly associated revolutionary millennialism with specific 'postmillennial' doctrine and revivalist religious groups that they...failed to make a compelling case for its wider significance," she suggested that Hatch and James West Davidson had ultimately concluded that "millennialism (and, by implication, religion in general) played no important autonomous or creative role in the shaping of American revolutionary thought." Bloch's suggestion seems exaggerated, but it casts interesting light on her own agenda in Visionary Republic: Millennial Themes in American Thought, 1756-1800 (1985).

Deliberately eschewing any attempt "to yield definitive answers to the many open questions about millennialism and the role of religion in the American Revolution," Bloch sought to show how "the millennial tradition contributed to the formation of revolutionary consciousness." But she did not aim to document so much a conscious "ideology" as a "structure of meaning," or a "cultural pattern" which could "illuminate how many Americans understood the ultimate meaning of the revolutionary crisis and the birth of the American nation." A central argument was that "the conviction that history was drawing to its glorious conclusion...predisposed large numbers of American Protestants to throw themselves behind the revolutionary cause with a fervency that is otherwise hard to explain." Millenialist beliefs were widely held among different religious denominations and social classes throughout the American colonies, Bloch contended, and while they did not "cause" or even furnish a concrete rationale for revolution or for the founding of the American republic, they certainly provided a framework for interpreting contemporary events and an impetus to committed engagement.

The author developed this argument over nine closely argued chapters, in which she chronicled "the development of a millennial tradition in colonial America," "the rise and decline of millennialism in the revolutionary era," and "the eschatological revival of the 1790s." By the late colonial period, "millennial ideas [drawing on European sources] gained great currency in America," Bloch argued. Their value was "successively bolstered by revivals, natural disasters, and war," and "when the crisis that led to the American Revolution erupted in the 1760s and..."
Inasmuch as Bloch's thesis was more concerned with the overall development of millennialism between 1750 and 1800, the interface between millennialism and the Revolution per se was only part of her subject. However, her arguments that millennial beliefs served as an interpretative framework for revolutionary events, and that they provided "ideological leverage" for revolutionary engagement are suggestive contributions. *Visionary Republic* is not without its problems. Bloch's basic definition of millennialism is biblically based, but ultimately rather vague, and her contention that "before the end of the eighteenth century there was little polarization along premillennial and postmillennial lines" is unconvincing without further support. She might also have done more to establish the influence of key millennialists and their views on popular belief-systems, especially in the revolutionary period. Yet by seeking to demonstrate a "general cultural pattern" and a climate of opinion, rather than a causally efficient "ideology," Bloch set herself a less demanding burden of proof. And by expanding her range of research beyond New England, she was arguably able to construct a more balanced picture of late 18th century American millennial thought than Hatch, despite her general reliance on similar sources. The net result is thus considerable evidence that religious millennialism was an important factor for many Americans in the late colonial and revolutionary periods, although how much it directly encouraged them to take up the fight, as Bloch also alleged, is less clear.

The fact remains that despite the efforts of Heimert, Hatch, Bloch and others, there remain those who are simply unconvinced that distinctively religious millennial beliefs motivated revolutionary commitment, even among contemporary clergy. In a thought-provoking 1985 article on "Just War, Holy War, and Millennialism in Revolutionary America," for example, Melvin Endy, Jr., analysed nearly 200 sermons and tracts published between 1774 and 1784 by ministers across the colonies. His major conclusion was that "the large majority...justified the war effort by a rationale that was more political than religious." These ministers "provided less a distinctly religious millennial justification than arguments harmonizing religion with the Real Whig

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52 Ibid., p. 50.
53 Ibid., pp. 77, 93.
54 Ibid., pp. xvi, 131.
55 Ibid., pp. 75-93, where although Bloch adduced significant evidence of "revolutionary millennialism," she ultimately failed to show, p. 93, that this provided "an animating ideal of the future," which served as "ideological leverage" for revolutionary engagement.
legitimations of the Revolution and with warnings of the adverse consequences that a British victory would have for religious liberty." Moreover, their ethical criteria "more often fit the just war tradition of the Christian church than the interpretation of the Revolution as a holy war - an interpretation to which many recent scholars have contributed and subscribed."56

b. Political and Institutional Connections.
In light of the obvious difficulties of conclusively linking religious ideas like millennialism with revolutionary activity, it may not be surprising that other scholars should have attempted to document more concrete connections at political and institutional levels.

With his studies of key individuals and of the general topic of Christians in the American Revolution in the late 1970s, Mark Noll was among the first to follow Heimert's lead in seeking to show the direct influence of religion on revolutionary and pre-revolutionary politics, although some of his conclusions differed significantly from Heimert's.57 Noll's account of the career and thought of Connecticut minister Ebenezer Devotion (1714-1771) provided support, he contended, for "Heimert's contention that the long-term effects of the Great Awakening were of vital importance for the shaping of responses to the crisis of revolution." However, he also concluded that "Whig ideology did define the nature of theoretical and practical political action" and that for Devotion, "the Great Awakening was of primary importance in lending his social and ecclesiastical theory the impetus which would bring it into natural affinity with Whig ideology."58

Noll's overarching historiographical premise was that both Heimert and Bailyn, in his influential account of the influence of "Real Whig" on revolutionary ideology, had "accurately portrayed certain aspects of the relationship between religion and society in revolutionary America." But he also saw "a close, even determinative, connection between religious and political ideas and actions during the period." In that sense, the narrow case study of Devotion lived up to Noll's rather ambitious intention "to show, in fact, that the apparently antithetical positions of Bailyn and Heimert are capable of being synthesized." So did his parallel study of New Jersey Presbyterian Jacob Green (1722-1796) whose example "militates against Bailyn's conclusions concerning the source of moral reform in Revolutionary America," inasmuch as Great Awakening principles directly encouraged him to support the patriot cause.59

56Endy, pp. 3-4.
Noll's book-length treatment of Christians in the American Revolution (1977) allowed him to pursue his synthesizing agenda more broadly in the form of an avowedly introductory survey which drew primarily on secondary monographs. After opening chapters on main events in the 1763-1775 period, which he described as a “prelude to war” and on the general “religious background,” which he characterized as 75% Protestant and dissenting, Noll usefully distinguished between four main responses to the Revolution itself: “patriotic,” “reforming,” “loyalist” and “pacifist.” In pursuing his central focus on “the way in which religious convictions and Revolutionary thought interacted in the minds and hearts of American Christians,” Noll argued - like Hatch, but even more explicitly, for a “deep...mutual compatibility of late-Puritan Christianity and Whig ideology.” Each shared, he suggested, “a distinctly bearish view of human nature’....a common belief in the mutual interdependence of virtue, freedom, and social well-being” and “common convictions about the nature of history.” In fact, “the bond between libertarian ideology and a certain strand of Christian belief was so strong [among patriots] that many defenders of the colonies must properly be labelled Christian Whigs or Whig Christians” to the point where “republican religion, or religious republicanism, was the result.”

In differentiating between various responses to the Revolution, Noll helpfully noted, for example, that those in his “reforming” category, especially “New Light” Baptists, generally took a more critical stance towards revolutionary activity than patriot Congregationalists or Presbyterians, that 20-33% of colonists were loyalists or had some “Tory leanings,” and that for pacifist Quakers and others, “participation of a Christian in warfare violated the express teachings of the Christian Scriptures and the inherent character of the Christian life.” But perhaps because of his heavy reliance on secondary sources and the transcolonial ambit of his argument, some of his generalizations do not seem borne out by his evidence. Noll’s arguments, following Hatch, but contra Heimert, for example, that “both New Lights and Old Lights accepted the basic synthesis of Whig and Christians ideas,” or that “individuals from all theological camps actively pursued the goal of a Christian republic” seem tendentious. His concluding chapter on “the American Revolution and the religious history of the United States" offered some suggestive, but inevitably preliminary ideas on topics that Noll was later to explore in his major recent work covering the

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61 Ibid., pp. 11, 52.
62 Ibid., pp. 53, 57, 59.
63 Ibid., pp. 80, 103, 141.
64 Ibid., p. 76.
post-revolutionary period.\textsuperscript{65} But in the final analysis, as elsewhere, even whilst urging the importance of religion in the revolutionary period, Noll's commitment simultaneously to upholding and ostensibly prioritizing the causative influence of Bailyn's "Real Whig" ideology seemed to leave uncertainties as to which he found more significant. "It is possible to conclude that Christian convictions lay \textit{at the root} of the Revolutionary movement," Noll concluded. But then he almost immediately mixed his metaphors to offer a competing claim of causal primacy: "without the \textit{fertile soil} of the American religious tradition...Whig ideology would not have exerted such a powerful sway in leading the thought and guiding the actions of the Patriots."\textsuperscript{66}

In later articles, Noll offered shorter syntheses of his views on the congruence of late Puritan and republican ideologies and discourses. But tensions and uncertainties remained.\textsuperscript{67} With his continuing emphasis on the primacy of political ideology, Noll's work on religion and the American Revolution is thus open to the same questions as Hatch's "civil millennialism" thesis. In particular, if religious ideas provided little more than an intellectual or discursive framework or vehicle for the conveyance of 18\textsuperscript{th} century republicanism, how causally significant were they in and of themselves?

Through her stress on the more practical political and institutional dimensions of ecclesiastical influence, Patricia Bonomi arguably avoided such a challenge and like Noll in \textit{Christians in the American Revolution}, she circumvented the limitations of narrow geographical specialization by addressing religious developments across the American colonies. In \textit{Under the Cope of Heaven: Religion, Society, and Politics in Colonial America} (1986), her focus was on "the increasing interpenetration of religion and politics," and her canvas was broad, covering the whole of colonial religious history from 1607 to the Revolution.\textsuperscript{68} In her first part, she thus addressed the general religious climate between 1607-1750, before devoting her second to "religion and politics" between the Great Awakening and the revolutionary period.\textsuperscript{69}


\textsuperscript{66}Noll, "Christians in the American Revolution," pp. 149-50.


\textsuperscript{68}Bonomi, pp. 8-9.

\textsuperscript{69}Ibid., pp. 13-128, 131-222.
Bonomi's characterisation of the first 150 years of colonial religious history was inevitably very general in outline. She saw the 17th century as "a time of strain and conflict," as Christian beliefs and institutions were adapted to meet "colonial realities," followed by a period of consolidation in the first half of the 18th century, when "religious organisations....emerged as significant centers of stability and influence." One of Bonomi's key arguments was that the 18th century witnessed religious vitality, not declension, and she sought to demonstrate that by detailed considerations of the roles of the clergy and of ordinary churchgoers.71 "A majority of adults...were regular church attenders" in the 1700s, she contended, and churches were "vital centers of community life."72 Thus rather than representing a sudden recovery, the Great Awakening "bespoke the vitality and widening reach of an expanding religious culture."73

However, the Awakening did have a major impact on contemporary society. For Bonomi, it pierced "the facade of civility and deference," encouraging people "to make choices that had political as well as religious implications."74 New forms of popular leadership and church organization arose, and revivalism, which also stressed the rights of minorities, had a levelling and divisive influence ecclesiastically, elevating the position of the individual churchgoer and internalising her decision-making.75 Such trends were then reflected in what Bonomi described as a "political awakening" in various colonies. In Connecticut, Pennsylvania and Virginia in particular, there were "new political attitudes and a heightened partisanship."76 In effect, the church congregation had become the "school of democracy" and denominational politics "the bridge between the Great Awakening and the Revolution."77

In her chapter on "Religion and the American Revolution," Bonomi suggested, contra Heimert, that "evangelical Calvinism and religious rationalism...flowed as one stream toward the crisis of 1776." Ideologically, "radical resistance...to the doctrine of divine right and passive obedience" were the clearest religious contributions to revolutionary thought.78 A predominantly dissenting people favoured opposition to ecclesiastical domination and this was reflected in the Anglican

70ibid., pp. 15, 37.
71ibid., pp. 6-7, 39-85, 87-127.
72ibid., p. 87-8.
73ibid., p. 126.
74ibid., p. 132.
75ibid., pp. 139-49, 152-60.
76ibid., pp. 161-86, 162.
77ibid., p. 186.
78ibid., p. 188.
Episcopate controversy. Ecumenism among religious dissenters also served as a precedent for trans-colonial political cooperation. Evangelicals and others were united in opposition to both civil and religious tyranny, and "religious doctrine and rhetoric...contributed in a fundamental way to the coming of the American Revolution and to its final success." In short, earlier characterizations of the 18th century as a period of Enlightenment scepticism were simply misguided, Bonomi concluded. In a very religious society, religion itself was "an agent of change," even revolutionary change, and not a conservative force.

In a sense, Bonomi's final conclusion thus echoed one of Heimert's, although Under the Cope of Heaven also took issue with his thesis in other areas. Like Heimert, Bonomi saw the Great Awakening as a crucial formative influence on subsequent religious and political life. She also allowed for the role of religion in shaping revolutionary ideology, although she largely ignored millennial themes and highlighted others. But her most distinctive contribution lay in her attempt to show connections between ecclesiastical and more general politics at an organisational and institutional level. Unfortunately, this was also the weakest part of her argument, and its problems emerge most clearly in her chapter on "the political awakening," where she was unable to demonstrate decisive links between religious structures and political counterparts. Bonomi's survey of pre-revolutionary politics was hardly comprehensive, of course, but its weaknesses seem indicative of a more fundamental problem in attempts to trace causal connections between religion and the American Revolution. While it is clearly possible to establish religious influences on political life at an individual, congregational or even denominational level - in terms of people or organizations with religious motivations for political ends, for example, it is much more difficult to demonstrate that religious ideas or structures directly affected broader political processes or institutions. Such problems are only aggravated when scholars seek to extrapolate, as they often have, from conclusions drawn from elite sources in a limited geographical area to trans-colonial "ideologies" or currents of opinion.

79 Ibid., pp. 195, 199-209.  
80 Ibid., pp. 206-7.  
81 Ibid., p. 216.  
82 Ibid., p. 220-1.  
83 Ibid., p. 221.  
84 Ibid., pp. 161-86. Whereas Bonomi successfully highlighted the impact of the Great Awakening on Connecticut politics, even there she was forced to concede, p. 167, that religious divisions were not directly translated into political ones. Moreover, her treatments of pre-revolutionary Pennsylvanian and Virginian politics, pp. 168-86, provide little evidence of Awakening influences at all, except perhaps in the most general terms by way of increased factionalism and egalitarianism. Thus while Bonomi suggested interesting thematic links between the Awakening and the Revolution and she offered a provocative analysis of 18th century religious vitality, she scarcely proved her case. Bonomi has summarized and pursued similar themes in recent articles. See "Hippocrates' Twins: Religion and Politics in the American Revolution," The History Teacher, 29:2 (February 1996), pp. 137-44; "Religion, Literary Sentimentalism, and Popular Revolutionary Ideology," in Ronald Hoffman and Peter J. Albert (eds.), Religion in a Revolutionary Age (Charlottesville, VA: 1994), pp. 308-30.
Heimert drew on a wide range of materials in an attempt to document how religion influenced "the American mind from the Great Awakening to the Revolution," and ended by alleging the national importance of a rather limited, but diffuse set of views flowing from "Calvinist" soteriology, eschatology and ecclesiology. Hatch relied on New England sources to reconstruct an even narrower politico-religious ideology of "civil millennialism," to which he attached such significance that he asserted its influence right into the 19th century. Yet like Noll, who espoused a similar notion of "Christian republicanism," he failed to demonstrate how such a belief-system acquired the dramatic import that he alleged at a practical political level, and/or how ordinary colonists were decisively affected by it. Bloch and Bonomi arguably pursued more promising lines of enquiry simply by broadening their range beyond the novanglocentric concentration of other authors. Yet despite their consideration of developments outside New England, their conclusions still went beyond their evidence. While Bloch adduced considerable support for the view that Christian millennialism was a significant interpretative framework for many in revolutionary America, she did not really show how people were motivated to active political [or military] involvement by it. Bonomi also highlighted interesting thematic possibilities for general continuity between the Great Awakening and the Revolution, and she suggested more immediate examples of religious influence. But she seemed unable to detail decisive impact on the politics of the three colonies which she addressed.

At the same time, it has proved consistently difficult to find theoretical clarity as to what might constitute authentic causal connections between religion and revolutionary politics and to establish clear criteria for a satisfactory demonstration of such links. Theologically and ideologically, Heimert, Hatch and especially Bloch made a strong case that millennial views were quite widely held in the revolutionary and pre-revolutionary periods. Heimert and Bonomi also suggested the significance of other convictions, including religious concerns for liberty, greater democratization and ecumenical cooperation. Yet the challenge has remained to show how such beliefs substantively impacted contemporary political processes, or to integrate them, as Hatch and Noll have tried to do, with the findings of scholars like Bailyn, for example, on the broader "ideological origins" of the Revolution.86

85Soteriology" is here defined as theology of [Christian] salvation; "eschatology" as theology of "the last things," including the second coming of Jesus Christ; "ecclesiology" as theology of the church.

86Bailyn, "The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution." The need for such integration has been urged by Philip Gura, among others. See especially, "Baring the New England Soul," American Quarterly, 38 (1986), pp. 653-60, and Gura's observation, p. 656, that "we still need a genuinely ecumenical study of Revolutionary ideology which will treat fairly both religion and Whig political thought." Goff, pp. 712-17 also listed a range of other authors who have sought to demonstrate political and institutional links between colonial religion, especially as it emerged out of the Great Awakening, and the Revolution, including Charles Royster, A Revolutionary People at War: The Continental Army and the American Character (Chapel Hill, NC: 1979) and Catherine L. Albanese, Sons of the Fathers: The Civil Religion of the American Revolution (Philadelphia, PA: 1978). Of further note in this connection are: Keith Griffin, Revolution and Religion: American Revolutionary War and the Reformed Clergy (New York, 1994); Gerald R. McDermott, One Holy and Happy
c. Cultural and Discursive Links.

In a thought-provoking article on "Religion and Revolution in American History," John F. Wilson highlighted one of the major difficulties that historians have apparently faced. "In modern Western societies," he argued, "revolution" is primarily located in discourse about politics as distinct from religion." In "the modern West," there has been a "separation of religion and politics," and this has encouraged scholars to interpret political events in largely secular terms.87

Conceptually at least, the most direct way to demonstrate the causal impact of religion on the American Revolution would be to show that national revolutionary leaders were primarily motivated by religious concerns. But as Noll and others have noted, the evidence for such a contention is not persuasive.88 Failing that, the focus has understandably shifted to other alternatives, including the role of key theological doctrines and/or ideologies like the millennialism studied by Hatch, Bloch and others and the political/societal instrumentality of religious individuals and/or institutions of the kind explored by Bonomi and Noll.89 As has been seen, however, although valuable work has been done in these areas, such connections have consistently proved difficult to substantiate. Partly in order to meet such a challenge, both Wilson and Noll have persuasively suggested the possible fruitfulness of a third, more "cultural" perspective on early American religion, which pays greater attention to how it served as a legitimizing framework of meaning for society, as a definer of "cultural horizons" and a provider of normative

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87 John F. Wilson, p. 598.


89 In Providence and the Invention of the United States, 1607-1776 (Cambridge, 2007), which only became available during the final stages of preparation of this dissertation, Nicholas Guyatt highlighted the significance of a further significant religious theme in revolutionary ideology and rhetoric in the form of "historical providentialism," which he defined, p. 6, as "the belief that God imagined a special role for certain nations in improving the world and tailored their history to prepare them for the achievement of this mission." In a wide-ranging chapter on "Providentialism and the American Revolution," pp. 95-133, he thus argued, p. 106, that "Patriot orators employed historical providentialism," and that while "Americans did not concur on the exact pattern of their past and their future," they applied this argument to "the shared goal of independence during the conflict with Britain." Although his monograph was ultimately devoted to a much broader topic, Guyatt's nuanced and well-researched account of providentialism on both sides of the American Revolution seemed likely to have a significant impact on subsequent scholarship.
"languages." In keeping with the "linguistic turn" pursued by many historians over recent years, Hatch, Bloch, Bonomi and their successors have all shown some awareness of such a perspective, although it was primarily left to Harry Stout and Rhys Isaac to pioneer it in any thoroughgoing way in 18th century American religious historiography.

Stout's first major published attempt to address the interface between evangelical and revolutionary culture was in his 1977 article, "Religion, Communications, and the Ideological origins of the American Revolution." Building on Heimert's location of the sources of the "animating egalitarianism" of revolutionary rhetoric in the Great Awakening, Stout argued that "despite the differences in intellectual substance between the revivals and the rebellion, those movements exhibited a close rhetorical affinity that infused religious and political ideas with powerful social significance and ideological urgency." The Awakening was inherently democratizing in impact because "the revivalists' repudiation of polite style and their preference for extemporaneous mass address cut to the very core of colonial culture by attacking the habit of deference to the written word and to the gentlemen who mastered it." This entailed nothing less than "an egalitarian cultural transformation," and in due course, "the social order prefigured in evangelical assemblies was suffused with secular and political meanings articulated in the worldview of republicanism." In the final analysis, the Great Awakening thus paved the way for the Revolution by providing a cultural challenge to existing structures which was subsequently translated into "a secular theoretical vocabulary" furnished by radical Whig and republican ideology.

In The New England Soul: Preaching and Religious Culture in Colonial New England (1986), Stout developed his approach to New England religion and its impact in a much broader context, addressing 200 years of colonial and revolutionary history from settlement to the early republic. But his thoughts on the Revolution remained central to his thesis. In a decade's research, Stout

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90E.g., Wilson, p. 600; Noll, pp. 623-4. Such an analysis of the role of religion assumes, of course, a more "functional" understanding of its place in society. On the place of religion in creating legitimizing "symbolic universes" within cultures, see also, for example, Peter Berger, The Sacred Canopy (New York, 1969), pp. 3-101, passim.


93Ibid., pp. 524-5, 521.

94Ibid., pp. 529-30.

95Ibid., pp. 536, 540.

96Ibid., p. 541.
studied thousands of sermons, both published and unpublished, and he especially focused on previously ignored manuscripts. His assumption was that given the massive exposure of the average churchgoer, sermons must have been very influential in a society where the pulpit was the major forum of public instruction. Stout's agenda was also revisionist, for he discovered in reading regular Sunday homilies that conclusions drawn in previous studies of published, "occasional" works could not be applied universally.

Not the least of Stout's findings was that rather than supporting earlier suggestions of declining piety, or greater moralism and rationalism after the 17th century, the evidence of regular preaching in New England indicated significant areas of continuity in religious commitment. There was "an undiminished emphasis on the themes of the individual's death in sin, his salvation through Christ, and the life of sanctified obedience he must strive to lead." In fact, such common emphases on sin, salvation and service persisted for some 200 years, despite the rhetoric of occasional "jeremiad" sermons. Even after the Great Awakening, they transcended the kind of division which Heimert posited between Calvinist and "Liberal" preachers, for the latter, inasmuch as they could be identified, shared a mutual commitment to the supremacy of biblical revelation.

There were changing thematic priorities at different stages in New England preaching, as Stout demonstrated in some detail, but these largely centred on the adoption of different scriptural types and precedents to suit shifting circumstances. The author also conveyed a significant amount of factual detail to contextualize such progressions, constructing, in effect, a church history of New England, as well as a history of homiletics. But Stout's views on connections between religion and the American Revolution have proved most controversial, especially his continuing contention that the form and content of Puritan preaching were closely linked to revolutionary ideology during an era when "the cause of liberty and the federal covenant became so closely intertwined that it was impossible for ministers to separate the two." Civil liberties were deemed necessary for the preservation and extension of the Christian gospel, and clergy "played a leading role in fomenting sentiments of resistance and, after 1774, open rebellion."
Stout repeated his earlier argument that revolutionary political rhetoric derived added force from religious overtones and implications. But he also allowed that millennialism was a factor "as an additional source of incentive and hope." In the end, the author concluded, "New England's revolution" became "nothing less than America's sermon to the world." Indeed, "the language of destiny, liberty, purity, desertion, and redemption lives on and testifies to the astonishing tenacity of the Puritan vision to shine before a world trembling in darkness."

In some ways, The New England Soul thus represented an extension of Stout's earlier thesis of "cultural" continuity between the Great Awakening and the Revolution. Ideas, ideologies and institutional structures were given greater prominence, as was clerical political involvement. Stout also advanced provocative counter-arguments on a number of issues, including Heimert's strategic division between Calvinist and "Liberal" clergy, as noted. However, despite its insightful and suggestive contributions in other ways, the book arguably failed to make a convincing case for Awakening-Revolution continuity. In restoring the witness of manuscript sermons, Stout enabled a more balanced understanding of 18th century New England thought as a whole. But in the final analysis, although he quite forcefully contended that the democratizing trends of the revivals influenced later political developments, for example, or that revolutionary rhetoric derived added power from religious overtones and assumptions, Stout did not demonstrate such connections conclusively. As with Hatch before him, the limited focus of his research and his failure to consider the reception as well as the promulgation of clerical ideas seem to undermine the broad claims about New England's contribution to revolutionary and subsequent American history that Stout made towards the end of his study. Moreover, his tendency to subsume obvious differences in theological and rhetorical emphasis under his overarching themes of "sin-salvation-service" risks leading to an arguably unrepresentative homogenization of the thought of his clerical subjects which does not do justice to some of the complexities uncovered, for example, by Heimert. Stout's bold attempts to trace broader areas of cultural and discursive, as well as theological and thematic continuity between religion and Revolution have raised important questions. But the limitations of The New England Soul are also indicative that the burden of proof required to establish that the Great Awakening fostered a more egalitarian and populist

\[\text{\textsuperscript{106}}\text{\textsuperscript{10}}\text{\textsuperscript{5}}\text{\textsuperscript{bid.}, p. 298.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{105}}\text{\textsuperscript{5}}\text{\textsuperscript{bid.}, p. 306.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{106}}\text{\textsuperscript{5}}\text{\textsuperscript{bid.}, p. 311.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{107}}\text{\textsuperscript{5}}\text{\textsuperscript{bid.}, p. 316.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{108}}\text{\textsuperscript{5}}\text{\textsuperscript{Cf. Gura, "Baring the New England Soul," p. 656. Even if greater ecclesiastical egalitarianism or politico-religious understandings of liberty and the millennium were significant factors for New England clergy in the late 18th century, for example, their import for average church members remains less certain, either there or elsewhere.}\]
culture, for example, or that such trends carried through to the revolutionary era, is very demanding.

Largely short-circuiting some of the challenges associated with Stout’s theological and rhetorical focus, Rhys Isaac adopted an avowedly “ethnographic” approach in his ground-breaking and prize-winning *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790* (1988). The outcome is a richly textured portrait of late-eighteenth century Virginian culture, in which Isaac used the techniques of cultural anthropology to uncover fascinating insights via detailed exploration of social vignettes and of pictorial, architectural and geographic evidence, as well as deeply contextualized readings of print and manuscript sources. The resulting work is complex, episodic and somewhat fragmented in structure, but in the process, Isaac also developed a clear argument about the democratizing and liberating impact of Great Awakening revivalism on the hitherto hierarchical structures of Virginian society.

As T. H. Breen pointed out in an insightful review, Isaac eschewed earlier explanations of the late-colonial colonial anxiety of Virginia’s planter-elite that prioritized largely economic and political factors (especially a depression in tobacco prices) in favour of the destabilizing and ultimately disintegrating influence of Great Awakening evangelicalism. Prior to the Awakening, as Isaac convincingly demonstrated in the first part of his study on “traditional ways of life,” the Virginian gentry had become a class of self-assured social superiors who expected and generally received the deference of those less privileged than themselves. Yet this “dominance...was hardly consolidated before it began to be subverted” and evangelical revivalism, which came with waves of Presbyterians in the 1740s and of Separate Baptists and Methodists during the 1760s and 1770s, was the major subversive force.

Revivalist culture, premised on a spiritual new beginning afforded by Christian “new birth,” was inherently egalitarian and anti-deferential. It was nothing less than an “evangelical counterculture” which defied traditional norms of social relations and ultimately undermined them. The net result was deeply destabilizing, although Isaac did not contend, like Heimert, for the primacy of a democratizing evangelicalism in promoting the patriot cause in the American Revolution. He did, however, suggest that if Virginia gentry were to pursue and justify a quest for independence

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109 Isaac, pp. 323-57, helpfully offered “A Discourse on Method,” in which he outlined his “ethnographic” approach to history, drawing on the insights and techniques of cultural anthropology.


111 Isaac, pp. 11-136.


persuasively following the onset of revolutionary hostilities, they had little choice but to deploy and
appeal to the moralizing rhetorical style of evangelical revivalism. Thus "what enabled Patrick
Henry to rise above his generation - in its general estimation - ", for example, "was his ability to
communicate in popular style the passion for a world reshaped in truly moral order that lay at the
heart of both the religious revolution of the evangelicals and the political revolution of the
patriots."114 Such rhetorical strategies also helped Virginian gentry to reclaim popular cultural
hegemony, but they were only effective in the short run. "In 1740 an integrated official set of
symbols had served to shape the awareness of...Virginians." But "by the 1790s," Isaac
concluded, "affairs were greatly changed: diverse cultural and countercultural possibilities had
manifestly appeared to fracture shared definitions and ways of seeing things." The unsettling
consequence was that "Virginia entered the nineteenth century still a wholly agrarian society, yet
with a complex of cultures that was fractured by a widening ethnic rift and an enduring legacy of
conflicting value systems."115

Ironically enough, therefore, Isaac's portrayal of Virginian transformation, though shaped by such
a radically different and innovative methodology from the intellectual history of The New England
Mind, ultimately chronicled a declension model of 18th century development, albeit one in which a
revival of religion led to a breakdown in prevailing social structures. While leading historians have
praised both Isaac's innovative methods and some of the insights resulting from them, it is fair to
say that the more or less explicit conclusions of his study have not found widespread
acceptance.116 Robert Calhoon was ultimately somewhat critical of some of Isaac's
historiographical presuppositions, but he arguably went to the heart of the main achievement of
The Transformation of Virginia in providing "a kind of map or code to Virginia culture" that had
simply escaped more traditional histories.117 By adopting the techniques that he did, Isaac was
able to elucidate some significant aspects of late-eighteenth century life in Virginia, not only
among the gentry and other privileged members of society that had already commanded so much
historiographical attention, but also among the "lower orders" that had so often eluded it. Isaac's
methods thus enabled him to chart cultural change in quite compelling ways and to trace deeper

114Ibid., p. 269.
115Ibid., pp. 320-22.
116Laudatory excerpts from reviews are cited on the back-cover of the 1988 Norton paperback edition. Wood, "Religion
and the American Revolution," p. 178, used the adverb "brilliantly" about Isaac's "prize-winning book". Two of Breen's
main objections, pp. 300-1, both of which carry some weight, were that "there is little evidence that the tidewater gentry
felt deeply threatened by the rise of dissenting faiths," and that "to see their enthusiasm for the patriotic cause largely as a
response to the dissenters seems a bit tendentious." He also objected to "Isaac's insistence that the evangelicals and the
gentry - both treated as static, monolithic groups - were continuously at odds, the representatives of two irreconcilable
value systems." Although he praised Isaac's "gift for interpreting incident and scene," Richard Bushman, review of Isaac,
American Historical Review, 88:2 (1983), pp. 464-5, was similarly cautious, questioning, for example whether "the
disturbing effect of the evangelicals" was not "somewhat exaggerated."
connections between religious and revolutionary culture, for example, than might normally emerge from a more conventional source base. In that sense, Isaac’s approach may have allowed him to transcend some of the limitations faced by Stout and other scholars with their more narrow focus on the written remains of colonial elites.

However, to the extent that some of Isaac’s major conclusions are open to serious question, the strengths of his methodology (and of some of his resulting cultural insights) obviously cannot compensate for any weaknesses in his argument. Moreover, the connections that Isaac traced between evangelical revivalism and revolutionary politics do not escape such a critique. As Calhoon has suggested, Isaac may not have been “trying to add religious motives to political ones as causes of the Revolution or even to argue that evangelicalism heightened the tempo of political and ideological conflict,” as the leading historian of the Great Awakening in Virginia, Wesley Gewehr, had done nearly 20 years previously.118 But Isaac clearly did contend, for example, that “popular evangelicalism and patriot republicanism .... both seem to have met a general need for relief from collective anxiety and perceived disorder.... Certainly both called for positive individual acts of affirmation as the basis for a new moral order.”119 He also argued that the discourse of popular revivalism contributed to that of gentry patriotism. Thus if other evidence shows more than just a convergence of convenience between evangelical and republican discourses, The Transformation of Virginia, however probing, must ultimately emerge as less than fully persuasive in its account of the impact of revivalist evangelicalism on the traditional culture of Virginia in the crucial decades from the Great Awakening to the Revolution and just beyond.

iv. The Importance of Religion.

Despite the innovative and valuable work of Heimert, Stout, Isaac and so many others in different fields, it is important to note that some scholars have continued to belittle or dispute the role of religion in revolutionary causation altogether. Although chronicling the general impact of growing “Christianization” in the early centuries of American history, Jon Butler still suggested, for example, that the Revolution was a “profoundly secular” event.120 Bailyn has been even more dogmatic. For him, it was “a gross simplification to believe that religion as such, or any of its doctrinaire elements, had a unique political role in the Revolutionary movement.” Bailyn’s judgement is especially significant in view of the fact that the argument of his own, highly influential work on revolutionary ideology was largely consistent with it. Yet he made it in a

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119Isaac, pp. 266-67.
120Butler, p. 195.
context where he also contended that "the whole of American culture was ‘religious’ in the sense that common modes of discourse in both ordinary life and high culture were derived from Protestant Christianity."121

A similar paradox is evident in the views of Wood, who recently observed in a typically cogent and incisive survey of "Religion and the American Revolution" that "despite the growth of Enlightenment among elites in the eighteenth-century America, Protestantism in one form or another still remained the principal means by which most common people ordered and explained the world and made it meaningful."122 Yet such an admission of a fundamental colonial American religiosity which Bailyn assumed, but then marginalized, appears similarly inconsistent with Wood’s own position as one of the leading scholars to argue the paramount significance of allegedly “secular” political ideology in revolutionary causation, and it raises important questions.123

If, as the provocative work of Isaac and others would suggest, for example, modern scholars are effectively confronted in early American society by an alien, cultural and religious milieu, whose symbolic universe was radically different from that of modern academe, it may not only be inappropriate to seek to apply conventional cause-and-effect models to the historiographical interpretation of key events. Interpretative paradigms that assume a clear distinction between "sacred" and "secular" fields of discourse and activity may be especially misplaced. Instead, a systematic attempt, like Isaac’s, to enter into the worldviews of colonial America on their own terms may prove more rewarding.124 Moreover, if such a quest were pursued with due attention to prevailing linguistic and discursive ambiguities, it could emerge that historians have often made misguided distinctions and asked misleading questions. It might be confirmed, for instance, as scholarship on millennialism and Stout’s work on New England homiletics have already suggested, that the American Revolution was construed by contemporaries as neither “secular” nor “sacred” in its origins, but both. The resolution of these problems clearly depends on convincing answers to other questions, not least the extent of 18th century religiosity and the possibility that contemporary “modes of discourse” could have allowed for such ambiguities in the first place. And these issues seem all the more pressing in light of the findings of other historians,


124For a seminal account of some of the implications of such cross-cultural analysis, see Clifford Geertz, "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture," in The Interpretation of Cultures (New York, 1973), pp. 3-32. It seems safe to assume that there was more than one “culture” in colonial and revolutionary America, and a variety of different “worldviews.”
contra Ballyon and Wood, that some areas of colonial American society show evidence of increasingly "secular" currents of thought and patterns of organization.

Scholars have generally addressed the topic of "secularization" in later historical periods, when it has often been linked with key aspects of modern industrialization, including urbanization, commercialization and societalization. But while colonial American historians may not often have used the technical term itself, they have often argued for the advent of more "secular" trends and lifeways in the 18th century. Inasmuch as Miller's New England "declension" thesis has arguably influenced many interpretations of colonial history, the influence of The New England Mind may be significant in this connection. However, as scholars like David Hall have convincingly argued, despite the monumental scale and intellectual rigour of Miller's work, which remains a landmark in its field nearly 55 years after full publication, his general interpretative model is no longer accepted as convincing, even within the relatively narrow confines of the scholarship of New England Puritanism.

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125 The meaning of "secularization" remains widely debated among sociologists and historians alike. Different definitions have ranged from a simple "decline of religion," in terms of its influence on the values and structures of society, to a more general "desacralization" of the world, conceived as a widespread shift towards more "secular," less magical worldviews. In the widely respected and cited "The Concept of Secularization in Empirical Research," Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, VI:2 (1967), pp. 207-220, for example, Larry Shiner listed six main definitions of secularization, as analyzed and critiqued by Michael Hill, A Sociology of Religion (London, 1973), pp. 228-251. Bryan Wilson has been viewed as having advocated an "orthodox," or "inherited model" as that process by which "religious institutions, actions and consciousness, lose their social significance" in the context of a shift in "social organisation" from "one that is communally-based to a societally-based system." See Wilson, "Religion in Sociological Perspective," pp. 149, 153. Wilson's secularization theory was described as "orthodox" by Roy Wallis and Steve Bruce, "Secularization: The Orthodox Model," in Steve Bruce (ed.), Religion and Modernization: Historians and Sociologists Debate the Secularization Thesis (Oxford, 1992), pp. 8-30. It was termed "the inherited model" by Wilson himself in "Secularization: The Inherited Model," in Philip Hammond (ed.), The Sacred in a Secular Age (Berkeley, CA: 1985), pp. 9-20. Cf. Wilson, Religion in Secular Society (London, 1966), p. xiv. Secularization is here understood in a more inclusive, synthetic sense, as a process whereby religion declines in general social influence and significance, as it becomes increasingly marginalized to private sectors of belief and activity, and secular ideas and institutions take precedence in a progressively desacralized public sphere. In Western terms, the principal religion in question is obviously Christianity in its various forms, although secularization has also been observed with reference to non-Christian belief systems. See, for example, Wilson, "Religion in Sociological Perspective," p. 150. "Societalization" has been defined by Roy Wallis and Steve Bruce, "Religion: The British Contribution," The British Journal of Sociology, 40:3 (1989), pp. 493-520, p. 496, as "the process by which life comes to be lived less in the context of a close-knit community of socialisation, work and leisure, and more in the context of society as a whole, notably but not exclusively, the nation state."

126 For examples of broader treatments of secularization in the modern, industrialized era, see Alan Gilbert, The Making of Post-Christian Britain: a History of the Secularization of Modern Society (London, 1980); Hugh McLeod, Religion and the People of Western Europe (Oxford, 1982).

At the same time, historians have done much to undermine the broader applicability of Miller's "declension" thesis to other areas. A legion of Southern and Middle Colonies scholars have effectively demonstrated the untypicality of a New England model for the American colonies as a whole, simply by highlighting divergent distinctives in their own fields of interest. At a more comprehensive, but also theoretical level, Greene (1988) pooled his encyclopaedic knowledge of the sources, both primary and secondary, to argue that in their "pursuits of happiness," the "centrifugal," often irreligious and "highly individualistic" communities of the early Chesapeake ultimately proved far more foundational to and representative of subsequent American social trends, than their "centripetal," "strongly communal," Puritan counterparts in the North. In attempting to replace a declension model of colonial development, with its inherently secularizing implications, with a progressive, three-tier pattern of "social simplification" [of inherited European norms] "elaboration" [of basic structures and values] and "replication" [of British society] based on increasing "convergence" among the colonies after 1660, Greene arguably substituted one form of over-generalization for another. But in the process, like James Henretta and Gregory Nobles in their influential synthesis of colonial history, Evolution and Revolution: American Society, 1600-1820 (1987), he did much to demolish the New England paradigm that was his major focus of controversy.

In tandem with such general critiques of the application of a Miller model to fields of scholarship beyond New England Puritanism, other historians have meanwhile raised more fundamental issues about the true extent of religious commitment across the colonies. Simply by foregrounding the extent of magical beliefs and superstitions and the role of "popular religion" in New England itself, Hall and others have raised serious questions about the alleged universality and predominance of more official or perhaps rational beliefs and practices. In highlighting
continuing strong religious preoccupations even among eighteenth century "rationalists," other scholars have meanwhile undermined simplistic dichotomies between the persistence of Christian belief and the rise of Enlightenment scepticism. On a broader scale, historians like Bonomi, Butler and Marini have offered alternative and largely convincing interpretations of general religious trends.

In Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People (1990), for example, Butler drew on trans-colonial sources to argue that "the story of religion in America after 1700 is one of Christian ascension, rather than declension." The evidence for his thesis that the 17th century was generally a period of religious insecurity and even decline, that 1680-1760 witnessed substantive state church renewal and a process of "sacralization," and that the revolutionary era was relatively irreligious prior to a resurgence of "Christianization" in the early Republic, is sporadic and questionable in places. But through skilful deployment of materials from the Southern and Middle Colonies, Butler offered a nuanced and quite complex picture of early American religious life. As noted, Bonomi advanced similar conclusions in Under the Cope of Heaven, where she viewed the 18th century as a time of Christian growth and consolidation after the strains and uncertainties of church life in the difficult circumstances of the first century of European colonization. Stephen Marini has since corroborated and even extended such findings with convincing, statistically based demonstrations that not only did 1760-1790 generally witness significant religious growth, especially in newer denominations and sects like the Baptists and Methodists, but the years of the Revolution in particular could be construed as nothing short of a "revolutionary revival."

See, for example, Colin Kidd, The Forging of Races: Race and Scripture in the Protestant Atlantic World, 1600-2000 (Cambridge, 2006), p. 83: "For the majority of its supporters, certainly in the Protestant world, the Enlightenment was a further wave of Reformation. It was not about the wholesale rejection of Christianity, but rather a tidying exercise which might well see untenable superstitions or inessential but problematic beliefs cast out of the churches, but only in order to conserve and bolster a purer and stronger Christianity." Alongside the "religious radicalism of a sceptical, deistic Enlightenment," Kidd further pointed to "a moderate, clerical Enlightenment" that "yoked reason and sophistication to the cause of religion." Guyatt, p. 56n., has similarly written of "a 'conservative Enlightenment' within Anglicanism." See further, John G. A. Pocock, "Clergy and Commerce. The Conservative Enlightenment in England," in Raffaele Ajello et al. (eds.), L'Età dei Lumi. Studi Storici sul Settento Europeo in Onore di Franco Venturi (Naples, Italy: 1985), pp. 523-62.

Bonomi, op. cit.; Butler, op. cit.

Butler, p. 2.


See, for example, Stephen Marini, "Religion, Politics, and Ratification," in Hoffman and Albert (eds.), pp. 184-217. In summarizing some of Marini's key findings, Wood, "Religion and the American Revolution," pp. 186-7, also cited, p. 201, an unpublished paper by Marini entitled "The Revolutionary Revival in America" and his Radical Sects of Revolutionary New England (Cambridge, MA: 1982), in which he chronicled the rise of such groups as the Freewill Baptists, Universalists and Shakers, as well as sectarianism in general in revolutionary and post-revolutionary periods.
Clearly, if Butler, Bonomi, Marini and others are correct in suggesting that the American colonies were generally more religious in orientation towards the end of the 18th century than previously, to talk of wide-scale secularization is misleading. Instead, Bailyn's and Wood's presuppositions as to the fundamental religiosity of colonial and revolutionary American culture appear much more convincing.

B. Definitions of Liberty.
Such questions and assumptions will inform this dissertation, as it addresses the careers of four individuals who have figured repeatedly in revolutionary and pre-revolutionary historiography. In detailed analyses of the life and work of John Wise, Jonathan Mayhew, Andrew Eliot and Charles Chauncy, attention will particularly focus on their religious and political views, showing them to have been more conservative in defending the New England status quo and less shaped by contemporary philosophical influences than has often been portrayed. The dissertation will further build on the work of Hatch, Stout and others in documenting the historical meanings and implications of a central term and concept in the work of these four authors - that of "liberty." It will show how the Massachusetts ministers' ideas and "languages" of this key interface between theological and political rhetoric were not only foundational to their thought, but fundamentally spiritual in origin and definition. It will demonstrate how these found practical expression in attitudes towards particular contemporary challenges, especially the defence of Congregationalist polity against perceived threats, both internal and external, and the exercise of a right of rebellion or civil disobedience against British authority. In addressing the theme of liberty, the dissertation will thus engage a second crucial topic that has figured prominently both in the historiography of religion and the American Revolution and in the scholarship of historians, political scientists and philosophers on 18th century political thought and revolutionary causation in general.

Speaking to the British Parliament some 16 months before the American Declaration of Independence asserted "these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness," the Anglo-Irish statesman Edmund Burke (1729-1797) argued:

In this character of the Americans, a love of freedom is the predominating feature which marks and distinguishes the whole; and as an ardent is always a jealous affection, your colonies become suspicious, restive, and untractable whenever they see the least attempt to wrest from them by force or shuffle from them by chicane what they think is the only advantage worth living for. The fierce spirit of liberty is stronger in the English colonies

139It would, however, be one thing to measure increased religiosity in terms of rates of church attendance, for example, but quite another to show that political, educational or commercial life in the 18th Century colonies were subject to greater religious influences.
probably than in any other people of the earth; and this from a great variety of powerful causes.\(^{140}\)

Burke's judgement has subsequently been endorsed by modern scholarship.

In his influential *Seedtime of the Republic: The Origin of the American Tradition of Political Liberty* (1953), Clinton Rossiter argued that "liberty, in one guise or another, was the aspiration of most men and the characteristic of most currents of thought that moved westward to America."\(^{141}\) According to Wood in *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1787* (1972), "liberty" was invoked more often by the Revolutionaries" than any other "phrase."\(^{142}\) In a helpful lecture on "Liberty, Authority, and Property in Early America" (1986), Michael Kammen suggested that "the concept of liberty did not appear often during the first few decades of English colonization in the New World," but that "between the onset of the revolutionary crisis in 1763 and ratification of the Constitution in 1788...no notion was invoked more frequently."\(^{143}\) Writing in *Capitalism and a New Social Order: The Republican Vision of the 1790s* (1984), Joyce Appleby made the even more general claim that "no other political ideal was invoked more often in the Anglo-American world than that of liberty."\(^{144}\) But if the centrality of liberty has been widely acknowledged, especially during the revolutionary period, understandings of what colonial Americans meant when they used the word, or what significance it may have carried as a bearer of social or cultural meaning, have differed widely. Varying interpretations of liberty have also been connected with competing schools of thought concerning what Bailyn seminally defined as the "ideological" origins of the American Revolution.

As Greene noted in 1968, the concept of liberty had been front and centre in 19th century "Whig" and nationalist histories of the Revolution, which was primarily seen by historians like George Bancroft as "a classic struggle" for freedom through independence.\(^{145}\) However, with the advent


\(^{145}\) Greene in Greene (ed.), p. 3.
of the "imperial" and "progressive" schools, historians paid much more attention to imperial political, social and economic causal factors than to intellectual or idealistic ones.146 Thus as recently as the 1950s, according to Barry Shain, when there was a noted resurgence of interest in revolutionary political philosophy led by 20th century "neo-Whig" historians, "there was only one claimant to the role of reigning 18th-century political philosophy; the still vibrant philosophy of liberal individualism."147 Although he also allowed for the influence of other ideas, Rossiter assumed, for example, that "the men who made the Revolution held a philosophy of ethical, ordered liberty that the American people still cherish as their most precious intellectual possession." In The Liberal Tradition in America: An Interpretation of American Political Thought Since the Revolution (1955), Louis B. Hartz defined "the master assumption of American political thought," flowing directly from the "perspectives of 1776," as "the reality of atomistic social freedom."148 In briefly expounding the views of those who concluded that "individualism...played an active role in shaping the aspirations of Revolutionary-era Americans," Shain suggested that "the proponents of this traditional interpretation [of late-18th century political philosophy]...were advocates of political individualism and thus defended something like the modern concept of individual freedom – freedom to do what one wishes."149

Lee Ward has usefully summarized the central arguments of a mid-20th century "liberal' consensus regarding the dominant mode of thought in the Anglo-American political and constitutional tradition" to shape the views and actions of American revolutionaries, in the following terms:

These scholars agreed that the prevailing mode of political discourse and constitutional theory in America was profoundly shaped by the overwhelming influence of Lockean-liberal ideas at the time of the Founding....The distinctive features of this liberal consensus in the fields of both Anglo-American and early modern studies were an assertion of the centrality of individual natural rights, an instrumentalist or conventionalist understanding of government as a product of human artifice designed and directed to the securing of rights, and a statement of the importance of private property rights and the unleashing of essentially selfish and materialist passions channeled through the political and economic institutions of a competitive, individualistic, and capitalist society. In sum, early liberal modernity peaked in [John] Locke, and Locke was America's philosopher.150

146Ibid., pp. 4-17.
The "liberal" school of interpretation has meanwhile been strengthened in recent years by scholars like Appleby, Steven Dworetz and Isaac Kramnick, who have defended the importance of Lockean liberalism to late-eighteenth century American political thought against competing claims of primacy upheld by advocates of what Robert Shalhope has called the "republican synthesis" which emerged in the 1960s and 1970s. 151

Although of exceptional range, quality and complexity, the three seminal studies of the republican school, Bailyn's The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution (1967), Wood's The Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1787 and John Pocock's The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition (1975) were clearly works of intellectual history. 152 However, as Daniel Rodgers pointed out in an insightful overview of the "career" of republicanism as a dominant concept, through an increasing focus on "ideology," which was defined in a Geertzian anthropological sense as a "cultural system," scholars also sought to invest significant "social power" in their explications of revolutionary ideas and so to enhance the causal weight of their conclusions in face of those arising from competing historiographical paradigms. 153

Inasmuch as its major authors actually offered sometimes complementary, although often quite disparate interpretations of revolutionary and post-revolutionary thought, it is difficult to summarize the central ideas of a republican interpretation of the American Revolution and founding era. In The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution, for example, Bailyn


153 Daniel T. Rodgers, "Republicanism: The Career of a Concept," Journal of American History, 79:1 (1992), pp. 11-38, esp. p. 21. For a definition of a "Geertzian anthropological sense" of ideology, see Clifford Geertz, "Ideology as a Cultural System," in "The Interpretation of Cultures," pp. 193-233. Neither Bailyn nor Wood devoted any attention to ideology per se in their major works on the Revolution. However, writing four years after initial publication of "The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution," Bailyn was more forthcoming. In "The Central Themes of the American Revolution," a paper which he first delivered in 1971 and was published in Stephen Kurtz and James Hutson (eds.), Essays on the American Revolution (Chapel Hill, NC: 1973), pp. 3-31, Bailyn argued, p. 11, citing Geertz, that: "the concept of 'ideology' ... draws formal discourse into those 'maps of problematic social reality,' those shifting patterns of values, attitudes, hopes, fears, and opinions through which people perceive the world and by which they are led to impose themselves upon it. ... Formal discourse becomes politically powerful when it becomes ideology: when it articulates and fuses into effective formulations, opinions and attitudes that are otherwise too scattered and vague to be acted upon; when it mobilizes a general mood, 'a public possession, a social fact;' when it crystallizes otherwise inchoate social and political discontent and thereby shapes what is otherwise instinctive and directs it to attainable goals; when it clarifies, symbolizes, and elevates to structured consciousness the mingled urges that stir within us." For an overview of Wood's thoughts on relations between historical and social scientific study, see his "Intellectual History and the Social Sciences," in John Higham and Paul Carvin (eds.), New Directions in American Intellectual History (Baltimore, MD: 1979), pp. 27-41. As Rodgers noted, p. 22, Pocock largely eschewed reference to ideology. For him, "language structured the means and vocabularies by which reality could be described. Ideas cohered (and, to a great extent, disappeared) in languages, speech acts in 'paradigm systems,' intentions in the available means of expression."
eschewed any reference to "republicanism" per se, arguing for the primacy of English Commonwealth "Real Whig" country ideas in the development of an explosive and ultimately victorious revolutionary ideology. By contrast, although he acknowledged such transatlantic influences, Wood sought to chronicle the influence of a more ancient tradition of classical republicanism. The latter swept "into colonial political culture with near utopian force in 1774-1775," offering "extraordinarily idealistic hopes for the social and political transformation of America," Wood argued, and inspiring American Whigs' dedication to "a conception of the ideal republican society," in which "the sacrifice of individual interests to the greater good of the whole...comprehended for Americans the idealistic goal of their Revolution." As Ward has stated, Pocock's republican vision was distinctive from that of both his illustrious predecessors in that he located the origins of a "civic humanist republican tradition" brought into England and America by Machiavelli and his followers in "the city states of Renaissance Italy." Such republicanism included, Pocock suggested, "a Renaissance pessimism concerning the direction and reversibility of social and historical change." It saw "the health of the balanced constitution...in the independence of its parts," while that of "the civic individual consisted in his independence from government or social superiors, the precondition of his ability to concern himself with the public good, res publica, or commonweal....The name most tellingly used for balance, health, and civic personality was 'virtue'; the name of its loss was 'corruption.'" As such, this republicanism clearly presented a decidedly antithetical social vision to that of Lockean liberalism.

It is beyond the scope of this analysis to chronicle developments in such a complex area of historiography in more detail. But notwithstanding Rodger's seemingly premature claims about the demise of republicanism as a meaningful conceptual category some 15 years ago, it would seem fair to say that even if, as Ward has suggested, "the state of the debate...is one of stalemate," scholars now quite widely accept that both liberal and republican interpretations of American revolutionary origins and development have substance. Both also incorporate

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155 Rodgers, p. 18; Wood, pp. 48, 53. According to Rodgers' summary of Wood's argument, revolutionary republicanism involved "an idea of community as a natural organic whole in which sacrifice of individual self-interest for the sake of the common good lay at the core of their notion of virtue."

156 Ward, p. 3; John G. A. Pocock, "Virtue and Commerce in the 18th Century," Journal of Interdisciplinary History, 3 (1972), pp. 119-34, esp. p. 121 on "Country ideology." Among key elements of Pocock's understanding of classical republicanism, Ward listed "mixed government, civic virtue, property as instrumental to citizenship, and the importance of participatory politics."

157 Ward, p. 6. See, for example, Ruth Bloch, "Religion, Literary Sentimentalism, and Popular Revolutionary Ideology," pp. 308-11; Robert M. Calhoun, Dominion and Liberty: Ideology in the Anglo-American World (Arlington Heights, IL, 1994), pp. 127-8, 130. Calhoun argued, p. 127, for example, that "most historians now agree...that the ideology of the Revolution was both republican and Lockean."
different understandings of liberty and so have a direct bearing on one of the main themes of this dissertation.

Even within "republican" scholarship, Bailyn, Wood and Pocock highlighted significant variations of emphasis in their accounts of revolutionary concepts of liberty. Writing of colonial views, Bailyn highlighted, for example, the contrasting “spheres” of “power” and “liberty” apprehended by preachers and pamphleteers. He defined the fundamental colonial conception of liberty in rather Lockean terms as "the exercise, within the boundaries of the law, of natural rights whose essences were minimally stated in English law and custom" and noted a prevalent notion that "America was a purer and freer England." However, Bailyn’s definition of “political liberty” was also remarkably similar to Wood’s. It was, he argued, citing John Allen’s The Watchman’s Alarm To Lord N---H... (1774), both "a natural power of doing or not doing whatever we have a mind" so long as that doing was ‘consistent with the rules of virtue and the established laws of the society to which we belong’ and a “power of acting agreeable to the laws which are made and enacted by the consent of the people, and in no ways inconsistent with the natural rights of a single person, or the good of [the] society.”

Likewise, for Wood, “the important liberty in the Whig ideology [of 1776] was public or political liberty,” which involved protecting “the public rights of the collective people against the supposed privileged interests of their rulers.” Thus “the private liberties of individuals depended upon their collective public liberty” which rightfully took priority. In his brief summary of Pocock’s republican thesis, Ward highlighted his conviction that as a result of the Machiavellian civic humanist tradition of republicanism, “Anglo-American thought inherited a profoundly anti-Lockean and anti-individualist notion of liberty. This idea of liberty hearkened back to the classical Aristotelian ideal of citizenship as the fulfillment of the human personality through common political discourse and action.”

Commenting on general understandings of liberty “in the Anglo-American world,” Appleby noted that “its meaning was [only] precise in particular intellectual contexts, of which there were at least three which speakers might have in mind in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.” Assuming that a more modern conception of “liberty as personal freedom bounded only by such

161Ward, p. 3.
162Appleby, p. 15.
limits as are necessary if others are to enjoy the same extensive freedom” was not widely held in colonial America, the three on which Appleby focused were:

i. a “classical republican definition of liberty,” similar to that advanced by Pocock, which referred to “a corporate body’s right of self-determination,” and according to which “to be a free man (and they always were men) was to participate in the life of the polis or community;”

ii. “the liberty of secure possession,” which was “negative, private, and limited” and protected “private, personal enjoyments – liberties that become vested interests;” and

iii. “the liberal concept of liberty” advocated by Locke and Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) before him, which centred on individual rights and was based on a particular narrative of the origins of government. According to this understanding:

   living free and equal in a state of nature with the protection of natural law, men formed civil society only for convenience. By giving up their private right to execute the law of nature they created government to do the policing, but civil society added nothing to their rights nor to the content of natural law; it existed only to implement what was already a part of God’s creation. Its power, most importantly, was limited to those measures necessary to protect the life, liberty, and property of the members of society.163

It was the liberal understanding of liberty, Appleby argued, that ultimately triumphed in the United States of America following ratification of the federal Constitution in 1783, although she found evidence of both liberal and classical republican conceptions operative in political discourse before, during and after the American Revolution.164

Despite the obvious importance of liberty as a concept, discourse or ideology in colonial and revolutionary America, as Shain has noted, Appleby has been one of very few scholars who have attempted any systematic account of its different understandings of it.165 In his massive work of anthropological “cultural history,” Albion’s Seed: Four British Folkways in America (1989), David Hackett Fischer examined what he called “freedom ways” in four major geographic areas of the American colonies, in which he sought to show the continuing influence of inherited British traditions.166 Thus in Massachusetts Fischer mined early colonial legal documents and the works of Samuel Adams (1722-1803) to find evidence that “from the generation of John Winthrop (1558-1649) to that of...Adams... , the noun ‘liberty’ was used throughout New England in at least four ways which ring strangely in a modern ear.” “Public” or “collective liberty,” belonged to “an entire community” and was not inconsistent with close “restraints upon individuals.” The “plural liberties”

163Appleby, pp. 16-21, passim.
164Appleby, p. 22.
166David Hackett Fischer, Albion’s Seed: Four British Folkways in America (Oxford, 1989), pp. vii, 4-5.
of individual colonists, on the other hand, were "understood as specific exemptions from a condition of prior restraint" and were "codified into 'laws and liberties' which became what the founders called 'the fundamentals of the Commonwealth,'" although they varied according to social status. "Soul" or "Christian liberty" consisted in "freedom to serve God in the world...in a godly way – but not in any other." A fourth sense of liberty was used "to describe a collective obligation of the 'body politicke,' to protect individual members from the tyranny of circumstance" as imposed, for example, by extreme poverty, and together with the first three, this constituted "a larger conception which might be called ordered liberty." 167

Fischer found different, but generally complementary understandings of liberty elsewhere in colonial America, although he did not always stress their complementarity. 168 His regional perspective on different "freedom ways" in colonial America thus offered a useful corrective to more centralizing approaches. At the same time, it would seem significant that his fourfold definition of Massachusetts conceptions of liberty finds significant corroboration elsewhere, even where scholars have used other categories.

Other historians to have analyzed colonial conceptions of liberty in some depth have included Michael Kammen and John Phillip Reid in The Concept of Liberty in the Age of the American Revolution (1988). 169 Kammen argued that liberty became a growing American preoccupation in the latter part of the eighteenth century. But it meant different things, including the freedom/independence associated with property ownership and that involving lack of incarceration. Liberty was often connected with notions of authority and reason, and because it was no "monolithic concept," it could be used to convey a variety of messages. In that connection, Kammen highlighted the particular importance of three inherited British models of liberty in a colonial American context: "the Tory concern for liberty constrained by law and authority; the Whig protectiveness of liberty and property, and the radical or 'Real Whig' notion...that the fulfillment of liberty should be found in social justice." 170 For Kammen, "the political ideology being deployed during the first half of the eighteenth century was unabashedly British." Even during the revolutionary period, rebel colonists claimed to act in defence of English liberty, while protesting the actions of the King-in-Parliament and resulting threats to property. 171

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167 Fischer, pp. 199-205, passim.
168 Ibid., pp. 411-18, 595-603, 777-82.
170 Kammen, pp. 18-19.
171 Ibid., pp. 26-27.
Where the "Real Whigs" changed prevailing ideas of liberty was by emphasizing the rights of individuals and the desirability of greater social equality. So from the 1740s through 1780s, "the antinomy between liberty and power would worry Americans intensely." British radicals like Joseph Priestley (1733-1804) and Richard Price (1723-1791) meanwhile distinguished between "civil liberty," which involved "the legally protected rights of individuals" and "political liberty," which entailed political participation and consent, and this strongly influenced American thought.¹⁷² Price’s Observations on the Nature of Civil Liberty... (1776) was a bestseller, urging "broad participation and self-government for the political community."¹⁷³ Eventually, in the post-war period, "liberty and property were redefined and incorporated into [a] new notion of civil liberty" involving broader democratic participation.¹⁷⁴

Kammen’s narrative of traditional British notions of liberty being transformed in more libertarian and democratic directions in the second half of the 18th century stands in marked contrast to Reid’s less dynamic account of “liberty in the age of the Revolution,” although the leading constitutional historian also highlighted the significance of British traditions.¹⁷⁵ Reid described the significance of liberty in the 18th century as peerless. “Worth even more than life,” liberty was “the most important possession of civilized people,” although “its existence was precarious.” It was conceived as “a directing force in public affairs” and “in addition to being a word appealed to, ‘liberty’...was a test applied.”¹⁷⁶ However, whereas “in the twentieth century the rhetoric of liberty leads to individual rights with which the state is forbidden to interfere,” 18th century thinkers understood that “the word ‘right’ was balanced by the word ‘duty.’” Moreover, rather than seeking its origins in “exotic explanations” like Pocock’s republican “civic humanism,” Reid’s central contention was that “English and British [and thus American colonial] liberty’s most obvious source” lay in “common-law constitutionalism.”¹⁷⁷

Reid clarified his interpretation of 18th century liberty by giving focused attention to its "opposites," which included "licentiousness" as "the nether side of liberty," "together with slavery," which was a much more general concept than "chattel slavery," and "the arbitrary exercise of government

¹⁷²Ibid., pp. 32-33.
¹⁷³Ibid., pp. 35-6, citing Richard Price, Observations On The Nature Of Civil Liberty... (London, 1776).
¹⁷⁴Ibid., p. 36.
¹⁷⁵Reid’s major work thus far is his four-volume Constitutional History of the American Revolution (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1986-93). "Libertarian" is understood in a very general sense in this dissertation as upholding and/or concerned with human liberty, however defined.
¹⁷⁷Ibid., pp. 2, 5.
power.\textsuperscript{178} So closely was liberty connected with the rule of law as its "central pillar" that its meaning could be said to be "contained" in it. This was because "law...provided security," especially "security of property," which itself "secured independence." Furthermore, the fundamental law in question was that embodied in and protected by the unparalleled, mixed British Constitution, which restrained power and guaranteed liberty through its traditional checks and balances.\textsuperscript{179} "On close inspection," therefore, Reid argued, "the eighteenth-century idea of liberty was the current constitution....The constitution was an instrument of liberty, and liberty was the spirit, the soul, the essence of the constitution."\textsuperscript{180}

Even during the American Revolution, the constitution was as much the "lodestar of colonial Whigs" as of loyalists and other opponents of American independence.\textsuperscript{181} The central problem that gave rise to the Revolutionary War was the Whig perception, shared by British radicals, that the British Parliament had come to exercise an unconstitutional and arbitrary power, which threatened security of property, by claiming "legislative supremacy" and seeking to impose taxation without consent.\textsuperscript{182} Colonists may have expressed their arguments in the rhetoric of both constitutionalism and liberty, as did their opponents. But the two were really one, in that "liberty was constitutionalism, and the constitution was liberty," and like the rhetoric of liberty, which included reference to it, the threat of slavery was a powerful motivating force.\textsuperscript{183}

In the introduction to his work, Reid sought to counter the predictable critique that he might be presenting a broad-brush, "mainstream" and insufficiently contextualized account of a deceptively simple, single "concept of liberty in the age of the American Revolution." He maintained that although people in the Anglo-American world may have disagreed about details of "the definition or conditions of liberty," they all shared and used the same rhetoric of liberty.\textsuperscript{184} He also distinguished his position in the context of the liberal/republican divide that has been such a major feature of 18\textsuperscript{th} century American historiography.\textsuperscript{185} Yet the major problems with Reid's account ultimately centre on precisely the main critique from which he sought to defend himself.

\begin{enumerate}
\item\textsuperscript{178} Ibid., pp. 32-59, passim, esp. pp. 32, 45.
\item\textsuperscript{179} Ibid., pp. 48, 60, 68, 72, 74-83, passim.
\item\textsuperscript{180} Ibid., pp. 49, 82.
\item\textsuperscript{181} Ibid., p. 84.
\item\textsuperscript{182} Ibid., pp. 85-90, passim, esp. p. 86.
\item\textsuperscript{183} Ibid., p. 88, pp. 91-107, passim.
\item\textsuperscript{184} Ibid., p. 9.
\item\textsuperscript{185} Thus while distancing himself from a definition of liberty "in the classical republican paradigm" of Pocock, as identified by Appleby, p. 18, Reid, pp. 7-8, listed Bailyn's understanding of "political liberty" as closest to his own, but with qualifications. The major one was "the historical steps to which Bailyn traces his definition" in English Radical Whig ideology, which he thought too narrow. Instead, Reid argued, citing Jack P. Greene, "Review," in Stuart Brown (ed.),
Such challenges are clearly highlighted by the much more comprehensive work of Shain, who offered, in his 1994 study, *The Myth of American Individualism: The Protestant Origins of American Political Thought*, not only an "introductory typology" of 18th century understandings of liberty, but also an extended analysis of "the meaning of liberty in the revolutionary era." The latter embraced separate chapters on "(ordered) liberty and freedom," "spiritual liberty," and "corporate liberty," as well as on "the concept of slavery" as "liberty's antithesis." Shain's "typology" was grounded in similar attempts at categorization by earlier writers. They included: from the 18th century, the definitions of Jonathan Mayhew in the "Memorandum" of a sermon on liberty from August 25, 1765, and of John Mellen in his 1795 discourse, *The Great and Happy Doctrine of Liberty*...; and from the 20th century, the brief analyses of James Bryce, John Roche and Appleby. Shain contended that neither Bryce's very general "fourfold division of liberty" into "civil, religious, political, and individual" nor Mellen's threefold definition of "natural" or "common," "political" or "civil," and "moral" or "religious" liberty did justice to the full range of 18th century understandings. He also found Mayhew's six-part exposition repetitive, in that he unnecessarily singled out two senses of "spiritual" or "Christian" liberty. Instead, drawing insights from all these sources, as well as the work of Fischer, Shain proposed that:

in early Americans' writings, they assigned to liberty eight different meanings that cut across the various regions. They are: philosophical (freedom of the will), political, spiritual (or Christian), prescriptive, familial (economic independence or autonomy), natural, civil, and individualistic (modern individual autonomy).

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188 Shain, pp. 166-8, esp. p. 168. Mayhew's views of liberty are explored in some detail below. See pp. 141-55.
189 Shain, p. 149. More specifically, Shain expounded these eight definitions in the following terms. "Philosophical" liberty, or freedom of the will, was understood, he argued, pp. 178-9, citing David Hume, *Philosophical Essays Concerning Human Understanding*... (London, 1748), p. 150, in terms of "a power of acting or not acting, according to the determination[s] of the will." "Political" liberty corresponded to the first of Appleby's three definitions, although Shain chose not to place it within a classical republican framework. It essentially involved, p. 169, "the right of a corporate body (usually local) to be governed by its citizens," as well as "the citizen's right of political self-determination." "Spiritual" or "Christian" liberty constituted, p. 180, "the relative freedom that a Christian enjoyed through Christ from sin and from the necessity of obeying the Mosaic law." It was thus an inherently religious and theological concept, traditionally defined in terms of reformed doctrinal statements like the "Westminster Confession." "Prescriptive" liberty, like Appleby's second sense of liberty as "secure possession," was best defined, p. 171, in a plural sense as "an inherited set of rights that were applicable to members of a particular class or a local corporation (often a town or village) - rights to which, as English subjects, Americans believed themselves duly entitled." "Familial" liberty involved, p. 179, the economic "independence or autonomy of a household" and represented "a socially defined characteristic of self-supporting male heads of house who were the central ligaments of...largely agricultural communities." "Natural" liberty, which consisted of the freedom of humanity in an idealized state of nature before the formation of society, was not a pressing issue, p. 181, because it "only fully belonged to the individual presocially." "Civil" liberty, at its most basic level, "described what remained of this [natural] freedom after society's expansive communal needs were fully met." It could actually be understood in any one of three senses, as "political liberty, individual civil...liberties," or what Shain referred to as "corporate communal liberty." "Individualistic" liberty approximated, pp 169, 174, the sense of "modern individual autonomy." But it was not a
Shain subsequently built on such a categorization to develop a comprehensive analysis of "spiritual" and "corporate" understandings of liberty which supported the overall thesis of his book that instead of being "accurately characterized as predominantly individualistic or...classically republican," the "vast majority of 18th century Americans lived voluntarily in morally demanding agricultural communities shaped by reformed-Protestant social and moral norms." The details of his central argument will not be considered here, although it is worth noting that in otherwise mixed reviews, both Bonomi and Michael Zuckert noted the value of his foregrounding of sometimes neglected religious and communal values. In addition to his detailed categorization of different definitions of liberty, of more immediate relevance to the topic of this dissertation are the contributions that Shain brought to the debate over religion and the American Revolution by giving primacy to "spiritual" over all other understandings of liberty.

Shain has been criticized for insufficiently contextualizing his numerous primary sources, for a relatively narrow focus on New England sermons, and for excluding major revolutionary-era political texts that might have led him to different conclusions. Although it is here noted as the most comprehensive modern account, the evidence for his eightfold definition of liberty is also sporadic in places and depends quite heavily on earlier scholarship. But his prioritization of "spiritual liberty," understood as that which frees Christians "from absolute servitude to sin and the necessity of adhering to the tenets of Mosaic law," rather than as freedom of religion or conscience, arguably highlighted a significant understanding of colonial American thought which had previously been neglected. Both Hatch and Stout had earlier pointed to conflations of spiritual with political ideas of liberty in revolutionary discourse. For Hatch, this was an important part of the ideology of "civil millennialism" or "Christian republicanism" which was central to his thesis of "a convergence of millennial and republican thought forms" that helped provoke the American Revolution. For Stout, "liberty's double meaning" in the homiletic usage of New England ministers was likewise key evidence that implicit religious content gave added force to widespread concept in 18th century America, where "few...recognized that the public's legitimate needs and those of particular individuals could be at odds, and gave preference to those of the individual."

190 Ibid., p. xvi.
191 Patricia Bonomi, review of Shain, American Historical Review, 101:3 (1996), pp. 905-6; Michael Zuckert, review of Shain, William and Mary Quarterly, 53:3 (1996), pp. 670-2. Zuckert suggested, p. 672, that "he [Shain] helps (along with some others) move the discussion beyond what now appears a sterile contest between liberal and republican views of the era. He introduces an important third element and begins to produce an account of how the various pieces of the tradition did or did not fit together." For a more critical review, see Marvin Bergman, Church History, 66:4 (1997), pp. 847-9.
193 Ibid., p. 193. Rather than treating it as a separate definition, Shain bracketed "freedom of religion or conscience" under "prescriptive" liberty.
revolutionary political rhetoric. However, Hatch gave primacy in such a context to the political ideas of republicanism and Real Whig ideology. Moreover, Stout, while suggesting that "America's political redemption from bondage and tyranny was important and necessary [for ministers during the revolutionary period], but not as important as personal, eternal redemption," ultimately focused on the politicization of traditional religious discourse. Where Shain shifted the emphasis of such arguments was in his very explicit claim that "spiritual liberty" was "Revolutionary-era Americans' most fundamental understanding of liberty." It thus "set the standard by which other forms of liberty were judged" and it was central to revolutionary ideology, because "from a reformed-Protestant perspective, only spiritual liberty could prepare a person to exercise corporate political liberty." 

Shain's account of spiritual liberty proceeded from the assumption, which has already been discussed, that the society of 18th century colonial America was a deeply religious one, "shaped by the tenets of reformed-Protestant theology." In such a society "the dominant language and pattern of social and political thought" reflected similar principles and, he contended, even leaders normally associated with Enlightenment heterodoxy were strongly influenced by them. The definition of spiritual liberty that was widely held thus flowed directly from Puritan and so Protestant Reformation and Augustinian sources. It consisted of a freedom bestowed by divine grace and aided by Christian community not only from the power of sin and from the burden of legalistic obedience to divine law, but also for the pursuit of moral good. In other words, spiritual liberty was of "a 'positive' form that carried within its meaning the specific moral ends for which it could be legitimately exercised." And those ends were consistently defined from the age of the Puritan founder, John Winthrop, to that of the Revolution in terms of voluntary "surrender...to a regime of effective subservience to God and his lieutenants on earth." 

Such an understanding of spiritual liberty as what Winthrop called "a liberty to [do] that only which is good, just, and honest" was combined with a view that "godly living by all was a necessary [and publicly enforceable] social standard by which to measure the public good." This combination naturally led to "the political extension of Christian liberty to corporate bodies" that was evident from the early days of New England and it remained a strong feature of an 18th century colonial society in which religious standards could still be legislatively, as well as more informally

197 Shain, pp. 193, 212.
199 Ibid., pp. 199-203, esp. pp. 201, 203.
imposed. In such a context, a heritage of reformed Protestantism could thus come to legitimize even a revolutionary quest for political liberty, Shain argued. But spiritual liberty was ultimately more important. It was, in fact, the only proper preparation for "corporate political liberty." Even "elite rationalists" like some of America's founders understood the importance of religion as a basis for secular order and often concealed their own heterodoxy. The general populace was meanwhile deluged with consistent messages underlining the primacy of spiritual liberty in a culture where, beginning in New England, the power and purview of the pulpit remained much more pervasive than that of political pamphleteers.

Such evidence all pointed to the logical conclusion, Shain argued, that: it was the reformed-Protestant vision of spiritual liberty...that best defines the late-18th century understanding of liberty. At the level of shared beliefs, liberty for Americans described the potential for voluntary submission to a life of righteousness that accorded with universal moral standards mediated by divine revelation and the authoritative interpretive capacity of a congregation of citizen-believers.

Belief in the centrality and primacy of spiritual liberty was further buttressed by a remaining, widespread conviction that original sin had robbed humankind of the full benefits of natural liberty, thus necessitating Christian salvation for the attainment of renewed freedom in Christ. A deep sense of the innate sinfulness of humanity not only shaped the ways in which individual and communal freedoms were deemed to be acceptably constrained. It also led, Shain contended, to a profound mistrust of governmental power, of which the abuse had the potential to provoke revolutionary consequences. The Revolution involved a direct quest for corporate political liberty and independence in the form of self-government. But neither a lofty vision of classical republicanism nor the pursuit of individual rights as ends in themselves were major motivating forces. "As a largely Christian and overwhelmingly rural people, Americans instead understood politics as instrumental in the services of higher religious and other publicly defined goals." Moreover, within the context of this traditionalist worldview, the major source for their notions of political liberty lay ultimately, as Fischer, Kammen and Reid had suggested, in their transatlantic inheritance. In an 18th century situation where "English political liberty enjoyed nearly universal

202 Ibid., pp. 213-14.
203 Ibid., pp. 215-18, citing especially the findings of Stout, "The New England Soul."
204 Ibid., p. 218.
205 Ibid., pp. 218-40, passim.

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support," even revolutionary colonists thus needed "the legitimacy offered by a communal [English] understanding of liberty" and they readily claimed only to be "defending their 'traditional' rights as Englishmen." 207

In thus highlighting the alleged influence of English on colonial American political ideas, Shain was obviously saying nothing new. Nor was he making a radical departure from previous scholarship by urging the overall importance of religion in 18th century colonial and revolutionary American society. But in arguing for the paramount importance of colonial American religious understandings of liberty, he arguably went further than any previous historian, except perhaps Heimert, whose thesis on the revolutionary impact of Calvinist evangelicalism was both substantively narrower and stylistically more diffuse. Because of Shain's sources, reviewers seem right to have warned against the possible risks of over-generalization from them. 208 But his conclusions remain challenging, especially in the context of a study like this which explores the life and thought of four Congregationalist ministers, often hailed as liberal and progressive thinkers, who allegedly pre-shadowed, actively facilitated or directly assisted the revolutionary cause by departing from, rather than upholding and defending the traditional New England Way.

A last major work that commands attention in this context is J. C. D. Clark's massively revisionist study, The Language of Liberty, 1660-1832: Political Discourse and Social Dynamics in the Anglo-American World (1994), which offered an account of relations between 18th century American religious and political thought that, if correct, would totally revolutionize scholarly understandings of the American Revolution. As its title would imply, The Language of Liberty built on Clark's earlier and equally controversial work, English Society, 1688-1832: Ideology, Social Structure, and Political Practice during the Ancien Regime, which focused solely on a reinterpretation of British history in the "long 18th century" (1985). 209 The full range of his far-reaching and often complex argument lies beyond the scope of this dissertation. 210 But his account of the development and dynamics of 18th century American religion and his radically religious interpretation of the American Revolution are clearly central.

Like Shain and others, Clark operated from the guiding assumption that colonial American society and culture was profoundly religious, although in diverse and often conflicting ways. It was also

207Ibid., pp. 258-66, passim, esp. pp. 264, 266.
209J.C.D. Clark, English Society, 1688-1832: Ideology, Social Structure, and Political Practice during the Ancien Regime (Cambridge, 1985), since released in a revised second edition, English Society 1660-1832: Religion, Ideology and Politics during the Ancien Regime (Cambridge, 2000). Both this and "The Language of Liberty" are described by their publisher on the latter work's back cover as "part of a project aimed at revising our map of early modern English-speaking societies."
210For example, Clark's detailed analysis of developments in 18th century legal thought.
preoccupied with legal issues. So "the two dominant idioms of discourse," he contended, "...were law and religion," of which each had its own "dialects." Clark, "The Language of Liberty," p. 11. In religious terms, the American colonies were dominated by the diverse denominations of Protestant dissent, and it was their ongoing conflicts with the hegemonic, unified sovereignty of the state-church establishment of England that ultimately culminated in the American Revolution. Thus the major thesis of Clark's study, which unapologetically analyzes the Revolution "theologically," is that it was "a rebellion by groups within Protestant Dissent against an Anglican hegemony," and so "a religious and civil war," Clark argued, "a revolution of natural law against common law," inasmuch as American dissenters appealed to natural law principles in order to contest the common law foundations of English constitutional authority. Clark, "The Language of Liberty," p. 4. In fact, in the final analysis, "a rebellion of natural law against common law and a rebellion of Dissent against hegemonic Anglicanism were the same rebellion, since their target was the unified sovereign created by England's unique constitutional and ecclesiastical development." Clark, "The Language of Liberty," p. 5.

In that sense - sometimes because of misguided and unduly secularized interpretations of 18th century political discourse, sometimes as a result of using anachronistic descriptive categories like "the Enlightenment," and sometimes by attaching undue significance to particular events - many previous scholars had simply misread the evidence. So Clark openly and rather dismissively rejected interpretations of revolutionary ideology like Bailyn's, for example, as well as the work of historians claiming direct links between the Great Awakening or millennialism and "the revolutionary outbreak of 1776." Instead, over the course of five lengthy, sometimes ambivalent and contentious, but always stimulating chapters, he developed a complex narrative of the shifting expressions and manifestations of English Anglican sovereignty and of dissenters' growing conflicts with it, both in Great Britain and its American colonies.

Clark's account of the causal sequence leading to rebellion and revolution is perhaps of most relevance here and he presented it most clearly towards the beginning of his wide-ranging analysis of "rebellion and its social constituencies in the English Atlantic Empire, 1660-1832:"

[A] comparative perspective reveals something of the preconditions for rebellion; it suggests that rebellions launched with a measure of success generally drew on a relatively clearly-

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211 Clark, "The Language of Liberty," p. 11.
212 Ibid., pp. 5, 41.
213 Ibid., p. 4.
214 Ibid., p. 5.
215 See ibid., p. 19, re. "the Enlightenment," for example. See also, pp. 143-6 and "English Society 1660-1832: Religion, Ideology and Politics during the Ancien Regime," pp. 1-13, where Clark attempted to debunk historical use of a range of descriptive categories, including "liberalism," "conservatism" and "radicalism," because of their alleged ahistoricism.
216 Ibid., pp. 20-29, 40-1.
defined social constituency which was often denominational in nature. A simplistic dualism of “preconditions” and “triggers” is to be avoided; rather, the analysis of the political discourses of law and religion suggests a hierarchy of causation in which denominational polities often established the boundaries of and potential for political mobilisation; theological developments, acting on those polities, acted as accelerators; practical grievances over land and defence, justice and taxation, religious discrimination and the perceived threat of “Popery and arbitrary power” acted as catalysts; but a long chronological perspective suggests too that practical grievances were seldom sufficient to activate those preconditions without specific triggers of the right of resistance.\footnote{217}

In the case of the American Revolution, Clark sought to chronicle such a process by offering separate accounts of developments within the American Anglican, Congregationalist, Presbyterian and Baptist churches.

Among major presenting issues to make the Revolution the “last great war of religion in the western world,” he argued, were “militant imperial Anglicanism versus sectarianism and ethnic diversity; heterodoxy and what we now know as the international Enlightenment versus dour, tradition-conscious orthodoxy, both Anglican and Calvinist; religious exclusiveness versus demands for toleration and the separation of Church and State; the right of rebellion versus the duty of obedience.”\footnote{218} In face of them, colonial Anglicanism was the most divided denomination. On the one hand, a majority of the signers of the Declaration of Independence were Anglican and most Anglican lay people joined the patriot cause. On the other, a greater proportion of clergy were loyalists, despite the domestic opposition of dissenters to the Church of England, which they increasingly attacked using the “trope” of anti-Catholicism.\footnote{219} Baptists generally aligned themselves with the revolutionary cause, notwithstanding the “sectarian intolerance they faced.”\footnote{220} Both Presbyterians and Congregationalists also largely supported the Revolution, and Clark saw the latter playing a particularly prominent role in revolutionary mobilization.

"The significance of the inner dynamics of Congregationalism was greatly enhanced by that denomination's numerical preponderance in the colonies," he argued. Congregationalism had long traditions of sensitivity to religious persecution, ecclesiastical self-government, and commitment to civil liberty. A significant historical problem for Clark was how "ancient principles of ecclesiastical polity were activated" into revolutionary action, and in that connection, he saw a particular role for theological heterodoxy, especially in the area of Christology.\footnote{221} The largely

\footnote{217}{\textit{Ibid.}, pp. 223-4.}
\footnote{218}{\textit{Ibid.}, p. 305.}
\footnote{219}{\textit{Ibid.}, pp. 339-40, 344.}
\footnote{220}{\textit{Ibid.}, p. 379.}
\footnote{221}{\textit{Ibid.}, pp. 43, 364. "Christology" is here defined as the theology of the person and work of Jesus Christ.
unsatisfactory evidence for this contention with particular reference to Andrew Eliot and Jonathan Mayhew, whom Clark cited as major examples together with John Adams (1735-1826), will be considered in more detail below.222

The title of his book might have indicated that understandings of liberty should have been a major focus for Clark. Indeed, one his main premises was that "the key term [of "the English-speaking world"] had been not 'democracy' but 'liberty,' and liberty was a term which had its ramifications chiefly in the vast intellectual territories then occupied by law and religion."223 But there are no indexed references to "liberty" in The Language of Liberty; nor did Clark offer any formal discussion or consideration of what it really meant, except in passing.224 Although his general argument clearly centred on the contentions that revolutionary Americans were seeking freedom from hegemonic British power structures and that they conceived, expressed and pursued that liberty primarily in terms of religious and legal, rather than more secularized political discourses, Clark also failed to pull all the threads of this thesis together in an easily accessible manner to show how.

The confusing complexity of The Language of Liberty is thus one of its major problems and it may help explain why initial reviewers offered such mixed responses to it.225 The huge scale and ambition of Clark's objectives also lead to some disappointment, especially in his final chapter, which ultimately fails to show decisive links between denominational initiatives and revolutionary outcomes, to demonstrate that the Revolution was indeed a "war of religion," or to support his earlier comparative thesis concerning an historically rooted causal sequence leading to "rebellion."226 In highlighting the significance of colonial denominational and legal to revolutionary

222See below, pp 123-4, 161, 170-1, 302.
223Ibid., p. 383.
224Clark defined "natural liberty," for example, p. 39, as "the liberty enjoyed by man in a state of nature," and noted, p. 94, late-17th century appeals to "the rights and liberties of Englishmen" as being to "specific privileges, defined by common law." He argued, p. 112, that 18th century American dissenters adopted an idea of "sovereignty of the people" which tended to move beyond such a conception towards a unified society whose fundamental laws, of general applicability, mirrored and expressed the eternal principles of natural law." He boldly contended, p. 143, that "the American Revolution cannot be ascribed to some prior colonial invention of a modern and newly powerful language of liberty: none such emerged." But what he really meant by that provocative statement was that England remained the traditional source of all colonial American political "languages." He apparently endorsed, p. 261, the findings of Hatch and Bloch about a "reversal" of attitudes towards the "identification of civil and religious liberty with British rule" after the Stamp Act of 1765 and he made a few other similar references. Cf. pp. 262, 277, 363-4.
226Clark, "The Language of Liberty," pp. 296-381. Kloppenberg seemed justified in suggesting, p. 687, that "Clark's account overlooks the massive evidence connecting American political discourse with Enlightenment, republican and liberal writers." Wood has arguably been the most critical of reviewers, although he offered little by way of evidence for his critique. "Despite its many qualifications and subtleties," he contended, "Religion and the American Revolution," pp. 178-80, esp. p. 180, "his [Clark's] argument seems much too extreme, much too thinly supported by research, and much too dismissive of contrary evidence...to be acceptable to most historians." Wood did note, however, that The Language of
discourse and tracing connections back to their common English heritage, Clark was not breaking totally new ground. But it remains a measure of Clark's achievement that in doing so within such a broad historical framework, like Shain and Heimert before him, he opened up fresh ways of seeing the whole relationship between religion and revolution as a quest for liberty. He also underlined the broad sway and unifying significance of a vigorously dissenting Protestant worldview that many colonists shared, including the four main subjects of this dissertation, for whom it will emerge as a major influence on their political, as well as religious thought.

2. Strategic Profiles.

It is apparent from such an historiographical context that despite the wealth of scholarship devoted to studying the impact of religious influences on the American Revolution, as well as to definitions of liberty in colonial and revolutionary thought, significant questions remain. Among the most pressing would seem:

a. To what extent did Christian ideas, ideologies and/or discourse help promote revolutionary fervour and action, as Stout and others have alleged; and by what means?

b. Were the Congregationalist clergy of New England as prominent as has often been suggested, and if so, how? More specifically, were evangelical or more theologically liberal ministers more active and influential in the patriot cause and why?

c. Was the ideal of liberty, which seems to have been so central to revolutionary discourse, essentially a political concept, as Bailyn and others have suggested, even for New England ministers, was it a religious doctrine, as Shain has argued, or both, as Hatch and others have contended?

d. What was the primary "language" in which such an ideal of liberty was conveyed? Was it that of "Real Whig" ideology, Wood's or Pocock's "republicanism," Appleby's liberalism, Clark's foundational discourses of religion and law, Shain's reformed Protestantism, or a combination of them?

Liberty "should help force a healthy reexamination of the religious ancient régime in colonial America." Kloppenberg made the similar observation, p. 687, that "the evidence Clark adduces is likewise often overlooked."


228 E.g., Clark, "The Language of Liberty," pp. 24-5. See below, pp. 294-303. Another scholar to argue more recently that "the late colonial gentry" were "neither...bearers of a 'reactionary' liberty nor a 'progressive' one, but...essentially adhered to the inherited, privilege-based meanings of liberty and equality paramount in the British world during the century preceding 1764" is Michal Jan Rozbicki in his insightful and provocative article, "Between Private and Public Spheres: Liberty as Cultural Property in Eighteenth-Century Britain," in Robert Olwell and Alan Tully (eds.), Cultures and Identities in British Colonial America (Baltimore, MD: 2006), pp. 293-318, esp. p. 294. On the assumption, pp. 298-9, that "liberty was neither self-evident nor a timeless abstract but a man-made social reality, rooted in a selective exemption from the constrictions of state power...rather than in a right to do things," Rozbicki contended that "this reality contained inequality in its very essence, for only some, but not others, were granted freedom from a particular constraint, or allowed some participation in government." Drawing on the theoretical foundations of sociologists Zygmunt Bauman and Pierre Bourdieu, he concluded, p. 299, that "as privilege, eighteenth-century liberty was thus essentially a social relation of difference, existentially dependent on inequality."
e. Were liberal Congregationalists nurtured in revolutionary ardour by theological progressivism, Whig politics and/or Enlightenment philosophical ideals or were they motivated, or perhaps restrained, by more traditionalist concerns for social order in church and state?

By focusing on strategic profiles of the life and work of Chauncy, Eliot, Mayhew and Wise with particular reference to their ideas of liberty, this dissertation will engage such questions. In general terms, it will contribute to a deeper understanding of 18th century New England religious and political thought by means of detailed analyses of the achievements of four significant contributors to it. Through its consideration of the shifting meanings of liberty, a term that was central to both religious and political modes of discourse, it will also cast light on the ongoing debates not only about the relative importance of “spiritual” and other forms of liberty, but also, by implication, about revolutionary origins. In the process, it will challenge the conclusions of previous scholars, including those whose arguments for the primacy of “Real Whig,” republican, or “Lockean-liberal” conceptions of liberty have already been considered, and those of Hatch and Noll, who have stressed the consistent primacy of political content in inherently ambivalent politico-religious ideologies of liberty in the revolutionary period.

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230 A more recent work to focus directly on the political views of New England clergy, which has failed to establish itself as a widely respected contribution to its field, is Dale S. Kuehne, Massachusetts Congregationalist Political Thought 1760-1790 (Columbia, MI: 1996). Joseph Conforti’s judgement, Church History, 67:1 (1998), pp. 194-195, esp. p. 195, that this study, which is heavily dependent on lengthy quotations from secondary sources, breaks “no new ground,” was a little harsh. Noll argued, Journal of American History, 84: 2. (1997), pp. 628-629, esp. p. 629, that “Kuehne’s historical sense is sometimes deficient” and that his book “promises somewhat more than it delivers.” But he also pointed out that Kuehne’s insistence on “the continuing vigor of Calvinist notions in Congregational political reflection” was valuable, especially his “identification of traditional Calvinist understandings of virtue as a key component of Congregational political discourse and his retrieval of an explicitly theological conve[n]ant in the Massachusetts sermons all the way through this period.” In an admittedly flawed study, Kuehne offered some helpful, albeit unoriginal observations on Massachusetts Congregationalist ideas of liberty. He described, for example, p. 46, “the Puritans’ concept of [ordered] liberty,” which precluded religious toleration as much as individual licentiousness, as “the most important element in their political thought.” He suggested, pp. 90-1, that although “the most important aspect of the English Constitution for the clergy was its defense of religious and civil liberty,” by the 1760s, “religious liberty had come to mean an individual’s right to public toleration of his Protestant denominational choice.” He maintained, p. 93, that Congregationalist ministers continued to insist, however, on a vital “relationship between liberty and virtue.” He highlighted, p. 120, a pre-revolutionary conviction that “the true design of civil government is to protect men in the enjoyment of liberty.” Finally, he noted, pp. 131-3, inherent tensions between ministers’ commitments to individual religious freedom and to preserving a Congregationalist establishment in Massachusetts.

231 Some of the interpretations of Miller, Hatch and Noll of colonial and revolutionary notions of liberty have already been noted in passing. They deserve some amplification, although none of these authors, even Hatch in his book, “The Sacred Cause of Liberty,” developed a really extensive or systematic account. In the 1660s, Miller noted, pp. 132-3, the clear Puritan identification between “Gospel liberty” and a duty of Christian obedience, which did not allow moral licentiousness, religious toleration or any right to hold views that were deemed heretical. As a result of England’s “Glorious Revolution” of 1689, however, and new Charter arrangements in the American colonies, there were three major consequences, p. 168, for “the New England Mind,” including obligations “to incorporate into its social theory a fulsome declaration of loyalty to the Crown and to accommodate itself to the idea of toleration,” as well as to embrace “a much enhanced veneration for the prescriptive rights of Englishmen.” In the process, Miller observed, p. 171, “Protestantism was imperceptibly carried over into a new [more secular] order...by translating Christian liberty into the liberties guaranteed by statute.” Thus by the 1720s, p. 377, “no longer able to demand that governments impose uniformity or suppress heresy, parsons had to change the definition of their goal: by making it merely ‘piety’ instead of the Congregational order, they sought to enlist
By examining the thought of Wise, Mayhew, Eliot and Chauncy, in particular, the dissertation will also address other significant questions in colonial and revolutionary religious historiography, especially since the publication of Religion and the American Mind from the Great Awakening to the Revolution. Through analysis of the life and work of four ministers who have often been categorized as “liberals,” it will challenge the heuristic legitimacy of that label and so Heimert’s much contested emphasis on the more conservative impact of such allegedly rationalist and elitist clergy compared with the democratizing and ultimately revolutionary influence of post-Great Awakening, Calvinist, evangelicals. Through the examination of common themes in both the theological and political writings of Mayhew, Eliot and Chauncy, whose major works were published from the 1740s onwards, and of John Wise, whose two major publications appeared some 30 years earlier, the dissertation will further explore areas of historical continuity between them that might normally be neglected. It will thus challenge the inherent viability of more “proleptic” interpretations of the four ministers’ ideas, which have sometimes contextualized them within “Whiggish” historical accounts leading inexorably to theological and political “Enlightenment” in the new republic, rather than within an inherently traditionalist colonial framework shaped by New England’s Puritan past and by the British Protestant heritage that Clark and others have recently done so much to restore to Anglo-American historical consciousness.
The basic theoretical assumptions that will inform this study are fairly straightforward. Although its functional dynamics as a creator of cultural "symbolic universes" are assumed and accepted, "religion" is defined in primarily "substantive" terms, as above.\textsuperscript{232} Texts have likewise been read with particular attention to appropriate historical contexts in an effort to determine authors' intended meanings, rather than as more abstract, self-generating cultural constructs. By contrast with more ambitious definitions, such as those of Edward Shils or David Davis, "ideology" is understood in broad terms as simply a coherent set of ideas and values. However, it is also assumed that all ideologies and discourses have symbolic and even creative import in their own right.\textsuperscript{233} The works of key authors have been studied as comprehensively as possible, but other readings have inevitably been selective and the focus has been on printed sources. Strictly speaking, it is recognized, with Clark, that some commonly used descriptive terms like "conservative," "liberal," "radical" and a few similar epithets are historically anachronistic.\textsuperscript{234} But for practical purposes, their usage is sometimes retained.

In Chapter 2, "Defending the "Constitution" - The Democratic Traditionalism of John Wise," consideration of this 17\textsuperscript{th} and 18\textsuperscript{th} century minister will establish a "benchmark" for the accounts of Mayhew, Eliot and Chauncy, by highlighting themes that will ultimately demonstrate significant areas of continuity with their later work. It will also address a central question as to whether Wise's own writings truly were influential forerunners and/or sources of revolutionary ideology, as leading historians have contended, or not.\textsuperscript{235} An analysis of Wise's theology will confirm that there is good reason to regard the Essex pastor as an upholder of traditional, Calvinist orthodoxy, albeit one who was occasionally prepared to draw on non-traditional sources to make his case. His major works on church government will then be interpreted as expositions and expressions of a constitutionalist traditionalism, which led Wise consistently to appeal to the authority of the Bible and Congregationalist church tradition, as he sought to defend the New England polity of the 1648 Cambridge Platform against the 1705 Proposals of a group of ministers for more Presbyterian forms of church government. Wise will thus emerge as both "conservative" in his defense of the "New England Way" and a "democrat" to the extent that the latter itself embodied

\textsuperscript{232}See above, p. 3, n.3.


elements of democratic governance. He will be seen as profoundly Anglophile, especially in his admiration for the perceived advantages of the English Constitution. He will also be viewed as a thoroughgoing anti-Catholic, who was not only a strong proponent of the virtues of Reformed Protestantism, but fiercely opposed to what he saw as the excesses of the arbitrary power of Rome. Last but not least, Wise's ideas of liberty will be demonstrated to be thoroughly consistent with and integral to this traditionalist worldview. Building on an inherently Puritan definition of Christian liberty to do good, they will be shown to have included clear conceptions of natural liberty in a philosophical sense, as well as of the “prescriptive” religious and civil liberties which he especially associated with the protection of English constitutionalism and Congregationalist church polity.

Chapter 3, “The Snare Broken’ - Jonathan Mayhew and his ‘Liberal Puritan’ Discourse of Liberty,” will then explore the life and work of the first of three mid- to late-eighteenth century Boston ministers whose thought showed significant areas of continuity with that of Wise. Mayhew's writings have been interpreted as not only sources for, but evidence of a developing revolutionary ideology. But a thorough reconsideration of his theology will reveal that he is better described as a “Liberal Puritan” and committed Congregationalist than the Enlightenment rationalist or “Real Whig” philosopher as which he has often been labelled. Although he embraced heterodox Arminian doctrines, the evidence for his alleged Arianism will be disputed and his religious thought will be shown to have been firmly anchored in a biblicist Weltanschauung, which led him regularly to emphasize the traditional themes of sin, salvation and service that Stout has highlighted as consistent features of 17th and 18th century Congregationalist homiletics. Such “conservative heterodoxy” will also emerge in an analysis of Mayhew's writings on liberty, which offer clear evidence of the development of a unified, but often ambivalent “discourse of liberty.” Chapter 3 will demonstrate how this was derived from both sacred and secular sources, but centred in a biblical understanding of “ceremonial,” “gracious” and “moral” Christian liberty from the bondage of sin and law to serve God and neighbour. Mayhew's strong admiration for and continuing attachment to the virtues of his English constitutional inheritance will be noted as defining characteristics of his conception of “civil” liberty and thus his political views generally, which included a defence of the right to civil disobedience and rebellion. But it will also be seen how this was shaped as much by his theological assumptions, as by his wider readings in classical and contemporary political philosophy. In that sense, despite his religious heterodoxy, Mayhew will emerge, in the tradition of Wise, as an inherently conservative defender of the New England Way and what he saw as its libertarian heritage.

236 “Prescriptive” liberties are here defined, following Shain, p. 171, as “an inherited set of rights that were applicable to members of a particular class or a local corporation (often a town or village) - rights to which, as English subjects, Americans believed themselves duly entitled.”
Chapter 4, "The Faithful Steward" - Andrew Eliot, A Calvinist Libertarian," will assess the validity and significance of the claim that Mayhew's colleague and contemporary in the Boston ministry was "a reluctant revolutionary," who vacillated on the questions of protesting British authority and seeking independence from it until his death despite his earlier statement of strongly libertarian ideas. Through an examination of Eliot's published oeuvre, including his letters, his moderate but consistently Calvinist theological position will be clearly expounded. It will also be shown how Eliot, like the theologically more unorthodox Mayhew, was not afraid to draw on the insights of contemporary philosophers to urge his vision of a rational Christianity or to develop his political outlook. The latter will emerge, however, as strongly rooted in his providentialist and biblicist theological perspective, as well as influenced by Whig political sources. Eliot's increasing ambivalence towards British rule and his ultimate vacillations over joining the patriot cause will thus be seen to reflect intellectual tensions quite apart from his admittedly cautious temperament. His views and discourse of liberty will be viewed as consistent with such an interpretation, in that they were rooted in Eliot's Calvinist theological heritage, as well as shaped by contemporary philosophical influences and they presupposed, like those of Wise and Mayhew, a foundational, Puritan understanding of spiritual liberty. Just as he simultaneously upheld the reality of human free will and the supremacy of divine grace, it will be demonstrated how Eliot also maintained firm, but ultimately irreconcilable commitments both to English libertarian views of civil and religious liberty, including the right to civil resistance, and to the biblical necessity of showing due submission to biblically authorized authority structures. In that sense, the American Revolution presented Eliot with a deeply challenging intellectual, as well as personal dilemma, which he ultimately addressed through active ministry, but political inaction.

Chapter 5, "The Mystery Hid" - Charles Chauncy's Creative Defence of the "Standing Order" will show how historians who have primarily characterized the leading Boston pastor as a radical theologian and/or active revolutionary have misrepresented the full testimony of his prolific published legacy. Theologically, Chauncy made a significant journey over the course of his 60-year pastorate from orthodox Calvinism through moderate Arminianism to outspoken universalism. But there is no convincing evidence in any of his works that his Christology was ever Arian, or that his general position was "proto-Unitarian," as some have suggested. At the same time, consistent themes of biblicism and Christocentrism constitute major areas of continuity throughout and it will be seen how even in his final, universalist writings, Chauncy believed that he was simply revealing a scriptural "mystery hid," rather than a totally new

discovery. Chauncy’s apologetics for New England church polity, especially against the ecclesiastical and political threat of a Church of England episcopate in the American colonies, will be shown to be similarly rooted in profound theological conviction, as well as in a staunch dedication, which he shared with Wise, Mayhew and Eliot, to his Protestant heritage.

An analysis of Chauncy’s political views will expound similarly long-held commitments to a free, but hierarchical society and to the maintenance of English constitutional rights and privileges as essential social support structures. Chauncy’s patriotic loyalism and ardent monarchism will be demonstrated right through the outbreak of the American Revolution, as will his providentialist views of government and prevailing social structures, which led him to defend the sociopolitical status quo whenever possible. In fact, his commitment to English constitutional ideals will emerge as so influential that it was only after Chauncy arrived at the conviction that the British authorities were undermining them that he decisively joined the patriot cause. After hostilities had begun, Chauncy’s theological understanding of the Revolution and his interpretative prioritization of moral and spiritual issues will be seen as consistent with his long-standing views on the meaning of liberty, which he defined in philosophical, prescriptive and civil, but primarily spiritual terms, based on a biblicist discourse informed by key texts from the New Testament. Despite his liberal reputation among scholars, the “mystery hid” about Chauncy will thus emerge as his inherent conservativism politically and even, to some extent, theologically. In that sense, the general tenor of his thought had much in common with of Wise, Mayhew and Eliot.

Chapter 6, "Conservative Revolutionaries," will finally seek to summarize and draw conclusions from previous chapters. It will especially highlight how comparative analysis suggests the relevance and influence of a broadly dissenting, Protestant intellectual tradition of the kind that Clark has foregrounded in a general 18th century colonial American context to the thought of Wise, Mayhew, Eliot and Chauncy. Their shared anxiety about slavery at the hands of arbitrary power, their high estimation of English constitutional values, their fierce allegiance to the British monarchy, their anti-Catholicism and their strong defences of New England Congregationalist polity will all emerge as more consistent with such a worldview than with more narrow political constructs like the "Real Whig" ideology that has often dominated historiography about revolutionary origins. At the same time, the dissertation’s reinterpretations of the theological and political contributions of the four Massachusetts ministers will be shown to indicate not only how previous views have misrepresented them, but how their inherent conservativism has especially been neglected. It will be contended that it is difficult to label any of them as decisively “liberal,” either theologically or politically, and that the evidence adduced supports the view that if they were revolutionaries at all, they were markedly conservative ones. The views of Wise, Mayhew, Eliot and Chauncy on liberty will be seen as key supporting evidence for such an argument,
grounded, as they were, in a fundamentally theological conception of spiritual liberty as freedom in Christ for Christian service.

1. Prisoner for “Libertie.”

On October 3, 1687, John Wise and five fellow townsmen from Ipswich, Massachusetts were tried in a Boston Court of Oyer and Terminer. They were charged and found guilty of Contempt and High Misdemeanor for their leading role in a town meeting of August 23, at which inhabitants of Ipswich had declined to appoint a commissioner to collect a new property tax introduced by the Dominion of New England Government of Sir Edmund Andros. The town meeting had taken the view that Andros’ “Act for the Continuing and Establishing of Several Rates, Duties and Imposts” of March 3:

doth infringe their libertie as free-born English subjects of His Majestie by interfering with the statute lawes of the land, by which it was enacted that no taxes should be levied on the subjects without consent of an assembly chosen by the free-holders, for assessing of the same.

Wise, who had effectively been pastor of the recently established parish of Chebacco (now Essex), a few miles south of Ipswich, since May 1680, was alleged to have been particularly outspoken at the August 23 meeting. Among the official complaints against him was that:

he the said John Wise did openly and publickly, factiously, maliciously and seditiously say, publish and declar...that the said warrant [to choose a new tax commissioner]...was not legall & to obey and comply with the same were to lose the liberty of free-born English men. And he the said John Wise did likewise then and there excite and stir up the people to be wise and consider before they acted any thing which might be to their prejudice and that they ought to have an assembly before they payd any rates contrary to and in contempt of the laws of His saijd Majestyes Government and the said warrant

According to a May 1689 complaint issued by Wise and his five co-defendants to a General Court assembled to hear evidence against Andros and his officers after the fall of the Dominion Government the previous month, Wise had also been accused of stating that “we had a good God, & a good King, and should do well to stand for our privileges.”

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1A reliable account of Wise’s role in the Ipswich tax revolt of 1687 is found in what remains the leading biography, George Allan Cook, John Wise: Early American Democrat (New York, 1966/1952), esp. pp. 43-60.

2State of Massachusetts, "Archives," Manuscript XXXV, pp. 138-40, esp. p. 138. The whole of this manuscript has been reprinted in Cook, pp. 199-202. Except for changing “y” to “th” and “f” to “s,” where necessary, adopting modern capitalization and italicization guidelines and making some changes in punctuation, the printed texts of original documents are cited largely unedited throughout this dissertation. Spellings are generally left unchanged, although sometimes clarified by the addition of letters or explanatory words in parentheses. Italics have usually been removed, except to indicate occasional quotations, and are specially noted, when added for emphasis.

3Although he began ministry at Chebacco in May 1680, Wise was not formally installed as pastor until August 12, 1683. See Cook, pp. 40-41.


5Massachusetts Archives, Manuscript XXXV, pp. 138-40, esp. p. 139, reprinted in Cook, pp. 48, 201.
Wise was eventually sentenced, on October 24, 1687, to a fine of 50 pounds for his alleged crime. He was ordered to pay his court costs and to “give sufficient surety in one thousand pounds like money for his good behaviour.” He was suspended from the ministry, although the suspension was lifted just a month later. The sentence was delivered despite a September 21 letter from Wise and local officials declaring their total submission to government policy. Prior to receiving judgement, the six co-defendants were told in no uncertain terms that “we must not think the lawes of England follow us to the ends of the earth.” Wise, who had pied, among other things, for the freedoms guaranteed by the Magna Carta, was also informed that “you have no more previledges left you than not to be sould for slaves.” He spent several weeks in jail as a result of these proceedings and it is unclear whether he was ever awarded damages following subsequent legal action. But after the 1689 change of government, Wise’s public standing actually seems to have been enhanced by his earlier resistance to Andros’ regime.

Wise’s role as a tax rebel, however short-lived, has also become seminal to his portrayal in modern scholarship, which has tended to focus on his credentials as what his major biographer termed an “early American democrat,” whose works, according to an influential account by Miller, were “truly forerunners of the Literature of the American Revolution.” Yet despite attempts to detach Wise from his Puritan religious heritage, and to emphasize his dependence on the power of reason and the influence of contemporary political theory, this chapter will show how the concern for “English liberties” that was evident in Wise’s notable contribution to the Ipswich tax revolt of 1687 was grounded in a strong, religious traditionalism reflected throughout his published oeuvre. He was, in fact, a very conservative thinker, whose primary focus was on the preservation of the established order, especially in New England’s churches.

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6For details of Wise’s sentence, see ibid., pp. 56-7; Toppan and Goodrick (eds.), Vol. 4, p. 180.

7See Cook, p. 53.

8Ibid., pp. 50-51, 200.

9In addition to participating in a joint complaint against Andros and his officers in May 1689, Wise also took independent legal action against Joseph Dudley, the outcome of which is unknown. See ibid., pp. 59-60.

10In this connection, Cook, p. 60, justifiably cites Wise’s selection as one of three chaplains to the expeditionary forces of General Sir William Phips against Quebec - an appointment which led to the composition of one of Wise’s few extant works. See John Wise, “The Narrative of Mr. John Wise, Minister of God’s Word at Chebacco,” reprinted in Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society (PMHS), XV (1906), pp. 281-96.


2. "Minister of God’s Word."

John Wise was born August 1652 in Roxbury, Massachusetts, the fifth son of Joseph and Mary (Thompson) Wise.¹³ His English father had come to New England as an indentured servant, but after securing his freedom in 1641, Joseph had risen to a position of some means and social respectability, possibly as a butcher and/or brewer by trade.¹⁴ Wise apparently received his first education at a school in the town of his birth, where he also sat under the ministry of John Eliot (1604-90), who was pastor there for nearly 60 years until his death. Eliot was a zealous Puritan evangelist known as the “Apostle to the Indians” because of his proselytizing work among local native communities. For 24 years he shared his pulpit with Samuel Danforth (1626-74), who was equally renowned for his fierce condemnations of the alleged sins of his contemporaries.¹⁵

By the relatively advanced age of 17, Wise’s schooling in Roxbury was obviously sufficient, together with his natural abilities, to earn him a place at Harvard, where he graduated in 1673 to take his first ministerial placement at Branford, Connecticut. Wise ministered there for four years, with one brief break to serve a chaplaincy with Connecticut forces in King Philip’s War (1675-6). He then moved to Hatfield, where he spent about three years, before finally settling in the newly established church at Chebacco. In December 1678, Wise married Abigail Gardner, with whom he went on to have five sons and two daughters. He remained as founding pastor at Chebacco, which was his first permanent settlement, until his death 45 years later.¹⁶

Despite periodic conflicts with his congregation over salary issues, the evidence suggests that Wise enjoyed not only a long, but a relatively stable and fruitful pastorate at Chebacco. However, except for what emerges from his two major publications and the circumstances surrounding them, relatively little is known about Wise’s everyday life and ministry.¹⁷ Wise figures only periodically in the historical record, and often as a result of his participation in events and

¹³This brief account of Wise’s life is based on Cook, op. cit. Unlike the date of his baptism, which was August 15, 1652, the exact date of Wise’s birth is unknown. See ibid., p. 6. For other, much less detailed treatments of Wise’s biography, see, for example, William B. Sprague, Annals of the American Pulpit... Vol. 1 (New York, 1859), pp. 188-9; Adams in Johnson and Malone (eds.), op. cit.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 5. Wise’s mother was probably the daughter of William Tompson, who was a minister at Braintree [now Quincy], Massachusetts, from 1639.

¹⁵Ibid., pp. 6-9. Danforth’s best known work was A Brief Recognition of New-England’s Errand into the Wilderness... (Cambridge, MA: 1671).


¹⁷John Wise’s two “major publications were The Churches Quarrel... (New York: 1713) and A Vindication... (Boston, MA: 1717). Cook, pp. 77-84, outlined about as much about Wise’s “life at Chebacco” as seems possible to glean from available sources. None of his sermons or personal correspondence has apparently survived for posterity, except for an April 12, 1698 letter from Samuel Sewall in response to an earlier communication from Wise, reprinted in “Letter-Book of Samuel Sewall,” Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society [CMHS], 61 (1886-88), pp. 196-9. On Wise’s conflicts with parishioners over salary issues, see Cook, pp. 157-9.
controversies outside his parish. His earliest extant works thus include a 1690 account of his observations as one of three chaplains to the expeditionary forces of General Sir William Phips against Quebec, as well as a fairly unremarkable series of instructions directed to prospective émigrés about to leave Massachusetts to establish a new settlement in South Carolina in 1697.18

In 1692, Wise played a minor role in the Salem witchcraft hysteria, intervening on behalf of two of his former parishioners, John and Elizabeth Proctor, who were tried and found guilty of being witches.19 There is no evidence of Wise ever having attended the Proctors’ trial, which eventually resulted in John’s execution. But he signed and probably wrote a petition to the Court of Assistants in Boston, in which he and 31 members of his community stated very clearly that “as to what we have ever seen, or heard of them – upon o’r consciences we judge them Innocent of the crime objected.”20 In the same document, Wise and his fellow parishioners also implicitly supported the more “enlightened” view elsewhere advocated by Increase Mather (1639-1723) and a few other religious leaders that so-called “spectral” evidence provided insufficient grounds for conviction of witchcraft.21 The supposed burden of incrimination derived from such evidence rested on the underlying assumption that only those who had entered into league with the devil could afflict others who complained of victimization by their “spectral” images. In contradiction of that premiss, Wise and his church members stated that:

we do at present suppose that it may be a method w’thin the severer but just transaction of the infinite majestie of God: that he some times may p’rmitt Sathan to p’rsoneate, dissemble, & thereby abuse innocents, & such as do in the fear of God defie the devill and all his works.22

The clear implication of their argument was that if the devil could quite independently impersonate those accused of witchcraft, then the simple allegation that they had appeared to their accusers in “spectral” form was no indication of guilt in and of itself.


19See Cook, pp. 70-76, for an account of Wise’s involvement in the witchcraft trials.


21Increase Mather’s major early work on this topic was Cases of Conscience Concerning Evil Spirits... (Boston, MA: 1693), for which Wise co-signed a Preface, with 13 other worthies, stating, p. 4, his “hearty consent to, and concurrence with the substance of what is contained in the following discourse,” together with a “hearty request to God, that he would discover the depths of this hellish design, direct in the whole management of this affair” and “prevent the taking any wrong steps in this dark way.”

22See “Petition for John Proctor and Elizabeth Proctor,” p. 681
Wise's concern over the conduct and impact of the witchcraft trials lasted more than 10 years. In 1703, he was one of 11 ministers from Essex County who petitioned the governor and elected officials of Massachusetts Bay to consider "whether something may not, and ought not, to be publicly done to clear the good name and reputation of some who have suffered as aforesaid, against whom there was not as is supposed sufficient evidence to prove the guilt of such a crime and for whom there are good grounds of charity."23

Other major debates of his day to which Wise made some kind of contribution included the smallpox inoculation controversy of 1721, when his views were publicized by Increase Mather in his brief pamphlet, Several Reasons...24 According to Mather,

It cannot be denied but that some wise and judicious persons among us, approve of inoculation, both magistrates and ministers....My sentiments, and my son's also, about this matter are well known. Also we hear that the Reverend and learned Mr. Solomon Stoddard of Northampton concurs with us; so doth the Reverend Mr. Wise of Ipswich, and many other younger divines, not only in Boston, but in the country, join with their fathers.25

In the same year, Wise published his views on another topic that almost certainly hit closer to home in Chebacco, namely bills of credit. As a minister who then received the whole of his salary in paper money, Wise was personally vulnerable to deflationary forces in an unsettled economy and there is evidence that he petitioned the local court at Newbury at least twice, in 1719 and 1722, in attempts to secure a higher income from his church.26 His major published pamphlet on the question, A Word of Comfort... was thus much more than an abstract philosophical exercise.27 As he called for the issue of more bills of credit and urged the establishment of a privately owned land bank that might contribute towards the stabilization of currency values, Wise was not only addressing a subject that was being widely debated. He was supporting a policy that would have had an immediate practical effect on all, like him, who depended on a salaried fixed income paid in paper money.28


24Increase Mather, Several Reasons... (Boston, MA: 1721), p. 1.


27John Wise, A Word of Comfort... (Boston, MA: 1721).

28For other major literature on the paper currency question, see, for example, Andrew M. Davis, Colonial Currency Reprints, 1682-1751 (Boston, MA: 1910-11), in which Wise's A Word of Comfort... is reprinted, Vol. II, pp. 159-223.
Wise's participation in the bills of credit controversy was extended by his contributions to a resulting public debate. In response to an anonymous advertisement published in the February 13-20, 1721 issue of the *Boston Gazette*, which criticized him for failing to service his debts and thus having a “worldly wise” interest in further emissions of paper currency, Wise published another pamphlet, *A Friendly Check...* (1721), which he announced in the following week’s *Gazette.* On the principle of “it being very proper to answer a fool according to his folly,” *A Friendly Check...* was mainly devoted to a satirical attack on the offending advertisement, charging its author[s] with greed, profiteering and cowardice. But Wise also included a newly written letter, dated February 23, 1721, and addressed to one of his sons, in which he offered a corrected version of his family finances. This conceded an annual income of £300 and a government loan of £1,000, held for three years, that was secured against an estate worth £2,000 and had been serviced with payments of at least £200. All in all, Wise argued, the “temporal business of the family” was thus “well qualified and adjusted,” and their assets extended beyond the mortgaged property to encompass “rich houses, homestead, remote lands, and other estates to the value of one thousand pounds, or not much under.”

George Cook explored the possible nature of the Wise family business, including the different occupations of his five sons, concluding that his “description most closely corresponded, perhaps, to Joseph’s situation and the family’s shipping interests.” What is clear from *A Friendly Check...* is that Wise claimed to be a person of some means, who wrote “purely in love to my country,” and

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29Anon, “N.E. Castle—William, February 1720, 21.” *Boston Gazette*, 62 (February 13-20, 1721). The full text of this advertisement reads as follows: “N.B. That Amicus Patriae [Wise’s pseudonym in *A Word of Comfort...*], a late author, is worldly wise man, and has spoke two words for himself, and not one for his country, as actions will better shew a man’s designs than his words; it would have been but the ingenious part in him to have told us that from twenty years’ long experience he has not been able to pay interest for money borrowed of private people, and of twelve hundred and fifty pounds (of his miracle working paper money) borrowed of the government by himself and two sons he has yet paid but 250 l. of it in again; ’tis therefore that he declares, and will insist on it, as the best way to enrich his country, to make paper bills enough for every body to take what they please, and further (in his whole bustle of words) sayeth not.” John Wise quoted these charges in his reply to them, *A Friendly Check...* (Boston, MA: 1721), p. 7, which he advertised in *Boston Gazette*, 63 (February 20-27, 1721).

30Ibid., pp. 1-4, esp. p. 4.

31Ibid., pp. 5-6. *A Friendly Check...* did not mark the end of Wise’s contributions to the paper currency controversy of 1721. Another advertisement published in *Boston Gazette*, 65 (March 6-13, 1721), printed a copy of a September 29, 1719 petition by Wise to the court at Newbury for a salary adjustment. In this, he had stated, among other things, that “I cannot submit to any other terms, but to have my salary paid in proper specie” and had requested “that Your Honours will do me the favour as to signify in a few words to my neighbours, that they must needs persuade themselves, that bills are not money, nor must they be so understood, and also that they must pay me in the proper specie...or otherwise if they pay the bills, then do it to my satisfaction.” Wise’s petition was printed, according to the advertise[rs], “to meet with a very candid entertainment, as well from *Amicus Patriae* (i.e., Wise), as his employers and admirers.” But Wise understandably found it necessary to respond to the advertisement in *Boston Gazette*, 66 (March 13-20, 1721), where he stated that he could “honestly aver, that the state of his country has lain as near to his heart, as ever Calis [Calais] did to Queen Mary’s.” He also sought to uphold the consistency of his court petition of two years earlier with the arguments of *A Word of Comfort...* in favour of paper currency. “If my dear country, and all my brethren in it,” wrote Wise as *Amicus Patriae*, “were but as well united in their principles, and as perfectly reconciled in their views and persuasions, concerning a bank of credit and the paper medium, as the aforesaid petition and the book of *Amicus Patriae* are, then the next Grand Sessions would have a very happy meeting, and a very joyful parting.” Two other contemporary pamphlets that supported both Wise’s personal reputation and positions in the paper currency controversy were Anon, *A Letter to an Eminent Clergy-man...* (Boston, MA: 1721) and Anon, *A Letter from a Gentleman in Mount Hope...* (Boston, MA: 1721).
notwithstanding the obvious personal benefits that he might have derived from the issue of more paper currency, his first claim is justified by other evidence. In addition to what is known of his ministerial income, Wise was identified as co-owner of two merchant vessels in 1713, for example. In his will, he effectively left more than 60 acres of land to his youngest son, John, and an ample library to John’s brothers, Jeremiah and Henry. He also bequeathed his wife “an honorable and sufficient maintenance...out of the income of me [my] estate, as she herself, and my executor shall adjust the terms.”

Over 45 years of ministry at Chebacco, Wise, who was latterly known as “Father Wise,” obviously became both a respected and influential local figure. By the time of his death in 1725, the parish boasted a membership of 91 and no doubt a significantly larger regular congregation. His power in prayer became legendary, as did Wise’s physical strength and prowess. In a typically encomiastic funeral sermon, John White (1677-1760) spoke further of his “kind, condescending, and most generous and obliging carriage,” of Wise’s personal charm, and particular concern for fellow ministers. But posthumously, Wise’s main claim to fame derived from interests and achievements that while noted in White’s eulogy (as in an anonymous, accompanying “character” sketch), were not the preacher’s major focus. According to White:

He was zealously affected towards his country, and the civil and sacred liberties and privileges of his country: and was willing to sacrifice any thing, but a good conscience, to secure and defend them. And the thing he had most at heart was the well-being of these churches; and no risks were too great to run, no pains too great to take, to defend and confirm the order and established constitution...of the same.

As already noted, in the course of his career, Wise was not afraid to engage in public conflict, as his more or less direct interventions in the Ipswich tax revolt of 1687 and in the Salem witchcraft, smallpox inoculation and paper currency controversies of later years made all too clear. But

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32Cook, p. 165; Wise, A Friendly Check..., p. 6
33For details of Wise’s will, on file in the Probate Court of Essex County, Salem, Massachusetts, see Cook, pp. 81-2, 179. The will is reprinted in Paul McElroy, “John Wise, the Father of American Independence,” Historical Collections of the Essex Institute, 81 (1945), pp. 201-26, esp. pp. 223-4. Cook argued, p. 82, that the estate that Wise’s youngest son inherited after other bequests, would have included “more than 60 acres of land.”
34Ibid., pp. 178-9. Cook also noted, p. 79, that “Wise contributed his share to the spiritual improvement of Chebacco by converting more than a hundred persons, if one judges from the names that were added to the church rolls during his ministry.”
35On “Wise’s physical strength and prowess,” see ibid., pp. 79-80
36John White, The Gospel Treasure in Earthen Vessels... (Boston, MA: 1725), pp. 36-8, esp. p. 37.
37Ibid., p. 38.
38Another much less prominent contemporary “controversy” in which Wise became involved was that of “singing by note.” In Utile Dulci... (Boston, MA: 1723), Thomas Symmes (1678-1725), cited, p. 55, “a letter from the Reverend and aged Mr. Wise of Ipswich,” which effectively reported Wise’s judgement in favour of moving towards a more regular system of singing Psalms to standard tunes, rather than continuing with the traditional practice of “lining,” which tended to result in a
what he has since become most famous for are the positions that he took and the writings that he
produced in defence of Congregationalist church polity, especially in his main publications, The
Churches Quarrel..., (1713) and A Vindication..., (1717).

In view of the scarcity of other sources, it is not surprising that scholars’ understandings of these
two works and of their circumstances of composition have primarily determined their general
interpretations of Wise. Following examination of the immediate historical contexts of his major
writings, which will demonstrate that Wise was very much addressing a live issue when he wrote
them, this chapter will provide an overview of the two main historiographical schools that have
built up around his life and work. Analysis of key elements of his religious and political thought,
including his theological orthodoxy, biblicism, reliance on Puritan sources and the obvious
constitutional traditionalism reflected in both The Churches Quarrel... and A Vindication..., will
then show that historians who have viewed Wise as an inherently conservative thinker have more
accurately interpreted the Ipswich minister than those who have seen him as a pioneering, even
proto-revolutionary democrat. Wise’s understandings of different forms of liberty, which will be
considered towards the end of the chapter and which were rooted in a foundational conception of
spiritual liberty, will emerge as thoroughly consistent with such an interpretation. For in defending
the liberties of Congregationalist churches and their governing polity, including its more
democratic elements, Wise was in fact defending a traditionalist Puritan vision of the New
England status quo.39

3. Grounds for a Quarrel.
The immediate historical background to Wise’s main writings lay in moves to consolidate mutual
assistance and cooperation among Congregationalist ministers around the turn of the 18th
Century. The first of a growing number of formally organized ministerial “associations,” the
“Boston-Cambridge Association,” was apparently established in the Boston area in 1690.40 Cotton

39The words, “conservative” and “democrat” or “democratic” are used periodically in this chapter and elsewhere because
they have featured consistently in the historiography of Wise and others. However, it is recognized, with Clark, “English
Society, 1660-1832: Religion, Ideology and Politics during the Ancien Regime,” p. 6, for example, that “Conservatism”
as a political doctrine was not defined until the 1830s, and that modern, Western notions of a democratic society would
have been anachronistic in the context of colonial New England. “Conservative” is thus here defined in very broad terms,
as by the Oxford English Dictionary (OED), as “characterized by a tendency to preserve or keep intact or unchanged.” A
“democrat,” or one of “democratic” views, is understood, again with the OED, as “an adherent or advocate of democracy,”
by which is meant “government by the people,” whatever its contemporary historical definition. See “Conservative,”
“Democrat” and “Democracy,” (Oxford, 2007) in John Simpson et al. (eds.), OED Online, Oxford University Press,

40Cook, p. 88. Ericson, pp. 43-48, described, however, significant historical precursors to the “Boston-Cambridge
Association,” not least in the “Ministers’ Convention” that met in conjunction with meetings of the General Court and the
regular “Thursday lectures.”
Mather (1663-1728) described the primary business of that group, which met every six weeks at Harvard, as debating contentious doctrinal issues and problematic "cases" presented by individuals and/or churches. According to two of its six governing principles, the association was specifically founded in order:

4. That we shall submit unto the counsils, reproofs, and censures of the bretheren so associated and assembled, in all things in the Lord (Eph. 5.21)....

6. That our work in the said meeting shall be; 1. To debate any matter referring to our selves.
2. To hear and consider any cases that shall be proposed unto us, from churches or private persons.
3. To answer any letters directed unto us, from any other associations or persons.
4. To discourse of any question proposed at the former meeting.41

Over time, the perceived needs for greater inter-church and inter-ministerial accountability apparently grew. Traditionalists like Mather and his father Increase observed a general religious declension in New England society. They were particularly disturbed by such developments as the formation of the theologically more liberal Brattle Street Church under Benjamin Colman (1673-1747) in 1699, the inclusive policies on Communion admission adopted by Solomon Stoddard (1643-1729) of Northampton, Connecticut, and the growth of Episcopalian ambitions and activities, especially with the arrival of George Keith (1639?-1716) as a missionary for the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG) in 1702.42 In that same year, Cotton Mather followed two earlier, more extensive publications in which he and Increase had addressed issues raised by the Brattle Street founding with Proposals for the Preservation of Religion..., a brief, four-page document, in which he set forth a series of practical recommendations for "a due trial of them that stand candidates of the Ministry."43 Two years later, a convention of pastors produced "a pastoral letter, recommending greater pastoral activity and cooperation in each church and between churches," and in September 1705, a much more detailed series of Proposals emerged from a Boston meeting of delegates representing five Massachusetts ministerial associations.44

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41Cotton Mather, Magnalia Christi Americana... (London, 1702), Book V, pp. 58-9.
42For an account of the Brattle Street Church controversy, see Cook, pp. 89-100. See further Ericson, pp. 29-39, on this and other evidence of "declension."
43Cotton Mather, Proposals for the Preservation of Religion... (Boston, MA: 1702). For the Mathers' earlier writings on the Brattle Street controversy, see Increase Mather, The Order of the Gospel... (Boston, MA: 1700) and Cotton Mather, A Collection of Some of the Many Offensive Matters... (Boston, MA: 1701), itself a response to a critique of The Order of the Gospel..., The Gospel Order Revived... (New York, 1700) that has been variously attributed to Simon Bradstreet (1671-1741), Thomas Brattle (1653-1715), Benjamin Colman and Timothy Woodbridge (1655-1732).
44Cook, pp. 100-1. According to Ericson, p. 58, the Proposals of 1704 (Boston, MA: 1704) included six recommendations suggesting that 'ministers should 'discourse with the young people,' make visits to the homes of member families, and avoid giving shelter to 'obstinate individuals' from other churches. The seventh proposal, which could be taken as more radical in nature, was presented as supporting 'these good and great intentions.' It was proposed that the associations of the ministers in the several parts of the country may be strengthened, and that the several associations may by letters hold more free communications with one another. " The 1705 Proposals were printed in full in Wise's The Churches Quarrel Espoused..., pp. 3-9, under a heading, which was included in that work's full title, "Certain Proposals Made, in
Whereas Cotton Mather’s earlier work focused solely on the issue of trying and approving ministerial candidates, in the 1705 Proposals, this was just one of a much broader series of recommendations for inter-church cooperation. The first half was devoted to proposing not only the desirability of, but the proper parameters for the effective operation of ministerial associations.

The pastors’ primary recommendation in this regard was that:

the ministers of the country form themselves into associations that may meet at proper times to consider such things as may properly lie before them, relating to their own faithfulness towards each other and the common interest of the churches; and that each of those associations have a Moderator for a certain time, who shall continue till another be chosen, who may call them together upon emergencies. 45

Once established, the proposed business of such associations included: answering “questions and cases of importance;” taking “advice;” the calling of councils for the examination of accusations of “scandal or heresie;” the trial of ministerial candidates; the recommendation of supply ministers for “bereaved” churches; “the direction of proceeding...about the convening of Councils that shall be thought necessary for the welfare of the churches;” the maintenance of “due correspondence” between associations; and the moral suasion of non-participating ministers to take a more active role. 46 Above and beyond such activities, however, the second half of the 1705 Proposals went one step further and recommended quite an ambitious programme of annual church councils that would be attended not only by member-pastors, but by delegated lay leaders. The aim of such gatherings was that association members “act as consociated churches in all holy watchfulness and helpfulness towards each other.” 47 Councils would thus have the right to “inquire into the condition of the churches and advise such things as may be for the advantage of our holy religion,” together with the power, subject to appeal, to make “final and decisive” determinations on matters presented to them. Furthermore, if “a particular church will not be reclaimed by Council from such gross disorders as plainly hurt the common interest of Christianity, and are not mere tolerable differences in opinion, but are plain sins against the command and Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ,” Councils would have the duty of declaring it “no longer fit for communion with the churches of the faithful” and thus of effectively excommunicating its members. 48

If implemented, the 1705 Proposals would thus have entailed a significant shift in traditional Massachusetts Congregationalist polity, which had sought to uphold the relative independence of

Answer to this Question, What Further Steps Are to Be Taken, that the Councils May Have Due Constitution and Efficacy in Supporting, Preserving and Well Ordering the Interest of the Churches in the Country?”

45Cited in Wise, The Churches Quarrel... , p. 3.

46Ibid., pp. 3-5.

47Ibid., p. 6.

48Ibid., pp. 6-8.
local congregations - albeit within an overarching synodical framework, towards a more cooperative, consultative model of governance, in which "consociated churches" would have worked and even acted together more regularly, both through local "associations" and wider "councils." Scholars have disagreed over the extent to which the 1705 Proposals were ever implemented. Cook suggested that although the number of ministerial associations increased over time, there was no evidence that any other proposal was fully adopted in practice until 1790. In seeking to explain this alleged failure, he pointed to the reluctance of local congregations "to yield themselves to a strangling formalism administered by corruptible men," as well as the "indifference of the Massachusetts Government" under Sir Joseph Dudley, for whom "the church-state was a dead letter." Writing just 21 years after their initial publication in his own defence of New England church government, Cotton Mather seemed to justify such an analysis, while singling out the influence of those like Wise who opposed the Proposals that he had championed:

Such Proposals as these found in one of the New-English colonies a more general reception (and even a countenance from the civil government) than in the rest. In the other, there were some very considerable persons among the ministers, as well as of the brethren, who thought the liberties of particular churches to be in danger of being too much limited and infringed in them. And in deference to these good men, the Proposals were never prosecuted, beyond the bounds of meer Proposals. Accordingly the churches go on in the methods of which an account was given, before the introducing of these Proposals. However, Mather's statement that "the Proposals were never prosecuted" in Massachusetts, which was later echoed by Miller, as well as Cook, has been clearly shown by Jon Ericson to be misleading. So has the supposed corollary, when linked with an alleged lack of support for the Proposals, that in opposing them at all, Wise was effectively "flogging a dead horse." On the contrary, as Ericson argued:

the Proposals of 1704...were signed by twenty-six leading clerics; add to that the fact that the Proposals in question were written by a representative group of all the Associations in Massachusetts and were subsequently endorsed by the Massachusetts Ministerial Convention. Then it is difficult to conclude that the Proposals of 1705 were the work of a faction, and

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49Cook, p. 102, citing Henry M. Dexter, The Congregationalism of the Last Three Hundred Years... (New York: 1880), Vol. 1 , p. 506. The proposal adopted in 1790 was for the "trial of ministerial candidates."

50Cook, pp. 102-3.

51Cotton Mather, Ratio Disciplinae Fratrum Nov-Anglorum... (Boston, MA: 1726), p. 184.

52See Perry Miller, "Introduction," in a reprint of John Wise, A Vindication... (Gainesville, FL: 1958), p. xi. Contra Mather, Miller argued, p. vi, that "Wise's two books actually played no part in the defeat of the Proposals of 1705; in eastern Massachusetts these had fallen dead." He then proceeded to claim, p. xi, that "eastern Massachusetts was too far gone into individualism. Wise did not need to fight the Proposals: he just chose to do so. Had we no other evidence than the texts of the books, no other insights into the personality of John Wise, we should see that they are extravagant utterances, the more rollicking because the author knows he is flogging a dead horse." In "The New England Mind: From Colony to Province," p. 290, Miller stated that "long before Wise published, the project [of the Proposals] was moribund. Aside from the few evidences of contemporaneous perturbation..., the books were swallowed up in Cotton Mather's generous silence." Among scholars minimizing ministerial support for the Proposals, Ericson, p. 61, singled out Moses Coit Tyler, A History of American Literature, 1607-1785 (Ithaca, NY: 1949), p. 391; Dexter, Vol. 1, pp. 491-2, as well as Miller, "Introduction."
equally difficult to find elements of the Congregationalism of eastern Massachusetts that were unrepresented in their production.  

Such widespread ministerial support was not without its dissenters, including John White and Samuel Moodey (1676-1747), pastors of Gloucester, Massachusetts and York, Maine respectively, who publicly endorsed Wise's work in a forward to the 1715 edition of *The Churches Quarrel.* Another prominent opponent of the 1705 *Proposals* appears to have been the magistrate and leading layman, Samuel Sewall (1652-1730).

Cook argued that "no one ventured a reply" to *The Churches Quarrel...* until 1774, although he also suggested that "perhaps Increase Mather did make answer to Wise's book — though indirectly" in his *Disquisition Concerning Ecclesiastical Councils...* (1716). Cotton Mather noted that there had been a deliberate policy of ministerial silence in response to Wise's works. It is clear from sources dating from 1715, however, when *The Churches Quarrel...* was reprinted in at least its second edition in Boston, that Wise's first attack on the *Proposals* drew heavy criticism from key figures in the Boston ministerial establishment. On August 2 of that year, Samuel Sewall reported in his diary that both Colman of Brattle Street and Cotton Mather had denounced Wise in Fast Day sermons. Colman had "censur'd him that had reproach'd the ministers as they were Gog and Magog," while Mather "preach'd... excellently" and not only "censur'd him that had reproach'd the ministry," but called "the *Proposals* modalities of little consequence." In a letter of

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53 Ericson, pp. 61-2.
54 According to Wise, *The Churches Quarrel...* 2nd ed. (Boston, 1715), the text of White's and Moodey's joint introductory commendation, dated March 25, 1715 and addressed to Wise personally, reads as follows: "We have had the favour and satisfaction of reading, and according to our measure considering the transcendent logick, as well as grammar and rhetoric, of your reply to the Proposals; by which our eyes are opened to see much more than ever before we saw, of the value and glory of our invaded privileges, and are of opinion, that if your consent can be obtained to a new edition, it may be of wonderful service to our churches, if God shall please to go forth with it. However, it will be a testimony that all our watchmen were not asleep, nor the camp of Christ surprized and taken, before they had warning."
55 Ericson, pp. 63-4, cited a letter of November 10, 1706 from Sewall to Wait Winthrop (1643-1717) in this connection. Ericson offered no substantive proof, however, for his suggestions that John and William Brattle (1662-1717), as well as Harvard President John Leverett (1662-1724), also probably opposed them, and he conceded that Colman of Brattle Street Church actively supported the *Proposals*.
57 Cotton Mather, *Ratio Disciplinae Fratrum Nov-Anglorum...* pp. 184-5: "There was indeed a satyr printed against these written *Proposals*, and against the servants of God that made them. Nevertheless, those followers of the Lamb, remembering the maxim of, not answering, used the conduct which the University of Helmstadt lately prescribed under some abuses put upon them; Visum est non ali remedia quam generoso silentio et pious contemptu, utendum nobis esse ["It seemed right that we should not use any other remedy than a generous silence and a pious contempt"]."
58 Cook, p. 103, citing Samuel A. Allibone, *A Critical Dictionary of English Literature and British and American Authors...* (Philadelphia, PA: 1891), Vol. III, p. 2801, reported that Wise's "first book was...printed in Boston in 1710; certainly it was printed in New York in 1713 and found a reception warm enough to warrant its reprinting in Boston two years later." Miller, "The New England Mind: From Colony to Province," p. 288, described the 1715 Boston reprint as a "second edition."
September 17 to Robert Wodrow (1679-1734) of the University of Glasgow, Mather's verdict on The Churches Quarrel Espoused..., emerged more extensively:

No remarkable disturbance is offered unto them [the New England churches]; only that a furious man, called John Wise, of whom, I could wish he had, cor bonum ["a good heart"], while we are all sensible, he wants, caput bene regulatum ["a well-ordered mind"], has lately published a foolish libel, against some of us, for presbyterianizing too much in our care to repair some deficiencies in our churches. And some of our people, who are not only tenacious of their liberties, but also more suspicious than they have cause to be of a design in their pastors to make abridgements of them; are too much led into temptation, by such invectives. But the impression is not so great as our grand adversary doubtless hoped for. And his devices are disappointed.60

Such dismissive comments and denunciations would seem sufficient in and of themselves to show that the Proposals not only enjoyed a strong measure of support, but were still a current issue at the time when Wise wrote against them. In addition, Ericson made a strong case for seeing Increase Mather’s Disquisition Concerning Ecclesiastical Councils... as the work not so much of a former supporter of them who came to critique the Proposals "indirectly," but of someone who never clearly endorsed them and subsequently spoke out against at least three of their clauses.61 Ericson also adduced substantial evidence to show that “between 1705 and 1716 the question of councils had not been settled.”62

Not only did the number of ministerial associations grow significantly in the 1710s, as Cook conceded, but standing councils were "more and more a general practice" in Massachusetts.63 Meanwhile, in nearby Connecticut, “a General Synod was called in 1708 where the Proposals were, in effect, adopted.”64 Ericson argued that the 15 “Articles for the Administration of Church Discipline” drafted as part of the Saybrook Platform “embodied the features, and to some extent, the language of the 1705 Proposals.”65 But while the Platform was approved by the four lay and 12 clerical delegates who constructed it, and by Connecticut’s General Court, it met some opposition in local congregations. In the town of Norwich, in particular, a 1709-16 controversy eventually led to the discharge of Pastor John Woodward and the renunciation of the Saybrook Platform altogether at the ordination of his successor.66 Moreover, there is clear evidence that

61Ibid., pp. 64-66.
62Ibid., p. 66.
63Ibid., p. 74, citing Increase Mather, A Disquisition Concerning Ecclesiastical Councils, p. 7.
64Ibid., p. 69.
66Ibid., pp. 70-73.
one of the key leaders of the Norwich opposition to Saybrook, Joseph Backus (1667-1740), not only traveled to Ipswich, Massachusetts, to consult with Wise, but "came back, confirmed in determination not to yield the point." 

Ericson’s contention that Wise was addressing a live issue both in Connecticut and Massachusetts thus seems a reasonable one. His argument that “in the twenty-five years following the presentation of the Proposals, there was almost constant concern and controversy over the question regarding the authority of councils” may be overstated. But Ericson did enough to show, contra Cook, Miller and other scholars, that the Proposals were not so lacking in support, implementation or contemporary relevance as to be a “dead letter” at the time that Wise chose to address them in The Churches Quarrel... 

4. Democrat or Conservative?

Whatever their understanding of the historical context of Wise’s work, however, modern scholars have also disagreed in their interpretation of the overall thrust of his thought both in The Churches Quarrel Espoused... and in A Vindication... Moreover, historians have primarily differed over one key question. To state the issue directly, in writing what he did about church government and related matters, did Wise give voice to the views of what Cook described as an “early,” even precocious “American democrat” politically as well as ecclesiastically, or was he actually, as Ericson argued, a “colonial conservative,” whose ultimate purpose was to defend the Congregationalist status quo?

A. Democratic Interpretations.

Although there have been significant dissenters, it is fair to say that the overwhelming majority of scholars who have addressed Wise and his works have highlighted what Miller termed his generally “democratic” and “egalitarian” emphasis. In so doing, they have followed an interpretative paradigm that Raymond Stearns (1961) and Ericson traced well back into the 19th century and to a misleading reference in the work of George Bancroft (1837), which struck a chord echoed by several historians through the first half of the 20th century and beyond. 

67ibid., p. 73, citing Frances Caulkins, History of Norwich, Connecticut... (Hartford, CT, 1866), p. 286.
68Ibid., pp. 74-75, esp. p. 75.
70See Raymond Stearns, “John Wise of Ipswich Was No Democrat in Politics,” Historical Collections of the Essex Institute, 97 (1961), pp. 2-18, esp. pp. 3-8; Ericson, pp. 2-5. There is no evidence that Wise attracted sustained historical attention at all until 1834, when Joseph Felt provided a brief biographical sketch in History of Ipswich, Essex, and Hamilton (Cambridge MA: 1834), pp. 258-60. Stearns, pp. 3-4, cited the influence of Bancroft’s pioneering A History of the United States from the Discovery of the American Continent (New York, 1883/1834-74), Vol. I, p. 591, which mentioned Wise’s part in the Ipswich tax rebellion of 1687 and stated that "to the people of Ipswich...in town-meeting, John Wise, the minister who used to assert, 'Democracy is Christ's government in church and state;' advised resistance. 'We have;' said he, 'a good God and a good king; we shall do well to stand to our privileges.'" Given that the first of the quotations
1949, Rossiter produced one of the most influential accounts of Wise as "colonial democrat" in an article that was only slightly modified when it became a full chapter of his award-winning monograph, Seedtime of the Republic (1953).\textsuperscript{71} Rossiter unapologetically described the laudatory purpose of his concise overview as "to set forth in praise the life and thought of John Wise" and he portrayed his subject from the outset as "a relentless warrior for both ecclesiastical and political democracy" and "a companion-at-arms to all the Separatists who had gone before and to all the Revolutionists who were to come after."\textsuperscript{72} Rossiter described Wise as not only "the bold antagonist of Sir Edmund Andros," but "a spiritual forebear of Sam Adams" in the Ipswich tax revolt of 1687 and argued that "Wise's consistent stand for common sense in the witchcraft persecution of 1692 moves him even further towards the front of the tiny company of colonial democrats."\textsuperscript{73} Wise was "first and last a minister," Rossiter conceded, but he was "a zealous believer in democracy in the church."\textsuperscript{74}

A Vindication... was "probably the outstanding piece of polemical writing of the first one hundred and fifty years of the American settlements" and Rossiter drew heavily on it to present "an examination of the chief tenets of his political theory."\textsuperscript{75} Rossiter's analysis relied almost entirely on Wise's second "demonstration in defence of our [i.e., the Cambridge] Platform," in A Vindication..., which was intentionally based on philosophical arguments "in the light of nature," rather than on more traditional theological considerations.\textsuperscript{76} His main conclusion was that Wise developed "a coherent, impressive political philosophy," in which though "writing in defense of an established form of government..., [he] nevertheless ranged far afield from his original purpose attributed to Wise by Bancroft appears nowhere in Wise's writings. Stearns justifiably viewed this last sentence as "a minor masterpiece of misquotation and historical misrepresentation." But it was influential on subsequent scholars, not least the doyen of Congregationalist historians, Henry Dexter, who imported it directly into his own account of Wise in his 1880 study, The Congregationalism of the Last Three Hundred Years... Vol. I, p. 498. For other significant 19th and early 20th century accounts and references, see Joseph Clark, A Historical Sketch of the Congregational Churches in Massachusetts, from 1620 to 1858 (Boston, MA: 1858), pp. 115-21; Tyler, pp. 350, 359-60; James Truslow Adams, Revolutionary New England, 1651-1776 Vol. 2 of The History of New England, (Boston, MA: 1923), pp. 97-8; Sherwin Cook, "John Wise, the Preacher of American Insurgency," Proceedings of the Bostonian Society, (1924), pp. 28-40; Vernon Parrington, Main Currents in American Thought, Vol. 1 (New York: 1924), pp. 119-23, 122, 124-6; William Pew, "John Wise," Historical Collections of the Essex Institute, 66 (1930), pp. 553-6; Russell Blankenship, American Literature as an Expression of the Colonial Mind (New York: 1935), pp. 103-4; Paul McElroy, "John Wise, the Father of American Independence," Historical Collections of the Essex Institute, 81 (1945), pp. 201-26; Max Savelle, Seeds of Liberty: The Genesis of the American Mind (New York, 1948), pp. 311, 320-1.


\textsuperscript{72} Rossiter, "John Wise: Colonial Democrat," pp. 3-4.

\textsuperscript{73} Ibid., pp. 7, 9.

\textsuperscript{74} Ibid., p. 10.

\textsuperscript{75} Ibid., pp. 13, 17-29. These "tenets" included Wise's views on "natural law," "the nature of man," "natural rights," "civil rights," "the formation of society and government," "popular sovereignty," "the forms of government," "majority rule," "the beneficent nature of civil government," "the purpose of government" and "the right of revolution."

\textsuperscript{76} Idem, Wise, A Vindication..., pp. 30-70.
and ended with a magnificent apologia for liberty and democracy in the civil community." Rossiter freely acknowledged that Wise advanced no "well defined" theory of the right of revolution and that "his ideas were quite without effect, even upon the minds of the Massachusetts Revolutionists." Nevertheless, Wise "saw clearly...the inevitable bridge leading from the church covenant to the principle of popular sovereignty, and from there to democracy in state as well as church."77

Miller's published views on Wise, although varied in nuance and detail over the course of two decades, ultimately provided one of the three definitive interpretations, with those of Rossiter and Cook, of Wise as "colonial democrat." Miller first addressed Wise in a 1938 compilation of Puritan source materials, which included an extract from A Vindication...78 There he and co-editor Thomas Johnson described Wise, among other things, as "a vigorous, hard-hitting, racy champion of popular causes and the agrarian point of view."79 They especially focused on the structure of Wise's A Vindication..., and on his method of argumentation, which they termed "out-and-out rationalism." They also saw Wise as a revolutionary ahead of his time, who produced "his vindication of the Congregational system in order to demolish" a particular ecclesiastical proposal, "but in working out the philosophy of church government...had to overhaul the fundamentals of all government." The net result was that "from Wise to the Declaration of Independence is a clear and inevitable progress."80

In 1953 Miller struck similar themes in his most extended treatment of Wise in a colourfully entitled chapter of The New England Mind: From Colony to Province, "The Poison of Wise's Cursed Libel."81 His account of the circumstances surrounding the publication of both The Churches' Quarrel... and A Vindication... reinforced the now discredited view that "long before Wise published, the project [of the Proposals] was moribund."82 Miller conceded that "there is no cause for supposing that the author of the Vindication" was not an orthodox Calvinist and "did not preach The Westminster Confession undefiled." But his analysis of Wise's ideas focused quite narrowly on his alleged rationalism and on the democratic flavour of his theories of both church and state government. Miller found a primary rationale for Wise's objections to the Proposals in

79ibid., p. 257.
80ibid., p. 193.
82ibid., p. 290.
his "tremendous passion for the rights of Englishmen." He also had high praise for the author's literary skills, including his use of humour, and for the "liberation of language" that he achieved. It was in that sense that he first identified Wise's works as "truly forerunners of the literature of the American Revolution." But it was Wise's "daring" move "to defend the order of the New England churches 'fairly' out of the law of nature alone, without any reference to revelation" that was "the achievement of the Vindication," and Miller commended Wise's dependence, in his arguments from "the light of nature," on Samuel Pufendorf's *De Jurae Naturae et Gentium* (1672). Indeed, Miller laid such stress on the centrality of the "rational proof" for Congregationalism set out by Wise in the "second demonstration" of A Vindication... that he ended by concluding that "Wise went further than any colonial theologian had ventured" by presenting "reason not merely as an instrument for interpreting Scripture, but as itself the giver of truth."

Five years later Miller repeated some of these arguments in his introduction to a reprint of Wise's A Vindication..., although he somewhat qualified his previous judgement, describing the work as "a subtly planned battle against the 'Enemy,' rather than a full-fledged assertion of eighteenth-century rationalism or a preliminary draft of the Declaration of Independence." Miller remained convinced, however, that "the great point all the way through is that both out of reason and out of Christianity, by appealing both to the Puritan conception of history and New England's provincial experience he does vindicate the democratic principle – at least, that is, in church government." Wise was always, Miller argued, "a man of the people," who "spoke in the name of the people."

Other defenders of the notion of Wise as "colonial democrat" have included Timothy Breen, Phillip Chapman and perhaps most influentially, Wise's principal biographer, George Cook. Right from...
In his overview of the first hundred years of New England Puritan political ideas, *The Character of the Good Ruler* (1970), Timothy Breen ostensibly departed from earlier democratic interpretations of Wise. But although he conceded that "the Ipswich minister may not have been a democrat" in latter-day, Jacksonian terms, Breen stressed that "he had much to say about politics, rulers, and civil government." He also interpreted Wise's thought in such a way as to encourage the view that this was a thinker whose comparatively libertarian, egalitarian political ideas, although part of a broader New England "Country persuasion," further presaged revolutionary republicanism. For Breen, Wise may have been "more articulate and better read than most of the other Country writers in Massachusetts," but he shared their opinions inasmuch as he "hated arbitrary power in any form," believed that "man was a reasonable animal capable of ameliorating his environment" 3, also advanced the thesis that "the truly revolutionary significance of Wise's second treatise has not been fully appreciated in the existing scholarship." Through an ultimately flawed and anachronistic analysis of *A Vindication,...* Erler thus attempted to show that Wise's liberalism included "a subtle call for rebellion against Britain and the establishment in America of the modern state, the Leviathan which subordinates religion and the Church to thoroughly secular ends."

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3Cook, p. 1.
4ibid., pp. 3-103, 178-82, passim, esp. pp. 70, 85.
5ibid., pp. 157-77.
and "cherished the right of the Bay citizens to determine voluntarily their own political future." Breen thus rejected Miller's earlier emphasis on Wise's "uniqueness" as a natural law philosopher, preferring to stress political "ideas which he shared with other men in his own generation." But he all but ignored Wise's religious thought and his claim that "Wise's political ideas came not from 'rational' philosophers, but from an odd assortment of English country authors" was exaggerated and misleading. Especially problematic was Breen's misidentification of the radical Whig "Commonwealthman" Thomas Gordon (d. 1750), who produced only one minor published work in Latin prior to Wise's A Vindication..., as a key source. Breen's listing of three other writers cited by Wise as "Country" was also questionable and he failed to show that any of them had a decisive influence on his thought.

Chapman (1977) began his account of "John Wise and the democratic impulse" with a clear statement that "Wise had no direct influence on the ideas of the revolutionary generation." He suggested that Wise's position as an opponent of the Proposals was "a peculiar one." Although he was a "conservative defender of the established order of things...the established order that

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96 Chapman in Chaudhuri (ed.), p. 3.
Wise defended involved...a measure of democracy in the governance of the church. Chapman followed the consensus of most previous interpreters of Wise as “colonial democrat,” when he suggested that “Wise was not loath to extend the democratic implications of the covenanted church into the civil realm.” But the main thrust of his article was to cast Wise as a primary exemplar of “a vigorous strain of democratic thought that was not only independent of, but more radical than the Lockean ‘paradigm’” in eighteenth century colonial America.” Chapman sought to demonstrate this thesis through an analysis of Wise’s philosophical and political ideas in the “second demonstration” of A Vindication..., in particular. He also advanced the argument that “there are good reasons for thinking that Wise was addressing a largely convinced audience.”

B. Conservative Reinterpretations.

The first scholar to offer not only a sustained critique of “democratic” interpretations of Wise, but a re-interpretation of the Chebacco pastor as essentially “an ecclesiastical conservative” was Harry Poole in a ground-breaking, but now rarely cited MA thesis of 1953. In a trenchant opening chapter, Poole highlighted a series of “inconsistencies” and “unsubstantiated generalizations” in previous articles on Wise and argued that the work of Rossiter and Cook had “done nothing” to rectify them. In his own “re-study” and “re-evaluation” of Wise’s “political importance,” Poole focused especially on Wise’s alleged role as an “anti-Andros democrat” in 1687 and on the context and content of A Vindication...

By placing the Ipswich tax revolt within a more general historical context than any previous Wise scholar, Poole highlighted, among other things, that the rebellion of Wise and other Ipswich leaders was not unique. Several other towns, including Taunton, Andover, Haverhill and Topsfield, protested Sir Edmond Andros’ “Act for the Continuing and Establishing of Several Rates, Duties and Imposts” of March 3, 1687 by refusing to elect commissioners to collect the new property tax instituted by it. Moreover, these towns were not protesting against “taxation without representation but taxation without the consent of the General Court which represented not all the inhabitants but only those who were freemen.” At the same time, the September 28 letter to Governor Andros written by Wise and seven others, in which they almost abjectly pleaded for clemency, acknowledged the “offence” of their actions, as well as their “willing

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100ibid., p. 4.
101ibid., pp. 4-14, esp. p. 6.
103ibid., pp. 1-35, esp. p. 35.
104ibid., pp. 56-7.
105ibid., p. 60.
subjection" to the new regime in New England, and their intention to comply with the terms of the act that they had previously rejected. Based on such considerations, as well as the more prominent, politically activist roles of other leaders, like Salem minister, John Higginson (1616-1708) and Major Samuel Appleton (1625-96), Poole's overall conclusion was that "John Wise played a relatively minor part in the foundation, development and protection of the representative democratic institutions of the colony." He was willing to concede that Wise was "an advocate of New England autonomy, but in this," he suggested, "he was neither outstanding nor alone.

In his analysis of Wise's two major published works, Poole undermined previous interpretations of their democratic political import by emphasizing their decidedly ecclesiastical contexts and arguments. He thus contextualized The Churches Quarrel... within the framework of attempts by Cotton Mather and others to foster religious revival by centralizing Congregationalist church polity through the Proposals and other means. "It seems quite likely," he argued, "that the Saybrook Result [Platform of 1708] put into effect in neighboring Connecticut was the immediate cause of Mr. Wise's first writings in 1710." Moreover, Wise's response, rather than being a proto-democratic call for political reform, was essentially that of a traditionalist "conservative," who was not afraid "to draw upon English civil and legal practices and precedents as a defense of the established ecclesiastical polity of New England," while basically declaring that "the old religion must become more vigorous in the lives of all New Englanders." Wise was thus "an ardent defender of the status-quo both in the church and in the state" and he continued that stance in A Vindication..., where he "sought to justify the Cambridge Platform of 1648 using the same criteria to substantiate this document that he had used to invalidate the proposals of 1705, namely God's immediate inspiration, ancient revelation, right reason, and the Platform itself.

107 Ibid., pp. 70-1. In addition, Poole argued ex silentio, p. 70, that: "During the uprising of the Boston populace against Governor Andros, there is no record of Mr. Wise taking part in the insurrection, making speeches against the Governor, or otherwise siding with the old General Court." He also pointed out, p. 71, that: "There is no evidence that before 1691 the Reverend Mr. John Wise believed in extending the colonial suffrage to all persons, regardless of property holdings or of religious belief, that he advocated separation of the church from the state as in present day America, or that he desired to hold any major political office in town or colonial government. Nor is there any evidence that he wrote influential political pamphlets nor advocated verbally that democracy was best for church and state." Cf. pp. 73-4.
108 Ibid., p. 74. In his haste to undermine past interpretations of Wise as "anti-Andros democrat," Poole arguably overstated his case in some instances. His contention, for example, pp. 71-2, that Wise's "convictions about the legality and justice of Governor Sir Edmund Andros's tax edicts seem to have arisen more out of a misunderstanding of the political situation in Massachusetts, than out of any desire to uphold democracy in the colonies" may place undue weight on arguably predictable statements in Wise's September 1687 letter to Andros pleading ignorance in the interests of obtaining clemency. As shall be seen, it also does insufficient justice to Wise's clearly stated concern for the New England colonists' "liberty as freeborn English subjects" (Massachusetts Archives, Manuscript XXXV, reprinted in Cook, p. 199). But Poole did much to show how a portrayal of Wise as full-blown political democrat was simply unjustified by evidence surrounding his participation in the Ipswich tax revolt.
109 Poole, p. 97. For more general contextualization of The Churches Quarrel..., see pp. 77-98.
110 Ibid., p. 102.
111 Ibid., p. 107.
Poole's interpretation of *A Vindication...* was unremittingly forthright in attempting to show that "he started from an ecclesiastical premise. He pursued an ecclesiastical argument. He never digressed into civil politics except to prove an ecclesiastical point, and he ended his treatise with an ecclesiastical conclusion." Poole quoted extensively from the introduction to Wise's much discussed second "demonstration in defence of our Platform, which is founded in the light of nature" to argue that "the author stated explicitly that his concern was the justification of an ecclesiastical polity..., not the overthrow of old forms of Congregationalism, nor the undermining of the contemporary civil Government of New England." Thus Wise's use of materials from Pufendorf's *De Jure Natiae et Gentium* was entirely ancillary, along with other parallels from political philosophy, to his defence of the Cambridge Platform as the legitimate constitution of the New England churches. In the final analysis, *A Vindication...* "contained exactly what its title suggested, a defense of the old Congregational polity."

Poole's overall conclusion that "there is nothing in the writings of Mr. Wise to suggest that he was anything but an ecclesiastical conservative" was first published more widely by his thesis supervisor at the University of Illinois, Raymond Stearns, in a 1961 article, "John Wise of Ipswich Was No Democrat in Politics." In the same year, Ericson issued by far the most extensive and still perhaps defining interpretation of Wise as "colonial conservative" in his doctoral dissertation for Stanford University. Following some introductory observations on previous scholarship, as well as the general background to Wise's life and ministry, Ericson focused quite narrowly on the contexts and contents of the two main works in his subject's published oeuvre.

As has been seen, in analyzing the historical circumstances surrounding the 1705 *Proposals*, Ericson showed how they were far from a "dead letter" when Wise chose so vigorously to respond to them. Throughout his analysis of *The Churches' Quarrel...*, Ericson highlighted

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112 Ibid., p. 109.
113 Wise, *A Vindication...*, p. 30; Poole, p. 122. Poole summarized Wise's overall position on matters of government as follows, p. 127: "In the civil sphere...he personally preferred a mixed form of civil government to democracy. In the church, however, a pure democracy had been most successful in leading men to salvation."
114 Ibid., pp. 123-9. According to Poole, p. 133: the "reaffirmation of the rights and dignities of the individual churches and of their members" within the framework of the *Cambridge Platform* was, in fact, Wise's major concern in *A Vindication...*.
115 Ibid., p. 138.
116 Ibid., p. 147. Stearns, op. cit., Stearns went further than his former student in conceding, pp. 17-18, that Wise's second "Demonstration" in *A Vindication...* "introduced a new mode of reasoning which presaged the Enlightenment." But his final judgement remained that Wise "was a philosophical liberal but no political democrat."
117 Ibid., op. cit.
118 Ibid., pp. 1-28.
119 Ibid., pp. 29-75. See above, pp. 66-69.
Wise's basic premise that "the Cambridge Platform of Church Discipline is a sacred, non-amendable document." Such a "conservative view" was "the pervasive theme and the underlying assumption" of The Churches' Quarrel...120 To change the Platform in any way was thus "to abrogate the liberties of the churches."121 Wise may have been "a man of practical judgment" and "an individualist," Ericson conceded, but "in his refutation of standing councils," he emerged as a "conservative" church leader defending tradition first and foremost.122

The "central issue" of A Vindication... was very similar when "stated negatively," i.e., that "New England's church polity should not be changed."123 In a systematic analysis of Wise's second major work, Ericson argued that he was essentially upholding traditional Puritan conceptions both of church government and authority and of the limits of human freedom and responsibility according to established norms of covenant theology.124 Within that context, Wise developed "three principal ideas concerning democratic government" in his second "demonstration," concluding that there was "a rationale for democracy as a form of government," that democracy was "the best government for the Church," and that it was "understood to be the government that ha[d] existed for one hundred years in the churches of colonial Massachusetts."125 In promoting ecclesiastical democracy, Wise was thus confirming his position as a defender of tradition.126 Moreover, "his conception of democracy" was "one of delegated powers," which did not "vary from the accepted idea of mixed government."127

Ericson devoted his penultimate chapter to a convincing demonstration that Wise's major writings were not reprinted in 1772 in Boston for pre-revolutionary political reasons. Instead, they were re-issued in direct response to a controversy over church polity questions in Bolton, Massachusetts, where a local pastor was dismissed by his congregation for allegedly intemperate behaviour. Those in favour of the dismissal were instrumental in the republication of Wise's works, according

120Ibid., p. 110.
121Ibid., p. 113. Cf. Wise, The Churches' Quarrel..., p. 119: "What! To alter the constitution of church government, which is established by the statute and canon law of church and nation? This is to blow up the whole kingdom."
122Ericson, p. 128.
123Ibid., p. 135.
124Ibid., pp. 135-73.
125Ibid., pp. 152-3.
126Ibid., pp. 165-6.
127Ibid., p. 164. Ericson highlighted similar evidence, pp. 168, 170, of traditionalist concerns in his brief examination of the last three sections of Wise's A Vindication...
to a later account by Isaac Backus (1724-1806), and were prominent among subscribers to them.\textsuperscript{128}

The only published scholar to have more recently followed the lead of Poole, Stearns and Ericson in their revisionist interpretations of Wise's life and work has apparently been Eldon Turner in a thoughtful 1983 article on The Churches' Quarrel...\textsuperscript{129} On the assumption that "no reading is available that treats Churches' Quarrel as an effort by Wise to fit his work to the readership that he identified — the laymen of the churches," Turner sought to show how Wise wrote both for and out of the experience of contemporary rural "yeomen," whose "social-psychological existence," rather than being inherently democratic, "was both authoritarian and paternalistic."\textsuperscript{130} The net result was "not a liberal defence of democratic principles but a parochial defence of a legal document, the Cambridge Platform."\textsuperscript{131} Turner found further support for such an interpretation in Wise's attitudes towards the Ipswich tax revolt of 1687, which showed "a legal and limited concern," and in his 1690 account of his observations as chaplain to the expeditionary forces of General Sir William Phips against Quebec.\textsuperscript{132} Overall, even in A Vindication... where he "asserted that God was still the author of government," Turner concluded that "Wise's important values" were the traditional conservative ones of "divine law and duty."\textsuperscript{133}

Since Chapman's and Turner's contrasting interpretations of 1977 and 1983 respectively, Wise has apparently attracted relatively limited historiographical attention. But passing references in works by Theodore Bozeman (1988), Noll (2002) and E. Brooks Holifield (2004) would indicate that scholars have continued to view Wise in primarily democratic/progressive terms. Bozeman thus linked Wise's "grounding of constitutional authority upon reason and natural law" with similar elements in the thought of James Harrington (1611-1677) and Thomas Hobbes, seeing them as counter-examples to a "Puritan impulse" that "characteristically worked against the grain of those developments that twentieth-century historians most often identify as signs of modernization."\textsuperscript{134}


\textsuperscript{130}ibid., pp. 146, 149. According to Turner, p. 151, in the first 15 pages of The Churches' Quarrel... "Wise appealed in various ways to patriotism, war readiness, the mythopoetic mission of reformed Protestantism, parsimony, and a blanket religious bigotry," and he continued with such themes throughout.

\textsuperscript{131}ibid., p. 161.

\textsuperscript{132}ibid., pp. 163-4, citing "The Narrative of Mr. John Wise, Minister of God's Word at Chebacco," where "far from embracing an anti-authoritarian ideology, Wise consistently held paramount the law of God in a theocratic sense and emphasized the duty to obey."

\textsuperscript{133}ibid., pp. 165-6.

\textsuperscript{134}Bozeman, "To Live Ancient Lives," pp. 350-1. Wise, Harrington and Hobbes, "held in common," Bozeman argued, "a secularizing spirit of revulsion against biblical programs, now deemed narrow and destructive of the public peace, and a quest for natural principles of order that should release mankind from mythic confinements and clear a way for the higher
Noll specifically focused on the political aspects of Wise's writings and his misleading reliance on Breen's earlier flawed account led him to stress Wise's "familiarity with 'country' rhetoric" and use of "commonwealth and country authors." But Noll also described the Ipswich pastor as "a maverick," whose "writings have meant much more for modern students excavating the origins of American democracy than for his contemporaries," and suggested that "his opinions did not represent a groundswell of support for republican convictions."135 Holifield was especially interested in Wise's embrace of natural law principles in support of "congregational 'democracy.'"136 He thus echoed, with Noll, the preoccupations of earlier scholars like Miller and provided further proof that the long-running academic debate over Wise's "democratic" versus "conservative" credentials remains a live one.137

5. Theological Conservative.

One of the great challenges in assessing Wise's thought is the lack of extant sermons or other materials that might enable the reader to develop a clearer understanding of his basic theology. Both his major works focus quite narrowly on issues of church polity and his other writings address non-theological matters. Scholars have thus differed over their interpretations of some of his most basic assumptions. As already noted, while emphasizing his dependence on reason, rather than revelation, in defending New England polity, Miller conceded, for example, that there was no reason to suppose Wise not to have been an orthodox Calvinist.138 On the other hand, Rossiter argued that "Wise seems to have freed his thinking completely from the harsh compulsions of the Calvinistic view of human nature."139

The evidence, such as it is, would tend to support Miller's assumption. Quite apart from Wise's published works, it is difficult to imagine that either his religious upbringing in Roxbury under Pastor John Eliot or his formal education there and at Harvard from 1669-1673 would have encouraged him to have been anything other than conventionally orthodox in his theology. At the same time, the fact that there is no obvious record of Wise ever being criticized for alleged pursuits of reason, science, commerce, and property. Among the truly modern notes of the century, they showed a flat oppugnancy to classic Puritan objectives."130


131E. Brooks Holifield, Theology in America: Christian Thought from the Age of the Puritans to the Civil War (New Haven, CT: 2003), pp. 81-2.

132The most recent dissertation to advocate a "democratic" view of Wise is William Paul Wood, "A Comparison of the Political Philosophies of John Winthrop and John Wise" (Ph.D. diss., Westminster Theological Seminary, 1989). According to Wood's Abstract, Wise "believed that the goal of government was to secure the rights and happiness of the individual" and he advocated "a mixed democracy."


heterodoxy by opponents in controversy like Cotton Mather is surely significant. So are the endorsements that Wise received both during and after his life from the conservative Calvinist, White, who described him, among other things, as a “faithful pastor,” concerned to “promote the purity and peace” of New England churches.  

When it comes to Wise’s writings, other considerations, some of which will be developed separately, also seem important. In the first place, there is no evidence of decidedly unorthodox ideas, even on the topic of human nature. Second, Wise’s method of argumentation was fundamentally biblicist, even when he defended New England church polity on essentially rational grounds. Third, Wise often appealed to and cited traditional Puritan sources. Last but not least, he was obviously particularly conservative in his ecclesiology, and especially in his views of church order and discipline.

A. Theological Orthodoxy.
The evidence of Wise’s ideas on basic theological doctrines is not extensive in The Churches’ Quarrel... or A Vindication.... But significant indications can be found in his high view of the person and work of Christ, in his consistent providentialism and in his careful observations on human nature, as well as in his biblicism and conservative defence of New England polity.

Wise made his strongest statements on the theme of Christology in the fifth “demonstration” of A Vindication... “from the dignity which the providence of God has put upon the constitution [of New England churches],” where he described “the fatal Arian heresy” as a consequence of the early church’s abandonment of apostolic principles of church order. His succinct summary of Arianism as “this damnable doctrine, viz., that our Saviour Christ was neither God, nor eternal, but a creature; and that he assumed only the body, not the soul of a man, &c.,” together with his identification of the beliefs that it denied as “essentials” of Christian faith clearly revealed his own high Christology. And this was fully consistent with statements elsewhere in Wise’s works, which ascribed absolute sovereignty to Christ over all human rulers, as well as, in his role as “the

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140 White, pp. 37, 38. For White’s commendation of The Churches’ Quarrel..., see above, p. 67, n.54. White’s Calvinist conservatism is obvious from a work like New England’s Lamentations... (Boston, MA: 1734).

141"Providentialism" is here defined, as by Guyatt, p. 5, as “the belief that God controls everything that happens on earth.” It is acknowledged, with Guyatt, that this was a fairly commonly held assumption in 18th century colonial America, although specific attention is periodically drawn to it, where it seems a particularly striking feature in the thought of the four main subjects of this dissertation. "Biblicism" is here understood simply as commitment to biblical authority.


143 Ibid., pp. 100, 102.
Great Shepherd,” over the church, described Christ as the sine qua non of gospel preaching and viewed Christ as the ultimate source of all authentic church power and authority.144

Such a high view of Christ's person, authority and sovereignty was paralleled by the traditionalism inherent in Wise's stance as a filiopietistic New Engander who fully espoused the Puritan notion that the founding of New England had been “an errand into the wilderness” in order to establish a godly society, with pristine gospel churches, that would serve as “a city upon a hill” and thus a witness to biblical truth for the whole world.145 In his opening “Epistle Dedicatory” of The Churches' Quarrel..., Wise thus reminded his readers not only of their present “liberties,” but of what they had cost their “progenitors, some of them having buried their estates, and all of them their bones in these foundations.”146 He went on to compare the government of New England churches to the “theocracy” of ancient Israel, which “had more of God than of man in it,” in that it had been “honoured with great success and many blessings from its beginnings to this day.”147 In A Vindication..., Wise underlined this argument with a lengthy citation from Urian Oakes' (1631-1681) 1673 Election Sermon, New-England Pleaded with...:

I profess that I look upon the discovery and settlement of the Congregational Way as the boon, the gratuity, the largess of divine bounty, which the Lord graciously bestowed on this people, that followed him into this wilderness and who were separated from their brethren. Those good people who came over had more love, zeal, and affectionate desire of communion with God, in pure worship and ordinances, and did more in order to it, than others; and the Lord did more for them than for any people in the world, in shewing them the pattern of his house, and the truer scriptural-way of church-government and administrations....God was certainly in a more than ordinary way present with his servants, in laying of our foundations; and in settling church-order, according to the will and appointment of Christ.148

Even when commencing his second “Demonstration” of A Vindication..., “in the light of nature,” Wise continued such themes, seeing “the divine establishment in providence of the fore-named churches in their order” as “apparently the Royal Assent of the Supream Monarch of the churches to the grave decisions of reason in favour of man’s natural state of being and original freedom.” “It seems to me,” he continued:

as though wise and provident nature by the dictates of right reason excited by the moving suggestions of humanity; and awed with the just demands of natural libertie, equity, equality, and principles of self-preservation, originally drew up the scheme and then obtained the royal approbation. And certainly it is agreeable that we attribute it to God whether we receive it

144Wise, The Churches' Quarrel..., pp. 32-4; A Vindication..., pp. 12, 28, 30, 51, 62, 85, 100. See especially, p. 77, where Wise imagined Christ saying: “I, the Lord Jesus Christ, have invested all holy and good Christian people, both by nature and grace, with power, to enter into church order, for the advance of my name, and their own edification.”

145Cf. Perry Miller, Errand Into the Wilderness (Cambridge, MA: 1956). For a recent discussion of this theme in light of more modern scholarship, see Guyatt, pp. 11-52, passim, esp. p. 24 and works listed there.

146Wise, The Churches' Quarrel..., p. 17.

147Ibid., pp. 41-2 - italics added for emphasis.

nextly from reason or revelation, for that each is equally an emanation of his wisdom, *Prov. 20.27.*

Scholars have debated the relationship between reason and revelation expressed in such passages, but it is important to stress that even there, Wise clearly saw both as the outcome of God’s providential care for humanity. He was thus able to write of “the Law of Nature” itself as something that God had “established” and saw this plain truth as “further illustrable from the many sanctions in providence and from the peace and guilt of conscience in them that either obey or violate it.”

Wise’s providentialist understanding of history and especially church history emerges most directly in the fifth “demonstration” of *A Vindication.* For Wise, the first three, pre-Constantinian centuries of the life of the early church were marked by a “great and admirable success of the gospel, in the conversion of so many nations,” by the churches’ “singular purity and virtuous deportment in the midst of a corrupt world,” and by the fact that “they were eminently supported and carried on by the grace and providence of God thro’ all their direful sufferings.” Right at the beginning of *A Vindication,* he described this golden age as “the most refined and purest time, as to faith and manners, that the Christian church has been honoured with,” and he consistently attributed subsequent declension - or the “universal apostacy” that followed over some 1200 years in the post-Constantinian era, to “subversion of the old constitution.” After biblical and apostolic standards of church order were abandoned, “the frowns of providence...pursued the Christian world,” he argued, including the Arian heresy and the gradual decline of Christianity “till all was swallowed up in a universal and direful apostacy, never sufficiently to be deplored.”

These dark ages for the church, which were also marked by a huge aggrandizement of clerical power and by the rise of Roman Catholicism as an ultimately anti-Christian institution, only came to an end with the Reformation under Martin Luther and others. But it was left to New England
to complete that work of grace by ensuring that its churches, "as to their order and discipline...surpassed all churches of the Reformation."\textsuperscript{157} Thus Wise saw "the last century," including New England's settlement, as one in which God has been very admirable in the works of providence and has herein highly dignified our constitution. And we want no other evidence under this head than the recognition of what God has done for these famous English colonies in North-America.

This was, in fact, Wise's concluding argument in defence of New England polity as a whole, for he was in no doubt that it was "by the grace of God" that "we in these countries, are by his good providence over us, the subjects of the most ancient, rational and noble constitution in church order that ever was, will be, or can be."\textsuperscript{158}

Apart from affirmations of Christ as "Saviour" and "Great Shepherd," there is no sustained treatment of Wise's soteriology in his extant writings. So it is not possible to move from citing evidence of his high Christology and Puritan providentialism to a conclusive demonstration that Wise was a committed five-point Calvinist. In other words, it cannot be shown from his extant works that Wise embraced all the traditional doctrines of the "total depravity" of humankind, of "unconditional [divine] election" of those chosen for Christian salvation, of Christ's "limited atonement" in dying on behalf of the "elect," of God's "irresistible grace" in all saving dealings with humanity, and of the necessary "perseverance of the saints," once truly converted, in remaining Christians forever. It is important to note, however, that there is also nothing in Wise's writings to prove decisively that he was not the orthodox Calvinist that a New England minister of his time and place in history would normally have been expected to be.\textsuperscript{159}

Thus contra Rossiter, it is surely significant that in the very treatise where he highlighted the "honourable character" of humanity and described "man" as "a creature which God has made and furnished essentially with many ennobling immunities, which render him the most august animal in the world," he went out of his way, on two clear occasions, to signal his implicit or open

\textsuperscript{157}Ibid., p. 9.


\textsuperscript{159}For a simple definition of "five-point" Calvinism, as upheld by the 1619 Synod of Dort, see, for example, John T. McNeill, The History and Character of Calvinism (New York: 1954), p. 265. On New England Calvinism, see, for example, Miller, "The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century," pp. 92-7; Holifield, pp. 25-55. The Calvinism encapsulated by Dort is used as a litmus test or benchmark for Calvinist "orthodoxy" in this dissertation on the ground that, as Holifield argued, p. 38, early "New England preachers subscribed" to its "tenets." It is recognized, however, that Calvinism was a far from uniform belief system and that it encompassed a significant diversity of views from the 16th century onwards. For a fascinating study of a key figure in early 17th century English Calvinism that illustrates this point, see, for example, Jonathan D. Moore, English Hypothetical Universalism: John Preston and the Softening of Reformed Theology (Grand Rapids, MI: 2007). The Christian concept of "atonement" is here understood, as defined by John Simpson et al. (eds.), OED Online, as "reconciliation or restoration of friendly relations between God and sinners" through the mediation of Jesus Christ.
acceptance of the traditional doctrine of the “Fall” of humankind and its consequences. In the second “demonstration” of A Vindication..., which contains Wise’s most extended treatment of human nature and “liberty” (aspects of which will be explored in more detail under a separate heading), he began an analysis of “original liberty” by directly stating his intention to “wave [waive] the consideration of man’s moral turpitude,” which he did not deny. He also argued that “whatever has happened since his creation [i.e., the Fall], he remains at the upper-end of nature, and as such is a creature of a very noble character.” Later in the same work, towards the beginning of his third “demonstration” defending New England polity “from Holy Scripture,” Wise took “a brief view of man by Scripture account under a religious notion, as the subject of grace.” His basic anthropology remained consistent. On the one hand, “it is very certain that man has greatly debased himself by his apostacy” – a statement that is fully consonant with the Calvinist doctrine of total depravity. On the other, “God puts abundance of honour upon him in his reduction,” even making him “lord of himself and owner of heaven and earth both.”

What may have served to encourage the notion that Wise essentially departed from a theologically reformed view of humankind as born in sin and destined for hell without divine intervention and redemption are the very positive statements that he made about human nature and capabilities in A Vindication... In addition to those already cited, Wise further observed, for example, citing Pufendorf, that “the word man...is thought to carry somewhat of dignity in its sound”. However, none of Wise’s affirmations of human dignity are necessarily inconsistent with a Calvinist understanding of total depravity. One of the main reasons why Wise so strongly emphasized the strengths of humanity, created, as he saw it, in God’s image, was that he sought to make the case that people were both free and worthy, under God, to govern their own churches, as they did in New England. But even whilst affirming the liberties and privileges of “man...as a free-born subject under the crown of heaven,” Wise wrote nothing to deny traditional Puritan understandings of human bondage in sin and Christian salvation by grace through faith alone. In fact, on the only occasion when he directly addressed the topic of conversion, Wise

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160Wise, A Vindication..., pp. 71, 38.
161Ibid., pp. 37-8.
162Ibid., pp. 70-1.
163Ibid., p. 71. Cf. p. 56: “if we remember what is in the hearts of good men [viz. much ignorance, abundance of small ends, many times cloaked with a high pretence in religion; pride skulking and often breeding revenge upon a small affront; and blown up by a pretended zeal; yet really and truly by nothing more divine th[a]n interest, or ill nature] and also considering how very uncertain we are of the real goodness of those we esteem good men and also how impossible it is to secure the intail of it to successors...”
165Ibid., p. 33.
struck a fine balance between upholding human dignity and divine sovereignty at one and the same time. But he also made it clear that the latter was paramount:

First, God treats him [i.e., “man”] as a creature of a very honourable character, as free and at his own dispose, or as though he were some high and mighty state placed at the top of his glob[e]; therefore he courts him into an alliance as though he were like to yield great honour to the crown.... This is very much the tenour of God’s heralds in their addresses of capitulation. That certainly if God did not highly estimate man, as a creature exalted, by his reason, liberty and nobleness of nature, he would not caress him as he does in order to his submission; but rather with some peevish and haughty monarch, or the bloody Mahomet, send his demands at the mouth of his cannon. But instead of such harsh measures, they are treated with the highest reason, attended with lenity and great acts of condescension. Nay, divine menaces are frequently cloathed with such soft language as this: Turn ye! Turn ye! Why will ye dy? Yea, under all impulsive means, which God wisely and graciously makes use of to gain man’s consent, he sets the will to turn about it self without forcing it, that so man’s religion may be the free and noble emanations of his noble and exalted nature.

Judging from the phrases underlined in the above citation, Wise left his readers in no doubt that God had complete power over the will in the process of conversion, as well as the absolute right to command human “submission.” God’s “means” may have been subtle and more cooperative, in keeping with humanity’s “very honourable character,” but the end result of God’s “courting” would never be uncertain.

Wise’s theological anthropology thus joins with both his Christology and his providentialism to urge a fundamentally conservative assessment of his religious thought as quite consistent with the tenets of orthodox Calvinism. Further evidence in favour of such an analysis also emerges from Wise’s biblicism, which is a striking feature throughout his works.

B. Biblicism.

In examining possible sources for the 1705 Proposals, which were his main focus of attack in The Churches’ Quarrel.... Wise expressed his absolute conviction that “God hath made all things sufficiently plain, by this time of day, either by Scripture or reason, for the conduct and government of his churches, yea, of the subjects of his universal intellectual monarchy in this world.”167 But like any good Puritan, he also made it very clear that the Bible was his primary and most authoritative source-book. It was, “tho’ not the bigest of books...the saint’s library and the clergy-man’s Pandects, whence he takes the rules for the managment of his trust.”168

166 Ibid., pp. 71-2 - words underlined for emphasis.
168Ibid., p. 46. According to Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary, 10th ed., (Springfield, MA: 1996), p. 838, a “pandect,” derived from “Pandects,” which was “a digest of Roman civil law,” is “a complete code of the laws of a country or system of law.”
Wise viewed the church as "the pillar of truth, or sacred recluse and peculiar assylum of religion," and his vision of New England as an exceptional, godly society was saturated with "family devotion, reading God's Word, catechizing and well instructing youth...and divine prayers."169 Thus one of Wise's primary defences of existing New England church order, i.e., its biblical warrant, was an exact corollary of one of his main complaints against the Proposals. "I cannot but esteem them very unfortunate...," he observed wryly of the latter, "to be turned so naked into the world, as to not have the least tincture of Scripture to guard them from contempt."170 By contrast, although there was "no particular form of civil government described in God's Word," it was not only crucial for Wise's thesis in A Vindication..., but necessary in view of his underlying theological presuppositions, that he demonstrate the validity of New England church polity "from Holy Scripture."171

Wise attempted such a demonstration through quite a complex argument, in which he began with the basic principles that "all power is originally in the people" and that "the power placed in man that enables him to manage religious affairs is not sovereign, but limited and confined." Such restrictions as there were reflected the realities that "all laws are enacted already" and "there is no coercive power needful in the church."172 However, it was a vital truth for Wise "that the Scripture does warrant a government in gospel churches, consisting of the exercise of several distinct powers inhering in the fraternity," including "the election of officers," "power judicatory," or church discipline, and the authority "to represent themselves in synodical conventions."173 Wise's discussion of disciplinary matters, which centred on an extended exposition of Matthew 18:15-20, is striking for its strict adherence to biblical precedent. He not only applied all four stages of the process recommended in Matthew's Gospel directly to contemporary church life.174 Wise supported his exegesis with a slew of other references, concluding with a dramatically expansive exhortation that compared Bible verses about church discipline to the Magna Carta:

170Ibid., p. 46.
171Wise, A Vindication..., pp. 33, 70-87.
172Ibid., pp. 71, 73.
173Ibid., pp. 76, 78-9, 85.
174According to the King James Version of the Bible, which is cited throughout this dissertation, Matthew 18:15-20 reads: "Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."
For Wise's exposition of it, see A Vindication..., pp. 79-85.
Let the reader lay all these Scriptures together, which contain rules of judicatory for the churches; and then let him answer me with good reason if he can, and tell me why these Scriptures may not be esteemed the churches' *Magna Charta*, in matters of censure and judicature; as well as that be held such a Golden Rule in the judicial proceedings of English Government, mentioned in the Great Charter of English Liberties, Chap. 29. *No freeman shall be taken, or imprisoned, or be disseised of his freehold, liberty or free customs, or be outlaw'd or exiled, or any other ways destroyed, nor will we press upon him, nor condemn him, but by lawful judgment of his peers.*

It has already been observed how Wise saw evidence of providential design in his claim that New England polity was justified by reason, as well as biblical revelation. But even in the midst of the second and most overtly rational of Wise's five "demonstrations" in *A Vindication..., he plainly stated his commitment to the pravity of the latter over the former. "Nothing can be God's ordinance," he observed, "but what he has particularly declared to be such" in "God's Word." It is also noteworthy that Wise directly cited no fewer than 11 Bible references in the course of his defence of the *Cambridge Platform* "in the light of nature." In fact, as well as making a number of other, unspecified biblical allusions, Wise referred to specific Bible passages more than 30 times in both *A Vindication...* and in *The Churches' Quarrel...* It is surely another major indication both of Wise's biblicism and of his general theological conservatism that he so often appealed to, as well as acknowledged this source of authority.

C. Puritan Sources.

The most famous extra-biblical source to be quoted in Wise's writings is undoubtedly Samuel Pufendorf, who was not only mentioned by name as a "chief guide and spokesman" on the topic of the "civil being of man," but cited *verbatim* from *De Jure Naturae et Gentium* over more than three full pages of *A Vindication...* As noted, historians have made much of Wise's dependence on the 17th century German legal scholar, whom they have seen as an important influence on the more rationalistic, even enlightened elements of his defence of church polity.

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175Ibid., p. 85, where Wise apparently misquoted one word of Article 29 of the *Magna Carta*, substituting "press" for "pass" in "nor will we pass upon him." Cf. "The Magna Carta - A Translation of the Original Text as Confirmed by Edward II in 1297" (London) *Britain Express*, online. David Ross (ed.) <http://www.britainexpress.com/history/medieval/magnacarta-trans.htm>, November 21, 2007: "No freeman shall be taken, or imprisoned, or be disseised of his freehold, liberty, free customs, or be outlawed, or exiled, or any otherwise destroyed; nor will we pass upon him, nor condemn him, but by lawful judgment of his peers..."


177Ibid., pp. 31, 35, 51, 61, citing Proverbs 20:27; John 1:4, 9; Romans 2:14; Revelation 1:6, 9; 1 Peter 2:9; 1 Corinthians 4:8, 12:28; 2 Corinthians 10:8; 1 Peter 2:7.

178Ibid., pp. 4, 14, 31, 35, 51, 61, 71-4, 78-9, 81, 85-8, 90-1, 100-1; *The Churches' Quarrel..., pp. 11, 15-16, 18, 22, 27, 41, 43, 49, 51-3, 64-5, 69, 78, 81-2, 85, 87, 98, 102-5, 124, 127. It is interesting to note that of all the Bible references in *A Vindication..., only around 10% are from the Old Testament. *The Churches' Quarrel...* includes a more equal balance of Old and New Testament citations.


In addition to Pufendorf, Cook also highlighted the importance of Peter King’s (1669-1734) anonymously published 1691 treatise on early church history, *An Enquiry into the Constitution, Discipline, Unity & Worship of the Primitive Church*. Gummere has further provided a convincing account of the significance of various classical authors.

But what has thus far been somewhat neglected in Wise scholarship is the extent to which he also cited and drew upon the works of earlier Puritan authors, especially on questions of church order. Attention has already been drawn to Wise’s lengthy citation from Uriah Oakes’ 1673 Election Sermon, *New-England Pleadeth with...*, which provided more than a page of the concluding chapter of his first “demonstration” in *A Vindication*. Other Puritan sources that Wise cited more or less extensively included, in *The Churches’ Quarrel...*, Nicholas Noyes (1647-1717), Cotton and Increase Mather, and William Ames (1576-1633), and in *A Vindication...*, John Owen (1616-1683), Increase Mather, Thomas Hooker (1586-1647) and John Cotton (1584-1652).

Thus in responding to his own rhetorical query “whether length of time has discovered any essential error in the government of these churches?” in *The Churches’ Quarrel...*, Wise argued that no change was necessary and that:

> It will be more divine and agreeable with the law of our religious gratitude, to joyn with the Reverend Mr. Nicholas Noyse in his doxology, or use of triumph and praise for the great mercies he recites in his Election Sermon, pag. 79. Says he, “Thanks be to God and the King! Our houses and our lands are our own, without every man’s being at the cost of a charter, and yet we have the liberty of our religion and the free exercise of it, without subscribing new articles of faith, worship or discipline; which is a great favour of God, if we have wisdom and grace to improve it rightly.”

He went on to argue that the best way to “improve” such divine favour was that advocated by Cotton Mather in *Theopolis Americana...* (1710), from which Wise cited the following passage on two separate pages:

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181Wise, *A Vindication...*, pp. 10-11, citing Peter King, *An Enquiry into the Constitution, Discipline, Unity & Worship of the Primitive Church...*, 2 Vols. (London, 1691). Wise relied quite heavily on this work in the first “Demonstration” of *A Vindication...*, from “the voice of antiquity,” openly stating his intention “principally” to follow King’s “guidance” and to “imitate his faithfulness, in transcribing what I find in him suiting my present purpose.” Cook has shown that this section of *A Vindication...*, pp. 3-30, contains portions of King’s text “transposed, unacknowledged...into his own book.” See op cit., pp. 130-1, 212, n.11. According to an online version of the 1911 edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, after his early publication in early church history, the Anglican Baron King went on to be one of England’s most prominent lawyers, becoming Lord Chancellor in 1725. See “King [of Ockham], Peter King, 1st Baron (1669-1734)” in LoveToKnow Free Online Encyclopedia (California), LoveToKnow Corp., <http://www.1911encyclopedia.org/Peter_King_1st_Baron_King>, November 3, 2007.

182Gummere, op. cit.


Where we have a platform left us that is according to the Word of our gracious Lord and the pattern in the Mount, we shall be great enemies to ourselves if we do not keep to it.... Here is a temple built, more glorious than Solomon's, not of dead stones, but living saints, which may tempt the greatest Queen of Sheba to come and see and allure even kings from far to come and worship in.... [Therefore, as to their government (says he)] Sirs, do not spoil it, Oh, destroy it not! There is a blessing in it. 186

Wise also quoted the comments of Cotton Mather's father Increase, in his 1708 A Dissertation..., on “the bold attempts which have of late been made to unhinge and overset the Congregational Churches in New-England by decrying their holy covenant, &c.” 187

Reference to the work of English Puritans was confined in The Churches' Quarrel...., to a passing mention of William Ames. 188 But in A Vindication..., Wise cited the influential John Owen and his 1681 treatise, An Enquiry..., on three separate occasions. Thus in arguing for a widescale declension in church practice from the fourth century onwards, Wise quoted Owen to the effect that:

It was the pride, or ambition of the Doctors of the Church, which introduced the alteration in its order....the ambition of church rulers...in the fourth and fifth centuries openly proclaimed it self to the scandal of the Christian religion[; for that their interest lead them to] a deviation from [the] order [and discipline of the church according to its first institution]. 189

Later, in defending the contention that the laity had the right in the early church both to elect and depose their own officers, Wise drew on Owen's interpretation of the views of the third century African leader, Cyprian:

It seems what Cyprian afterward affirmed, was then acknowledged, namely, that the right of choosing the worthy, and rejecting the unworthy was in the body of the people. But [the Corinthian Church is] severely reproved for the abuse of their liberties and power. 190

Elsewhere in A Vindication..., Wise cited Increase Mather's The Order of the Gospel... (1700), and his "excellent treatise," A Disquisition Concerning Ecclesiastical Councils..., (1716), in defence of the right of lay people to attend church synods. 191 He also referred his readers to

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186Ibid., pp. 40, 42, citing Cotton Mather, Theopolis Americana... (Boston, MA: 1710), pp. 40-1 - words in parentheses added by Wise. Mather himself was quoting from, p. 40, an unidentified "letter sent from a worthy person here."

187Ibid., pp. 42-3, citing Increase Mather, A Dissertation... (Boston, MA: 1708), p. 91.

188Ibid., p. 67.

189Wise, A Vindication..., p. 6, citing John Owen, An Enquiry... (London, 1681), pp. 8-9 - words in parentheses added by Wise.

190Ibid., p. 20, citing Owen, p. 94 - words in parentheses added by Wise. The third reference to Owen's An Enquiry..., pp. 120ff., in A Vindication..., p. 88, is offered in support of the "plea," p. 87, "that it [New England church polity] best suits the great and noble designs of the gospel."

191Ibid., p. 28, citing Increase Mather, The Order of the Gospel... (Boston, MA: 1700), esp. pp. 83-90, which addressed "Question XI," i.e., "May the brethren in churches and not the pastors only be sent unto, and have their voice in ecclesiastical councils?"; p. 85, citing Increase Mather, A Disquisition Concerning Ecclesiastical Councils...
Thomas Hooker’s *A Survey of the Summe of Church-discipline...* (1648) for an explication of the distribution of church power between congregations and their chosen officers, and to the thoughts of another of New England’s founding theologians, John Cotton, on the purity of the churches in their “first ages.”¹⁹²

It is noteworthy that with the exception of Wise’s lengthy citation from Oakes, which addressed New England declension in general, all of his Puritan references related specifically to matters of church order and discipline. Such a focus might obviously have been expected in two works specifically dedicated to questions of polity. But it also underlines the extent to which Wise is clearly identifiable as a theological and ecclesiastical “conservative,” who quite deliberately took it upon himself to defend an established order that dated back to New England’s founding and beyond.

**D. Constitutional Traditionalism.**

Certainly, if there is any theme that can be said to predominate in both Wise’s major treatises on church order, it is the *constitutional traditionalism* that is consistently reflected in his appeals to historical precedent and to the “letter of the law” in the main authority that he sought to defend, especially against the *Proposals* of 1705 - i.e., the *Cambridge Platform* of 1648. In that sense, however diverse his sources, Wise was a very single-minded apologist for the traditional order, as both the form and content of his two major works make very clear.

**i. "The Churches’ Quarrel."**

In his opening letter “to the fraternity of the churches in the New-England colonies,” Wise immediately began *The Churches’ Quarrel...*, for example, with lavish, even exorbitant praise of “the constitution and way of New-England churches:”¹⁹³

> the Parliament (that wise and august council of the nation) could not have invented an establishment in church order, more for the service of the imperial crown of the British Empire than our present constitution....such a constitution in church government is (also) the only way to advance grace and man’s eternal happiness.¹⁹⁴

Wise then offered his readers six “petitions,” all aimed at stirring up their sense of pride in, as well as specific action in defence of established polity:

1) imagine your selves to be something more than ordinary; for really you be so and that as you are a gospel combination, and collectively considered....¹⁹⁵


¹⁹⁴Ibid., pp. 12, 13-14.

¹⁹⁵Ibid., p. 16.
2) put such an estimation and value on your church liberties as the English do on their civil...

3) honour and oblige your pastors and publick ministry....

4) furnish your churches with ruling elders...

5) revise the study (and in order to it) a new impression of your [Cambridge] Platform....

6) meet or represent...in a Provincial or General Synod.

The main focus of all Wise's initial counsel to his "fraternity," even the last "petition," which was targeted against the innovations of "small junctos of men," was thus on appreciating and making the most of benefits and opportunities already to hand, rather than pursuing the kind of change advocated by the authors of the Proposals. Particularly conservative in emphasis were Wise's calls for the appointment of ruling elders in every church, despite the fact that it had "grown very rare to find one individual" in that office, and to re-issue the Cambridge Platform, which he described as "the ecclesiastical political charter of these churches.

After such a lengthy "Epistle Dedicatory," the whole of The Churches' Quarrel... was then deliberately structured as a legal trial "in a form borrowed from Sir Edward Cooke [sic], the King's Attorney in the arrreignment of Sir Walter Rawleigh [sic]." Moreover, as he pursued such a satirical device, Wise made it very clear from the start that it was the Proposals themselves that were being prosecuted "at the bar of common reason" and tried for being nothing less than "criminal.

Wise began his prosecution with a series of five "queries," all designed to highlight the strengths of existing New England polity and/or the weaknesses of the system advocated by the Proposals:

1) Whether the churches in New-England are not fairly in possession of a form of government by which they are distinguished from most of the Reformed churches in the world, more than by their grace?....

2) Whether length of time has discovered any essential error in the government of these churches?....

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196Ibid., p. 17.
197Ibid., p. 18.
198Ibid., p. 19.
199Ibid., p. 29.
200Ibid., p. 30.
201Ibid., p. 31.
202Ibid., pp. 21, 29.
203Ibid., p.36. The reference is clearly to Sir Edward Coke (1552-1634) and his prosecution of Sir Walter Raleigh (1554-1618) in 1603.
204Ibid., pp. 36-7.
3) Whether it be not great boldness for any particular gentlemen to invade, null, alter or weaken so great a right and propriety, as is the government of these churches, without their consent?....
4) Whether by comparing the proposals and our Platform, we don’t find them repugnant, and so contradictory, that if one stands, the other must fall?....
5) From whence the Proposals derive their force? Who gives them Letters of Attorney or Commission to sue these churches (by a *quo warranto*) out of possession of their government?205

Central to Wise’s concerns, especially in considering the fourth and fifth of these queries, was clearly the question of legitimate authority for maintaining or changing established church order, and although he examined a range of possible bases for that, including “immediate inspiration” and “right reason,” he ultimately appealed to the supremacy of biblical revelation and to Puritan tradition, as enshrined in the Cambridge Platform.

On the previously quoted assumption that “God hath made all things sufficiently plain, by this time of day, either by Scripture or reason, for the conduct and government of his churches,” Wise rejected the whole notion that the Proposals could have been immediately inspired by God as an argument that could only be entertained by “enthusiasts.”206 He also suggested that the Proposals were “irrational,” and his grounds for doing so rested on their inconsistency with provisions of the Platform, as well as on the logical law of non-contradiction.207 Wise summarized his thoughts on the incongruency of the Proposals with scriptural precedent in a couple of graphic metaphors:

Here we have nothing for our faith to lean on, but so many austerer *ipse dixit*, as bitter pills of death for the churches to swallow, without any of the confection of heaven or the sweet Manna sprinkled upon them; or else only so many naked humane presumptions, as arrows or bolts, too rashly shot out against the sides of our churches, and no word of Scripture to tip or feather them.208

He was even more concise in specifically “enquiring whether the Proposals are deduced from this fountain,” contenting himself with portraying the Platform itself, “by a kind of short prosopope” as saying, among other things, that it had “never since it possest the government, so much as dream’d of them.”209

205Ibid., pp. 37, 38, 40, 42, 44.
206Ibid., p. 45.
207Ibid., pp. 47-9. See especially, pp. 48-9: “when we can by the rules of grammar resolve yea or no, yea or nay, to be the same voice and word, then you may reconcile the Proposals and the Platform.”
208Ibid., p. 46.
209Ibid., p. 49. According to Noah Webster’s 1828, *An American Dictionary of the English Language*, “prosopope” is “a figure in rhetoric by which things are represented as persons, or by which things inanimate are spoken of as animated beings, or by which an absent person is introduced as speaking, or a deceased person is represented as alive and present. It includes personification, but is more extensive in its signification.” See the online edition of Webster published by Christian Technologies, Inc. (Independence, MO: 2002) <http://65.66.134.291/cgi-bin/webster/webster.exe?search_for_texts_web1828=prosopope>, November 15, 2005.
Proceeding "to enquire into the nature of these Proposals, by surveying their composition and properties," Wise attacked the former as "a conjunction of almost all the church governments in the world," with "the least part...Congregational." He further charged the Proposals with having such an obvious aim of "ennobling government for clergy-men" as to lead to the conclusion that "there is also something in it which smells very strong of the Infallible Chair" [i.e., the papacy].

Among their particularly offensive "properties," Wise targeted their "disorder, "usurpation" and "riotous," "sacreligious" and "rebellious" nature, together with their "unfaithfullness," "ingratitude," and "impolicy." In doing so, he consistently continued his basic appeal to Puritan tradition and so to the guiding authority of the Cambridge Platform. Thus the Proposals could rightly be charged with "disorder," because they were "born out of due time" to an illegitimate "match," unsanctioned by "lawful authority." They were guilty of "usurpation," inasmuch as they assumed the "prerogatives" of churches "settled upon the Platform of their own government for upwards of sixty years" – a truly outrageous development:

What! For a particular knot or juncto of gentlemen to make so bold with a settled government, as to pick out all the ennobling royalties, liberties and enfranchisements in it, and sacrifice them to their own ambition! It is enough to put mankind into an uproar.

Wise thus thought the Proposals "riotous," because they were the product of "an unlawful assembly," and both "sacreligious" and "rebellious," in that:

they take away the liberties, priviledges, discipline and government of these churches, all of which are established to them by the law; and that not only by their own cannons, but by the laws of this Province, as by a royal Magna Charta...

Last but not least, he was scandalized by the Proposals' "unfaithfullness" and "ingratitude" in robbing the glorious inheritance of New England polity, and by their "impolicy" as "a conspiracy very heterogenous to...judicious acts of humane providence, a design plainly, if not perfectly to enslave, yet to bring posterity into a needless vassalage and thraledom."

\[^{210}\text{ibid.}, \text{pp. 49-50.}^\]
\[^{211}\text{ibid.}, \text{pp. 51-63.}^\]
\[^{212}\text{ibid.}, \text{p. 52.}^\]
\[^{213}\text{ibid.}, \text{pp. 52-3.}^\]
\[^{214}\text{ibid.}, \text{pp. 56-7.}^\]
\[^{215}\text{ibid.}, \text{pp. 58-9, 61.}^\]
Wise divided the remainder of *The Churches' Quarrel...* into two parts, both containing eight sections, in direct response to the precise structure of the *Proposals* themselves, with each section answering the specific wording of one of the 16. The cumulative result was a devastating reply that systematically dismantled the *Proposals* on a variety of different grounds, some of an immediately practical nature.

Thus in responding to the first eight *Proposals*, Wise argued that the second, “that questions and cases of importance...should be upon due deliberation answered” by ministerial associations, was simply unnecessary. He contended that the fourth, urging that ministerial candidates “undergo a due trial by some or other of the association” was “booteless, useless and perilous both to them and us,” not least because it might undermine the authority of “Harvard's *Commendamus,*” as well as the judgement of local churches. The sixth and seventh, referring the “convening of the Councils” to associations that would maintain regular correspondence and meet annually, were meanwhile not only superfluous, in that local churches already had such a power, but so costly that “the revenue won't hold out.” Wise pursued a similarly pragmatic tack in “Part II” of *The Churches' Quarrel...,* where he maintained in response to the second eight *Proposals*, for example, that the fourth, which advocated that “the churches have a stated time to meet in their Council” was unnecessary precisely because it included “that which from our beginning has been recommended.” At the same time, the seventh, proposing that “the determinations of the Councils” were “to be looked upon as final and decisive,” except for a right of appeal, did not meet “the necessities of these churches,” which were already provided for by Chapters 15 and 16 of the *Cambridge Platform*, covering issues relating to communion between churches and synods. Finally, the eighth, advocating due process “if a particular church will not be reclaimed by Council from such gross distortions as plainly hurt the common interest of Christianity,” was likewise redundant because this was already “laid out in the 15th Chapter of our Platform.”

Even such appeals to the pragmatism and common sense of Wise's readers thus rested to a significant degree on the authority of the *Cambridge Platform*, which he consistently defended throughout his attempts to refute the *Proposals*. Particularly striking examples of this kind of

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216 Ibid., pp. 63-107, 107-52. “Part II” also contains a “Conclusion,” pp. 145-52, responding to the last paragraph of the *Proposals*, which listed their circumstances of “assent.”
217 Ibid., pp. 66-7.
218 Ibid., pp. 75, 77, 79, 82.
219 Ibid., pp. 93-5, 99-100.
220 Ibid., pp. 6, 140.
221 Ibid., pp. 7, 144.
222 Ibid., pp. 8, 144.
ecclesiastical constitutionalism in Wise's responses to the first eight Proposals include his objection to the first, that "the ministers of the country form themselves into associations, that may meet at proper times to consider such things as may properly lie before them," as bidding "defiance to our constitution; for our Plat-form denies the classical state of the church under Christ, Cap. 2. Sect. 5." But Wise also rejected the first provision of the third, "that advice be taken by the associated pastors, from time to time, ere they proceed to any action in their particular churches, which may be likely to produce any imbroylments," because it robbed "the officers of the free exercise of that office-authority, which God's Word and our Plat-form places in them; read Plat. Chap. 10, Sect. 8, 9." He refuted the third provision of the third Proposal, that association members should examine charges of "scandal or heresy" against individual pastors and refer them to the judgement of a full ecclesiastical Council, if necessary, by citing two passages from the Platform that upheld the authority of local churches in such matters. Last but not least, he denied the fifth Proposal that associated ministers "be consulted by bereaved churches" and recommend supply clergy, "from whom they may in due time proceed to choose a pastor," because the Platform gave local churches the power to choose their own officers and "our Plat-form is our settlement and it has secured to the churches these prerogatives."

It has already been shown how Wise was no less reliant on the constitutional guidance of the Platform in "Part II" of The Churches' Quarrel... A noteworthy additional example is found in his argument against the first of the second eight Proposals, which proposed the formation of a standing council by associated ministers to "consult, advice and determine all affairs that shall be proper matter for the consideration of an ecclesiastical council within their respective limits." This, he contended, was no more justified by the Platform, than by scriptural, legal or other precedent. In the course of an extended disquisition on the general topic of standing councils,

223Ibid., pp. 63-4.
224Ibid., pp. 67-8.
225Ibid., pp. 71-3, citing Cambridge Platform (Cambridge, MA:1649), p. 7, Chapter V:2: "ordinary church power...of privilege...belongs to the brotherhood...[and may] be acted or exercised immediately by themselves," and pp. 13-14, Chapter X:6: "[if] an elder offend incorrigibly, the matter so requiring, as the church, had power to call him to office, so they have power, according to order (the council of other churches, where it may be had, directing thereto) to remove him from his office; and being now but a member, in case he add contumacy to his sin, the church that had power to receive him in to their fellowship, hath also the same power to cast him out, that they have concerning any other member."
226Wise, The Churches' Quarrel, pp. 89-92, esp. pp. 89, 91, citing Cambridge Platform p. 7, Chapter V:2, and p. 13, Chapter X:5: "The power granted by Christ unto the body of the church and brother-hood is a prerogative or privilege which the church doth exercise [in the admission of her own members, and in chusing their own officers]." The original, extended wording of the passage in parentheses was: "In choosing their own officers, whether elders, or deacons. In admission of their own members."
Wise also highlighted two related themes that were consistently important throughout his major works. For his constitutional traditionalism in matters of church polity was clearly paralleled by wider concerns to uphold established English legal standards and thus to avoid the dangers of “arbitrary” and especially Roman Catholic power in either church or state.

Thus in making his argument that there was no legitimate legal precedent for standing church councils, Wise outlined seven “principles of the English Government, that are like...great arteries in nature, which circulate the blood and spirits thro’ the imperial body,” including:

1) There is no one of the three Estates of the Empire can make a valid Act to bind the subject, or institute any new forms of government;
2) All English men are priviledged by and strictly bound to the law; that's the fruitful reason of all good and rule of duty;
3) The vengeance or vindictive justice of the nation flames (in the sanction of the law) against all transgressors;
4) Every great person is under the awe of the law, either as directive or co-ersive;
5) All English men live and dye by laws of their own making;
6) English government and law is a charter-party settled by mutual compact between persons of all degrees in the nation, and no man must start from it at his peril;
7) English men hate an arbitrary power (politically considered) as they hate the devil.

Wise’s immediate purpose in citing these principles was clearly to adduce yet another charge against the Proposals as “despotick and arbitrary measures.” But in so doing, he provided strong evidence that his concern to uphold what he saw as the traditional order in both church and state was rooted in a quintessentially Protestant vision of constitutionally ordered government designed to be a bastion against the incursions of absolutism from any source, especially from Roman Catholicism. Thus Wise charged the Proposals not only with having “out king’d all kings on earth whose prerogatives are bounded, and their kingdoms governed by law” to the point where “we must needs range them with the arbitrary princes of the earth.” He also went on to allege that:

they have out bishop’t all bishops of Great Britain, whilst they themselves have acted with such lawless liberty, and left the bishops fettered in the statutes.... They have out-Pope’t the Pope himself, who is head of an hierarchy supported by certain laws, acts and ordinances...

Right from the very beginning of The Churches’ Quarrel, Wise had left his readers in no doubt of his opinion that the Proposals threatened to introduce a new “sort of discipline” into the New England churches that was redolent of Catholic absolutism. In concluding his “Epistle Dedicatory,” he affirmed his English and anti-Catholic allegiances by praying for “the great

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229 Ibid., pp. 117, 118, 119, 120.
230 Ibid., p. 122.
231 Ibid., pp. 122-3.
[Queen] Anne, our wise and Protestant Princess," calling her "New-England's royal nurse and great benefactress" and pleading that "she may live to see all the Protestant churches thro' her vast empire more virtuous and more united."233 Wise plainly saw the Cambridge Platform, which he subsequently described as "established by certain or legal and orderly familiarities and universal consent," as a key instrument for preserving Protestant freedoms in New England:

We can as soon reconcile a republick with an absolute monarchy, or the best sort of free states with a politick tyranny, or at least with an oligarchy, when the chief end of government is the inriching and greatness of its ministers; and this we may do when we have compounded these Proposals and our Platform...234

The "riotous," "sacrilegious" and "rebellious" Proposals would, Wise expected, lead to a growth in arbitrary, clerical power of the kind that had "utterly undone the Christian world" in times past.235 As little as 30 years previously, there had been "no appearance of the associations of pastors in these colonies," but as a result of the efforts of "some gentlemen that were inclined to Presbyterian principles," they had now given rise to "these Proposals like Aaron's golden calf."236 Such was Wise's apocalyptic concern over the rise of arbitrary clericalism that he did not hesitate to see in such an idol a contemporary parallel of the "great and terrible beast" of Roman Catholicism just "a few ages ago." He went on to suggest that "this very creature, that was but a calf when they first begun to feed it, is now grown to be such a mad, furious and wild bull," that only the most powerful of Protestant rulers would dare "take this beast by the horns, when he begins to bounce and bellow."237 Wise even saw providential and conspiratorial significance in the November 5 date of assent by the ministers who subscribed to the Proposals:

The 5th day of November....is the Gun-Powder-Treason day; and we are every man ruined, being running Faux's fate!...Our measures certainly intend the blowing up the churches, as Faux's did the Parliament.238

Wise' anti-Catholicism did not lead him to embrace full-blown anti-clericalism. He was prepared to acknowledge that New England pastors were "in a high station, as they represent the Great Shepherd, and their trust is noble and great."239 But it was an important principle that ministers "must never infringe the churches' power of privilege in any branch of it" and there was always a danger that they might "begin to soar a-loft, or above their proper sphere."240 Inasmuch as "the

233ibid., p. 32.
234ibid., pp. 39, 42.
235ibid., pp. 56-7, 74.
236ibid., pp. 102-4.
237ibid., pp. 105-6
239ibid., p. 114.
very name of an arbitrary government is ready to put an English man’s blood into a fermentation,” Wise’s fear of clerical aggrandizement was thus closely linked with his vision of an ordered society that preserved both traditional English freedoms and the distinctiveness of New England’s more democratic church polity. He saw a situation arising from the Proposals where:

These beg’d prerogatives of clergy-men come so thick in this place and smell so strong of the Pope’s cooks and kitchen, where his broaths and restoratives are prepared, that they are enough to strangle a free-born English-man...

But the threat was, if anything, even greater for the churches of New England that had “lived in such a clear air and under such enlargements so long a time.” Wise freely conceded that the Church of England had already been “wont to look upon us as men out of our wits,” even venturing to slander New Englanders with such labels as “phanaticks or mad-men.” The charge would not be so misplaced, he suggested, were they now:

to break from the government they themselves have established by consent and practice, and arbitrarily to rally together and draw up a direful sentence (if not in terms, yet in intent) for the dissolution of a country full of the best churches of Christ in the world...

It was such a threat that Wise continued to try to ward off in A Vindication..., where he turned from appealing to the authority of the Cambridge Platform as a first defence against the Proposals to a systematic apologia for the Platform itself that revealed the full range and depth of his constitutional traditionalism.

ii. “A Vindication.”

Wise effectively summed up the whole argument and structure of A Vindication..., as an apologetic treatise in its first two sentences:

The constitution of New-England churches, as settled by their Plat-form, may be fairly justified, from antiquity; the light of nature; Holy Scripture; and from the noble and excellent nature of the constitution itself. And lastly from the providence of God dignifying of it.

Although he thus divided the work into five discrete “demonstrations,” each of them ultimately served his major stated purpose, which was to vindicate the ecclesiastical status quo, as defined by the Cambridge Platform.

In his first “demonstration” containing “the voice of antiquity,” Wise accordingly drew on the work of King, Owen, Hooker and Oakes to present a traditionally Puritan interpretation of church
history and New England's part in it. He basically divided the whole of the Christian era into "three parts," including:

1) "the first three hundred years..., which may be accounted the most refined and purest time;"  
2) "the next twelve hundred years...within which circuit is included the commencement and progress of a direful apostacy, both as to worship and government in the churches;"  
3) "towards the latter end of this space of time...a glorious Reformation," subsequent to which "these churches in New-England...have surpassed all churches."

Wise then sought to show, through a systematic comparison of "the constituent parts of a church" that were evident in both the earliest era of ecclesiastical history and in New England tradition that "the churches in New-England and the primitive churches are eminently parallel in their government." In making this argument, he paid particular attention to the congregational definition of a church, to the duties and responsibilities of officers, to "the prerogatives, or peculiar immunities of the laity," to "the joynet acts of officers and people, carrying on as an organick body," and to "the fellowship and communion that distinct churches had & held one with another," all of which he found exactly parallel and congruent under both systems. Wise's resulting conclusion that New England polity was "apostolical" thus buttressed his restorationist vision of church history, according to which the New England churches had furthered the work of the Reformation in restoring "the essentials of government" in church order and discipline. Moreover, as in The Churches' Quarrel..., the forces that he saw threatening pristine Congregationalism in his age were very similar to those that had led to the undermining of the early church. In the fourth and fifth centuries, clerical ambition had led "prelates" to "embrace all opportunities of introducing another order into the churches that might tend more to the exaltation of their own power and dignity." Now too, Wise observed, quoting Oakes, it was important to "consider what will be the sad issue of revolting from the way fixed on to one extream or to another, whether it be to Presbyterianism or Brownism."

245 Ibid., pp. 3-30. For Wise's citations of King, Owen, Hooker and Oakes, see above, pp. 89-91.  
246 Ibid., p. 3.  
247 Ibid., p. 5.  
248 Ibid., pp. 8-9.  
249 Ibid., pp. 12, 10.  
250 Ibid., pp. 11-29, esp. pp. 18, 22, 24.  
251 Ibid., p. 11.  
253 Ibid., p. 28, quoting Oakes, p. 45.
Wise’s second “demonstration” in *A Vindication...*, “in the light of nature” may have attracted most attention from scholars like Cook, Miller and Rossiter, who have been keen to draw attention to the allegedly progressive, even enlightened reliance on reason that they have found there. However, as already noted, even as he took what he conceded to be “an unusual and unbeaten path” in defence of New England polity, Wise did not fail to remind his readers that his main argument remained on “the common road” that was built on the foundations of Scripture and traditional church order. Thus he introduced his remarks on “several principles [of] natural knowledge” which he applied in “ecclesiastical affairs” to conclude that “these churches...are fairly established in their present order by the Law of Nature,” with the clear affirmation that:

> The light of reason as a law and rule of right is an effect of Christ’s goodness, care and creating power, as well as of revelation; though revelation is nature’s law in a fairer and brighter edition.\(^{254}\)

Then in discussing “man in a state of nature,” he went on to affirm that even forms of civil government were subject to the authority of “God’s Word.”\(^{255}\) He cited Romans 2:14 in arguing that God had “established the Law of Nature as the general rule of government,” which was divinely “written on men’s hearts.”\(^{256}\)

Following an extended discussion of “the civil being of man,” in which he relied particularly heavily on quotations from Pufendorf to affirm human dignity and “equality,” Wise offered a brief outline of “the forms of a regular state,” including democracy, aristocracy and monarchy.\(^{257}\) His concluding remarks on “mxt governments,” which included a significant quotation from Edward Chamberlayne’s (1616-1703) 1669 *Angliae Notitia...*, left no doubt about what he saw as the ultimate model of good civil government:

> [the British Empire] is such a monarchy, as that...it hath the main advantages of an aristocracy, and of a democracy, and yet [is] free from the disadvantages and evils of either....It is a kingdom, that of all the kingdoms of the world, is most like to the Kingdom of Jesus Christ, whose yoke is easie, and burden light.\(^{258}\)

Moreover, just as he saw Christlike features in the English Constitution, even when “improving” established “principles of civil knowledge” to “ecclesiastical affairs,” he appealed straight to

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\(^{254}\) *ibid.*, pp. 30-2 - italics added for emphasis.

\(^{255}\) *ibid.*, p. 33.

\(^{256}\) *ibid.*, pp. 35-6, citing from Romans 2:14: “Those having not a law, are a law to themselves.”

\(^{257}\) *ibid.*, pp. 32, 39-43, 47-51.

biblical authority and stated his basic intention "to discover more clearly the kind and something of the nature of that government, which Christ has plac't in and over his church."²⁵⁹

Wise's Protestant and Anglophile predilections emerged even more forcefully in his subsequent analysis of different types of church government, from which he concluded that democracy was the only appropriate one for "gospel churches."²⁶⁰ In expounding the dangers of ecclesiastical monarchy and aristocracy, the anti-Catholicism of both The Churches' Quarrel...'s and A Vindication...'s earlier historical commentary resurfaced very strongly. Wise took it as an absolute certainty that the Pope "either by reasonable pleas, or powerful cheats, has assumed an absolute and universal sovereignty," and he did not hesitate to argue that:

It's very plain, it's written with blood in capital letters, to be read at midnight by the flames of Smithfield and other like consecrated fires that the government of this ecclesiastical monarch has instead of sanctifying, absolutely debaucht the world, and subverted all good Christianity in it.²⁶¹

An aristocracy was likewise a "frail bottom," on which to embark so "great an interest" as church government and Wise again appealed to the lessons of history to highlight the associated perils.²⁶² "The primitive constitution of the churches was a democracy." In the post-Constantinian era, however, the ministers "quickly deprived the fraternities of their rights."²⁶³ Especially by usurping lay authority to elect church officers, clergy became "the subjects of all power" and then proceeded to commit that most heinous of Catholic sins by acting "arbitrarily." Others facilitated this process by their sheer passivity. The root problem for the traditionalist Wise was that they had not "stood firm to the [existing] government."²⁶⁴ By contrast, ecclesiastical democracy was not only "most agreeable with the light of nature" and "to the just and natural prerogatives of humane beings."²⁶⁵ It was the form of government that Christ had settled "for his churches' safety and for the benefit of every member."²⁶⁶ In concluding his second "demonstration," Wise thus once more reminded his readers of the supremacy of Scripture. "If we find that God has disclosed his mind by revelation that his churches be the subjects of a democracy," the Ipswich pastor argued, "then all stand obliged to comply under a double bond."²⁶⁷

²⁵⁹Ibid., p. 51, citing Revelation 1:6, 9; 1 Peter 2:9; 1 Corinthians 4:8; 1 Corinthians 12:28; 2 Corinthians 10:8.
²⁶⁰Ibid., p. 69.
²⁶¹Ibid., p. 54, 55-6.
²⁶²Ibid., p. 56.
²⁶³Ibid., p. 57.
²⁶⁴Ibid., p. 59.
²⁶⁵Ibid., p. 60.
²⁶⁶Ibid., p. 62.
²⁶⁷Ibid., p. 69.
It has already been noted how Wise conflated biblical evidence for New England polity with traditionalist appeals to the values of the English Constitution in the third “demonstration” of A Vindication..., “from Holy Scripture.” He continued such themes in the fourth “from the excellent nature of the constitution, in that it exceeds all that have been yet extant in the Christian world,” where he based his argument on three “pleas.” Thus Wise contended that New England’s present polity “best suits the great and noble designs of the gospel” by preventing such obvious dangers as the sin of simony. He further suggested that “it has the best balance belonging to it of any church government” both by preserving “equality of power” among members and continuing to hold ordained ministers in such high respect “as though all power were invested in them.” Last but not least, Wise stressed “the near affinity our constitution holds with the civil governments of some of the most flourishing common-wealths in the world,” not least the Venetian, which he described as “a limited democracy,” that of “the Belgick [sic] Provinces” and of course, the English. Although he had earlier described it as “mixed,” rather than as a pure democracy, Wise maintained the unstinting, patriotic praise of the English system of government that is such a consistent feature of both his major works, focusing especially on democratic rights to parliamentary representation and trial by jury:

These two grand pillars of English liberty are the fundamental vital privileges whereby we have been and are still preserved more free and happy, than any other people in the world; and we trust shall ever continue so.

Wise also drew an obvious corollary between the value of a traditional English concern to preserve civil liberties and the need for equal vigilance in matters ecclesiastical in the New England churches. All in all, he concluded:

The several examples of civil states, which I have named, do serve abundantly to justify the noble nature of our constitution in church-order; for that the several famous and august nations...are either a perfect democracy, or very much mixed and blendished with it. Then why should we in New-England be any more ashamed, or less careful of our church-government...th[a]n those nations are of their civil government...?

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268 Ibid., pp. 70-87, esp. p. 85; pp. 87-97.
269 Ibid., pp. 87-8.
270 Ibid., pp. 88-90.
271 Ibid., pp. 93-5.
272 Ibid., p. 95, citing Care, p. 4.
273 Ibid., pp. 96-7.
274 Ibid., p. 97.
Attention has already been drawn to the providentialism of the fifth and final “demonstration” in *A Vindication...*, where Wise recapitulated much of his earlier account of church history. He thus ended his second and last major treatise as he had begun it by attempting to demonstrate that New England’s ecclesiastical constitution had been blessed by God because it marked a restoration of apostolic purity in church order and discipline. To uphold the Cambridge Platform against innovations like the Proposals was, therefore, to defend the most valuable traditions of all. The fact that these contained democratic elements was obviously very important to Wise and he could show that importance from other sources and models, like those of civil government. But as has been seen, his major priority was not the pursuit of democracy as either a rational or even political ideal. In matters of state, his English epitome was very much a “mixed” government, and in both his main works, Wise’s primary concern was for the preservation of a traditional form of church government that embodied some democratic principles. What is more, he found primary justification for them in the most conservative manner available to him, which was by direct appeal to divine revelation and to the ecclesiastical structures that he thought shaped by it. In that sense, Wise was both an “early American democrat” and a “colonial conservative,” but he was first and foremost a “constitutional traditionalist,” a conservative defender of his ecclesiastical inheritance in all its particulars, including its democratic ones.

### 6. Defender of Liberty.

Similar conclusions emerge from a study of Wise’s ideas on the topic of liberty, which have equally tended to strike scholars as evidence of progressive, democratic and even libertarian tendencies in his thought.

Wise often wrote of the value of religious “liberty” or “liberties” in very general terms, but he consistently saw himself as a defender of a New England tradition that was defined in the Cambridge Platform. In *The Churches’ Quarrel...*, he described himself right from the start as stepping “into the gap” in defence of his country’s “sacred liberties.” He pled with his readers that they might “put such an estimation and value on your church liberties as the English do on their civil” and called upon them to be “very sensible what these New-England liberties have cost your progenitors.” He saw both the office of ruling elder and the Cambridge Platform as

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276 Such “democratic principles” included, for example, the right of members of independent congregations to choose their own pastors and to vote on major church decisions, although once in place, the authority of pastors, if not monarchical, was considerable, and Wise supported traditional pastoral privileges.


279 Ibid., p. 17.
guardians of “gospel liberties” and he prayed that Christ might “preserve inviolable the
inestimable privileges and liberties of these churches.”

Wise affirmed Nicholas Noyes’ judgement that “we have the liberty of our religion, and the free
exercise of it” and found it scandalous that the authors of the Proposals should be ready to betray
such a priceless inheritance. One of his main charges against the Proposals was that they took
away “the liberties, privileges, discipline and government of these churches.” He found the
origins of Catholic absolutism, which had “robbed the laity of their Christian liberties,” in clerical
ambition, and saw similar forces at work in proposals that consociated churches have the power
to recommend pastoral candidates and that a ministerial association be able to call together a
council of churches whenever it thought necessary. Wise’s Protestant sensibilities seemed
especially offended by the conciliar proposal:

Four score years has brought...our innocent flock to a fair market, if it is come to this, that
clergymen may buy and sell them (as the Romans did the Jews) thirty for a penny, or at least
say, pro and con, at their pleasure, upon all the high immunities and ancient liberties of the
churches.

Wise expressed similar concerns for the general preservation of religious freedoms in A
Vindication..., where he described the churches as “free states,” for example, and “New-
England’s Gospel liberties” as deserving both “fear and caution.” Moreover, such priorities
were rooted in a vision of ecclesiastical freedom for which he found nothing less than biblical
warrant:

In general my advice is to you, that in good order and with all gracefulness which becomes
wise men, you will with zeal, courage and faithfulness, stand in the defence of and maintain
your church liberties. God certainly obliges you to do it, with all the discretion and bravery of
spirit, which becomes free-men, in withstanding vassalage or a servile state, Gal. 5:1.13
“Stand fast therefore in the liberties, wherewith Christ has made us free, and be not intangled
again with the yoke of bondage:” the plea is as forceful against a Christian as a Jewish
thralldom. "For brethren, ye have been called unto liberty."

280 Ibid., pp. 19, 29-30, 33.
282 Ibid., p. 57.
283 Ibid., pp. 74 and 89-90: “According to my apprehensions, this proposal insults very daringly over the churches in two
things. 1. By ingrosing the right of jurisdiction, not only over the visible freedom and liberties, but conjugal and secret
powers of Christ’s virgin and widow churches.... This apparently puts too hard upon the churches’ liberties and overthrows
the government.”
284 Ibid., pp. 141-2.
285 Wise, A Vindication..., pp. 86, 96. Cf. Wise, A Word of Comfort..., p. 164: “And to perfect our happiness we enjoy the
Gospel liberties, without infringement; together with health, peace and plenty.”
286 Wise, The Churches’ Quarrel..., p. 11.
But Wise also consistently drew parallels between the value of religious and civil liberties, and in doing so, he regularly appealed to English precedent and tradition.

Wise stated one of his most basic assumptions in making such comparisons in the “Epistle Dedicatory” of The Churches’ Quarrel:

By the suffrage of our nation, that government which sensibly clogs tyranny and preserves the subject free from slavery, under the ambition of men of great fortune and trust, is the only government in the state to advance men’s temporal happiness; and we in the country honour the resolve in civil affairs, also affirm (upon great experience) that such a constitution in church government is (also) the only way to advance grace and man’s eternal happiness.

The English form of civil government was, as noted, a political ideal for Wise. It was “finest and most incomparable” and the freedoms that he sought to elucidate at the heart of it were definitive of its virtues, including both the “seven principles” that he outlined quite specifically in The Churches’ Quarrel, and the rights to parliamentary representation and trial by jury that he extolled in A Vindication. Wise described “a noble government” as one of which the subjects not only flourished, but enjoyed “their liberty and property, with the rest of the great immunities of man’s nature nourished, secured, and best guarded from tyranny.”

And this original happy form of government, is [says one] truly and properly called an English man’s liberty; a priviledge to be freed in person and estate from arbitrary violence and oppression and a greater inheritance than we derive from our parents.

Wise was not uncritical of the established church in England. Indeed, he questioned “why the nation should be so enamored with their civil, and yet so careless and regardless of their Gospel liberties, so as to trust their consciences with their clergy, more immediately.” But such was his regard for the English system of civil government that he held up recent reactions to threats against it as an instructive model for resistance against the Proposals. He also appealed directly to the protection of “liberties in church or state” afforded by “law and regular settlements”

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287Ibid., pp. 13-14.
289Wise, A Vindication, p. 93.
290Ibid., p. 95, citing Care, pp. 3-4.
291Ibid., pp. 53-4: “It is fresh in memory, that when some of our English Princes (and one would think, if any men may, they may be allowed to aspire, yet when they) have presumed on less things than these Proposals reach after, in gratifying their aim at an absolute monarchy, whereas they have not dared to lay out with such freedom a new form of government, with a wide mouth, gaping to devour the English liberties, (as these Proposals do the churches, but only with much secrecy, covin and policy, they have by some more clandestine measures been intruding upon the antient liberties of the English nation) every one knows what direful convultions this has bred in the bowels of the Kingdom. And may it not serve to enliven this plea?”
as strong cause for "English men" in general, including New Englanders, to "beware how they repeal those laws or weaken those settlements."  

For the traditionalist Wise, the maintenance of established, constitutional "settlements" was thus the best guarantor of the liberties that he valued most highly both in the state of England and in the churches of New England. But he did not advocate any abstract ideal of unrestrained human freedom as an end in its own right, as his extended discussion of human liberty in the second "demonstration" of A Vindication... makes very clear.

Wise’s ideas of personal freedom can easily be misread if they are not appropriately contextualized within the overarching framework of his thought. He strongly affirmed, for example, the "original liberty instampt upon his rational nature" as "the second great immunity of man" (after being "the subject of the Law of Nature"). He emphasized "man’s external personal, natural liberty, antecedent to all humane parts," so that "every man must be conceived to be perfectly in his own power and disposal" and he noted the Roman jurist Ulpian’s (d. 228) judgement that "by a natural right all men are born free." But Wise made those affirmations in the context of deliberately waiving "the consideration of man’s moral turpitude," or original sin, which he freely upheld. Moreover, his basic premise that "man in a state of natural being" was "a free-born subject" was specifically qualified by the observation that he owed "homage to...God." Wise’s contention that "the internal native liberty of man’s nature in general implies a faculty of doing or omitting things according to the direction of his judgment" was likewise counter-balanced by the statement that "this liberty does not consist in a loose and ungovernable freedom or in an unbounded licence of acting."

Thus Wise considered humanity to have both internal and external freedom of action in philosophical terms. He further espoused a "social contract" theory of state formation, according to which free individuals, "yielding up natural liberty," covenanted together to form "what species of government they please" for their mutual protection. He even implicitly defended the right of civil rebellion in exceptional cases where "the Prince who strives to subvert the fundamental laws of the society is the traitor and the rebel, and not the people, who endeavour to preserve and

293Wise, A Vindication..., p. 97.
294Ibid., pp. 37, 34, 39, 42, citing Pufendorf, III:II:VIII.
296Ibid., p. 33.
297Ibid., p. 38.
298Ibid., pp. 43-4.
defend their own." But he was no libertarian or revolutionary in any modern sense of those words. In fact, much like John Winthrop and his Puritan forebears, his fundamental understanding of human freedom was a spiritual and moral one. It was not "licence," but "a liberty to [do] that only which is good, just and honest:"

Therefore as Plutarch says, those persons only who live in obedience to reason are worthy to be accounted free. They alone live as they will, who have learnt what they ought to will. So that the true natural liberty of man, such as really and truly agrees to him, must be understood, as he is guided and restrained by the tyes of reason and laws of nature; all the rest is brutal, if not, worse.  

Although Wise cited Plutarch and appealed to reason and the "laws of nature" in this definition, he did so as a writer who deemed both the latter to be created and guided by providence. He also did so as a theologian whose traditional understanding of divine sovereignty ultimately left the decisive initiative in human conversion with God, rather than with human beings who needed divine salvation in order to fulfil their ultimate moral potential. So when he argued that "they alone live as they will, who have learnt what they ought to will," Wise was not only stating a foundational understanding of human liberty as spiritual; he was re-affirming a conservative religious worldview of which that formed part, in which humanity was ultimately powerless to do good without God.

7. Democratic Conservative.

In this as in other senses, therefore, an holistic interpretation of Wise's life and writings reveals a traditionalist pastor and theologian, whose thought justifies the label of "early American democrat" only to the extent that it was consistent with his "colonial conservatism." There is significant evidence in his extant works to indicate that Wise was an orthodox Calvinist in his theology. Moreover, his advocacy of "mixed" democracy, while extending to both church and state, was ultimately subservient, in The Churches' Quarrel... and A Vindication..., to his defence of a New England polity that contained democratic elements in its constitution. Thus while Wise was clearly committed to human liberty and expressions of democratic government under God, he saw them as essential parts of the Puritan heritage that he was defending. He was relatively progressive on some issues, including the Salem witchcraft, smallpox inoculation and paper currency controversies to which he contributed. He had a high view of the value of human reason and he was prepared to take "an unbeaten path" by drawing on less familiar sources, like Pufendorf, and advancing more rationalistic arguments if they served his apologetic interests. But the latter were paramount because of the value of the cause at stake and Wise consistently prioritized what he perceived to be divine revelation over all other sources of authority.

299Ibid., p. 53, citing Anon, The Secret History..., p. 2
301Wise, A Vindication..., p. 72.
Wise's conservatism was also rooted in a patriotic Anglophilia that found frequent expression in his works and clearly underlay much of his self-understanding, as well as his interpretation of New England history and values. He thought that the best of Congregationalist church polity was modeled on the best of an avowedly mixed English civil government, especially in its most democratic elements, and he defended both to the hilt. Throughout his life, from the Ipswich tax revolt of 1687 to the publication of A Vindication... in 1717 and no doubt beyond, Wise sought to uphold the rights of “free-born Englishmen,” which he saw extending all the way back to the Magna Carta and found embodied, in a church context, in the pristine Congregationalism of the Cambridge Platform. Wise was thus a constitutional traditionalist in his views of both church and state. Despite his active and implicit defence of acts of civil rebellion on at least two occasions in his life, Wise was also, in the final analysis, an obedient servant of the legal establishment that he sought to conserve.

On September 28, 1687, just days before the trial at which he was found guilty of Contempt and High Misdemeanor for his role in the Ipswich meeting that led to the town’s refusal to appoint a tax commissioner for Governor Andros, Wise signed his name as co-author of an “humble petition of the Selectmen and other inhabitants.” In this document, he begged, as noted, for clemency and declared his submission to the governing authorities. But the terms of his apology, far from representing an uncharacteristic or politic lapse in democratic zeal, as some have suggested, were entirely consistent with what Wise wrote 30 years later on the general topic of civil rebellion.

“It is our great sorrow,” wrote Wise and his colleagues:

that for want of due consideration and prudent conduct wee have by any of our inadvertent and rash actions unhappily precipitated and involved our selves in so great inconvenience and mischief as justly to fall under Yo' Exc[celienc]ieS displeasure and give any occasion to be represented as disloyall or in the least disaffected unto His Majesties Government as now established amongst us by his Royal Commission unto which we do and shall yield our willing submission and dutyfull observance and upon all occasions give such demonstration and testimony of our allegiance and duty to our Sovereign as may bespeak us good and loyal subjects.302

“In general concerning rebellion against government,” he subsequently wrote in A Vindication...:

for particular subjects to break in upon regular communities duly established is from the premises to violate the Law of Nature; and is a high usurpation upon the first grand immunities of mankind. Such rebels in states and usurpers in churches affront the world with a presumption that the best of the brotherhood are a company of fools, and that themselves have fairly monopolized all the reason of human nature. Yea, they take upon them the boldness to assume a prerogative of trampling under foot the natural original equality and liberty of their fellows; for to push the proprietors of settlements out of possession of their old, and impose new schemes upon them, is virtually to declare them in a state of vassalage, or

302John Wise et al. to Edmund Andros, September 28, 1687, reprinted in Walters, p. 249.
that they were born so; and therefore will the usurper be so gracious as to insure them they shall not be sold at the next market, they must esteem it a favour, for by this time all the original prerogatives of man's nature are intentionally a victim, smoaking to satiate the usurper's ambition. 303

Seen through the lens of both these declarations, Wise emerges as the true conservative that he was, albeit one who found the best defence of human liberty in the rule of law and of established constitutional authorities in both church and state, including appropriate democratic structures.


1. “Called Unto Liberty.”

On the evening of August 26, 1765, amid the gathering storm of the Stamp Act crisis, a Boston crowd gathered at the house of Lieutenant-Governor Thomas Hutchinson (1711-1780) and proceeded to wreck it. According to the most authoritative modern account of events, “they destroyed windows, doors, furniture, wainscoting and paintings, and stole £900 in cash, as well as clothing and silverware. They cut down all the trees in the garden, beat down the partitions in the house and had even begun to remove the slate from the roof when daylight stopped them.”

The leader of the assault, Ebenezer McIntosh, was subsequently arrested, but released by the Sheriff as a result of political pressures. No one was ever formally charged or criminally convicted for the attack. But the influential minister of Boston’s affluent and prestigious West Church, Jonathan Mayhew, subsequently spent the remaining months of his life attempting to clear his name and clarify his position in response to accusations of complicity in the riot. His alleged offence had been to preach a sermon the previous day on Galatians 5:12-13, in which he had so urged his West Church congregation that “ye have been called unto liberty,” that some decided to take the law into their own hands. Writing some years later, in the third volume of his History of the Province and Colony of Massachusetts-Bay..., Hutchinson expressed the view that if Mayhew had paid more attention to the second half of Galatians 5:13, including the instruction to “use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh,” this “would have been sufficient to have kept the people within bounds.” One of Mayhew’s most prominent parishioners, the merchant Richard Clarke, took such offence at his pastor’s sermon of August 25, that he not only expressed his opinions directly to Mayhew during a pastoral visit, but subsequently left West Church altogether. In a September 3 letter to Clarke, Mayhew defended himself as “no encourager of mobs and riots,” but acknowledged that Clarke was not alone in representing his discourse “in that odious light.”

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2Ibid., pp. 134-5.
3The major modern biography of Jonathan Mayhew is Charles W. Akers, Called unto Liberty: A Life of Jonathan Mayhew, 1720-1766 (Cambridge, MA: 1984). The much older work by Alden Bradford, Memoir of the Life and Writings of Rev. Jonathan Mayhew... (Boston, MA: 1839) is a rather rambling chronicle which contains little by way of original analysis or insight, but much of value in the form of otherwise unpublished source materials. For a much briefer account, see also, William B. Sprague, Annals of the American Unitarian Pulpit (New York, 1865), pp. 22-29.
Mayhew's letter to Clarke was one of four extant documents which Bailyn has rightly signalled as testimony to his efforts "to bring back into balance a reputation he felt had been grotesquely distorted." Moreover, two of them, a "Memorandum" of the offending sermon and Mayhew's last published discourse, *The Snare Broken...*, which he preached on May 23, 1766, following the repeal of the Stamp Act, have been seen as major contributions not just to his own homiletical *oeuvre*, but to a libertarian ideology that subsequently prepared the way for the American Revolution. Together with Mayhew's 1763-4 controversy over the role of the missionary society SPG, Bailyn has interpreted, "his incendiary oration on the Stamp Act, and his Thanksgiving sermon, *The Snare Broken*" as "the fulfillment and application of his [1750] Discourse Concerning Unlimited Submission - as was, indeed, the American Revolution itself." As shall be seen, however, both Mayhew's political thought, while strongly influenced by Locke and more radical Whig sources, and his theology, however "liberal," remained firmly grounded within a religious framework that had more in common with that of Wise and earlier New England precursors than scholars have generally allowed. Moreover, Mayhew's understanding of spiritual liberty, which he conceived in traditional Puritan and very biblicist terms, was foundational to his intellectual worldview.

2. Pastor, Preacher and Controversialist.

Mayhew's public and ministerial career may have been relatively short. But in terms of output and impact, he achieved much, especially through his written works, which number more than 23 volumes published over a period of 18 years, all but four of which contained sermons. Mayhew was born at Chilmark, Martha's Vineyard on October 8, 1720, the son of Experience and Remember (Bourne) Mayhew, and the great-great-grandson of Thomas Mayhew, who had ruled the Vineyard as "proprietor, magistrate, and missionary" from 1646 to 1682. His father was a...
minister and farmer like his immediate ancestors. He was also one of Mayhew's most significant early teachers, academically as in other ways. Mayhew's financial resources were quite limited when he took up residence in Cambridge to attend Harvard College in 1738. He eventually graduated with honours six years later, but not without a number of interruptions in his studies due to lack of funds. An early enthusiast for the Great Awakening, Mayhew grew, over time, increasingly sceptical of and even hostile towards the revival of religion that shook New England life in the early 1740s. If he ever earnestly embraced them, Mayhew also came to reject the main tenets of orthodox Calvinism which shaped classical interpretations of the Awakening.

Rossiter noted the liberalizing influence of Mayhew's Harvard tutors and of his studies of Locke and the theology of Samuel Clarke (1675-1729) in that connection, as well as an alleged stay with "Old Light" minister Ebenezer Gay (1718-1796) of Hingham. Akers has likewise suggested that "Harvard had encouraged him to mine fully the vein of rationalism inherent in Puritanism and to explore widely and freely the ideas of the European scholars who struggled to keep Christianity alive in the Age of Reason." Akers arguably exaggerated the case when he stated that "before his thirtieth birthday, he [Mayhew] had knocked down the creeds of Puritanism and on their ruins had erected a monument to the rational Christian who never neglected his sacred duty to resist both political and ecclesiastical tyrants." But whatever the exact chain of influences that led Mayhew to reject much of the orthodoxy of the "New England Way," by the time he came to be ordained pastor of the West Church in 1747, he was already so identified with Arminian heterodoxy that his ordination had to be delayed nearly a month because only two of the invited ministers attended the first planned ceremony.

Notwithstanding such an inauspicious start, Mayhew ended up staying at West Church, a prosperous congregation of some 200 families in the mercantile district of Boston, for the

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12See, for example, the citations from two letters to Zachariah Mayhew and to his father, dated March 26, 1742 and October 1, 1747 respectively, in Akers, "Called unto Liberty," pp. 33-35.


14Akers, "Called unto Liberty," p. 60.

15Ibid., pp. 60-1.

16"Arminian heterodoxy" is here understood, as by Holifield, who noted, p. 83, that "by the eighteenth century, the label 'Arminian' acquired an expanding range of meanings. When such English 'Arminian' theologians as Daniel Whitby, Thomas Stackhouse, and John Taylor criticized Calvinism, they meant to reject not only predestination but also imputed guilt, imputed righteousness, and original sin." Holifield further contended, pp. 128-9, that "the Arminians of the 1750s were more adventurous than the earlier theologians of virtue, more willing to break openly from Calvinism. Tracing a progression from Ebenezer Gay to Jonathan Mayhew to the mature Charles Chauncy shows not only an increasing respect for reason...but also a movement from a cautious theology of virtue to an open attack on Calvinist orthodoxy."
remainder of his life and ministerial career. Over that 19-year period, he became known as a
tireless pastor, preacher and controversialist, who retained the loyalty of his flock and acquired
significant standing, both locally and internationally, despite his radical views. His first publication,
Seven Sermons... (1749), won such acclaim that it led to the award of a Doctorate of Divinity
from Aberdeen University in 1750. His subsequent works can be helpfully divided into the
following five categories, which give a clear indication of the range, as well as periodic
concentrations of his intellectual interests:

i. Eight political sermons published between 1750 and 1766, beginning with A Discourse
Concerning Unlimited Submission... (1750) and ending with The Snare Broken... (1766).

ii. Four volumes of sermons exploring the significance of natural disasters and “public
calamities,” especially the Boston earthquakes of 1755 and the Boston fire of 1760, from
which Mayhew drew both moral and theological lessons.

iii. Three treatises written in 1763 and 1764 in connection with public controversies over the
role of the English missionary society SPG, which Mayhew criticized, and the prospect of
an Anglican episcopate in the American colonies, which he vigorously opposed.


18Jonathan Mayhew, Seven Sermons... (Boston, MA: 1749). Citations in this chapter are from the London edition of 1750,

19In addition to his published works, Akers, pp. 235-6, noted the survival of 139 items in a collection of Mayhew’s papers
[MP] now at the Boston University Library, as well as eight manuscript sermons, preached from 1749 to 1764 and
currently held by the Henry E. Huntington Library. However, he also commented that the former contained “more letters
to Mayhew than by him,” while the latter, which have not been consulted in research for this dissertation, “amplify the
contents of his printed sermons and show that he preached much the same message in and out of print.”

20In addition to A Discourse Concerning Unlimited Submission... and The Snare Broken..., Mayhew’s published political
sermons, of which titles are here listed in full to indicate their initial occasion, included: A Sermon Preach’d in the Audience of His Excellency William Shirley, Esq.; Captain General, Governor and Commander in Chief, the Honourable His Majesty’s Council, and the Honourable House of
Representatives, of the Province of the Massachusetts-Bay, in New-England, May 29, 1754. Being the Anniversary for the
Election of His Majesty’s Council for the Province... (Boston, MA: 1754); Two Discourses Delivered November 23d 1758.
Being the Day Appointed by Authority to be Observed as a Day of Public Thanksgiving: Relating, More Especially, to the
Success of His Majesty’s Arms, and those of the King of Prussia, the Last Year (Boston, MA: 1758); Two Discourses
Delivered October 25, 1759. Being the Day Appointed by Authority to be Observed as a Day of Public Thanksgiving, for
the Success of His Majesty’s Arms, More Particularly in the Reduction of Quebec, the Capital of Canada. With an
Appendix, Containing a Brief Account of Two Former Expeditions against that City and Country, which Proved
Unsuccessful (Boston, MA: 1759); Two Discourses Delivered October 9th, 1760. Being the Day Appointed by Authority to
be Observed as a Day of Public Thanksgiving, for the Success of His Majesty’s Arms, More Especially in the Infra
Reduction of Canada (Boston, MA: 1760); A Discourse Occasioned by the Death of King George II and the Happy
Accession of His Majesty King George III to the Imperial Throne of Great-Britain; Delivered Jan. 4th 1761 (Boston, MA:
1761).

21These volumes included: Mayhew, A Discourse on Rev. XV. 3d, 4th... (Boston, MA: 1755); The Expected Dissolution...
(Boston, MA: 1755); Practical Discourses... (Boston, MA: 1760); God’s Hand and Providence... (Boston, MA: 1760).

22These treatises included: Mayhew, Observations...; A Defence of the Observations...; Remarks on an Anonymous
Tract..., which have already been cited.
iv. Six volumes of sermons and an open letter on more general theological topics, ranging from his earliest work, *Seven Sermons...* (1749), to one of his last, his 1765 Dudleian lecture at Harvard, *Popish Idolatry...* 23

v. A single funeral sermon on the death of Chief Justice Stephen Sewall in 1760. 24

Mayhew was never invited to join the Boston Association of Congregational Ministers, but he was a respected member of the Harvard Board of Overseers. 25 He also enjoyed widespread support in New England for his vigorous contributions to public debates over the role of the SPG and to the Anglican Episcopate controversy. 26 Happily married to Elizabeth (Clarke) Mayhew from 1756, he was survived by her and two daughters on his untimely death from a “nervous fever” in 1766. 27

Mayhew maintained a wide network of correspondence, including a series of noteworthy exchanges with the prominent English Whig and dissenter, Thomas Hollis (1720-1774), in his latter years. 28 But he has been chiefly known to posterity as a champion of more liberal theology and of accompanying political radicalism.

3. Schools of Interpretation.

In the most recent major dissertation on Mayhew, John Mullins bemoaned his subject’s “unwarranted obscurity” and scholarly “neglect of Mayhew in general and his contribution to the revolution in particular.” 29 But Mullins seemed to overlook the fact that Mayhew has consistently attracted the attention of historians through to the present day. Quite apart from his own views, John Corrigan thus outlined three major “schools of interpretation” of both Mayhew and Charles Chauncy, which can provide a helpful framework of historiographical reference, although they inevitably fail to do justice to the full range and complexity of Mayhew scholarship.

Most scholars to engage Mayhew’s life and work during the first two centuries after his death can broadly and sometimes simultaneously be identified with two of Corrigan’s “schools.” The first,

23 In addition to *Seven Sermons...* and *Popish Idolatry...* (Boston, MA: 1765), among volumes of sermons on more general theological topics were: Mayhew, *On Hearing the Word...* (Boston, MA: 1755); *Striving to Enter...* (Boston, MA: 1761); *Two Sermons on... Divine Goodness...* (Boston, MA: 1763); *Christian Sobriety...* (Boston, MA: 1763). Mayhew’s open letter was *A Letter of Reproof...*


25 As an example of Mayhew’s contribution towards Harvard governance, see Bradford, pp. 225-31 and the “remonstrance” which he wrote on behalf of the Board of Overseers against a project to build another college in Massachusetts.


27 Concerning Mayhew’s death and last year, see *ibid.*, pp. 217-225.

28 See, for example, Bernard Knollenberg, “Thomas Hollis and Jonathan Mayhew their Correspondence, 1759-1766,” *PMHS*, LXIX (1956), pp. 102-93.

including John Thornton, Frank Moore, Claude Van Tyne, Alice Baldwin, Max Savelle and Bailyn, concentrated on the Boston pastor's political writings and argued that "certain sermons" of Mayhew and Chauncy were "major contributions toward the formation of the rhetoric of the American Revolution." By contrast, historians like Alden Bradford, Joseph Allen and Richard Eddy, George Cooke, Herbert Morais and Akers focused on his theological ideas and saw Mayhew, with Chauncy, as "leaders in the move toward 'rational religion' in America." But Corrigan might easily have added others and these "schools" were far from mutually exclusive.

Though also describing him as theoretically "unorthodox" and an "extreme" Arminian, Baldwin expounded one of the most influential political interpretations of Mayhew's thought in The New England Clergy and the American Revolution (1928). Citing quite liberally from Mayhew's works, she thus portrayed him as "a bold and passionate advocate of civil and religious liberty," a student of Locke, John Milton (1608-1674), Philip Sidney (1544-1586) and others, and one of the New England ministers whose teachings "provide one unbroken line of descent" from "the political philosophy of the seventeenth century" to "that of the American Revolution." In a 1950 article that was reprinted in Seedtime of the Republic: The Origin of the American Tradition of Political Liberty (1953), Rossiter echoed such themes, but offered a more comprehensive analysis, viewing Mayhew as "at the same time the rough-voiced herald of a new day for religious and political liberty."
Theologically, Rossiter described Mayhew as a “radical,” whose “life-long campaign against New England orthodoxy was actually little more,” he claimed somewhat tendentiously, “than a series of opportunistic raids on a once-mighty army left defenceless by wholesale desertion.” Mayhew was thus both “the forerunner of American Unitarianism” and “New England’s most outspoken Arian,” who “preached a gospel that rejected flatly the five points of Calvinism” and espoused “a humanistic, liberal, rational, ‘natural religion.”34 In his defence of New England polity against the possible incursions of an Anglican episcopate, “the most plausible explanation for the intensity of Mayhew’s loud-voiced convictions” was “the tight connection between the aspirations of the Anglican bishops and designs of the Tory ministers.” But Mayhew consistently rallied to the cause in any “controversy with British authority,” like the furor over the Stamp Act, and his “political philosophy was the natural fruit of the liberal gospel he preached.”35 Unlike many historians to focus on Mayhew’s political thought, Rossiter freely conceded that the Boston pastor “rarely if ever discussed a subject of secular interest except in terms of Christian principle.” His three “major pronouncements on political matters” were thus all in sermonic form, and although Mayhew was “conversant with the great men of seventeenth-century English republicanism,” he consistently cited biblical texts in support of his political arguments.36 Among the latter, Rossiter especially noted a “patristic-medieval-Lockean doctrine of political authority as something held in trust for the people and exercised in their behalf,” an understanding of “the purpose of government” as social and human happiness and the common good, and a clear doctrine of the right of “popular resistance to abuses of public trust.” He also discerned an “unbending belief in personal freedom and accountability” that Mayhew called ‘private judgment’ in religion and ‘liberty’ in politics, and that we can recognize today as one of the first clear expressions of American individualism.37 Rossiter openly admitted that “Mayhew added very little to the great body of political theory,” but he was a “herald of the American Mission” and “easily the most striking representative of those dissenting preachers who from the 1740’s onwards proclaimed Locke and Milton from their pulpits and prepared the mind of New England for the Revolution.”38

35Ibid., pp. 539, 540, 541.
36Ibid., pp. 544, 545.
37Ibid., pp. 546, 549, 553.
38Ibid., pp. 552, 555, 557. Two years after Rossiter’s laudatory, proto-revolutionary synthesis of Mayhew’s views, Conrad Wright, The Beginnings of Unitarianism in America (Boston, MA: 1955), e.g., pp. 8, 63-7, 204-7, refocused attention more narrowly on his theology as an influential Arminian and early Arian. But in his study of the decline and fall of “the Puritan mind,” Schneider, pp. 194-7, returned to the bigger picture. See also H. Shelton Smith, Robert T. Handy, and Lefferts A. Loetscher, American Christianity: An Historical Interpretation with Representative Documents, (New York, 1960), Vol. 1, pp. 319, 378-82, who described Mayhew, p. 382, as “not a strict Unitarian,” but “essentially an Arian” in that while declining “to ascribe Deity to Jesus, he also refused to equate him with a human being.”
It was not until 1964 that Akers finally produced, in *Called unto Liberty*, a full-scale modern biography of Mayhew. Yet despite the many advances that Akers made in adducing scattered evidence to develop a quite detailed account of Mayhew’s life and intellectual development, he offered no systematic overview of Mayhew’s thought and his interpretation of his subject drew on very familiar themes. Echoing the judgements of “the Revolutionary generation,” Akers thus not only characterized Mayhew as “the boldest and most articulate of those colonial preachers who taught that resistance to tyrannical rulers was a Christian duty as well as a human right,” but as one who “brazenly proclaimed his abandonment of Puritan theology in favour of a ‘pure and undefiled’ version of Christianity” and a “gospel of the Enlightenment.” Akers described *A Discourse Concerning Unlimited Submission...* (1750) as a “catechism of Revolution” and identified the allegedly anti-Trinitarian views expressed by Mayhew in the mid-1750s as clearly Arian. He majored on the Whig, even “Real Whig” sources of Mayhew’s political thought and argued that historians of Unitarianism had been “right in hailing [the Arminian] Mayhew as a pioneer of their movement,” although “wrong in confusing his theology with their own.” Akers departed from previous scholars, with the exception of Rossiter, when he contended that “it was precisely because his liberalism was grounded on so much of the traditional faith, notably the authority of revelation, that he was so easily understood,” and that Mayhew played an important political role in preparing the way for the American Revolution “by helping to weld libertarian ideas to Christian tradition.” Akers concluded much more predictably, however, that “to nonbelievers, Jonathan Mayhew remained the first commander of the ‘black Regiment’ of Congregational preachers who incessantly sounded ‘the yell of rebellion in the ears of an ignorant and deluded people.’”

Just two years later, the first historian fully to advocate the innovative approach of Corrigan’s remaining “school of interpretation” of Mayhew and Chauncy, and to argue that they were actually “more interested in preserving the status quo than in fomenting rebellion,” was Heimert. In the multi-layered and highly complex argument of his 1966 *magnum opus, Religion and the American Mind*, Heimert thus highlighted Mayhew’s alleged elitism and inherent conservatism, as well as


40Ibid. pp. 81-94, 115-22

41Ibid. pp. 133-48, passim, 227.


43Corrigan, pp. x, 126, citing, in addition to Heimert, John C. Miller, “Religion, Finance, and Democracy in Massachusetts,” *New England Quarterly* 6:1 (1933), pp. 29-58; Jones, op. cit. However, Miller’s article made no reference to Mayhew at all, while Jones, although occasionally highlighting Mayhew’s social conservatism, e.g., pp. 151, 162-3, was primarily concerned with the general theological underpinnings of Mayhew’s thought, rather than with his political ideas.
his rationalism and individualism. He recognized that in earlier historiography Mayhew had stood "serenely as the exemplary Liberal revolutionary" and as a mythical figure who had come to acquire "a sort of sainthood as herald not only of a 'liberal faith' but of American democracy." Yet Heimert claimed that "the image of Jonathan Mayhew as a 'fiery Liberal'" had "every virtue except consonance with the facts" and he found it "questionable that the Boston pastor, had he lived, would have been a zealous revolutionary in the 1770s." He freely acknowledged that Mayhew "exemplified that brand of libertarianism that asserts the individual's inalienable right 'of thinking for himself'" and that "he was perhaps 'a sort of tribune of the people.'" But he also found it "difficult to view the Lockean arguments" of Mayhew's *A Discourse Concerning Unlimited Submission...* (1750) as "an early espousal of the ideology of the American Revolution" and thought that Mayhew's conservative "celebration of liberty" in *The Snare Broken...* (1766) demonstrated a socially reactionary concern "to see that none but the most cultivated members of society would share this emotion." Socio-politically, Heimert contended, Mayhew's "dilemma...lay in the seeming impossibility of reconciling an ethic of self-improvement with a conservative desire to preserve the ancient landmarks of the social order." In the final analysis, had he lived nine years longer, therefore, "for Mayhew to have made a different contribution to the uprising of 1775 it would have been necessary for him to overcome his aversions to violence, revivals, awakenings and popular enthusiasm."

In his 1965 work, *Pamphlets of the American Revolution, 1750-1776*, Bailyn not only stressed the allegedly revolutionary import of *A Discourse Concerning Unlimited Submission...* (1750). He also sought to show how "in the principles it expresses the pamphlet is a cliché of Whig political theory." Five years later, in his influential article, "Religion and Revolution: Three Biographical Studies," Bailyn offered a brief exposition of Mayhew's writings and personal struggles during the Stamp Act crisis of 1765-6 in support of his main thesis, *contra* Heimert, that "the effective determinants of revolution were political," not religious. Bailyn's central interpretation of Mayhew's actions during this crucial period was that he was seeking "to maintain the balance of social stability and political radicalism that lay at the heart of this liberal revolution," especially in *The Snare Broken...* (1766). Personally, he portrayed Mayhew as a "volatile and enthusiastic"

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44E.g., Heimert, pp. 47-8, 169-70

45Heimert, pp. 290, 274, 291, 292, 325, 275, 252, 251. Earl Edward Lewis, "The Theology and Politics of Jonathan Mayhew" (PhD. diss, University of Minnesota, 1966) addressed more familiar themes of Mayhew scholarship. His conclusion was that, p. 272, "the role of Jonathan Mayhew in intellectual history is not that of innovator, but of eclectic philosopher, able with a fair degree of logical consistency, to construct from Scripture, seventeenth-century theology and Lockean psychology and political theory, a liberal theology which denied original sin and asserted human ability, and a political theory which declared that man has the natural and divine rights to resist political and ecclesiastical tyrannies."


figure, who "ran to extremes in everything he did." Theologically, he pointed to Mayhew's "belligerent Arminianism," which "fed by the nourishment he continued to draw from the writings of such Christian rationalists as Samuel Clarke, flowered into a non-doctrinaire Arianism, easily and not incorrectly construed by his Congregational colleagues as a flat repudiation of the divinity of Christ."49 Analyzing the aftermath of Mayhew's incendiary sermon on liberty of August 25, 1765, Bailyn conceded "no indication that Mayhew deliberately sought to incite his audience to violence," but he also found "no question that he had endorsed the most radical line of resistance to Parliament's taxation, and explicitly linked such resistance to the English libertarian tradition whose public advocate he had become fifteen years earlier."50 Rather than a repudiation of such political activism, he then saw The Snare Broken... (1766) as "a statement of the social limitations of radical Whig thought," based on the assumptions that "a stable social order was the counterpart of political freedom and that a reform of politics need not be associated with social upheaval." In the process, Bailyn also contended, the sermon met a "highly personal" purpose of "redressing the balance of the preacher's reputation."51

Deliberately eschewing any discussion of Mayhew's role in the American Revolution, James Jones refocused attention on Mayhew's theology in The Shattered Synthesis: New England Puritanism before the Great Awakening (1973), where he offered a helpful, although sometimes questionable summary predicated on the notion that "for Mayhew, theology begins and ends with the goodness of God, which is the center of the Christian revelation."52 Observing that "Mayhew had no trouble identifying religion with rationality," Jones also noted that his "rationalism was combined with a certain kind of anti-intellectualism."53 All God's works, including humankind, reflected divine benevolence and so "Mayhew identified God's intention to manifest his goodness with an intention to make men happy." Moreover, this, Jones thought, was "the keystone of the liberals' edifice." In the thought of "liberal Puritans" like Mayhew, "the anthropocentric tendency of the seventeenth century reached its fullest theological expression." The net outcome was that "God was made over in the image of man's reason to make him comprehensible to man" and so "the goal of all God's actions and the criterion of all theological judgment became man's happiness."54

49Ibid., pp. 111-12.
50Ibid., pp. 119-20.
51Ibid., pp. 121, 124.
52Jones, pp. 143-64, esp. p. 145.
53Ibid., p. 147.
54Ibid., pp. 149-50.
Although Jones endorsed Heimert’s assessment of the “social elitism of the liberal vision,” he acknowledged that suffering was a fact of life in a world where “for Mayhew, as for all liberals, man’s condition was totally in his own hands.” But he also saw a logical connection between Mayhew’s “idea that God acts to uphold his own government” by permitting and/or inflicting suffering and his adoption of a “governmental” theory of Christ’s atonement.\textsuperscript{55} Jones seemed to exaggerate the human element in a “liberal plan of salvation,” where “man saves himself through obedience to the commands of Christ” and “God accepts man’s striving even though he is not required to do so.”\textsuperscript{56} But he insightfully stressed Mayhew’s rejection of the doctrine of imputed righteousness, together with his strong emphasis on the need for human effort in moral improvement. With other theological liberals, Jones thus saw Mayhew turning Puritanism into “moralism,” as “conversion became a process of character development, and piety and faith became resources for morality.”\textsuperscript{57}

In \textit{The Hidden Balance: Religion and the Social Theories of Charles Chauncy and Jonathan Mayhew} (1987), which represented only the second major monograph on Mayhew in the modern era, Corrigan advanced a distinctive new interpretation of his subject based on the findings of his earlier doctoral dissertation. Corrigan thus offered a comparative study with a threefold focus on Chauncy’s and Mayhew’s ideas on religion, government and society.\textsuperscript{58} In the process, he deliberately tried to set his work apart from that of earlier scholars, contending that:

Chauncy and Mayhew were neither strict conservatives, as Heimert has claimed, nor as radical thinkers in politics and religion as Baldwin and Haroutunian have claimed. Chauncy and Mayhew occupy a pivotal place in American intellectual life not because they proposed a sterile rationalism born of reaction to the Great Awakening, but because they affirmed the mystery and sacrality of the cosmos in new ways. They emphasized the complexity of

\textsuperscript{55}\textit{Ibid.} pp. 151, 150, 152.

\textsuperscript{56}\textit{Ibid.} pp. 154-5.

\textsuperscript{57}\textit{Ibid.} pp. 156-9, 160-1. As Jones and others continued to wrestle with Mayhew’s theological legacy, Billy Wayne Reed, “Jonathan Mayhew: A Study in the Rhetoric of Agitation” (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1974) highlighted the ongoing contributions of another group of scholars who have focused on the Boston minister’s rhetorical theory and praxis. Reed cited the following theses and dissertations addressing similar themes to his own: Virginia Covington, “A Rhetorical Analysis of Three Representative Sermons by Jonathan Mayhew” (M.A. thesis, State University of Iowa, 1957); Robert Herold, “The Rhetorical Characteristics of Jonathan Mayhew” (M.A. thesis, University of Wisconsin, 1955); Stephen Hiten, “The Historical Background of the Election Sermon and a Rhetorical Analysis of Five Sermons Delivered in Massachusetts between 1754 and 1775” (PhD. diss., University of Michigan, 1960); John F. Kuhn Jr., “Literary Art in the Writings of Jonathan Mayhew” (Ph.D. diss., University of Notre Dame, 1973). Jean-Pierre Martin, “Jonathan Mayhew: Un Théologien de la Rébellion,” \textit{Revue Francaise d'Etudes Americaines} (1976), pp. 119-27, offered a textual analysis of Mayhew’s \textit{A Discourse Concerning Unlimited Submission}, concluding, p. 119, that Mayhew’s position on the right of rebellion was “unorthodox...as compared to the usual stance of American Puritans,” and that the sermon provided evidence of “the doctrinal confusion and drift – regarding absolute monarchy – that appeared among the Massachusetts Congregationalists as early as the mid-eighteenth century.”

\textsuperscript{58}Corrigan, “The Hidden Balance: Religion and the Social Theories of Charles Chauncy and Jonathan Mayhew” was based on his “Religion and the Social Theories of Charles Chauncy and Jonathan Mayhew” (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1982).
social life and the necessity for both head and heart in religion, at a time when most of their
contemporaries had all but abandoned the responsibility for such an endeavour.  

In face of “tensions in three areas of colonial life in this period – in religion, political ideology, and
the socioeconomic order,” Corrigan thus sought to demonstrate how his two subjects presented
“an understanding of the cosmos” that was “based on two key principles: wholeness and
balance.” This was rooted in enlightened conceptions, and on that basis, Corrigan concluded, it
was not only “appropriate” to “recognize Chauncy and Mayhew as key figures of the Moderate
Enlightenment.” Their views could even be seen as constituting “one of the very few examples
among eighteenth-century American writers of the attempt to integrate ideas in all of these areas
into a coherent [Geertzian] ideology, a symbolic map of reality.”

Akers offered an insightful critique, when he pointed to the limitations of the demographic
evidence that Corrigan attempted to connect with his analysis of Mayhew’s ideas. But Robert
Wilson seemed right to observe that Corrigan “does augment and deepen our understanding of
the complexity of their [Chauncy’s and Mayhew’s] thought.” In attempting to outline major
features of Mayhew’s ideas and of his understandings of different concepts of “liberty” in
particular, there is certainly much to be gained from Corrigan’s account, and especially from his
emphasis on the inherent conservatism of Mayhew’s radicalism, such as it was.

Although Corrigan’s work is still the last major monograph, Mayhew has continued to command
significant scholarly attention since the late 1980s. Just a year before Corrigan’s publication,
Harry Stout devoted significant attention to at least four of Mayhew’s political sermons in his
brilliant overview of 17th and 18th century Congregationalist homiletics, The New England Soul
(1986). He thus drew attention to the Whig sources of A Discourse Concerning Unlimited
Submission... (1750), describing it as “a model of libertarian logic and Scripture precedent,” and
to the rhetorical power of A Sermon Preach’d... (1754), which “transformed that logic into an
enraged language that patriot ministers would later imitate in fomenting revolution against
England.” Between them, Stout argued, “these sermons would stand as the apotheosis of
Revolutionary preaching in New England.” Mayhew’s “inflammatory sermon” of August 25, 1765
meanwhile gave “Mayhew and others an unforgettable look at the popular power unleashed in

60Ibid., pp. 5, 7.
61Ibid., p. 112.
part by their own libertarian rhetoric," while *The Snare Broken...* (1766) offered a "fusion of the sacred and profane history of liberty" that "would be reiterated in countless occasional sermons."

Clark proposed a more radical interpretation in *The Language of Liberty* (1994), where he advanced Mayhew, with Andrew Eliot and John Adams, as an example of how theological heterodoxy, especially in the area of Christology, allegedly helped promote revolutionary activism among Congregationalists. For Clark, "the explicit attack on allegiance to a British monarch, defined as that allegiance was in politico-theological terms, came when the revivalist idiom, and anti-Anglican sectarian traditions of ecclesiastical polity, were mobilized by men with profoundly different theological positions, like the Arians Jonathan Mayhew and John Adams or the Deist Tom Paine." In that connection, he saw Mayhew as "by temperament, an extremist," as well as "an instinctive controversialist, an indignant and militant Arian." But Clark offered little by way of concrete evidence for such contentions. Echoing the earlier interpretation of Bailyn, he argued that in his infamous sermon of August 25, 1765, Mayhew "effectively sanctioned resistance while washing his hands of responsibility for the violence which accompanied it." Clark further suggested that in *The Snare Broken...* (1766), "Mayhew attempted to backtrack from the dangerously exposed position in which he had found himself: social stability was now presented as a precondition of political reform."

In his recent survey of American religion in the 18th and 19th centuries, Noll (2002) also followed Bailyn in interpreting Mayhew's *A Discourse Concerning Unlimited Submission...* (1750) as a "full articulation of republican ideology" and a clear example of "the ideological transformation of colonial religious discourse" in the 1740s under the influence of "Real Whig ideology." He further conceded that what he termed "Mayhew's full articulation of republican ideology might seem to support the interpretation of Jonathan Clark that progressive politics grew from heterodox theology." But he preferred to contextualize the former within Mayhew's repetition of "time-worn conventions of standard anti-Catholic theology," and he contended, contra Clark, that inasmuch

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65Ibid., pp. 262-3, 266. In his denominational study, *The Congregationalists* (1991), J. William Youngs returned to more general themes, offering a brief biography of Mayhew in which he characterized him, p. 277, in rather traditional terms as both a theological radical and a political iconoclast. In a rather pedestrian Baptist seminary dissertation, E. Randall Adams Jr., "A Critique of the Concepts 'Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness' as they Are Discussed in Sermons of Selected American Preachers from 1750 to 1783" (PhD. diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1993) studied three of Mayhew's sermons, especially *A Discourse Concerning Unlimited Submission...*, pp. 8-22, in support of his thesis, p. 193, that in the 1750-1783 period, "election preachers and other patriot preachers expressed their belief in the existence of rights that were both natural and unalienable."


67Ibid., p. 366.

68Ibid., p. 367.
as Mayhew shared “religious and political convictions...with a wide variety of other Americans from many points on the theological spectrum,” his “linkage of radical politics and heterodox theology was more eccentric than typical.” In more general terms, Noll identified Mayhew with fellow 18th century “liberal Congregationalists,” or “Boston liberals,” like Chauncy and Ebenezer Gay, who were primarily “guided by European thought” and departed from Puritan orthodoxy in proclaiming their “liberation from Calvinistic dogmas,” in exalting “the role of natural revelation at the expense of special revelation,” and in overtly espousing an Arminian elevation of “the human capacity for self-determination.”

Ignoring Mayhew’s political views altogether, Holifield honoured the stated ambit of his magisterial summary of “Christian thought from the age of the Puritans to the Civil War” (2003) and preferred to focus on Mayhew’s standing as a promoter, in Seven Sermons... and other works, of a “theology of virtue.” Holifield thus saw Mayhew as an “ally” of Chauncy, “who was ready not only to criticize specific Calvinist doctrines but also to be more explicit about his alternative.” The result was a moralistic and rationalistic theological position, in which the attribute of divine benevolence was primary, the happiness of humanity a principal goal, and Mayhew adopted a “governmental” view of Christ’s atonement that served the interests of preserving moral order. Although not labelling Mayhew’s Christology as definitively “Arian,” Holifield stressed that his “view of Jesus” as “subordinate to [God] the Father” led him “even further outside Calvinist circles.” Holifield also argued that Mayhew became “increasingly uncomfortable with the notion of eternal damnation,” but he offered no evidence for his implicit suggestion that Mayhew’s views ultimately implied “universal salvation.”

In his recent doctoral dissertation, Mullins (2005) subsequently returned to the largely political preoccupations of Baldwin, Bailyn and others. Describing his thesis as “the first book-length study of the political thought and political activism of Jonathan Mayhew,” he sought to synthesize “the history of ideas with biographical and political narrative,” and he did so quite successfully. In some ways, Mullins offered a very familiar account of Mayhew’s thought, portraying him as “a revolutionary in religion as well as politics,” for example, who departed from Calvinist orthodoxy, was “the first American openly to reject the Trinity” and consistently promoted “the Country Whig political ideology,” of which he offered “the first great restatement by an American” in A Discourse

70Ibid., pp. 138-40.
71Holifield, p. 131.
72Ibid., pp. 131-3.
73Mullins, “Abstract.”
Concerning Unlimited Submission... (1750). Where Mullins departed from some previous interpretations was in locating the deepest roots of Mayhew's thought in an Enlightenment worldview that he allegedly first acquired at Harvard. A central thesis of his dissertation was that Mayhew's “political principles derived from independent thinking about his fundamental personal values – the Enlightenment values of reason, virtue, liberty, and happiness – and these did not alter over the course of his adult life.” Through an examination of Mayhew's early intellectual development, Mullins thus sought to show how Mayhew “rejected the Calvinism of his Puritan ancestors and embraced the Protestant rationalism of the English Enlightenment.” Reviewing his political sermons of 1750-1761, Mullins then argued that Mayhew “advanced Whiggism in New England more than any other American,” whilst in his contributions to the Anglican Episcopate controversy, he not only “warned that seemingly modest and disparate encroachments were part of a wider conspiracy to subvert colonial liberty in church and state,” but “drew the philosophical battle lines of the American Revolution before the debates over taxation had begun in earnest.” In the controversies surrounding the Stamp Act, Mayhew “recognized that not just tyranny but also anarchy could destroy individual liberty.” But he remained “a Whig advocate of constitutional government” throughout, and “from the beginning of his career in 1747 to the beginning of the constitutional crisis in 1761, no-one did more to promote Country Whig ideology in New England than Jonathan Mayhew.”

Inasmuch as he simultaneously urged the primacy of both Enlightenment rationalism and Real Whig ideology in shaping Mayhew's political thought, Mullins' thesis presented clear problems of internal consistency. But he offered a potential solution to such an impasse by suggesting that it was the former that led Mayhew to embrace the latter. He also advanced a radically libertarian and individualistic view of Mayhew's understanding of liberty as “an individual right, the right of all individuals to think, choose, and act by the guidance of their own reason, to be bound by no authority not of their choosing,” which he saw as central to the "liberal consensus" which was “Mayhew's greatest contribution to the intellectual origins of the American Revolution and to the Republic he did not live to see.”

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74Ibid., p. 2.
In light of the above historiographical tradition, the remainder of this chapter will show how Mullins, like previous scholars to prioritize the radical origins and nature of Mayhew's political and religious thought, have overstated their case. As has been seen, with noteworthy variations, the scholarly testimony of the past couple of centuries has generally seen Mayhew as a pioneer of progressive, even Arian theology and Whig politics. But in reaching such conclusions, historians have often paid too little attention to more conservative elements in Mayhew's thought, not only socio-politically but theologically. While Mayhew clearly had problems with key tenets of traditional New England Calvinism, there is no conclusive evidence that he ever became a convinced Arian. At the same time, other elements of Mayhew's religious thought, including his committed Congregationalism and his consistent advocacy of conventional homiletic themes of "sin-salvation-service," are strongly indicative of more conservative theological tendencies. Politically, Mayhew plainly was influenced by Whig and "Enlightenment" philosophers. But full examination of his views of liberty, which were ultimately rooted in a Puritan understanding of spiritual liberty in Christ, together with appropriate contextualization of his allegedly most "radical" works, highlight the extent to which scholars have neglected more traditional religious themes and influences in this area of Mayhew's oeuvre. When due allowance is made for the proper complexities of his thought, a balanced portrayal of Mayhew thus raises serious objections of previous characterizations. In that sense, the Boston pastor emerges as neither the proto-revolutionary of Rossiter or Baldwin, nor the proto-Unitarian of Jones and others; neither the conflicted radical of Bailyn, nor the social reactionary of Heimert; neither the "Enlightened" consensus-builder of Corrigan nor the rationalist Whig of Mullins; but as the progressively-minded, politically active, yet traditionally-oriented "liberal Puritan" Congregationalist minister and theologian that he was.

4. Mayhew's "Liberal Puritanism."

In 1764, Mayhew wrote a public letter, dated January 17, to John Cleaveland (1722-1799), a Separatist minister in John Wise's town of Ipswich, Massachusetts. Cleaveland had published An Essay, to Defend Some of the Most Important Principles in the Protestant Reformed System of Christianity... (1763), which constituted a 108-page attack on Mayhew's Two Sermons on... Divine Goodness... (1763) and especially on the doctrine of Christian atonement presented in that work, which Cleaveland thought cast "injurious aspersions" on Calvinist orthodoxy. Mayhew's A Letter of Reproof... (1764) was a rather high-handed, arrogant and vituperative...
composition, which revealed something of the elitism that Heimert highlighted in his socio-political outlook. He wrote, he told Cleaveland, “not to dispute with, but to chastise and admonish you, for your real good; and to make you an example and warning to others.” Mayhew also made it painfully obvious in some of his opening questions and remarks that he ultimately regarded a man of Cleaveland’s education and social standing as unworthy of his time and attention at all:

Can you then possibly think it became you, an obscure person from another province, and one so unletter’d as you are; an out-cast from the college to which you was a disgrace; for some time a rambling itinerant and promoter of disorders and confusions among us; so raw and unstudied in divinity; one hardly ever heard of among us, but in the frequent reports of your follies and extravagances, and at length set up as a minister to an assembly of separatists; can you possibly think it became you to turn author on this occasion; and to take this supposed necessary work of defending the most important principles of the Protestant religion against me out of the hands of our divines of indisputable ability? What unaccountable vanity and infatuation was this?

But although Mayhew showed such clear signs of personal offence and indignation in A Letter of Reproof... (1764), his main agenda was ultimately doctrinal. In a similar manner to his self-defence against the charge of Arianism in A Defence of the Observations... (1763), Mayhew was keen to protect himself against claims that his soteriology, which Cleaveland had impugned as including the notion that “there was no absolute necessity for the sacrifice of Christ to make atonement, or to satisfy divine justice, in order to God’s forgiving the sins of men consistently with his moral goodness,” was unorthodox. Moreover, in presenting the arguments that he subsequently did, Mayhew not only demonstrated an obvious desire to preserve whatever reputation he maintained for orthodoxy in such a central doctrinal area. Before denying that he ever advanced the position that Cleaveland attributed to him, he appealed directly to the example of “eminent Protestant divines...even Calvinistical divines,” most notably William Twisse (1578?-1646), in support of it. In that sense, A Letter of Reproof..., although hardly one of Mayhew’s most notable works, provides a vivid example of a deep familiarity with and ongoing concern for reformed Protestant orthodoxy that scholars have typically neglected.

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82Akers, “Called unto Liberty,” p. 132, thus suggested that in his subsequent A Reply to Dr. Mayhew’s Letter of Reproof... (Boston, MA: 1765), Cleaveland “struck the most telling blow of the controversy by suggesting that Dr. Mayhew had not written in the spirit of the Gospel.”

83Mayhew, A Letter of Reproof..., p. 3.

84Ibid., p. 4. For other examples of Mayhew’s elitist and hierarchical social vision, see, for example, Christian Sobriety..., pp. 272-4; Two Sermons on... Divine Goodness..., p. 31.


Mayhew has so often been presented as a theological "liberal" that it is easy to lose sight of the Puritan, biblicist underpinnings of his ideas, especially in his more doctrinal sermons. To begin with his undeniable liberalism, however, in the sense that throughout his career Mayhew was consistently prepared to make and state an open departure from all five points of the orthodox Calvinism that was his New England Congregationalist inheritance, he can justifiably be characterized as theologically progressive.87

A. Problems with Calvinism.

Mayhew gave perhaps the fullest exposition of his major problems with traditional, reformed doctrine in his 14 sermons On Hearing the Word..., (1755) and his Two Sermons on...Divine Goodness... (1763). In a long note on the topic of freedom and necessity appended to Sermon IX in the former work, "Of the Nature and Principle of Evangelical Obedience," for example, the author effectively denied the doctrine of "total depravity," whilst affirming a cooperative understanding of divine grace working with human initiative to yield obedience to Christian principles and commandments. According to John Calvin, writing in his Institutes of the Christian Religion, of which the first edition appeared in 1536, original sin was "a hereditary depravity and corruption of our nature, diffused into all parts of the soul, which first makes us liable to God's wrath, then also brings forth in us those works which Scripture calls 'works of the flesh.'"88 But Mayhew took a somewhat more optimistic view of human nature. "The meaning is only this," he wrote of an earlier argument, "that God does actually afford, or is at least ready to afford, his aid and assistance to men, in such manner and such measure, that they may, thereby, work out their own salvation; so that if they do not, it is owing to criminal neglect of the power which they have, notwithstanding the supposed depravity and real imbecility of human nature."89

As shall be seen, the basic assumption of human freedom of choice was foundational to Mayhew's understanding of personal "liberty." But it was also central to his theological anthropology. In his very first published work, Seven Sermons..., (1749), Mayhew had argued that "men are naturally endowed with faculties proper for distinguishing betwixt truth and error, right and wrong," and he made a similar point in On Hearing the Word... (1755).90 "There is not the least contradiction or absurdity," Mayhew contended, "in the supposition of a creature's having active power, or being a free agent." In fact, "to deny to this great first Cause [i.e., to God], the

87For the author's generally dismissive comments about Calvinism, see, for example, Mayhew, Striving to Enter..., pp. 82-7 and On Hearing the Word..., p. 303n., pp. 403-4.


89Mayhew, On Hearing the Word..., pp. 294-303n., pp. 297-302 - italics added for emphasis.

90Mayhew, Seven Sermons..., p. 38.
power of imparting to his creatures a measure of freedom; or of making a free creature, who can
either chuse and act, or not, within a certain sphere (how narrow and limited soever that sphere
may be) is making much too free with him.91

Mayhew's pressing sense of the need to uphold freedom of choice thus weighed heavily in his
rejection of the traditional doctrine of total depravity, as did his desire not to limit divine
sovereignty, as he understood it, by denying God the power to bestow genuine free will on
humankind. Similar considerations applied in Mayhew's refusal to endorse the Calvinist doctrine
of "unconditional election." The idea defended by the 1618-19 Synod of Dort that "the good
pleasure of God is the sole cause of...gracious election," whereby God "was pleased out of the
common mass of sinners to adopt some certain persons as a peculiar people to himself"
represented not only an unduly deterministic view of salvation history, Mayhew thought.92 It also
made a mockery of the infinite goodness of God, for which he argued so forcefully throughout his
ministerial career, most notably in Two Sermons on... Divine Goodness... (1763). The idea of
eternal reprobation, in particular, was anathema to Mayhew:

What shall we say to the doctrine of God's having reprobated a great proportion of mankind;
or, from eternity devoted them in his absolute decree and purpose, to eternal torments, without
any respect or regard to any sins of theirs, as the procuring and meritorious cause of their
perdition?...I will tell you, in a very few words, what I have to say to it at present. And that is,
first, that if any persons really hold such a doctrine, neither any man on earth, nor angel in
heaven, can reconcile it with the goodness of God. And secondly, that I have not myself the
least inclination to attempt a reconciliation of these doctrines; being persuaded, that they are
just as contrary as light and darkness, Christ & Belial.93

Although he openly questioned whether "all the heathen will actually be miserable in the world to
come," Mayhew was no universalist.94 But he had strong words for what he called "dark systems
of divinity," which had the perceived effect of narrowing the scope of God's saving love and
"disturbing truly pious and good Christians with doubts and fears."95 Instead of what he saw as
the insecurities and speculative uncertainties of Calvinist orthodoxy, Mayhew preferred a grander,
more confident vision of divine grace. Great punishment was indeed to be expected for "those
who die impenitently under the gospel," but "God certainly exercises great goodness and mercy
towards such sinners in the world," in that "all are invited and persuaded, in the most gracious

91Mayhew, On Hearing the Word..., p. 296n..
93Mayhew, Two Sermons on... Divine Goodness..., p. 66.
94Ibid., p. 65.
95Ibid., p. 50.
and pathetic terms, to accept of eternal life, through him [i.e., Jesus Christ] that ‘gave himself a ransom for all.’

Thus Mayhew wrote of an “unlimited,” rather than a “limited atonement,” achieved through the saving death of Christ. Although he did not deny the role and importance of divine grace in his soteriology, rather than maintaining, with the Calvinist Synod of Dort, that “it was the will of God, that Christ by the blood of the cross...should effectually redeem...all those, and those only, who were from eternity chosen,” he vigorously upheld that all may “work out their own salvation.”

Mayhew also rejected a traditional, reformed understanding of the atonement as penal substitution in the sense that Christ died in the place of and to pay the price for the sins of humanity. Instead, he adopted what scholars have rightly called a “governmental” interpretation. “Infinite goodness itself, considered in connection with infinite wisdom, requires that order, and the highest veneration for the majesty of God, his laws and government, should be preserved amongst all his reasonable creatures. Their own good essentially depends on it.” And for Mayhew, “this important end is most effectually attained by the sacrifice of Christ ‘by whom we have received the atonement.’”

Two other important ways in which Mayhew departed from Calvinist soteriology were his rejection of the doctrine of “imputed righteousness” and his decidedly Arminian reinterpretation of “justification by faith” as a work that required human cooperation. “I cannot but observe here,” Mayhew wrote in a footnote to Sermon VI of On Hearing the Word... (1755), “that the Scripture teaches no such doctrine as that of God’s imputing the perfect righteousness of Christ to sinners for justification.” On the contrary, it was a “grand capital error” to suggest that “the merits of Christ’s obedience and sufferings, may be so applied or imputed to sinners, as to be available to

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96 Ibid., pp. 66-7, citing 1 Timothy 2:6.

97 Ferm (ed.), p. 402; Mayhew, On Hearing the Word..., p. 300.

98 Cf. Jones, pp. 152-4. Holifield, pp. 132-3 offered a clear definition of the “governmental” theory of the atonement developed by Hugo Grotius (1583-1645), as follows: “Christ died not to redeem a debt but to preserve the dignity of the divine government. Having promulgated a moral law, God could not permit its subversion without allowing the destruction of the moral order itself. When Christ died to vindicate the honor of the law, he made it possible for God to forgive sinful rebels without upsetting the moral order.”

99 Mayhew, Two Sermons on... Divine Goodness..., p. 64, citing Romans 5:11.

100 Ibid., p. 49; Mayhew, Christian Sobriety..., p. 90.
their justification and salvation, altho' they are destitute of all personal inherent goodness."\textsuperscript{101} Mayhew understood “justification,” in a traditional sense, to signify “the remission of the penalty denounced against the violators of God’s law.” But while “the doctrine of the gospel undoubtedly is, that we are justified by faith,” it was, nevertheless, “a great mistake to infer from hence, that we are accepted to the divine favour, and entitled to eternal life, without unfeigned repentance, and new obedience.”\textsuperscript{102}

On the one hand, “they go upon a wrong hypothesis, who suppose that any acts of external obedience are the ground of our justification, or necessary in order thereto.” It was faith, not works, which served that purpose and Mayhew “constantly disclaimed the doctrine of merit.” On the other hand, faith itself involved not only “an hearty belief,” but an “inward submission” to the terms of the gospel, and such submission “will, whenever there is opportunity and scope for it, be accompanied with a corresponding obedience of life.”\textsuperscript{103} Mayhew’s vision of faith in action was thus more complex than that of reformers like Luther, whose “[sola fide]” “article of a standing, or a falling church,” he plainly rejected, because it required active repentance and good works.\textsuperscript{104}

But although it was clearly Arminian, it did not involve a Pelagian understanding of salvation by works. Mayhew stated his position very explicitly in On Hearing the Word... (1755):

\begin{quote}
Whatever is necessary, according to the terms laid down in the gospel, in order to our having a title to eternal life in the kingdom of heaven, is necessary in order to our being justified in this world. But in order to our having such a title, it is necessary, that we repent of our sins and obey the gospel. This is, therefore, necessary in order to our justification....If this quality is essential to a true justifying faith; viz. that it is operative, and productive of good works; and if the faith which has this property, certainly justifies the subject of it; it follows that faith justifies, only considered as having that property; i.e. on account of the obedience involved in the idea of it.\textsuperscript{105}
\end{quote}

Jones was thus right to argue that Mayhew’s understanding of salvation was both “conditional,” in the sense that it required the fulfilment of certain conditions of behaviour, and “free,” inasmuch as “any certain connection between the endeavours of sinful creatures to obtain eternal life and their actually obtaining it...is a connection which free grace, or unmerited goodness of God, has made and established.”\textsuperscript{106} However, for Mayhew, as for other Arminians, the fourth point of five-point

\textsuperscript{101}Mayhew, On Hearing the Word..., pp. 157n., 107.

\textsuperscript{102}Ibid., pp. 175, 171-2. Mayhew offered a more extensive definition of justification, pp.205-7, as involving “the remission of sins, the acceptance of our persons to the favour and friendship of God, and a title to eternal life in the kingdom of heaven.” Christian “justification” is generally understood, as defined by John Simpson et al. (eds.), OED Online, as “the action whereby man is justified, or freed from the penalty of sin, and accounted or made righteous by God” and/or “the fact or condition of being so justified.”

\textsuperscript{103}Ibid., pp. 179-80n., 180.

\textsuperscript{104}Ibid., p. 155, citing Mayhew, Striving to Enter..., p. 155.

\textsuperscript{105}Ibid., p. 255.

\textsuperscript{106}Ibid., pp. 219, 247.

\textsuperscript{106}Jones, p. 155, citing Mayhew, Striving to Enter..., p. 44.
Calvinism, "irresistible grace," was a decidedly unscriptural doctrine. There could be no necessary connection between the call of divine grace and appropriate human response solely on the basis of divine election, because salvation was available to all who were truly "striving to enter in at the strait gate," not just to a chosen few, and men and women were clearly capable of rejecting God's gracious invitation. In Striving to Enter... (1761), Mayhew conceded that "there is grace accompanying the dispensation of the gospel, sufficient to render it effectual to the salvation of those who hear it," but that was only on the provision that "they are really desirous of, and endeavour after it." Moreover, "we see from hence the wonderful goodness and mercy of God; inasmuch as he has given us the strongest assurances of pardon and eternal life, on such terms as, by his offered grace, we may all comply with, if we really desire to do it." However, even after responding in true faith and obedience, it was possible for anyone to relapse - a consideration that was also central to Mayhew's denial of the traditional fifth point of Calvinism, the necessary "perseverance [in saving faith unto death] of the saints."

In his Practical Discourses... of 1755, which were eventually published five years later, Mayhew sought to remind his hearers, for example, "of these representations in the Holy Scriptures; which show the possibility and danger of awakened sinners, yea, of partially reformed ones, returning, after a time, to their vicious courses, and dying at last in their iniquities." So while it was important for him to affirm that "all who really desire and strive to obtain eternal life, will certainly obtain it," to foster assurance and dispense with unnecessary doubts and fears, he also accepted the corollary of that proposition that salvation depended at least partly on one's own efforts. "If it should be objected," he wrote in his sixth sermon On Hearing the Word... (1755), "that this doctrine leads men to trust to their own righteousness; I answer it is very reasonable they should do so, in one sense....Certainly then good men may so far trust to their own righteousness, as to believe it will be available with a gracious God, thro' the Mediator; so as to procure eternal life for them."
B. "Arian" Christology?

From the perspective of New England orthodoxy, Mayhew's cooperative, Arminian soteriology could thus be accused of underestimating both the sovereignty of God and the atonement of Christ. Yet while he strove mightily to affirm both, he attracted further controversy for his understanding of Christ, which later scholars, as well as contemporaries, have often interpreted as “Arian.” Mayhew's problems with credal Trinitarianism were first publicly revealed in On Hearing the Word... (1755), where he expressed the view that:

Christians ought not, surely, to pay such obedience or homage to the Son, as has a tendency to eclipse the glory of God the Father; who is without rival or competitor. The dominion and sovereignty of the universe is necessarily one, and in One; - the only living and true God, who delegates such measures of power and authority to other beings, as seemeth good in his sight; but “will not give his [peculiar] glory to another.”

Thus according to Mayhew's understanding of the godhead, which he never fully expounded, Christ "claims no authority, besides what he claims by virtue of the Father's grant, and the commission which he received from him." Moreover, his role was especially that of mediator between God and humankind, in that "he [Christ] came to make an atonement for the sins of the world" and "he died thus, not only for a few particular persons, as some seem to imagine, but 'died for all.' Mayhew rejected the title of "God the Son," as opposed to "the Son of God," and he thought "the particular mode of the divine inhabitation in Christ...neither revealed, nor to be comprehended by mortal men." He was also dismissive of those who "contend, and foam, and curse their brethren, for the sake of the Athanasian Trinity, 'till 'tis evident they do not love and fear the One living and true God as they ought to do." So Mayhew attracted considerable opposition for even raising questions of Trinitarian orthodoxy and he subsequently became known to later generations as one of the pioneers, or at least forerunners of American Unitarianism.

But it is important to note that Mayhew's refusal to specify his understanding of the relationship between the persons of Jesus Christ and the deity he called "God the Father" more precisely

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113 Akers, "Called unto Liberty," p. 116, helpfully contrasted Arianism with Trinitarian orthodoxy as follows: "The orthodox clung to the Athanasian Creed, which taught that the three persons of the Trinity were all 'cotal and coequal.' Arians maintained that the Son was subordinate to the Father, yet had existed before the creation and the incarnation." He further noted "Arian teaching that there had been a time when the Son had not existed."

114 Mayhew, On Hearing the Word..., p. 268, citing Isaiah 42:8 and/or 48:11.

115 Mayhew, Christian Sobriety..., p. 66, citing 2 Corinthians 5:15.

116 Ibid., pp. 59-60.

117 Mayhew, On Hearing the Word..., p. 403.

leaves insufficient evidence to label his Christology as decisively Arian. At the same time, writing in defence of his Observations... about the SPG in 1763, Mayhew actively denied charges of outright heresy:

That I ever denied, or treated in a bold or ludicrous manner, the divinity of the Son of God, as revealed in Scripture, I absolutely deny....I have indeed expressed my disbelief and even contempt of certain metaphysical and scolastic, unscriptural and ridiculous definitions or explications of the Trinity, which some men have given.119

Although Mayhew's doctrinal departures from Calvinist orthodoxy are unmistakable, the precise nature of his theology of the godhead thus remains unclear. In their drive to demonstrate Mayhew's heterodoxy, what scholars have also ignored are other areas of major continuity with traditional New England theology, which are strong enough to justify retaining the label "Puritan" for Mayhew, even if qualified by the adjective "liberal."

C. Committed Congregationalism.
A good place to begin is with Mayhew's consistent defence of the Congregationalist polity that was such an integral part of the "New England Way" inherited from Puritan forbears. The historical background to Mayhew's engagement in controversies over the role of the SPG and the possible establishment of an Anglican episcopate in the American colonies has been well documented by Arthur Cross and Bridenbaugh and will not be repeated here.120 Rossiter summarized the main events surrounding his involvement more concisely than any other scholar:

1. a newspaper article published in Boston in February, 1763, which seized upon the death of an Anglican missionary in Braintree as an excuse for attacking the practice of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel of placing its missionaries in settled towns;121
2. a return to these aspersions by East Apthorp, missionary in Cambridge...122
3. a quick retaliation by Mayhew...[in the form of his Observations... (1763)];
4. a series of replies to Mayhew, three from America, one from England;123
5. two further rejoinders by Mayhew, A Defence of the Observations... [1763] in reply to the most important American attack, Remarks on an Anonymous Tract... [1764] in answer to the British pamphlet;

119Mayhew, Defence of the Observations..., p. 111.
120Cross, pp. 145-60; Bridenbaugh, passim.
121See Bridenbaugh, p. 219, citing "a long letter" in the February 21, 1763 edition of the Boston Gazette, "a sort of sardonic obituary describing the career of....Ebenezer Miller."
122East Apthorp, Considerations on the Institution and Conduct... (Boston, MA: 1763).
123The three American replies to Mayhew's Observations... apparently referred to by Rossiter were: John Aplin, Verses on Doctor Mayhew's Book of Observations... (Providence, RI: 1763); Arthur Browne, Remarks on Dr. Mayhew's, Incidental Reflections... (Portsmouth, NH: 1763); Henry Caner, A Candid Examination of Dr. Mayhew's Observations... (Boston, MA: 1763). Cross, p. 150, also noted the later "broadside," Anon, Advertisement, A Certain Jonathan Mayhew... (Boston, MA: 1769?). The English reply to Observations... was Thomas Secker, An Answer to Dr. Mayhew's Observations... (London, 1764). As Cross observed, p. 151, this last work "appeared anonymously, but was later discovered to have been written by Archbishop [of Canterbury] Secker." It was included in Volume VI of the third edition of Thomas Secker, The Works of Thomas Secker... (Dublin, 1775), pp. 340-402.
6. A final pamphlet by Apthorp, in which he reviewed the entire controversy and got in a
even last blows for the Church of England and the Society. Mayhew thought it unworthy
of an answer and put an end to this war of words by ignoring it.\textsuperscript{124}

It is important to note that Mayhew's major concern throughout most of his three controversial
works of 1763-4 was the activities of the SPG. He especially targeted the society's interference in
the religious life of New England by supporting Anglican missionaries and churches with a "formal
design," as he saw it, "to root out Presbyterianism &c. and to establishing both episcopacy and
bishops in the colonies."\textsuperscript{125} Moreover, skilful controversialist that he was, Mayhew generally
eschewed any broader theological critique of Anglican Episcopalianism in favour of narrower
discursive focuses on the SPG's failures to honour the terms of its original 1701 charter and on
Apthorp's and others' alleged misrepresentations of the ecclesiastical situation in New England.
He thus began the second section of his Observations on the Charter and Conduct of the Society
for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts; Designed to Shew their Non-conformity to
Each Other. With Remarks on the Mistakes of East Apthorp... by quoting the whole preamble to
the charter. He then argued that "If the society have applied any part of their fund to support and
encourage the peculiarities of episcopacy in any such places [where established
Congregationalist ministry already existed], they have applied it in a manner not warranted by
their charter."\textsuperscript{126} As Mayhew understood the terms of the SPG's founding document, it knew of:

no distinction amongst Christians, except that of Protestants and papists: its grand object, a
truly glorious one, is, to promote Christianity, considered in opposition to atheism, infidelity and
popery; not episcopacy and the liturgy of the Church of England, in opposition to
Presbyterianism, &c.\textsuperscript{127}

One of Mayhew's primary points of contention, therefore, which he continued to pursue in both A
Defence of the Observations... (1763) and Remarks on an Anonymous Tract... (1764) was that
although leaders of the SPG had "done much, according to the true intent of their charter, as it
has been represented... they have also done much beside or beyond that intent, by supporting
and propagating the Church of England, in opposition to other Protestant churches, at a great
expençe, where their charity was not needed."\textsuperscript{128} In other words, the missionary society had
acted, Mayhew contended, "to support and strengthen the episcopal party, and gradually to bring
us into the bosom of the church [of England]."\textsuperscript{129}

\textsuperscript{124}Rossiter, "The Life and Mind of Jonathan Mayhew," pp. 537-8, edited for stylistic consistency, citing, in a footnote, East
Apthorp, A Review of Dr. Mayhew's Remarks on the Answer to his Observations... (London, 1765).
\textsuperscript{125}Mayhew, Observations..., p. 103.
\textsuperscript{126}ibid., pp. 17-18, 22-3.
\textsuperscript{127}ibid., p. 28.
\textsuperscript{128}Mayhew, A Defence of the Observations..., p. 31.
\textsuperscript{129}Mayhew, Remarks on an Anonymous Tract..., p. 35.
Concomitant with this central critique of the SPG, however, Mayhew also sought to counter both false accounts of the religious state of New England generally and the broader threat of an Anglican episcopate to the American colonies. Furthermore, as he addressed such topics, the committed Congregationalism which he shared with Wise, Eliot and Chauncy, was unmistakable. Thus contra Apthorp in Observations... (1763), Mayhew reminded his readers that "the first settlers...were such as came hither chiefly on account of their sufferings for non-conformity to the Church of England," that Congregationalist doctrines were orthodox and "very agreeable to the doctrinal articles of the Church of England," that "our churches seem to have a proper legal establishment," and that such was the spiritual vigour of New England that "the people...are all in general professed Christians." Indeed, there was "no such monster as an atheist known amongst us; hardly any such person as a Deist." Mayhew repeated such points in A Defence of the Observations... (1763), devoting particular attention to his contentions that there was "a real and effectual establishment of religion made by the laws of this province," which was Congregationalist, but that this was "perhaps, the most generous and catholic one that was ever made in any country," since it allowed for such widespread religious toleration. Mayhew was relatively undogmatic in his opposition to Anglicanism. He conceded, for example, that he was "far from being zealous against all forms of prayer," that "the bishops are now generally persons of moderation; lovers of civil and Christian liberty," and more generally, that "ministers or churches differing widely in opinion about an hierarchy, discipline, and modes of worship, may yet be equally orthodox." But he also made his personal preferences very clear. Mayhew was quite convinced that:

the most detestable hypocrisy in the sight of God and wise men, is that which is shewn in a zeal for rites and ceremonies, for external modes and forms; especially uninstituted ones, the inventions of men, while the zealots are comparatively negligent of the weightier matters of the law and gospel. Of which kind of hypocrisy there has unquestionably been much more amongst us, since the Society [SPG] was instituted than before.

In a note on the penultimate page of his A Defence of the Observations... (1763), he likewise professed that:

130 Mayhew, Observations..., pp. 39, 41, 43, 44.
131 Mayhew, Remarks on an Anonymous Tract..., p. 60.
132 Mayhew, Remarks on an Anonymous Tract..., p. 26; A Defence of the Observations..., pp. 100-1; Observations..., p. 70. Cf. Observations..., pp. 137 and esp. p. 175: "Notwithstanding he [i.e., Mayhew] is in principle and profession an anti-episcopalian, yet he sincerely loves and honors all virtuous, candid and moderate men of all denominations among Christians; by no means excepting those of the episcopal communion; with several of whom he has a personal and agreeable acquaintance which he would be glad to keep up; nor would he willingly and unnecessarily give offence to any persons of that persuasion."
133 Mayhew, Observations..., p. 93.
No treatment which I have or may receive from persons of a narrow, contracted way of thinking, shall discourage me from standing up to the utmost of my power, in vindication of our religious liberties, and congregational church order; which, in my humble opinion is more scriptural and liable to fewer inconveniences, than any other now in the world; tho' there are others for which I have a great veneration.\textsuperscript{134}

Mayhew thus had no hesitation in stating his objection "against the Church of England in general," as well as his potential regret, "from a regard to what I suppose a more scriptural way of worship, to see that church prevail here."\textsuperscript{135}

But Mayhew's fairly moderate objections to Anglicanism in general became much more pointed when he was confronted, as he was in Archbishop of Canterbury Thomas Secker's (1693-1768) \textit{An Answer to Dr. Mayhew's Observations...} (1764), with a concrete proposal for the introduction of American bishops. While conceding that this plan was not intended to "infringe or diminish any privileges and liberties enjoyed by any of the laity," Mayhew had grave doubts in two main areas.\textsuperscript{136} First, he did not trust the durability of such intentions. "Let us suppose," he asked, that bishops are to be at first sent to America with such limited powers, to reside in episcopal colonies, and to have no concern, but with Episcopalians: have we sufficient ground to think that they and their successors would, to the day of doom, or for a long time, remain contented with such powers, or under such limitations?\textsuperscript{137}

Moreover, even assuming the goodwill of current British leaders, "may not times alter, and administrations change?"\textsuperscript{138} Second, there was always the danger that "appointing bishops for America, would be a probable means of increasing the episcopal party here," and that with Anglican growth would eventually come Church of England establishment and taxes.\textsuperscript{139} The political threat of American episcopacy thus overrode Mayhew's obvious concern for maximum religious toleration:

\begin{quote}
\textquote{tho' I am a warm friend to religious liberty in the largest sense; and tho' mutual forebearance cannot be too much recommended where the differences are merely of a religious nature, or such as do not affect the liberty, safety and natural rights of mankind; yet I must own, I hope never to see popish bishops thus going about without offence, in New-England.}\textsuperscript{140}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{134}Mayhew, \textit{A Defence of the Observations...}, p. 143n..

\textsuperscript{135}Mayhew, Remarks on an Anonymous Tract..., p. 78.

\textsuperscript{136}Ibid., p. 58, citing Secker, \textit{An Answer to Dr. Mayhew's Observations...}, in \textit{The Works of Thomas Secker...}, Vol. VI, p. 394.

\textsuperscript{137}Ibid., p. 60.

\textsuperscript{138}Ibid., p. 62.

\textsuperscript{139}Ibid., p. 63.

\textsuperscript{140}Ibid., p. 71.
Mayhew's commitment to Congregationalist polity was clearly not as comprehensively, systematically or forcefully argued as that of Wise and it found major expression, like that of Eliot and Chauncy, in the context of controversy over the external threat of Anglicanism, rather than the internal challenge of presbyterianizing tendencies within Congregationalism itself. Yet in the final analysis, therefore, while Mayhew's traditionalist dedication to preserving the ecclesiastical structures of the "New England Way" sometimes showed strong evidence of political motivation, it was no less decisive. When faced with some of the charges of Henry Caner in *A Candid Examination of Dr. Mayhew's Observations...* (1763), Mayhew also laid claim to a greater measure of theological orthodoxy than has often been observed by subsequent scholars. He freely admitted that his "religious sentiments" were "in some respects, different from those of the generality of our forefathers." But he disputed Caner's allegations of Socinianism and Arianism and he upheld his allegiance to "what our pious fore-fathers considered as the most essential branches of Christianity." Moreover, despite the obvious heterodoxy of some of his theology, there is clear evidence from elsewhere in Mayhew's works that he showed the same concerns for the central homiletic themes of "sin-salvation-service" that Harry Stout has found to be consistent and unifying features of Congregationalist preaching throughout the 17th and 18th centuries.

**D. Traditional Themes of “Sin-Salvation-Service.”**

Mayhew may not have been a defender of the doctrine of "total depravity" in a strictly Calvinist sense, for example, but he did not pull many rhetorical punches when addressing the sins and shortcomings either of his West Church congregation or of the world in which they lived. When exploring, for example, the possible "special grounds and reasons of God's displeasure against us, and of his contending with us in so terrible a manner" as the Boston fire of 1760, Mayhew spoke, in remarkably "jeremiad" terms, of communal "pride," addiction to "luxury," selfishness, desire "of gain, without a due and proportionate regard to the welfare of the public and of our neighbour," and of "formality in our religion" in particular. "Many atrocious sins, and flagrant abominations, are found in the midst of us," Mayhew thundered. "Probably none of us can entirely acquit ourselves of having contributed to it [the event of the fire], by our own particular miscarriages." He was in little doubt that "the end of our being thus visited and chastised, is our reformation" and he was not afraid to indicate where reforms might be necessary. A similar concern to identify sin and to urge moral improvement is evident throughout Mayhew's works - in


142 Stout, "The New England Soul."

143 *Mayhew, God's Hand and Providence...,* pp. 21, 23.

those of a more generally didactic character, as well as in sermons designed to "improve" on various calamities or on the vagaries of political circumstance.

The inherent moralism of a publication like Christian Sobriety... (1763) containing "eight sermons on Titus II.6. preached with a special view to the benefit of the young men usually attending the public worship at the West Church in Boston," is as inescapable as that of his first publication, Seven Sermons... (1749), or of On Hearing the Word... (1755). Moreover, while such discourses clearly underline the impact of Mayhew's Arminian theology of salvation on his understanding of Christian moral duties and responsibilities, they are also strongly redolent of traditional Puritan concerns for "preparation" and "sanctification." As has been seen, inasmuch as Mayhew conceived of human "righteousness" expressed in virtuous behaviour and gospel obedience as a necessary part and parcel of the process of justification by faith, he placed the onus very much on his hearers to do their part. "Our making a wise and diligent improvement of this present life" was, he wrote in Practical Discourses... (1760), "the only opportunity which we have, or may expect, in order to work out our salvation," and by highlighting the dangers of sin, the need for salvation and the duties of Christian service, Mayhew did all in his power to urge his congregation to seize the day.

Again like his Puritan forebears, Mayhew was also fundamentally biblicist in his approach to Christian ministry and preaching, despite his broad acquaintance with contemporary thought. "I must now declare, once for all," he wrote in the Preface to On Hearing the Word... (1755):

that I will not be, even religiously scolded, nor pitied, nor wept and lamented, out of any principles which I believe upon the authority of Scripture, in the exercise of that small share of reason which God has given me: nor will I postpone this authority to that of all the good fathers of the Church, even with that of the good mothers added to it!

Mayhew's hermeneutical approach to biblical interpretation was also conservative. "The most literal and obvious sense of Scripture, should ever be adhered to," he promised in The Expected Dissolution... (1755), "till we see some plain and positive reason for departing from it." So when Mayhew delved into the Bible, as he did deeply in all his discourses, he actually found a traditional and very orthodox definition of religion.

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145 On the Puritan doctrine of "preparation," see, for example, Pettit, "The Heart Prepared." "Sanctification" is here understood, as by John Simpson et al. (eds.), OED Online, as "the action of the Holy Spirit in sanctifying or making holy the believer, by the implanting within him of the Christian graces and the destruction of sinful affections," and/or "the condition or process of being so sanctified."

146 Mayhew, Practical Discourses..., p. 73. Cf. Philippians 2:12.

147 Mayhew, On Hearing the Word..., p. iii.

"Religion consists in knowing God and Jesus Christ;" Mayhew wrote in *Practical Discourses* (1760), "in understanding his word and will; in believing what God has revealed; in loving him above all things; and an habitual care to keep his commandments, in hope of eternal life; not as of merit in us, but as the 'gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord.'" However, in his everyday preaching, while he gave extensive attention to more abstract, doctrinal issues, his major focus was on the need to turn away from sin and to work out one's salvation through a life of dedicated and morally virtuous service. "Since the substance of Christian duty consists in the love of God and of our neighbour, and in the practice of morality," Mayhew taught in one of his earliest published sermons, "this shews us what a gospel-minister's preaching ought chiefly to turn upon." As "a practical science; the art of living piously and virtuously," Christianity was "a doctrine according to godliness, not a doctrine of licentiousness." So "the great aim of it, is to make us fear and love God, and work righteousness." For Mayhew, as has been noted, faith and works were inseparable. Inasmuch as "Christianity...is not only a rule of faith, but of practice also; it is as certain that we are obliged to obey it, considered in the latter of these respects, as that we are bound to believe it, considered in the former." However, "obedience [which] respects both the morals of the gospel and the positive institutions of it" was the acid test. Indeed, "the grand concern of mankind is, to act with propriety as the subjects of God's moral government."

Scholars have often cited Mayhew's "moralism" as evidence, with his alleged "rationalism," of an inherently enlightened 18th century approach characteristic of other liberal Congregationalists. But Mayhew's perceptions of the sheer gravity of sin and evil and of the resulting human need for divine salvation linked his theology more strongly with his Puritan heritage than has sometimes been allowed. Thus even while urging his hearers to strive "to enter in at the strait gate" in a sermon on Luke 13:24, Mayhew spoke, just five years before his death, in terms that could have been a precise echo of the theology of New England's founding fathers:

The salvation revealed thro' Jesus Christ, respects, or has for its object, not the righteous, but sinners; not men, considered in a state of innocency, who would need no such salvation, but apostate, degenerate and guilty creatures, justly obnoxious to the wrath of God. It is in this view that mankind are considered in the gospel; the very foundation of which is laid in, and the


150Mayhew, *Seven Sermons*, p. 158.


152Ibid., p. 78.

153Ibid., p. 338.


155Jones, p. 160, wrote of Mayhew, for example, that "faith existed to serve morality; religion became simply a resource for human effort." Haroutunian, e.g., p. 54, adopted a similar interpretation.
whole superstructure built upon, the supposition that mankind in general are in such a state of
sin, condemnation and ruin.

It was this kind of view of the human condition that led Mayhew to affirm that “however free the
grace of God is, it is manifest that he has required something of us in order to our salvation. And
our Lord...enjoins us to strive to this end.”\textsuperscript{156} Morally upright behaviour was both reasonable and
advantageous to society, but it was also necessary to avoid spiritual death and destruction.\textsuperscript{157} For
Mayhew, “the greatness of the punishment of those who die impenitently under the gospel” was
undeniable and it was “not inconsistent with the most perfect goodness, especially in certain
cases, to punish wicked men.”\textsuperscript{158}

5. Six Definitions of Liberty.
When Mayhew wrote a lengthy letter to Massachusetts Governor, Sir Francis Bernard (1712-
1779) on December 18, 1761, he had good grounds for considerable personal anxiety and
consternation. Almost exactly a month earlier, on November 17, Mayhew had entertained two
Pokanoket native Americans as overnight guests in his Boston home. James Tallman, who was
the father of one of Mayhew’s indentured servants, had arrived in town with Judah Olson to
present a petition to the General Court, which was then in session, and they had gone straight to
Governor Bernard’s house, where he had received it personally. The two men were short of
money and Mayhew agreed to give them two dollars for their journey home. But there was one
aspect of their circumstances that troubled him so much that he subsequently made further
enquiries. The reported reason why the native Americans had been without funds in the first
place was that they had paid the Governor two dollars in return for accepting their petition.\textsuperscript{159}

On December 8, Mayhew shared his concerns about Bernard’s alleged gratuity with two close
friends, a deacon of West Church and a member of the Royal Council, one of whom offered the
possible explanation that the Governor had received the funds on behalf of the Provincial
Secretary, Andrew Oliver (1706-1774). But the matter did not remain in confidence, and three
days later, Mayhew was visited by the Deputy Registrar of the Vice-Admiralty Court, William
Story, who informed him that news of his report of Bernard’s dealings had already reached high
places. After Mayhew confirmed the details and refused to retract, Story duly reported back to
Bernard, who dispatched Oliver to call on Mayhew at 9 A.M. on December 9 and summon him to
a meeting with the Governor within the hour. Soon after his arrival, Mayhew discovered that this

\textsuperscript{156}Mayhew, \textit{Striving to Enter...}, pp. 11, 23.

\textsuperscript{157}On the reasonableness of Christian faith, see, for example, Mayhew, \textit{Christian Sobriety...}, pp. 50, 224. On its social
and temporal advantages, see, for example, pp. 256-90, \textit{passim}.

\textsuperscript{158}Mayhew, \textit{Two Sermons on... Divine Goodness...}, pp. 66-7.

\textsuperscript{159}For reliable secondary accounts, on which this summary of the circumstances surrounding Mayhew’s letter of
December 18, 1761 is based, see Akers, “Called unto Liberty,” pp. 153-61; Mullins, pp. 172-82.
was to be neither a private nor a pleasant conversation. Having invited Oliver and Lieutenant Governor Thomas Hutchinson into the room to serve as witnesses, Bernard proceeded to deny the story of his gratuity and effectively to accuse Mayhew of a slanderous defamation of character, for which he demanded "satisfaction." When Mayhew showed himself unwilling to recant or apologize, Bernard then became furious, accusing him not only of spreading a lie, but of abusing "British liberty" and admiring the Government of Oliver Cromwell. After one-and-a-half hours of hostile exchange, Bernard eventually concluded the meeting by informing Mayhew that he would be taking further advice as to how to proceed in light of Mayhew's intransigence. Another full week elapsed before Hutchinson paid a visit on December 16 in an abortive attempt to act as mediator. The following day, Mayhew's friend Harrison Gray informed him that Governor Bernard was suggesting private arbitration of the matter. But despite the fact that Mayhew eventually learned from his brother Zachariah Mayhew (1718-1806), who interviewed Tallman in Martha's Vineyard, that the two native Americans had actually mistaken Bernard's identity and given the gratuity to one of his servants, there is no record that Bernard and Mayhew ever formally resolved their differences.

Instead, Mayhew continued to uphold his position, not only in his letter of December 18, 1761, but in a 64-page memorandum on the matter to an unnamed friend, entitled "A Circumstantial Narrative," which remains in Mayhew's unpublished papers. The general tone of both documents was predictably defensive. But they also offer fascinating insights into Mayhew's politics. In the "Narrative," for example, Mayhew speculated that the real causes for Bernard's anger had been partly political. The Governor resented the minister's denunciations of Charles I and other Stuart monarchs in A Discourse Concerning Unlimited Submission... (1750), he thought, as well as his "notions of civil liberty" and elements of his recent praise of the late Chief Justice Stephen Sewall in A Discourse Occasioned by the Death of the Honourable Stephen Sewall... (1760). In his letter to the Governor, Mayhew took particular offence at "another angry expression" that he allegedly "adored the Oliverian [i.e., Cromwellian] times," a charge which he rejected, although he could not help casting ironic aspersions on Bernard's own political views at the same time:

But I now beg leave to add, that I am as far from adoring those times of confusion and religious madness, as Your Excellency is from adoring the times of the Jameses and Charleses, when arbitrary power was carried to such enormous lengths, that hardly any wise and honest man could, with freedom and safety, speak his thoughts. And, surely, Your Excellency is far from adoring such wretched and despotic times as those.

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160See above, p. 114, n.19. Mayhew's "A Circumstantial Narrative," is to be found in Boston University's collection of his papers (MP, No. 61). According to Akers, "Called unto Liberty," pp. 158, 160, Mayhew also prepared a second letter to the governor, which he never sent, and after receiving clarification about the initial incident from his brother, he "admitted privately that there had been no bribe involved in the case."

161Ibid, pp. 159-60; Mullins, p. 180.

162Mayhew letter to Francis Bernard, December 18, 1761, as reprinted in Bradford, pp. 217-224, esp. 222.
Although he may have oversimplified their respective positions and exaggerated the ramifications of the 1761 dispute, Mullins seemed justified in contrasting such alleged differences between Bernard and Mayhew as those between “Court versus Country, Tory versus Whig” perspectives.  

Another dimension of this conflict, which Akers and Mullins acknowledged, but arguably underplayed, was the obvious religious tensions between the High Church Anglican Governor and the dissenting Congregationalist pastor. Yet Mayhew clearly saw them as important. He suggested in his “Memorandum,” for example, that the Governor, who was a member of the SPG, did not like Mayhew’s opposition to the Church of England’s “39 Articles,” to Anglican liturgy, or to the establishment of an Anglican episcopate in the American colonies. He also stated, in his letter of December 18, 1761, that rather than “the Oliverian times,” he adored “him alone, who was before all times, even from everlasting to everlasting; who always does right, and can never do wrong.” Mayhew clearly linked religious and political concerns together when he went on to observe:

If I adored any times, they would be those of the Glorious Revolution, when the nation was almost miraculously rescued from tyranny, and its liberties, by the Bill of Rights, &c., were established upon the present basis; which I pray God may be immutable.  

Yet even in the context of such a practical piece of correspondence, Mayhew’s discourse of liberty, such as it was, was primarily theological in origin. “I am confident you have no desire,” he thus told Bernard:

to obtain and establish such a universal influence over the tongues or pens of His Majesty’s loyal subjects as is not warranted by law; such an one as is not consistent with the genius of the British Government; in short, such an one as true Britons neither will nor ought to be under, so long as they enjoy both tongues and pens, and their liberties.

While laying claim to the freedom of expression that he valued so highly among the civil liberties guaranteed by the Protestant British Constitution, however, Mayhew made it very plain that his understanding of such a right and privilege was fundamentally biblical. “I beg...that you would not entertain so hard a thought of me,” Mayhew continued, with reference to his own free speech, “as to suppose, that I ‘use liberty for a cloak of maliciousness;’ against which I have often cautioned others.” So rather than an individualistic or solely political right to say what he wanted, what

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164 Akers, “Called unto Liberty,” p. 159; Mayhew in Bradford, pp. 222-3.
Mayhew was ultimately pleading for here, as he cited 1 Peter 2:16, was a traditional notion of spiritual freedom to do good.\textsuperscript{165}

In turning to consider Mayhew's conceptions of liberty in more detail, it may be helpful to bear such an example in mind. For it points, with many others, to the continuing influence and significance of a traditional, reformed doctrinal heritage that scholars have generally underestimated in their concerns to identify Mayhew's "liberal Puritan" thought with theological and political radicalism. Moreover, the best place to start in any exploration of Mayhew's ideas of liberty is with his own definition of different forms of it in another "Memorandum," which outlined his incendiary sermon of August 25, 1765 on Galatians 5:12-13.

In that document, Mayhew identified no fewer than six "acceptions of the word," including the following:

1. "Philosophical liberty, or freedom of choice & action.
2. Gracious liberty, given in regeneration, and consisting in a will or disposition to do good, in opposition to the slavery of [sin].
3. What is commonly called religious liberty; or that natural right which every man has to worship God as he pleases, provided his principles & practices are [not] prejudicial to others.
4. Liberty, or freedom from the ceremonial law, which law is considered in scripture as a yoke & burthen to those who were under it.
5. That liberty which every man has, in what is commonly called a state of nature, or antecedent to the consideration of his being a member of civil society; consisting in a right to act as he pleases, in opposition to being bound by any human laws; always provided that he violates no law of God, nature or right reason; which no man is at liberty to do.
6. Civil liberty...\textsuperscript{166}

It immediately emerges from this document that two of Mayhew's definitions, of "gracious liberty" and "liberty from the ceremonial law," are solely biblical in origin, while the other four all draw on philosophical and/or political sources to differing degrees. "Gracious liberty" makes no sense at all outside of a more or less reformed theological framework, while "liberty from the ceremonial law" is a Pauline category stemming directly from the New Testament.\textsuperscript{167}

Mayhew's fullest treatment of what he termed "philosophical liberty," or "freedom of choice and action" is found in an extended footnote to Sermon IX of \textit{On Hearing the Word...} (1755), where

\textsuperscript{165}Ibid., p. 221.

\textsuperscript{166}Mayhew, "Memorandum," in Bailyn, "Religion and Revolution," pp. 140-3, p. 141. In his usage elsewhere, moreover, Mayhew clearly deployed the word "liberty" in a seventh, even more general sense, which cannot be reduced to any of the other six definitions.

\textsuperscript{167}Mayhew's notion of "gracious liberty, given in regeneration, and consisting in a will or disposition to do good, in opposition to the slavery of [sin]" depended on a reformed theological understanding of regeneration and salvation as processes which restored freedom of choice to a fallen humanity. As shall be seen, his primary sources for the biblical concept of "liberty, or freedom from the ceremonial law" were found in the New Testament Epistles to the Galatians and to the Romans.
he considered the topic of "liberty, as opposed to necessity." In other writings, Mayhew spoke in very general terms of "liberty and freedom of thought," for example, of "the mind, which...was born free," of "the moral powers, the liberty, and proper agency of his [God's] rational creatures" and of man being "a reasonable creature, or a proper subject, a free, moral agent, one naturally capable of understanding, and being influenced by rational motives." Such anthropological presuppositions were clearly central to Mayhew's vision of Christianity as an inherently rational religion that reasonable people would naturally and freely embrace, when given the choice. But it was when he came to treat "of the nature and principle of evangelical obedience" that he expounded his views on "the old question concerning liberty" and on "the doctrine of human freedom, as opposed to necessity" in some depth. Moreover, Mayhew's ideas on the controversy were largely grounded in an empirically pragmatic, philosophical realism that led him to refuse to accept that human experience of freedom could be fundamentally misleading or deceptive in any way.

In the first place, the notion of philosophical liberty was linguistically essential, Mayhew argued, inasmuch as "all human language is exactly accommodated to the doctrine of freedom: so that we could neither understand each other, nor ourselves without the idea of liberty; or a power both of choosing and acting variously, or differently, within a certain sphere, under any given circumstances." Above and beyond the fact that "all men have... the idea of liberty," however, direct human consciousness and experience of freedom made it empirically absurd to deny that it really existed. For Mayhew, the concept of philosophical liberty was "a natural one, brought into our minds by daily observation. And if this is the case, it is surely natural to believe there is freedom." In cosmological terms, Mayhew accepted an Aristotelian understanding of God as the "first mover" in a universal chain of cause and effect. But having affirmed God's status as "a free being" with the attribute of "active power," he went on to propose that such an attribute must also be communicable to humankind. Thus for Mayhew, "we are not more certain of any one thing, except, perhaps, of our own existence, than that we are free creatures." He was even prepared to concede that "we are more certain...that we are free, from daily experience, than we

168Mayhew, On Hearing the Word... pp. 294-303n. References are to the edition of this note reprinted in Bradford, pp. 155-64.

169Mayhew, Seven Sermons... pp. 54, 60; Two Discourses Delivered October 9th, 1760... p. 27; Christian Sobriety... p. 22.

170See, for example, Jones, pp. 146-7.

171Mayhew, On Hearing the Word... p. 284. "Of the Nature and Principle of Evangelical Obedience" is the title of Sermon 9 in On Hearing the Word...

172Ibid., in Bradford, pp. 156-7.

173See ibid., p. 157, where Mayhew argued: "To deny to this Great First Cause the power of imparting to his creatures a measure of freedom; or of making a free creature, who can either choose and act, or not, within a certain sphere, (how narrow and limited soever that sphere may be,) is making much too free with him."
can be of the truth of Christianity." To reject such a certainty, or "first principle," would lead to an epistemological "abyss," an "endless labyrinth of doubts, from whence no clue can extricate us." But it would also have serious moral consequences, in that "there is a close, an intimate connexion, betwixt the ideas of blame-worthiness and liberty; so that the former cannot be without the latter....Nor can a man calmly and coolly think any action really culpable, or him that did it of ill-desert, without presupposing that he was a free being."

A denial of philosophical liberty would have equally serious implications for one's doctrine of God. For how could "the great author of our being...resent, or be angry with his creatures, for any thing besides the abuse, or the neglect, of their own freedom and active powers"? In point of fact, "human liberty is...the true basis of the moral constitution of things." Mayhew readily admitted that for Calvinists, "the doctrine of necessity, if true, would indeed afford a solution of some of the difficulties respecting fore-knowledge, predestination, and their mechanical conversion." However, he saw insuperable difficulties in trying to square it with any acceptable understanding of divine justice. On the one hand, how could a perfectly good and omnipotent deity punish men and women for actions in which they ultimately had no choice? On the other, how could any counter-claim that "vicious men are justly punished, because they are not actuated by a foreign, external constraint, but will, and choose to sin, and do it voluntarily" be consistent with a rigorously applied notion of necessity? "Philosophical liberty" was thus integral to Mayhew's conceptions of human moral responsibility and of divine justice. But that did not mean that he saw no place for "gracious liberty, given in regeneration, and consisting in a will or disposition to do good, in opposition to the slavery of [sin]," or for his fourth definition of liberty, "freedom from the ceremonial law," as defined in the New Testament. On the contrary, inasmuch as such notions of spiritual liberty were not only crucial to his theological worldview, but informed, through a biblicist discourse of liberty that Mayhew consistently deployed, his libertarian thought as a whole, they were ultimately the most foundational of all.

Mayhew's dealt with "ceremonial liberty" in a strictly Pauline sense in the "Memorandum" of his August 25, 1765 sermon on Galatians 5:12-13, in which he identified those deemed by the apostle Paul to be "troubling the Galatians" as "judaizing Christians, who adhered to the ceremonial law, particularly to circumcision; and who insisted on the Gentile converts submitting to the same heavy yoke & burthen." In that context, Mayhew interpreted the words "for, brethren,"

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174Ibid., pp. 158-9, 161.
175Ibid., pp. 160-1.
176Ibid., pp. 163-4.
ye have been called unto liberty" in Galatians 5:13 as proof that "the apostle considered liberty in general as a great good, or important blessing; and that he was accordingly justly provoked with the judaizing Christians for usurping on the [ceremonial] liberty of the Gentiles in one instance, by troubling them about circumcision."¹⁷⁸

As has been noted, despite his concern to uphold an Arminian understanding of free choice in his soteriology, Mayhew was consistent in seeing Christian salvation as an essentially cooperative process, in which divine grace was nevertheless paramount. He was thus also able to stress the importance of "gracious liberty" without impugning the "philosophical liberty" that was so central to his general conception of the human condition. When speaking "On the Shortness and Vanity of Human Life. Occasioned by the Death of a Young Person" in Sermon XII of On Hearing the Word... (1755), for example, Mayhew made the following observation on the Christian predicament:

Our condition is not desperate: so far from it, that God has made ample provision for our deliverance from this state of bondage, corruption and death, into the glorious liberty of his sons. For as in Adam we die, so in Christ we may be made alive.¹⁷⁹

In his Practical Discourses... (1760), Mayhew defined "moral liberty" as involving "a fixed habit of piety, and obedience to God's commandments," and he later spoke, in the same work, of "a life of irreligion and vice" as "naturally productive of many evils and disquietudes, from which the contrary course of life is free."¹⁸⁰ But while the proper exercise of "gracious liberty" might thus entail disciplined application, it was one of the most hopeful and inspiring implications of Mayhew's thoughts on "divine goodness" that:

When we reflect, that according to the apostle Paul, where sin has abounded, grace does much more abound; and that the same creature [or creation] which was originally made subject to vanity, is to be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God....light and comfort arise out of darkness and sorrow.¹⁸¹

Mayhew's reference to Romans 8:21 in this passage can be seen as representative of a familiar pattern that occurred frequently in his works of citations of and/or allusions to key New Testament usages of the word "liberty." Other biblical texts deployed in this fashion included John 8:36, 2 Corinthians 3:17, Galatians 5:1 and 5:13, James 1:25 and 2:12 and 1 Peter 2:16, in particular.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁸Ibid., p. 141.
¹⁷⁹Mayhew, On Hearing the Word..., p. 436, citing Romans 8:21; 1 Corinthians 15:22.
¹⁸⁰Mayhew, Practical Discourses..., pp. 109-10, 134.
¹⁸¹Mayhew, Two Sermons on... Divine Goodness..., pp. 89-90, citing Romans 5:20, 8:21.
¹⁸²The full text of these verses is as follows: John 8:36 - "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed;" Romans 8:21 - "Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God;" 2 Corinthians 3:17 - "Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty;" Galatians 5:1 - "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage;" Galatians 5:13 - "For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not
Moreover, they were all central to Mayhew's development of a biblically based, libertarian discourse which ultimately shaped the whole of his thought about liberty, including, as shall be seen, his political philosophy. A key example of how such texts came to be deployed in Mayhew's works is found in his treatment of James 2:12 in Sermons 8-10 of On Hearing the Word... (1755), which addressed "justification by faith," "the nature and principle of evangelical obedience" and "the extent of evangelical obedience." Mayhew first cited the verse towards the beginning of his sermon on justification, where he saw "an obvious inference" from James' command to "so speak...and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty," that "we cannot now be justified by this law of liberty." He had already defined the latter as "no other than the gospel-rule of life and manners" and he contended that even on the Day of Judgement, "the law of liberty will not then justify us, unless we have sincerely obeyed it." As such, the "gracious liberty" which Mayhew had in mind here involved more than the spiritual "deliverance from" a "state of bondage, corruption and death, into the glorious liberty of [God's] sons," which he discussed elsewhere. It consisted not only in "a will or disposition to do good," but in their practical realization. Mayhew rejected any notion that the "law of liberty" was a "legal dispensation," but he was keen to affirm the importance of "Christian obedience therein," albeit "with reference to the gospel of Christ." In that sense, notwithstanding Mullins' recent protestations to the contrary, Mayhew's understanding of spiritual liberty bore much less resemblance to liberal individualist notions, than to the traditional Puritan one as "a liberty to [do] that only which is good, just and honest." Mayhew made this view much more specific in two other places in his works. In the second of Two Discourses Delivered October 9th, 1760..., he cited another key biblical text, 1 Peter 2:16, which united the ideas of liberty and Christian service in one locus. "Let us be admonished," he exhorted his hearers, "to make it manifest, that we have a proper sense of God's undeserved goodness to us, by forsaking all our evil practices; whatever is displeasing in his sight, and serving him in holiness and righteousness according to the gospel of his Son: as free, and not using our liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God." In his first sermon on Christian Sobriety... (1763), Mayhew repeated the biblical reference in connection with an even more explicit identification of "gracious liberty" with freedom to do good. "Are you at liberty to act unreasonably?" he asked the young men in his West Church congregation rhetorically. "Have you

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Mayhew, On Hearing the Word..., pp. 223-4.


Mullins, p. 253; John Winthrop, in Miller and Johnson (eds.), Vol. 1, p. 207.
a right to reject the truth?” But then he answered his own questions. “You cannot think that you
have any such right as this, to do wrong; or that you may ‘use liberty for a cloak of
maliciousness.’ 186 So just as in traditional Puritan conceptions, there was a clear internal tension
in Mayhew’s conception of “gracious liberty” between the affirmation that a believer was free in
the sense that he or she had been released from “the slavery of sin,” and the recognition that
Christian freedom was only really worthy of the name, if it was pursued within the bounds of
“evangelical obedience” and so resulted in good works. Moreover, despite the influence of the
philosophy of Locke and of radical Whig ideology, which Bailyn, Mullins and others have been
right to point out, the same was true of Mayhew’s notions of “religious” and “civil liberty,” which
owed more to similar biblical and theological roots than has often been allowed.

Mayhew spoke and wrote frequently of both “religious” and “civil liberty,” and often in connection
with each other as necessary, constituent parts of what it meant to live in a free nation and
society in full possession of what Shain has defined as its “prescriptive” liberties.187 As early as
1751, he enthusiastically and patriotically described, in A Sermon Preached at Boston..., the late
Frederick, Prince of Wales, as “established in these glorious principles of a free government and
free religion,” and of his royal descent, “which was from an illustrious house, the patrons and
bulwark of liberty, from the very beginning of the Reformation.”188 Mayhew often expressed his
loyalty to the British monarchy, as well as his pride in and allegiance to such a constitutional
heritage of liberty, although his understanding of recent history led to some ambivalence about
the extent of religious freedoms in Britain. On the one hand, he thanked God, in his A Discourse
Concerning Unlimited Submission... (1750), that “one may, in any part of the British dominions,
speak freely (if a decent regard be paid to those in authority) both of government and religion;
and even give some broad hints that he is engaged on the side of liberty, the Bible, and common
sense, in opposition to tyranny, priestcraft, and nonsense, without being in danger either of the
Bastille or the Inquisition.”189 On the other, he vigorously upheld, like earlier Puritans, the
historical contention argued in his Election Sermon of 1754, that “our ancestors, tho’ not perfect
and infallible in all respects, were a religious, brave, and virtuous set of men, whose love of
liberty, civil and religious, brought them from their native land into the American deserts.”190 Thus
while Mayhew could dream in that same address of “Liberty victorious! Slavery biting her own

187Shain, p. 171.
188Jonathan Mayhew, A Sermon Preached at Boston..., p. 29.
189Mayhew, A Discourse Concerning Unlimited Submission..., in Bailyn (ed.), “Pamphlets of the American Revolution,
1750-1776,” p. 213.
190Mayhew, A Sermon Preach’d..., reprinted in A. W. Plumstead (ed.), The Wall and the Garden: Selected Massachusetts
chain! Pride brought down! Virtue exalted! Christianity triumphing over imposture! And another Great Britain rising in America!” he could equally well defend his Observations... (1763) with the assertion that his forebears “came hither chiefly on a religious account:- that they might enjoy intire liberty of conscience, free from those restraints and embarrassments, not to say persecutions, which they suffered there.”191

“Religious liberty” was, therefore, one of the key distinguishing characteristics and virtues of the Puritan “errand into the wilderness,” as Mayhew understood it, and it was central to his continuing vision of a free and just society. Towards the beginning of his Seven Sermons... (1749), Mayhew cited apostolic precedent for encouraging “liberty and freedom of thought,” and quoted one of the key texts which he deployed in that connection throughout his ministerial career.192 Moreover, in his appeal to Galatians 5:1, Mayhew clearly extended its application from “ceremonial liberty” in a strictly Pauline sense to a much broader definition of “religious liberty.” Thus he began his argument with a clear reference to ceremonial matters:

When the Jewish converts in Galatia (being still zealously attached to the law of Moses) were for imposing certain opinions and practices upon the Gentiles, the same apostle [Paul] took the part of the latter; and even enjoined it upon them to vindicate their religious and Christian rights against all such encroachments – Stand fast, says he, in the liberty, wherewith Christ has made you free: (i.e. assert your freedom from the Mosaic law, and all the old Jewish institutions) and be not again intangled with any yoke of bondage.

But Mayhew then pursued his exposition with a strong, albeit initially parenthetical focus on religious freedom in general:

(i.e. stand up in defence of your Christian liberty, not only against these your judaizing brethren; but also against all others who shall attempt to exercise any kind of spiritual tyranny over you.) So that it is not left to the option of Christians whether they will relinquish their natural liberty in religious matters, or not; they are commanded to assert it. God has given us abilities to judge even of ourselves what is right: and requires us to improve them. He forbids us to call any man master upon earth.193

For Mayhew, it was “one of the chief honours of the present age, that the principles of religion, particularly of religious liberty, are better understood, and more generally espoused, than they have, perhaps been, since the days of the apostles.”194 New England’s British heritage was central to this. In his Thanksgiving Sermon of 1758, for example, Mayhew was eager to point out, “how great the blessing is, of having the life of a good Protestant King, the British Government, and with it our rights and liberties, secular and sacred, preserved to us.”195 Mayhew defined

191Ibid., pp. 311-12; Defence of the Observations..., p. 48.
192Mayhew, Seven Sermons..., p. 54.
193Ibid., pp. 57-8.
194Mayhew, On Hearing the Word..., p. 16.
"religious liberty" in very broad terms. As already noted, it involved "intire liberty of conscience," free from the kind of "restraints and embarrassments, not to say persecutions," which New England's founders once suffered in Britain. 196 It entailed freedom to use different forms of worship and church government, even the episcopalian. In fact, uniformity in "modes of worship and discipline" was "not to be expected, unless in countries where the invaluable blessing of liberty is sacrificed to a far inferior object." 197 As has been seen, Mayhew was a committed Congregationalist who strongly opposed the introduction of English bishops into America, partly because he saw them as a threat to other freedoms. But he described himself as "a warm friend to religious liberty in the largest sense," by whom "mutual forbearance cannot be too much recommended, where the differences are merely of a religious nature, or such as do not affect the liberty, safety and natural rights of mankind." 198

Locke's influence on Mayhew's understanding of "natural liberty" emerges clearly from the whole conceptual framework of his sermon "Memorandum" on Galatians 5:12-13. 199 Indeed, Mayhew's fifth definition of liberty, which he did not actually treat at all elsewhere in his works, can be understood entirely in Lockean terms. Just as Locke defined "the state of nature" as "a state of perfect freedom [for people] to order their actions, and dispose of their possessions, and persons as they think fit, within the bounds of the law of nature, without asking leave, or depending upon the will of any other man," so Mayhew understood such natural liberty as that which "every man has, in what is commonly called a state of nature, or antecedent to the consideration of his being a member of civil society; consisting in a right to act as he pleases, in opposition to being bound by any human laws; always provided that he violates no law of God, nature or right reason; which no man is at liberty to do." 200 Moreover, Mayhew's extensive definition of "civil liberty" which followed was shaped by similarly Lockean presuppositions.

In general terms, Locke understood liberty as:

to be free from restraint and violence from others which cannot be, where there is no law: but freedom is not, as we are told, a liberty for every man to do what he lists: (for who could be free, when every other man's humour might domineer over him?) but a liberty to dispose, and order, as he lists, his person, actions, possessions, and his whole property,


197 E.g., Mayhew, Observations..., pp. 80, 175.


199 Mayhew directly acknowledged his intellectual indebtedness to Locke. See, for example, Christian Sobriety..., p. 326; The Snare Broken..., in Sandoz (ed.), Vol. 1, p. 259.

within the allowance of those laws under which he is; and therein not to be subject to the arbitrary will of another, but freely follow his own.\textsuperscript{201}

“Natural liberty” might involve being “free from any superior power on earth,” but in civil terms, “the liberty of man, in society, is to be under no other legislative power, but that established, by consent, in the common-wealth, nor under the dominion of any will, or restraint of any law, but what the legislative shall enact, according to the trust put in it.” Furthermore, amongst the various forms of government, including democracy, oligarchy or different types of monarchy, the “community” was free to decide, “as they think good.”\textsuperscript{202} Likewise, for Mayhew:

Civil liberty....supposes men to be united together in civil society, or a body politic: since they who continue in that, which is usually termed a state of nature, can with no propriety be said to enjoy civil liberty....This also supposeth, that men, for the sake of common good, and mutual security, give up some part of their natural liberty, or the right which they have in a state of nature, to act as they please, each individual for himself.....It supposeth the restraint of laws, some persons to govern, and some to be governed. For people do not enjoy civil liberty, where each individual does what is right in his own eyes, without any regard to others. This is a state of anarchy & confusion; as distant from a state of civil liberty, as slavery itself, in which it often terminates, one extreme leading to another, seemingly the most opposite there to. Civil liberty also supposeth, that those laws, by which a nation is governed, are made by common consent & choice; that all have some hand in framing them, at least by their representatives, chosen to act for them, if not in their own persons. If a nation is governed according to laws made by a single person, only for his own interest or pleasure, and one whom they do not chuse or appoint to govern them, such nation is in a state of slavery. Nor does it make any material alteration in the case, if the laws by which they are governed, are made by a considerable number of persons instead of one, if they are thus governed, contrary to, or independently of, their own will & consent. The essence of civil liberty does not consist in, or depend upon, the number of persons, by whom a nation is governed; but in their being governed by such persons & laws, as they approve of.\textsuperscript{203}

In his last published sermon, The Snare Broken... (1766), Mayhew acknowledged some of his intellectual debts, as he spoke in glowing terms of his education in and love of “the doctrines of civil liberty.” He had been “taught by such men as Plato, Demosthenes, Cicero and other renowned persons among the ancients; and such as Sidney, Milton, Locke and [Benjamin] Hoadley, among the moderns.” However, even in the arena of practical politics, Mayhew also drew on his Puritan, biblical heritage. “Earlier still [he had] learnt from the holy scriptures that wise, brave and vertuous men were always friends to liberty” and that freedom, therefore, was “a great blessing.” He was thus able to see the repeal of the Stamp Act in remarkably providential terms and to cry to civil liberty personified, or even deified, “Hail! Celestial maid, the daughter of God, and excepting his Son, the first-born of heaven!”\textsuperscript{204}

\textsuperscript{201}Locke, p. 324.
\textsuperscript{202}Ibid., pp. 301, 372.
The extent to which Mayhew’s understanding of civil liberty was shaped by his theological worldview, as well as by his readings in ancient and modern philosophy is evident throughout his works. As early as his *A Discourse Concerning Unlimited Submission...* (1750), Mayhew was able to oppose annual celebrations of Charles I’s supposed “martyrdom” on January 30 and to defend the Puritan Revolution that gave rise to the King’s execution on the basis of a quite detailed exposition of one of the standard biblical texts cited in support of obedience to civil authority, Romans 8:1-8. Mayhew gave a conventional summary of key points of “the apostle’s doctrine, in the passage thus explained,” as follows:

That the end of magistracy is the good of civil society, as such....That civil rulers, as such, are the ordinance and ministers of God, it being by his permission and providence that any bear rule, and agreeable to his will that there should be some persons vested with authority in society, for the well-being of it....That disobedience to civil rulers in the due exercise of their authority is not merely a political sin but an heinous offence against God and religion....(From whence it follows, that if unlimited obedience and nonresistance be here required as a duty under any one form of government, it is also required as a duty under all other forms, and as a duty to subordinate rulers as well as to the supreme.) And lastly, that those civil rulers to whom the apostle enjoins subjection are the persons in possession; the powers that be, those who are actually vested with authority.205

Furthermore, it was through the adoption of a particular hermeneutic approach to Romans 13:1-8, rather than an immediate appeal to contemporary philosophy or to Whig ideology that Mayhew came to the conclusion that “if those who bear the title of civil rulers do not perform the duty of civil rulers but act directly counter to the sole end and design of their office; if they injure and oppress their subjects instead of defending their rights and doing them good, they have not the least pretense to be honored, obeyed, and rewarded.”206 D. A. Lloyd Thomas discerned four main “grounds for justifiable rebellion” in Locke’s *Second Treatise*, including a government’s failures “to enforce the law of nature,” “to further the public or common good,” to maintain public “trust” or to “act within the bounds of positive law” and he expounded all of them within the terms of a developed political philosophy or theory.207 By contrast, in his *A Discourse Concerning Unlimited Submission...* Mayhew appealed straight to the revealed truths of Scripture, as he expounded them. Commenting on the literary and historical context of Romans 13:1-8, Mayhew argued that it was with “persons of...licentious opinion and character that the apostle is concerned. And all that was directly to his point was to show that they were bound to submit to magistracy in general.” Those magistrates who deserved full civil obedience were “good rulers, such as are, in


206Ibid., p. 228.

the exercise of their office and power, benefactors to society." But "rulers have no authority from
God to do mischief." In fact,

common tyrants and public oppressors are not entitled to obedience from their subjects by
virtue of anything here laid down by the inspired apostle. I now add, farther, that the apostle’s
argument is so far from proving it to be the duty of people to obey and submit to such rulers as
act in contradiction to the public good and so to the design of their office, that it proves the
direct contrary.208

It was on the basis of such apostolic doctrine, therefore, that Mayhew supported active resistance
against a monarch, like Charles I, become tyrant. "The hereditary, indefeasible, divine right of
kings, and the doctrine of nonresistance, which is built upon the supposition of such a right" were
"altogether as fabulous and chimerical as transubstantiation or any of the most absurd reveries of
ancient or modern visionaries."209 It was absurd to speak of resistance against or of even the
dethronement of a monarch as "criminal," for such conduct was "but a reasonable way of
vindicating...liberties and just rights." It was "the making use of the means, and the only means,
which God has put into their power for mutual and self-defense."210 The overthrow of Charles I
could not even be called "rebellion," because "resistance was absolutely necessary in order to
preserve the nation from slavery, misery, and ruin."211 In that sense, the only explanation that
Mayhew could offer for the "mysterious doctrine of King Charles’s saintship and martyrdom" and
associated celebrations was ultimately the self-interest of the English established church. The
King had been "a good churchman" and "a lover...of the hierarchy" and he became a martyr,
because he was "an enemy to liberty and the rights of conscience," as well as to "dissenters."212

Thankfully, in 1750, New Englanders were not being asked to submit to such a tyrant. "It is our
happiness," thought Mayhew, "to live under the government of a Prince who is satisfied with
ruling according to law....It becomes us, therefore, to be contented and dutiful subjects. Let us
prize our freedom," he therefore urged, before offering a final appeal to the biblical injunction of 1
Peter 2:16, not to "use our liberty for a cloak of maliciousness."213

Bailyn has justifiably drawn attention to Mayhew’s dependence, for key elements of the argument
of A Discourse Concerning Unlimited Submission... (1750), on Benjamin Hoadly, in his The
Measures of Submission to the Civil Magistrate Consider’d... (1706), and on an English pamphlet

208Mayhew, A Discourse Concerning Unlimited Submission..., in Bailyn (ed.), “Pamphlets of the American Revolution,
1750-1776,” pp. 225, 226, 228, 231.
209Ibid., p. 235.
211Ibid., p. 241.
212Ibid., pp. 245-6.
213Ibid., p. 247.
entitled *A Letter to a Clergyman, Relating to his Sermon on the Thirtieth of January...* (1746). However, the demonstration of such links is not sufficient to disprove the traditional, biblical content or structure of argument of Mayhew's discourse. Nor does it justify Bailyn's claim that "in the principles it expresses the pamphlet is a cliché of Whig political theory," especially given his parallel concession that not only were "these principles of government and of the limits of civil power...commonplaces of Whig thought," but "for years they had formed the substance of annual election sermons delivered before the Assemblies of Massachusetts and Connecticut and published by order of those governments." It is arguably a more authentic interpretation of Mayhew's understanding of civil liberty and the right of resistance to view them as rooted in his Puritan theological heritage, as well as in such Whig sources. Moreover, the biblicist discourse of liberty that has already been noted in connection with other aspects of his thought strongly reflected both.

6. Libertarian Discourse and "The Snare Broken..."

Clear evidence of a similar conflation also emerges from Mayhew's final published statement on "civil liberty," *The Snare Broken...* (1766), produced in the year of his death. Soon after the riot of August 26, 1765, Mayhew wrote to Lieutenant Governor Thomas Hutchinson to distance himself decisively from any part in provoking the attack by his preaching. "God is my witness," he told Hutchinson, "that, from the bottom of my heart, I detest these proceedings." He had heard reports that some of his "numerous and causeless enemies" had "expressed themselves to-day, as if I approved of these doings." However, although he admitted expressing himself "strongly in favor of civil and religious liberty" in his sermon on Galatians 5:12-13, and speaking of "the late Stamp Act as a great grievance," Mayhew was keen to assure Hutchinson that "as my text led me to do, I cautioned my hearers expressly against the abuses of liberty." Such were his concerns for scriptural obedience and public order, he informed the Lieutenant Governor, that "in truth, I had rather lose my right hand than be an encourager of such outrages as were committed last night." Judging from his response, Hutchinson found more reassurance in Mayhew's protestations than parishioner Richard Clarke and his family, although not for want of effort by Mayhew, who not only visited them twice pastorally before they left West Church, but sent them a detailed explanation of his ministerial conduct in the form of his letter of September 3, 1765.

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216 Mayhew's letter to Hutchinson, together with the Lieutenant Governor's reply, are reprinted in Bradford, pp. 420-22. See esp., p. 421. But see also Hutchinson's later comments, as cited above, p. 111.
Mayhew's approach in that letter was to quote directly from his August 25 sermon, as reproduced in the subsequent "Memorandum" of it, and thus to underline the biblical, as well as philosophical foundations of his argument. Having repeated his decidedly Lockean definition of "civil liberty," Mayhew dwelt especially on his exposition of the Pauline injunction "only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh." In expounding that command, he progressed considerably beyond treating the abuse of "ceremonial" or "gracious" liberty "in the practice of fleshly lusts, or in any immoral & sinful actions" to dealing directly with issues of politics and civil disobedience:

They also use liberty for an occasion to the flesh, who under color of it, disregard the wholesome laws of society, made for the preservation of the order, and common good thereof. They use liberty for an occasion to the flesh, who causelessly & maliciously speak evil of their rulers; endeavouring to make them appear odious or contemptible, or to weaken their influence, and proper authority, in their several stations. [Still more do] they use liberty for an occasion to the flesh, who cause factions or insurrection against the government, under which they live, and who rebel against, or resist their lawful rulers, in the due discharge of their offices. We ought to be subject, not only for wrath, or for fear of the wrath of man, but also for conscience sake. For government was instituted by God [for the good of man.] For this cause pay we tribute also, because civil [rulers] are the ministers of God to us for good, attending continually upon this very thing. We are bound to render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, as well as to God the things that are [his]. They [therefore], who rebel & resist, as aforesaid, resist the ordinance of God: and the apostle saith, they shall receive to themselves damnation.217

Inasmuch as Mayhew appealed directly here to such texts as Romans 13:4 and Matthew 22:21, the scriptural foundations of his original argument were inescapable. But in expostulating with Clarke, he also sought to show the depth of his feelings about such matters. As "a known friend of liberty," he might have been "solicited by different persons to preach upon that subject" and reproached, with other ministers, for his "silence in the cause." Yet when actually in the pulpit, he had been very clear that members of his congregation should not "use liberty for an occasion to the flesh, or use any method, for the defence of our rights & privileges, besides those which are honest and honourable."218 And Mayhew had not been reserved in expressing his views, either on August 25 or on September 1, when he had addressed the topic again at West Church:

I still love liberty as much as ever; but have apprehensions of the greatest inconveniences likely to follow on a forceable, violent opposition to an Act of Parliament; which I consider, in some sort, as proclaiming war against Great Britain. These are the sentiments of my soul, which I more particularly declared the last Lord's Day, in the fear of God, and with the deepest concern for the welfare of my country, and all the British colonies, at this most alarming crisis which they have ever known, whether they do or do not submit to said act. What the end of these things will be, God only knows. To him I lift up my soul for the common good, the public welfare.219


218Slade, pp. 17-18.

219Ibid., p. 19.
Against such a background, the religious and political passion of The Snare Broken... is more comprehensible, as is the sermon's biblical and philosophical framework. Written as a "Thanksgiving-discourse...occasioned by the repeal of the Stamp Act," The Snare Broken... was both a paean to liberty and a hymn in praise of God's providential care. The work's dedication to William Pitt, an "illustrious patron of America" and "a principal instrument in the hand of God, of saving Great Britain and her colonies from impending ruin" set the tone.220 Although taking Psalm 124:7-8 as his text, Mayhew was less rigorous in his expository focus than in many previous sermons, but that did not prevent him from suffusing his whole discourse with scriptural content. In his dedicatory preface, for example, Mayhew expressed the hope that Pitt's gaining "an adequate conception of the universal joy of America" might enable him to ""take up [his] bed and walk," like those sick and lame persons instantly cured by the word of him, who came from heaven to make us 'free indeed.'" He also stated America's prayer that when Pitt "must, according to the common lot of men, however great and good (O may it be late!) cease to plead the cause of liberty on earth, [he] may in heaven, as [his] reward, enjoy 'the glorious liberty of the sons of God.'"221 These citations from Mark 2:9, John 5:8, 8:36 and Romans 8:21 were followed, towards the beginning of the discourse itself, by a markedly political definition of civil liberty, following Magna Carta, which included rights to personal autonomy, as opposed to slavery, and to trial by jury.222 It was on that basis that "altho' the colonies could not justly claim an exclusive right of taxing themselves, and the right of being tried by juries; yet they had great reason to remonstrate against the act aforesaid on the footing of inexpedience, the great hardship, and destructive tendency of it."223 However, Mayhew had already described his basic agenda in The Snare Broken... (1766) in much simpler terms. "We only exercise that liberty, wherewith Christ hath made us free," he wrote, citing another of his key libertarian scriptural texts, Galatians 5:1, "being desirous that all other persons and churches should do the same; and not chusing that either they or we should be 'entangled with any yoke of bondage.'"224 Moreover, when it came to distancing himself from unduly violent acts of resistance, he again alluded to the colourful language and imagery of the Bible:

And I take for granted, that we are all perfectly agreed in condemning the riotous and felonious proceedings of certain men of Belial, as they have been justly called, who had the effrontery to cloke their rapacious violences with the pretext of zeal for liberty; which is so far from being a new thing under the sun, that even Great Britain can furnish us with many, and much more flagrant examples of it.225

221ibid., pp. 236-7.
222ibid., pp. 239-40.
223ibid., p. 241.
224ibid., p. 238.
225ibid., p. 241, making allusion to 2 Corinthians 6:15, 1 Peter 2:16 and Ecclesiastes 1:9.
In general terms, Mayhew could thus hail the repeal of the Stamp Act as living proof that "our soul is escaped as a bird from the snare of the fowlers; the snare is broken and we are escaped; tho' not without much struggling in the snare, before it gave way, and set us at liberty again." He could also see appropriate resistance to the act in the American colonies and in Britain, along with the change of policy to which it led, as entirely providential in origin. In another passage steeped in biblical references and allusions, Mayhew cited Psalm 124:2-8 and Matthew 10:29-30 to state the assumption that "he who made the world, exercises a providential government over it." "How much more then," he went on to ask, "is his providence to be acknowledged in the rise, in the preservation, in the great events, the revolutions, or the fall of mighty states and kingdoms?" Describing British taxation without representation of the American colonies as bondage of the worst kind, Mayhew additionally quoted Psalm 126:1-2 to suggest that "this was received as an emancipation indeed from unmerited slavery." He noted a "diversity of humours, sentiments and opinions among the colonists" which "occasioned great animosities, mutual censures and reproaches," and he surely spoke from the heart when he told how "it was hardly safe for any man to speak his thoughts on the times, unless he could patiently bear to lie under the imputation of being a coward, an incendiary, rebel, or enemy to his country; or to have some other odium cast upon him." But Mayhew's ultimate concern, even when discoursing on the vagaries of practical politics, was religious:

If Britain, which has long been the principal support of liberty in Europe, and is, at least was, the chief bulwark against that most execrable of all tyrannies, popery, should in destroying her colonies destroy herself (Heaven forbid it!) what would become of those few states which are now free? What, of the Protestant religion?

In the providential view of history which Mayhew had inherited, in a direct line of succession, from his Puritan forbears, the repeal of the Stamp Act was, therefore, cause for rejoicing, as well as thanksgiving. But it also provided an occasion "to add the obedience of our lives, as the best sacrifice that we can offer to heaven." Moreover, Mayhew applied this with particular force to the political arena, where he urged "a respectful, loyal and dutiful manner of speech and conduct, respecting His Majesty and his government" and the paying of "due respect in all things to the British Parliament." Thus concerns for the preservation of civil liberty, as Mayhew understood

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227 Ibid., p. 244.
228 Ibid., p. 246.
229 Ibid., p. 249.
230 Ibid., p. 250.
231 See ibid., p. 251, where Mayhew cited Isaiah 61:3 and Psalm 30:11-12 in support of such an exhortation.
232 Ibid., p. 252-3.
it, were translated into standard biblical injunctions, drawn from 1 Peter 2:17, to "fear God" and "honour the king." The British system of government, as well as reasonable American protests against its abuses, had been vindicated by recent events. So there was no point in nursing grudges over past injustices. It was much preferable, Mayhew argued, to focus on "leading in a prudent, temperate, wise behaviour" and to pursue the "duty of cultivating a close harmony with our mother-country," as well as "a dutiful submission to the King and Parliament, our chief grievances being redressed."234

It would be mistaken to conclude from this counsel that Mayhew did not see a constant need to act to preserve liberty, whenever it was deemed to be under threat. On the contrary, he thought it "necessary...for those who would preserve and perpetuate their liberties, to guard them with a wakeful attention; and in all righteous, just and prudent ways, to oppose the first encroachments on them." Moreover, it was precisely such concerns that prompted Mayhew to engage, in one of the most notable passages in all his works, in the praise of liberty personified as "celestial maid, the daughter of God" that was noted earlier. But even here, biblical language and literature provided so much of the symbolic and discursive framework for Mayhew's libertarian discourse that it is impossible to separate his political philosophy from his practical divinity.235

Mayhew was not remiss in listing key philosophical influences on his thought, but his prior debt to biblical sources was made very clear. Not only had he learned from Scripture that "wise, brave and vertuous men were always friends to liberty;" he had gathered, quite specifically, that "God gave the Israelites a king [or absolute monarch] in his anger, because they had not sense and virtue enough to like a free commonwealth, and to have himself for their king." He had also grasped "that the Son of God came down from heaven, to make us 'free indeed;' and that 'where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty;" all of which made him "conclude that freedom was a great blessing." In a conflation typical of such discourse elsewhere in Mayhew's works, this remarkable use of language from John 8:36 and 2 Corinthians 3:17 then led him to expound on his love of liberty as a political phenomenon. It was when threatened by the imposition of the Stamp Act that liberty "seemed about to take her final departure from America, and to leave that ugly hag slavery, the deformed child of Satan, in her room."236 The act's repeal had brought her return and encouraged Mayhew to sing her praises, although he did so by once more appealing to religious and scriptural terminology. Speaking of those who would seek "a safe retreat from

233Ibid., pp. 251-2, 264.
234Ibid., pp. 257-8.
235Ibid., pp. 258, 259.
236Ibid., pp. 258-9.
slavery in some far-distant climate, he expressed the wish that they would “find one in America under thy brooding, sacred wings; where our oppressed fathers once found it, and we now enjoy it, by the favor of him, whose service is the most glorious freedom!” He then concluded what he later characterized as “this odd excursion” by praying that God would never permit liberty to “forsake” America “for our unworthiness to enjoy thy enlivening presence! By his [God’s] high permission, attend us thro’ life and death to the regions of the blessed,” Mayhew pleaded, “thy original abode, there to enjoy forever the ‘glorious liberty of the sons of God.’”

After such high flights of rhetoric, the remainder of The Snare Broken... appears rather plain and down-to-earth. But it is significant to note that Mayhew continued biblical themes right to the end of what has often been construed as one of his most political works. Once more bemoaning the “many unwarrantable jealousies, and bitter mutual reproaches among the people of this town” and the fact that “some [like Mayhew] were blamed as too warm and sanguine, others as too phlegmatic and indifferent, in the common and noble cause of liberty,” he called upon his congregation to pursue the “most prudent, most Christian” course of action and “to begin our civil, political life anew as it were, from this joyful and glorious aera of restored and confirmed liberty.” He urged all, in typically Puritan manner, to “apply ourselves with diligence, and in the fear of God, to the duties of our respective stations” and to “join with heart and hand in supporting the lawful, constitutional government over us.” Last but not least, he quoted one of the key texts in his scriptural armoury. “If we hope for admission into those eternal mansions of joy,” Mayhew enjoined, citing 1 Peter 2:17, “let everyone of us, as the apostle Peter exhorts, ‘honor all men, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king.’”

7. Mayhew in Perspective.

In an ultimate conflation of some of the sacred and secular concerns and resulting discourse that modern scholars tend to separate but which were often indivisible for 18th century thinkers, Mayhew’s last sentence of The Snare Broken... thus made civil obedience a salvation issue. In so doing, he also undercut, here as elsewhere, many academic attempts to categorize him as a predominantly radical theologian and political thinker, who drew primary intellectual inspiration from Enlightenment philosophy, liberal theology and/or Real Whig ideology.

237 Ibid., p. 259, alluding to wording from the “Collect for Peace” from the Morning Prayer service in the Church of England’s 1662 Book of Common Prayer (Oxford, 1665), p. 50, as well as citing Romans 8:21.

238 Ibid., pp. 261-2.

239 Ibid., pp. 262-3, 264.
On the one hand, Mayhew clearly was an Arminian, if not Arian or Unitarian theologian, who was significantly influenced by more progressive and/or latitudinarian currents in eighteenth century religious thought. On the other, he can fairly be described as a “liberal Puritan,” whose theology was strongly biblicist, and who staked out his positions within a traditional conceptual framework that owed much to the New England Congregationalism which he vigorously defended against Episcopalian threats to its polity. On the one hand, Mayhew was a firm advocate of Whig notions of civil and religious liberty who was clearly influenced by Locke and other philosophers. On the other, his primary understanding of spiritual liberty in Christ was foundational to his whole libertarian discourse. On the one hand, Mayhew was a fierce defender of the public right to engage in civil disobedience and even rebellion, when he thought them necessary or justifiable. On the other, he could strongly uphold the constitutional inheritance and political status quo of Britain and her colonies, even in 1766, along with a Christian duty to submit to those in authority.

Although he attracted widespread public support for such initiatives as his campaigns against the SPG and an Anglican episcopate, Mayhew was accused of being both a heretic and a rebel during his own lifetime, and such a reputation has persisted, in many quarters, into academic posterity. As has been seen, however, a study of Mayhew’s basic theology and ideas about liberty provides a unique vantage-point from which to re-examine the apparent contradictions and ambiguities that emerge from his works. Moreover, such a re-examination reveals that Mayhew was a much more conservative thinker than he has often been portrayed. Scholars have frequently exaggerated the extent of his theological liberalism, especially by labelling him an Arian proto-Unitarian, and contra Clark, there is no evidence to support the view that his heterodoxy encouraged a more insurrectionist stance. Corrigan and Mullins have likewise overstated the influence of Enlightenment, as opposed to more traditionalist influences on Mayhew. At the same time, while Mayhew clearly upheld the right to rebel against unjust civil authority and one of his sermons actually led to mob violence, his political thought, which was rooted in traditional Protestant sources, was by no means as revolutionary as it has often been made out to be. Bailyn has shown how Mayhew spent much of the last year of his life actually defending himself against charges of demagogy and when due attention is paid to its biblicism and overt British loyalism, The Snare Broken... (1766) hardly emerges as an insurrectionist call to arms. Although Heimert undoubtedly highlighted a significant, but not necessarily defining aspect of Mayhew’s sociopolitical outlook when he pointed to predictable evidence of social elitism in the pastor of Boston’s prosperous and prestigious West Church, it is impossible to say whether he was right to question Mayhew’s potential allegiance had he lived to see the American Revolution. Subsequent revolutionaries clearly did draw inspiration from his works and Rossiter, Akers and Stout have helpfully signalled the possible impact of Mayhew’s rhetorical ambivalence in that connection. But in the final analysis, such considerations do nothing to undermine the view that
Mayhew was first and foremost a devout Congregationalist minister and theologian, whose primary understanding of liberty was spiritual freedom in Christ to serve God and others and whose libertarian discourse was shaped by biblical language and presuppositions, however far-reaching its implications. Such was the true *fons et origo* of the mindset of this sophisticated and highly educated pastor who could simultaneously view a multifaceted *persona* of liberty as "the daughter of God" and a "celestial maid," as well as "the delight of the wise, good and brave; the protectress of innocence from wrongs and oppression, the patroness of learning, arts, eloquence, virtue, rational loyalty, religion!"\(^{240}\)

\(^{240}\)Ibid., p. 259.
Chapter 4 - “The Faithful Steward” – Andrew Eliot, a Calvinist Libertarian

1. A Reluctant Revolutionary.

On June 19, 1775, two days after the Battle of Bunker Hill, Andrew Eliot, pastor of Boston's New North Congregationalist Church, wrote a vivid account of the aftermath in a letter to his friend Isaac Smith Jr., who had fled for England the previous month. Although he had sent the rest of his family out of town, Eliot was staying behind personally, he told Smith, “purely out of regard to the inhabitants who were left, that they might not be without ordinances and worship in the way which they choose.”1 He was thus one of the few remaining ministers to witness the results of the battle in which half the British forces were casualties and up to a third of the 1,500 Americans were killed, wounded, or captured.2

Eliot's graphic description of the scene in Boston did not conceal his horror at recent events:

It was a new and awful spectacle to us to have men carried through the streets groaning, bleeding, and dying....Amidst the carnage of Saturday, the town of Charlestown was set on fire, and I suppose every dwelling-house and every public building is consumed till you have passed the passage to the mills, and are come to the houses where Woods the baker dwelt.

But rather than lambasting the British occupiers, or lauding the heroism of American patriots, Eliot wrote of his distress at seeing and hearing “Englishmen destroying one another, and a town with which we have been so intimately connected all in flames. We are left in anxious expectation of the event,” he continued. “God grant the blood already spilt may suffice.”3 Even with his beloved Boston aflame, Eliot worried that a meeting of Harvard dignitaries might come to “sudden resolutions” and thus “give offence.” Three days later he added a postscript to Smith, in which he doubted any positive outcome of Anglo-American hostilities, whichever side should ultimately prevail.4

As shall be seen, the concerns expressed in his June 1775 letter were typical of Eliot's anxious, often vacillating approach to international politics in the revolutionary era. Historians have periodically debated the significance of the Boston clergyman's positions on key issues and of their practical consequences. But they have been divided over whether he was the convinced patriot characterized by Baldwin, the prudent “Liberal” described by Heimert, or the Whig of

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"indecisive" religious ideas and a temperamental "reluctance to declare for independence" portrayed by Bailyn.5

2. A Dedicated Bostonian.
Eliot has never been the subject of a major biography. The earliest extended, but limited account of his ministry is found in his son Ephraim's Historical Notices of the New North Religious Society... (1822), while the most detailed, but still relatively brief modern treatment is by Clifford Shipton in a compilation based on Sibley's Harvard Graduates (1963).6

To offer an introductory sketch of some of the main outlines of Eliot's personal history, he was born the son of a shoemaker in Boston on December 21, 1718 and except for his years in residence at Cambridge, Massachusetts, while he was at Harvard, he remained in the city for the remainder of his life. Having taken his M.A. in 1740 and spent a number of years doing supply preaching at different congregations, Eliot was ordained assistant pastor of Boston's Congregationalist New North Church in April 1742. The appointment process proceeded fairly smoothly and Eliot was asked to preach his own ordination sermon, which resulted in his first published work.7 Eliot married Elizabeth Langdon, the daughter of a New North deacon, in the year of his ordination, and they went on to have five sons and six daughters, all of whom survived childhood. Although the Eliots eventually acquired enough means to purchase their own house in 1756, Andrew's relatively humble background, limited pastoral income and large family never allowed them to live in luxury. But as pastor of a fairly prominent church, Eliot soon captured a place in what Shipton termed "the upper social circle" of Boston, mixing with "distinguished visitors," as well as "members of the old and wealthy families."6

When New North's senior pastor John Webb died in 1750, Eliot was asked to continue as sole minister, which he did for the next 28 years. He steadily introduced liturgical and other changes over that period, including public Bible reading, hymn-singing and use of a new version of the Psalter during services. In 1773 prospective church members were no longer required to give personal conversion testimonies, a move that was consistent with Eliot's "Old Light" approach to revivalism during the Great Awakening of the 1740s and afterwards. Eliot was a strong supporter

8Shipton, p. 400.
of the Testimony of the Pastors of the Churches of the Province of Massachusetts Bay... that condemned alleged excesses of the Awakening in 1743. Although he went to hear George Whitefield preach and even invited him to New North itself in 1770, there is clear evidence that he was concerned about the evangelist's "enthusiasm." The avoidance of unnecessary controversy was a key element of Eliot's approach to ecclesiastical life. But that did not prevent him from getting involved in various conflicts in the highly contentious religious and political climate of 18th Century New England, including the Stamp Act crisis and the Anglican Episcopate controversy of the 1760s, as well as discussions surrounding the rights and wrongs of the Revolutionary War in the 1770s.  

Among Eliot's most noteworthy extra-curricular commitments outside his church ministry was active support for missions to native Indians through such organizations as the London Society for Promoting the Gospel in New England and Parts Adjacent. He also devoted years of service to membership of the Board of Overseers and then the Corporation of Harvard, although he refused the College presidency when it was offered to him in 1774. Eliot had strong political interests, which he partly sustained through an extensive network of correspondence with like-minded English Whigs, including Hollis, Francis Blackburne (1705-1787) and Thomas Brand Hollis (1719-1804). His historical predilections bore fruit in various antiquarian activities, not least the preservation of newspapers, manuscripts and other materials for posterity.  

Sometimes out of deference to what he saw as the greater abilities of others, Eliot was a reluctant author. But he ended life with some 14 publications to his name, including:  

i. No fewer than five ordination sermons preached over the period of 32 years between his own installation at New North, which gave rise to The Faithful Steward... (1742), and that of his son Andrew at the First Church in Fairfield, Connecticut, at which he delivered A Sermon Preached at the Ordination of Andrew Eliot... (1774).  

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10 Eliot's most notable contributions to the Stamp Act crisis and the American Episcopate controversy were A Sermon Preached before His Excellency Francis Bernard... (Boston, MA: 1765) and Remarks on the Bishop of Oxford's Sermon..., reprinted in CMHS, 2:II (1814), pp. 190-216. His views on the American Revolution emerge most clearly from his "Letters," pp. 182-3, 280-306.  

11 The two major published collections of Eliot's political and other correspondence are ibid., and "Letters from Andrew Eliot to Thomas Hollis," reprinted in CMHS, 4:IV (1858), pp. 398-461.  

12 See, for example, ibid., pp. 417-18, and Eliot's comments on the work of Charles Chauncy in his letter to Thomas Hollis of December 10, 1767.  

13 Andrew Eliot, A Sermon Preached at the Ordination of Andrew Eliot... (Boston, MA: 1774). In addition to The Faithful Steward..., Eliot's other ordination sermons were: A Sermon Preached at the Ordination of the Reverend Mr. Joseph Roberts... (Boston, MA: 1754); A Sermon Preached September 17, 1766... (Boston, MA: 1766); A Sermon Preached at the Ordination of the Reverend Mr. Joseph Willard... (Boston, MA: 1773);
ii. Two political sermons, one in thanksgiving for the British reduction of Quebec, A Sermon Preached October 25th, 1759..., as well as his most famous work, A Sermon Preached before His Excellency Francis Bernard... (1765).  

iii. A funeral sermon for Eliot's ministerial senior colleague at New North, John Webb, A Burning and Shining Light Extinguished... (1750).  

iv. Four miscellaneous homiletic works: a Boston Thursday Lecture sermon, An Inordinate Love of the World... (1744), a fast day "jeremiad," An Evil and Adulterous Generation... (1753), an occasional piece moralizing on an execution for burglary, Christ's Promise to the Penitent Thief... (1773), and the wide-ranging compendium of Twenty Sermons on the Following Subjects... (1774).  

v. Two non-sermonic works: Remarks on the Bishop of Oxford's Sermon... (1766/7), which argued, inter alia, against the introduction of Anglican episcopacy into the American colonies, and Eliot's most academic publication, a Dudleian Lecture delivered at Harvard, A Discourse on Natural Religion... (1771).  

Eliot was awarded a doctorate (S.T.D.) by Edinburgh University in 1767, but he attracted greater fame and often suspicion towards the end of his years for his moderate stand on revolutionary hostilities and for his sometimes heroic efforts as one of the few pastors to remain in Boston in the mid-1770s. Although he proved himself a dedicated Bostonian to the last, perhaps because of his cautious stance towards the American Revolution, Eliot's death on September 13, 1778 did not elicit the fulsome local eulogies that might have been expected. Quite apart from the ministry of the last three years of his life, it is fair to say that he has since attracted the attention of scholars primarily because of the political views expressed in A Sermon Preached before His...  

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14 Andrew Eliot, A Sermon Preached October 25th, 1759... (Boston, MA: 1759).  

15 Andrew Eliot, A Burning and Shining Light Extinguished... (Boston, MA: 1750).  

16 Andrew Eliot, An Inordinate Love of the World... (Boston, MA: 1744): An Evil and Adulterous Generation... (Boston, MA: 1753): Christ's Promise to the Penitent Thief... (Boston, MA: 1773): Twenty Sermons on the Following Subjects... (Boston, MA: 1774)  

17 Andrew Eliot, A Discourse on Natural Religion... (Boston, MA: 1771). Eliot's Remarks on the Bishop of Oxford's Sermon... was not dated in its CMHS reprint of 1814. However, a reference within the work itself, p. 196, to "the late excellent Dr. Mayhew" having "given a just representation of facts in his writings, which have been published in England" indicates that it was composed after Mayhew's death in July 1766. Another mention in Eliot's letter to Thomas Hollis of December 10, 1767 further clarifies that he had already completed Remarks on the Bishop of Oxford's Sermon..., by that stage and passed it on to Charles Chauncy. See Eliot, "Letters from Andrew Eliot to Thomas Hollis," p. 418.  


19 The major published eulogy was Peter Thacher, The Rest which Remaineth to the People of God... (Boston, MA: 1778).
Excellency Francis Bernard... (1765) and elsewhere, and because of his colourful correspondence during a crucial period of colonial American history.

3. A Study in Ambiguities.

The scholarship devoted to Eliot has been very limited compared with that dedicated to any other subject of this dissertation. Neither Mark Noll in his 2002 overview of American religious history "from Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln" nor E. Brooks Holifield in his 2003 synthesis of "Christian thought from the age of the Puritans to the Civil War" even mentioned the Boston pastor, for example. But as already noted, those who have engaged with Eliot's life and thought have emerged over the years with decidedly mixed conclusions.

In the earliest extended account, Ephraim Eliot drew attention to the increasing "liberality" of church life at New North under his father's leadership. But in matters theological, he described Andrew as "a moderate Calvinist" who held "the doctrines laid down in the [Westminster] Assembly's Shorter Catechism"...in high estimation." Although he did not deem himself qualified to judge the issue, Ephraim rejected the notion that his father was an Arminian. Instead, he preferred to view Andrew as steering a rational, but scriptural via media amidst the doctrinally contentious minefields of his day:

The creed commonly called the Apostles' he assented to....About the time of his settlement it was supposed by some, that he favoured the doctrine of the New Lights. But they would not acknowledge him....If he was so inclined, he fully got over it, and was a warm opposer of [James] Davenport, [William] Hobby and other itinerants. He thought Whitefield a good man, and attended his preaching, especially on his last visit. But he disliked him as being an enthusiast, and was fearful that he would do injury, by diverting people from their business several times in a day, to attend upon his lectures....In the pulpit he was a favourite. His discourses were plain and practical, seldom on controversial points.

Politically, his son and biographer went to some lengths to distance Eliot from charges of factionalism. There were those, he noted, "who disapproved of his prudence in party matters, especially in politics," which he would not introduce into the pulpit. But Ephraim also took pains to defend his father against accusations of being a "tory" and "friend to the measures of Great Britain." By contrast, despite the "circumspection that acquired for him the name of Andrew Sly," Eliot "was a firm friend to the rights of his country, and opposed to the claims and measures of Great Britain." In that connection, Ephraim cited an unpublished letter of 1767 to a Dr. Harris, in

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22Ibid., pp. 28-9.
which Eliot foresaw independence as an event "which must take place, in the course of nature, before a great many years are passed."23

Writing more than 100 years later in her pioneering study of The New England Clergy and the American Revolution (1928), Baldwin restated a similar interpretation. She described Eliot as "of great service to the American cause," and a leader "in the revolt against the Stamp Act." In his Election Sermon of 1765, "he foreshadowed the main lines of argument against England by the colonists." At first, she conceded, "he thought some of the American measures too rash, but by 1769 he had become convinced that vigorous opposition had been necessary. He began then to talk of independence."24

It was not until Shipton's biographical sketch that such an interpretation was seriously questioned. Shipton largely echoed Ephraim Eliot's assessment of his father's moderate Calvinist theological stance, although he argued that "in his openness to logic and Biblical criticism he was sailing full in the course which in another generation was to carry the [Harvard] college into Unitarianism." Shipton also admitted some "truth behind the idea that the Revolution in Massachusetts was made by the black legion of preachers thundering politics from their pulpits, but Eliot," he stressed, "was not one of them."25 Shipton conceded that Eliot was not "without interest in public affairs." He called A Sermon Preached October 25th, 1759... "an excellent résumé of the colonial wars", and described A Sermon Preached before His Excellency Francis Bernard... (1765), with its quotations from Hugo Grotius, Jean Jacques Burlamaqui (1694-1748) and Charles [de Secondat, Baron de] Montesquieu (1689-1755), as "pure political science." But while Shipton acknowledged that in Eliot's view, "to assert Parliamentary authority over the English settlers after seven generations was absurd," he also stressed Eliot's bitter opposition to "the breaking of the compact by the colonists" and his parallel conviction that "independence would bring anarchy."26 Shipton noted Eliot's enthusiasm for Whig authors and his opposition to the Stamp Act, to the activities of the SPG, and to the appointment of a Church of England bishop for the American colonies, but he argued that "Eliot's fears of the church of Rome and the Church of England were purely political."27 Shipton also suggested that Eliot was somewhat naive, for while "his Whiggism was soundly based on a reasonable interpretation of history...of the imperial political problems of his own day he had not an idea." By the 1770s, his moderate stand had alienated both English

23Ibid., p. 29.

24Baldwin, pp. 111, 90, 112n., citing Eliot, A Sermon Preached before His Excellency Francis Bernard...


26Ibid., pp. 409-10, citing Eliot, A Sermon Preached before His Excellency Francis Bernard..., A Sermon Preached October 25th, 1759..., and an unpublished letter to Francis Blackburne of December 15, 1767 held at Harvard Library.

27Shipton, p. 415.
and American Whigs, although Eliot’s correspondence gave evidence of a more favourable attitude towards American independence in the last couple of years of his life.  

The only extended treatment of Eliot’s life and thought since Shipton’s has been Bailyn’s 23-page analysis of 1970. Although it stands as a piece of scholarship in its own right, it is important to note that Bailyn’s work was in great part provoked by the conclusions of Heimert in his 1966 study, Religion and the American Mind. Eliot was not a major figure in Heimert’s central argument that “New Light” Calvinists were leading contributors to the development of American revolutionary ideology. In fact, Heimert only referred to Eliot five times. Moreover, while noting his “prudence in party matters,” his attempts, in his 1765 Election Sermon, to “minimize the reality of American grievances,” and his general lack of outspokenness, Heimert freely conceded Eliot’s “legalist devotion to John Locke,” for example. Nevertheless, a major thrust of Bailyn’s brief essay on Eliot was to counter his representation as a member of “Old Light, theologically ‘liberal,’ clergy” who were “conservatives during the Revolution.” Instead, Bailyn argued that “if Eliot was a reluctant revolutionary it was not because of the pull of his religious ideas, which in any case were indecisive, nor of any tepidness in his political thought, which was based on rigorous Whig principles.” Bailyn preferred to interpret Eliot’s "reluctance to declare for independence" as "temperamental, the reaction of a broadly reasonable, tolerant, instinctively cautious and indecisive person always able to see both sides of the great public issues of his time, ever hesitant to draw his thoughts to thoroughgoing conclusions.”

In support of his argument, Bailyn sought to document Eliot’s “disposition to temporize” as a consistent theme of his life and writings from his first publication, The Faithful Steward... (1742), in which he allegedly wavered over the question of the need for a spiritually regenerate ministry, to his final letters from war-torn Boston. Thus in his “jeremiad” sermon, An Inordinate Love of the World (1753), Eliot failed to apply his observations of declension directly to his hearers, Bailyn argued, whilst in his “one high-level intellectual effort,” his Dudleian Lecture of 1771, A Discourse on Natural Religion, Eliot fudged the question of how to reconcile divine sovereignty with human freedom by resorting to an inconclusive quotation from Locke. Among his political writings, Bailyn singled out Eliot’s A Sermon Preached before His Excellency Francis Bernard... and his...

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29Heimert, pp. 291, 261, 260.
31Ibid., pp. 88-109, esp. p. 88.
32Ibid., pp. 90-95, esp. pp. 90-1. Bailyn also quoted, p. 93, the relevant citation from John Locke, “Letter to William Molyneux, January 20, 1692/3,” The Works of John Locke (London, 1812), Vol. IX, p. 305, which will be considered later in this chapter.
later correspondence with English Whigs. He rather dismissively described the former as “platitudinous throughout,” based on “the contract theory of government” and “exemplifying at the outset of the Revolutionary era the substratum of belief that underlay the developing rebellion.”

In Eliot’s correspondence with Thomas Hollis, Francis Blackburne and Thomas Brand Hollis, Bailyn further observed “agreement in general viewpoint...sympathy for their dark and progressively despairing interpretation of the tendency of events in England, and, above all, an extreme susceptibility to their conspiratorial, at times almost paranoiac, explanation of the underlying causes of the developing crisis.”

Eliot’s major problem when it came to “Anglo-American constitutional relations,” Bailyn contended, was that he “never followed through the implications of his own thought.” In other words, he “never agreed that since...England was hopelessly corrupt...independence was the only solution.” Such procrastinating failure to pursue the consequences or to have the courage of his convictions finally led Eliot to hesitate to leave Boston before the arrival of British troops, and thus to the harrowing years of pastoral detention under enemy occupation after which “he never recovered his former repute.” Noting Eliot’s continuing ambivalence about his situation even during the crisis of 1775-6, Bailyn concluded, in effect, that he became a victim of his own tolerance and indecisiveness. Although plainly liberal in his views, Eliot lacked either the intellectual rigour or the moral fortitude to act upon them and so fully to embrace the revolutionary cause that was their logical outcome.

Bailyn’s interpretation of Eliot was recently questioned by Clark in his revisionist study, The Language of Liberty (1994), where he adduced Eliot as an example of how theological and especially Christological heterodoxy served as an activating force for revolutionary engagement among Congregationalists. Clark highlighted Eliot’s activities as a correspondent with English Whigs, an opponent of plans for an American episcopate and an “eager student (and silent plagiarist) of the English Arian Samuel Clarke.” He noted his “most extreme rhetoric against the Stamp Act” and his persuasion that “a dark conspiracy threatened transatlantic liberties.” Clark shared Bailyn’s view that Eliot was ultimately a “reluctant revolutionary,” caught between the “imperatives” of his radical political worldview, his fear of civil war and his continuing affection for Britain. But he also suggested that “the evidence marshalled by Bailyn tells against his unsupported claims...that Eliot’s political ideas and revolutionary sympathies were not a result of

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33 Ibid., pp. 95-106, esp. pp. 96-7
34 Ibid., p. 98.
his religious beliefs." The major problems with Clark's analysis are that he neither showed how, nor offered any independent evidence in support of such a claim.\(^{37}\)

Whatever Eliot's personal ambiguities, in studying his thought in more detail, this chapter will show that while elements of Bailyn's interpretation remain apposite and insightful, analysis of Eliot's writings reveals a more traditionalist thinker, both theologically and politically, than has often been portrayed. Eliot's Calvinist theology was thus more clearly defined than Bailyn has argued and much less heterodox than Clark has suggested. At the same time, like all the other subjects of this dissertation, his political thought was firmly grounded in thoroughly biblicist, religious doctrine, as well as reflecting the ideas of 17th and 18th Century philosophers. Moreover, whilst Eliot's continuing commitment to English national identity, authority and ideals may have prevented him from ever becoming an outspoken advocate of what became the American Revolution, he defended notions of liberty that bear many similarities to those of Mayhew. Eliot did not give the same systematic treatment to the topic that Mayhew did, but his ideas were also sometimes presented in a religiously grounded libertarian discourse that echoed that of his friend and ministerial mentor. In that sense, as others, Eliot's intellectual worldview was primarily shaped by the distinctive contours of the dissenting Protestant traditions of New England Congregationalism that he shared with Wise, Mayhew and Chauncy.

4. A Moderate Calvinist.
A. Consistent Calvinism.
The records of the First Church in Cambridge, Massachusetts list the entry "Sir Eliot Andrew, Student" under the category of "Admissions" for August 13, 1738.\(^{38}\) Eliot would have been nearly 20 years old at that time and was still in residence at Harvard. Nearly four years later, on March 14, 1742, the New North Church in Boston reported that Eliot had been received "by dismission from Cambridge" exactly a month before his ordination to pastoral office. The New North records also show that a few weeks earlier, on February 21, 1742, "the pastor [John Webb] communicated...a confession of faith he had received from Mr. Andrew Eliot, in compliance with the desires of the Church; which confession was distinctly read, and accepted as satisfactory to the brethren, by a unanimous lifting up of their hands."\(^{39}\)

Eliot's candidacy for and eventual appointment to the position of Assistant Pastor of New North took nearly nine months from start to finish. But despite the church's strongly stated resolve to


\(^{38}\)Stephen Paschall Sharples (ed.), Records of the Church of Christ at Cambridge... (Boston, MA: 1906), p. 100.

exclude doctrinal heresy of any kind, the process was a relatively smooth one.\textsuperscript{40} It would seem reasonable to conclude, therefore, that notwithstanding Eliot's subsequent reputation in some quarters, he began ordained ministry as a thoroughly orthodox Calvinist. Moreover, a profession of faith that was first published in 1912 clearly supports the conclusion that Eliot merited that description in his younger years. In releasing the document to the Colonial Society of Massachusetts, its then owner, Henry Edes, declared himself incapable of determining whether Eliot's profession dated from his admission to First Church, Cambridge or to New North. Both the statement's style, however, which is relatively unsophisticated and even untutored compared with Eliot's first published work, \textit{The Faithful Steward},\textsuperscript{41} for example, as well as its content, which makes very deliberate reference to his desire "to come to the Lord's table," appear to contradict Shipton's identification of it with the "confession of faith" accepted by New North in 1742.\textsuperscript{41}

Whatever the precise dating of Eliot's profession, its Calvinist orthodoxy is striking. Eliot started with elements of a classic and somewhat conventional Puritan conversion narrative, including his "conviction" and "humiliation:"

\begin{quote}
[I]t pleased the Lord to work upon my heart by the convictions of his Spirit and to show me that I had something to do in order to my own soul's eternal salvation and blessedness in another world, but I went on contrary to convictions and stifled them very much for a long time. But at length I was so much awakened and terrified in myself that I could not resist any longer. Then I complied in some measure with these convictions that I had in me by the Spirit of God and thought with myself I would not any longer stand out and fight against God, but after some time I felt much from my resolutions and became cold and careless in the ways of godliness. But it pleased the Lord to stir me up again and to bring me to consideration of what a dreadful condition I was in while I thus continued in a state of coldness in the ways of religion and then I was brought into dreadful doubts and fears about my sincerity in the ways of religion. But I have great hopes that it was in love to my poor soul that God dealt with me after such a manner and that it was to humble me and to show me that my own strength and all my own righteousness was but as filthy rags and worse than nothing and that the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ was that in which I must appear in at the Day of Judgment...But now by these falls that I have met with I have seen in me a mere fountain of sin and iniquity and a wretched body of death within me so that from what I have experienced of it in me, I can cry out with the apostle: "Who shall deliver me from this wretched body of sin and death?" And by these falls I have been almost brought to despair of any hopes of my sincerity, but God by his infinite power and through his infinite wisdom has kept me in a little hope all along and by this hope that was in me I was kept from laying down my duty totally though it was kept up in much coldness and indifference.\textsuperscript{42}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{40}Ibid., pp. 237-8.

\textsuperscript{41}Ibid., p. 235. The most significant passage in favour of an earlier dating of Eliot's profession reads as follows: "[I] desire to come to the Lord's table and to partake of the benefits that Christ has purchased for his chosen and hope that I shall receive of the benefits that Christ has to give to all those that wait upon him there in sincerity because he has appointed it for weak and doubting Christians. And [I] desire the prayers of all God's people for me that I may have all my wants supplied and my doubts resolved at this holy ordinance of the Lord's Supper and that my life and conversation may show forth that I do adorn the profession that I now make before the Lord this day." Citations from the document have been edited in accordance with modern stylistic conventions.

Then having stated his desire to participate in Communion, Eliot went on to affirm basic tenets of his faith. These included relatively non-controversial beliefs in the Trinity, in the ordinances and two sacraments of the church, in Christ’s second coming and in eternal rewards and punishments in the after-life. But Eliot also took time to make unmistakable affirmations of the Calvinist doctrines of the limited atonement of Christ, of the ministry of the church “for the edifying and comforting of his chosen,” and of divine election by supralapsarian decree. Thus Jesus Christ “died a miserable and cruel death for the sins of the elect,” not for those of all humanity, and he did so in fulfilment of “a covenant between the Father and the Son from the days of eternity.” Eliot further stated that “there is a number of elected ones chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world for which number Christ died.”

At the time of the first publication of Eliot’s profession, Edes quoted the view of contemporary scholar William Fenn that “the writer was evidently a Calvinist believing, however, in ‘means’ and in a limited atonement” - an observation which is consistent with the firm, but generally moderate Calvinism evident throughout Eliot’s published works. Preaching on An Inordinate Love of the World... (1744) to the Thursday Lecture in Boston just two years after his ordination, Eliot left no-one in any doubt, for example, that he affirmed the doctrines of “total depravity,” “unconditional election” and “irresistible grace:”

There is naturally in our souls a principle of enmity to the blessed God, which results from this consideration, that he is holy, just and true, and that we are odious to his holiness, obnoxious to his justice, and expos’d to the execution of his threatenings: this enmity therefore can never be removed, ’till the cause is taken away; which must be by a change both of our state and our nature: which change is effected when God is pleas’d effectually to call us by his grace. Our state is then changed by God’s free justifying act on account of the righteousness of Christ imputed to us on our receiving him by faith; our nature is changed by the operation of the blessed Spirit working all his graces within us.

Just four years before his death, Eliot gave an equally strong affirmation of his persisting belief in the “perseverance of the saints.” “That which secures a good man from a total defection from religion,” he told the congregation of First Church, Fairfield in a sermon preached at the ordination of his son, “is not any impossibility in the nature of things that he should apostatize.” Instead, it was “the power and grace of God, which a sincere Christian is assured will be employed to secure him.”

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43Ibid., pp. 235-6. Italics have occasionally been added here and elsewhere for emphasis. Eliot’s “supralapsarian” doctrine of election is here understood as entailing election to Christian salvation by divine decree before the biblical Fall of humankind, as portrayed in the Book of Genesis.


In his 1750 eulogy of his ministerial mentor, John Webb, Eliot was even more specific in commending the full panoply of five-point Calvinism that his now departed senior pastor had consistently defended. Webb addressed “the great doctrines of Christianity,” Eliot argued, including:

the state of sin and guilt to which man was reduced by the apostacy of our first parents: the amazing love and grace discovered in the glorious scheme for our redemption, which was formed in the divine mind in the days of eternity, and accomplished by the incarnation, obedience and death of Jesus Christ: the doctrine of justification by faith alone: the necessity of divine influence, in order to begin and carry on a work of grace in the souls of men: the certainty of their perseverance to the end, who were once effectually called by divine grace...  

24 years later, when Eliot’s compilation of Twenty Sermons on the Following Subjects... was published, the consistently “reformed” nature of his views was still very much in evidence. He wrote, for example, of “a depraved nature... conveyed from Adam to his posterity,” of “the apostacy of man; which hath debased our nature, and degraded us among the creatures of God,” and of sin being “the greatest evil to man since it hath brought upon him death in this world, and exposes him to perdition in another.” Eliot defined “Christian faith” as “a belief of the truth of the religion of Jesus Christ, or an assent to the testimony which God hath given of his Son, who hath now in the end of the world appeared, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself,” and he plainly advocated an understanding of Christ’s atonement as an act of penal substitution. It was “the death of so glorious a person [i.e., Jesus Christ],” he argued, “being by God himself substituted, instead of the death of the offender,” that “answered all the purposes, that could have been answered by our punishment.” Eliot expanded on such a theology in his sermon on “Redemption by the Blood of Christ,” and on the principle that “the more we grow in grace, the stronger is the proof that we have grace,” he later sought to encourage his readers to rest secure in their faith.

B. Cautious Biblicism.

But while Eliot showed little sign even towards the end of his public ministry of discarding the Calvinism of his youth, he was, as Bailyn has rightly pointed out, an inherently cautious man. And his relative moderation on some issues was apparently linked to his desire to stay true to his text, as well as to avoid unnecessary controversy.

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48Ibid., pp. 109, 67-8.
49Ibid., pp. 205-226, 259.
Eliot described his "chief aim" as "to be a useful preacher" and in the five published ordination sermons that he delivered over the years, he consistently upheld the Bible as the best and most reliable source of doctrine. "The Scriptures," he told the assembled company at his own ordination, "are the only rule of faith and practice" and ministers could only expect to command "submission" from their congregations when they kept "close to the written Word of God." They should in fact be "men mighty in the Scriptures," although their preaching would be most "profitable" when they drew on their own experience as well.50 Speaking at the ordination of a colleague in 1754, Eliot saw the "great design of the ministry" as "to promote the Redeemer's Kingdom, and the salvation of men." In that connection, "true religion, or a work of grace in the heart" was obviously "necessary to constitute a good minister." But his "chief business" remained "to study the Holy Scriptures" and "faithfulness require[d], that ministers preach the truth."51 Eliot did not hesitate to offer practical advice about sermon preparation, which was important, and homiletic delivery, which should be "serious and in earnest." He also insisted that "much of a minister's usefulness depends on the holiness of his life." But Eliot's major focus was on the need for biblical study and exposition, inasmuch as "faithfulness obliges ministers to declare the whole counsel of God."52

Similar themes emerge from Eliot's ordination sermons for Ebenezer Thayer (1766), Joseph Willard (1773), and for his son Andrew (1774). "No one can have the approbation of God as a minister," he told Boston's First Church, "unless he is a good man or a sincere Christian." But given that prerequisite, study, knowledge and an ability to teach were vital. "Ministers ought to study clearness, decency, and propriety in the manner of their compositions," Eliot continued. Moreover, "if we leave the Bible, and set up any other directory, it will prove an ignis fatuus, and lead us into the bogs of error and confusion."53 The congregation of the First Church in Beverly was given a similar message, when Eliot prepared them for the ministry of Willard with an exposition of 2 Timothy 4:2. The ministry was "an institution of Christ" and "the principal business of a minister lies between the study and the pulpit," he argued. Eliot explicitly rejected the Catholic doctrines of "apostolic succession" and "indelible" ordination, and he even contended that the laying-on of hands was "not specifically enjoined." But on these, as on other issues, his final court of appeal was the Scriptures, which "contain every important truth. They teach all those doctrines which are necessary to be believed."54

50Ibid., p. v; Eliot, The Faithful Steward... , pp. 18, 9, 16, 13.
51Eliot, A Sermon Preached at the Ordination of the Reverend Mr. Joseph Roberts... , pp. 5, 13, 12, 22
52Ibid., pp. 21, 29, 32, 24.
53Eliot, A Sermon Preached September 17, 1766... , pp. 5, 17, 14.
54Eliot, A Sermon Preached at the Ordination of the Reverend Mr. Joseph Willard... , pp. 6, 13-15, 14, 25. Cf. 2 Timothy 4:2: "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine."
Eliot’s sermon at the ordination of his son in 1774 focused more narrowly on the issue of conversion, which he plainly described as “a work of divine power,” and was understandably more personal in emphasis.55 Yet as Eliot conceded that “it is not without reluctance, I have consented, that a son so deservedly dear to me should set down in such a distant part of the Lord’s vineyard” and as he sought to remind Andrew that “you have a soul of your own to save,” he also stressed that “the pure uncorrupted doctrines and motives of the gospel” were most effective. Biblical teaching was thus not only ministers’ privilege and the source of their own salvation under God:

> This is particularly the duty of ministers; God hath set them in his church, to “watch for souls as they that must give an account” – to warn men of their danger – to enlighten them in the doctrines and duties of Christianity – to lead them in the path of life.56

Despite or perhaps because of such obvious biblicism in Eliot’s thought, however, he also distanced himself from passing judgement on controversial issues that were not clearly decided by scriptural teaching as he understood it. Speaking at the ordination of Joseph Roberts in 1754, Eliot addressed the apostle Paul’s parting words to the elders of Ephesus in Acts 20:26: “I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men.” He defined ministerial purity as requiring not only an activist commitment to perform “all the duties of that important office,” but to “declare all the counsel of God.”57 Whereas Eliot was more equivocal about the issue in his first ordination sermon, The Faithful Steward... (1742), he left no-one in any doubt that religious conversion was essential to effective ministry. “True religion, or a work of grace in the heart” was “necessary to constitute a good minister,” and “the trust committed to them” was nothing less than “the souls of men, to save them from the damnation of hell; and to lead them to heaven and eternal happiness.”58 Nevertheless, while biblical study and knowledge and the faithful and earnest exposition of Scripture were central to godly ministry, it could be just as problematic to be over-ambitious or unduly dogmatic in one’s theology as to “dwell wholly on those things, which belong to natural religion; and handle them without any regard to their great Master.” According to Eliot, “every one, who wears the name of a Christian minister, should make Christ the great subject of his preaching.” But it was no-one’s “business:"

> in declaring the whole counsel of God, to attempt to explain every doctrine of the Gospel. There are some, in their nature, too sublime for us – such as, the infinite nature of God; the

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55Eliot, A Sermon Preached at the Ordination of Andrew Eliot..., p. 22.
57Eliot, A Sermon Preached at the Ordination of the Reverend Mr. Joseph Roberts..., pp. 4-5.
manner of the divine subsistence; the doctrine of the decrees of God; the union of the divine and human nature in the person of Jesus Christ, and the like.59

Eliot expressed such doctrinal "reserve" on a number of occasions in his published works. But he withheld his most personal testimony in that regard until four years before his death and the dedication of Twenty Sermons on the Following Subjects... to his congregation:

In the course of my preaching, I have not meddled with abstruse speculations: and, as far as ministerial fidelity would allow, have avoided subjects of controversy. I have rather desired to impress on your hearts and my own a deeper sense of those great and important truths, in which good men are agreed, and which are at the foundation of all religion.60

C. Practical Divinity.

In trying to avoid majoring on what he regarded as theological minors, whilst urging his New North congregation to be true to their faith, Eliot was, however, much more forceful than Mayhew in arguing the primacy of divine grace over human effort in the Christian economy of salvation. As a result, Eliot's sermons arguably have a less moralistic tone than those of his more liberal contemporary.

Bailyn has critiqued Eliot's sole published "jeremiad," An Evil and Adulterous Generation... (1753) for having "blunted the edge of the ritual attack" of this traditional homiletic trope on social and moral degeneracy. But in his treatment of four major themes of "impiety towards God — a prevailing neglect of Jesus Christ — a great contempt of the Holy Spirit — and vice and immorality of almost every kind," Eliot made clear that he saw his society's declension as requiring a prior and thoroughgoing remedy of spiritual regeneration and transformation that would far transcend Bostonian efforts to elevate moral standards by sheer force of will.61 Compared with the shining virtue of New England's first founders, Eliot argued, "we are guilty of great apostacy; we have broken the covenant, which, as we are a professing people, subsists between God and us." Thus in "impiety towards God," he noted "an observable degeneracy with respect to the Sabbath," "irreverence and indecency" even in "religious assemblies," the omission of both family and "secret" prayer, and too many taking "the sacred name of God in vain."62 Among "the immoralities which abound in our land," Eliot listed "intemperance," "uncleanness," "oppression and injustice," "pride," "that propensity there is in us, to gratify our sensual appetites," "slander and calumny," and "the encreasing rudeness and ungovernableness of children and young people." A universal

62Ibid., pp. 8, 9, 10, 11, 12.
problem was that “these kind of vices are’ too much connived at; at least, they are ‘not sufficiently branded and put out of countenance.”

As a result, Eliot thought New England’s position both “dishonourable” and “dangerous.” But he was equally sure that the solution would require more than hard work. “’Tis only by repentance, we can avert the judgments which are impending over us,” he contended, and this needed to begin in people’s homes. But true repentance and reformation would also ultimately depend on “the effusion of the Holy Spirit on this ungrateful, sinful people,” for which all should be praying. Thus rather than issuing a moralistic call to reform, Eliot closed his *jeremiad* by emphasizing that vital condition and citing from Isaiah 32:15-17:

> If we are once, by the influence of the Spirit of grace, brought to a sincere and thoro’ repentance; God, even our own God, will delight to dwell among us, and to bless us. Things will go well with us. If “the Spirit be poured [upon us] from on high, [and] the wilderness” shall “be a fruitful field... then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field: and the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.”

Such an emphasis on the sovereignty and priority of divine grace even in moral improvement was thoroughly in line with the consistent Calvinism of Eliot’s thought, and he expounded on it in greater detail earlier in *An Evil and Adulterous Generation...* when speaking of “the neglect of Jesus Christ and his salvation.” The Arminian Mayhew argued two years later that “this quality is essential to a true justifying faith; viz. that it is operative, and productive of good works,” and so “faith justifies, only considered as having that property; i.e. on account of the obedience involved in the idea of it.” But Eliot upheld the more conventional, reformed position that “faith in God, in Christ, and in a future state, is necessary to produce that holiness and goodness, which, we all allow, is necessary to happiness.” Among the major doctrinal problems of his age, Eliot saw not only the elevation of “natural religion...above the religion of Christ,” the denial of Christ’s atonement and the marginalization of “faith in the Mediator, and in a future state.” He also lamented that “morality is spoken of, as being all that is necessary in order to our acceptance with God.” Thus while he was prepared to own, in the words of James 2:17, that “faith, if it hath not works, is dead,” he went on to stress that “works without faith...will be a mere lifeless carcass.”

A similar approach to the faith/works dilemma is found elsewhere in Eliot’s writings. In *The Faithful Steward...* (1742), he argued that the “faithful minister” would “teach that good works are

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63 Ibid., pp. 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, citing an unidentified work.

64 Ibid., pp. 21, 23, 25, 26, citing Isaiah 32:15-17 - Italics added for emphasis.


the effect of faith and the evidence of it, and not the cause of justification, that they proceed from grace in the heart and don’t produce it.” In Christ’s Promise to the Penitent Thief... (1773), a sermon delivered at the express wish of prisoner Levi Ames, who was subsequently executed for burglary, Eliot’s main concern was to stress the overriding mercy of God even to those in extremis, like the thief on the cross who repented at Christ’s crucifixion, according to Luke 23:32-43. Yet as he called his hearers to “repair to our blessed Redeemer for pardon and salvation” and held out the possibility of salvation even to a duly repentant Ames, Eliot emphasized the omnipotence and sovereignty of divine grace. He also expounded a classically reformed understanding of the relationship between justification and sanctification:

The way in which God makes it evident to his saints and people, that they have a place in his Kingdom, is by implanting a principle of holiness and making them like his own blessed self....It is by their sanctification he makes it clear that they are justified.68

Eliot regularly stressed human responsibility to make use of all available means not only to grow in grace in the Christian life, but to come to faith in the first place. In that sense, his theology contained familiar Puritan, preparationist themes. “God expects something from us,” he told the congregation of First Church, Fairfield at his son’s ordination in 1774, and “if we carefully and seriously wait on him in the use of his appointed means, we may reasonably hope that he will produce this great and necessary change [i.e., spiritual regeneration] in us.” Moreover, “every direction to unregenerate sinners supposes some power existing in them, which they ought to improve, and in the improvement of which they may hope for a blessing.”69 Nevertheless, Eliot contended, quoting from an unidentified work by Boston’s Old South minister Thomas Prince (1687-1758), “‘every command to do a duty,’ as was observed by a great man of our own, ‘implies an offer of grace to enable us to do that duty,’” and in the final analysis, conversion was “a work of divine power.”70 Thus while Eliot’s thought might be termed morally demanding in the sense that he continually called upon “those who profess the religion of Christ” to “be careful to evidence their sincerity to the world, by an answerable conservation,” it was not moralistic, because he consistently viewed authentic Christian faith and life as the fruit of divine grace. For Eliot, “the exercise of grace [was] the proper Scripture evidence that we are in a state of grace,” and that initial state was solely the work of God.71

70Ibid., pp.19-20, 22.
71Eliot, Twenty Sermons on the Following Subjects..., pp. 77, 139.
D. Rational Christianity.

Such an emphasis on the primacy of divine sovereignty and revelation was also a feature of what might be called Eliot's "natural theology," despite the heavy reliance on more rationalist, contemporary sources that Bailyn has rightly noted in his sole published work on the topic, A Discourse on Natural Religion... (1771). Elsewhere in his writings, Eliot repeatedly stressed, like Mayhew and others of his age, that Christianity was an inherently rational faith. In his Election Sermon of 1765, for example, he defined religion as "that which Jesus Christ taught, and which is made known to us in the sacred oracles. It is a belief of the truth and a temper of mind correspondent to it."\(^7\)

Nine years later, in Twenty Sermons on the Following Subjects..., Eliot highlighted the duties which flowed from the fact that "God hath given us living souls, and endowed us with reason and understanding." This entailed, among other things, that "we are under the highest obligation, to use our reason, and to act reasonably" and that "we are to think and judge for ourselves."\(^7\)

Human capacity for rational thought and questioning would also mean that "there may be doubts about the truth of religion, where there is real sincerity of heart." If even the disciples could doubt Christ's resurrection, as reported in John 20, this was a clear indication that "every error doth not proceed from a wicked mind, and it is not for us to say, how far a good man may fall into wrong sentiments in religion." Moreover, such considerations prompted Eliot to reiterate the doctrinal reserve that has already been noted. "It becomes us to be very cautious," he noted towards the end of the last of his final collection of published sermons, "how we determine any point to be fundamental, which God hath not determined to be so."\(^7\)

But even if the gift and faculty of human reason entailed capacities for legitimate doubt and scepticism as well duties to exercise it responsibly, that did not detract from Eliot's conviction that "the Christian's joy is....a sober, rational thing, and may be defended upon all the principles of reason and religion."\(^7\) Eliot's theology of spiritual gifts was cessationist, in that he held that "extraordinary [i.e., miraculous] gifts ceased in the church" around the completion of the biblical canon.\(^7\) He also decried "enthusiasm" of all kinds, including the belief that one could receive "those qualifications which are necessary for a Gospel minister by immediate inspiration."\(^7\) But such convictions were based, in great part, on an underlying premise that "there is nothing in Christianity that is contrary to reason. God never did, he never can, authorize a religion opposite

\(^7\)Eliot, A Sermon Preached before His Excellency Francis Bernard..., p. 26.
\(^7\)Eliot, Twenty Sermons on the Following Subjects..., pp. 45-6.
\(^7\)Ibid., pp. 470-1.
\(^7\)Ibid., p. 244.
\(^7\)Eliot, A Sermon Preached at the Ordination of the Reverend Mr. Joseph Willard..., p. 9.
to it, because this would be to contradict himself." The ethical corollary of such an assumption was that "if our minds were in a right state, we could not have the least hesitation about any part of Christian practice." All that prevented such unhesitating, rational obedience - and without the atoning mediation of Christ, this was obviously an insurmountable obstacle for Eliot - was human depravity, whereby "man had by sin exposed himself to punishment." 79

In A Discourse on Natural Religion... (1771), however, Eliot was initially less concerned to stress the sin-sourced separation between God and humanity that featured so prominently in his published sermons, than the inherent rationality of belief in God and of "natural religion" in general. In so doing, as Bailyn has noted, he drew heavily on the theological and philosophical works of Samuel Clarke and James Beattie (1735-1803), as well as citing from Ebenezer Gay, Thomas Halyburton (1674-1712), John Howe (1630-1705), Henry Home, Lord Kames (1696-1782), Locke, Robert Riccalton (1691-1769), Matthew Tindal (1653-1733) and William Wollaston (1659-1724). 80

Samuel Clarke was a latitudinarian Church of England clergyman and philosopher, whose 1704-5 Boyle Lectures contained an influential "proof" of the existence of God a posteriori from which Eliot drew freely in his argument that it was rational to conclude that "the universe is the effect of some powerful cause" which must be "intelligent, wise and good." 81 Thus in view of "the structure and constitution of the world, the accurate adjustment of its various parts, and the uses and ends to which they are mutually adapted," Eliot contended, only "a being possessed of...perfections [of wisdom and power] in the highest possible degree could have created this stupendous universe." 82 Eliot found further support for such an argument in the work of the Scottish philosopher Beattie and especially in his An Essay on the Nature and Immutability of Truth... (1770), which was published in reply to David Hume (1711-1776) and his A Treatise of Human Nature (1739). 83 And having established, to his own satisfaction, the "being and perfections of God" on the basis of such inherently rationalistic arguments, Eliot thought it "not hard to prove

78 Eliot, A Discourse on Natural Religion... p. xxxvii.
81 Eliot, A Discourse on Natural Religion..., p. viii; Samuel Clarke, A Discourse Concerning the Being and Attributes of God... (London, 1711). This 1711 edition was the first in which Clarke's Boyle Lectures of 1704-5 were published together. Bailyn, "Religion and Revolution," p. 92, also notes the influence on Eliot of Clarke’s "Answer to a Sixth Letter" and "Answer to a Seventh Letter, Concerning the Argument A Priori," which were republished in the full edition of his Works (London, 1738), pp. 751-58.
82 Eliot, A Discourse on Natural Religion..., pp. viii, x-xi.
that there is such a thing as religion,” in the sense that “there are duties incumbent on man towards the Deity, which God hath a right to require of us.” 84

Underlying Eliot’s approach to religious responsibilities was his key assumption, which will be considered separately, that “man acts freely” and in support of such a premise, he marshalled a range of citations not only from Beattie, but from the English clergyman and scholar Wollaston, Oliver Cromwell’s Puritan chaplain Howe, the Scottish philosopher and lawyer Lord Kames and decisively, from Locke. 85 But given that primary supposition, Eliot did not hesitate to argue that “it is fit and right that we should act in conformity to the will of an all-perfect being, whose will is rectitude itself, and who requires nothing of us, but what tends to make us like himself, who is the standard of excellence.” 86 He also went considerably further, contending that God’s “moral government” gave rise to the “just and unavoidable” conclusion that God would reward or punish people according to their individual behaviour, and that there would be a “future state” when God’s justice would be fully displayed and vindicated. 87 Yet when Eliot attempted to describe the character of natural religion in more detail, his concern for the primacy of biblical revelation ultimately gave rise to significant caution.

Bailyn has been critical of the lack of originality of Eliot’s thought in A Discourse on Natural Religion..., stressing, for example, his “generous borrowings” from “early eighteenth-century latitudinarian rationalists,” like Clarke and Wollaston, as well as his reliance on a quotation from Locke to decide the thorny issue of human free will. 88 However, Eliot consistently refused to allow the claims of natural religion to override those of biblical revelation, and he was quite prepared to support the priority of the latter with citations from the works of otherwise quite divergent thinkers. Right from the outset of his disquisition on “in what sense...religion is called natural,” Eliot contended that:

it is thus denominated, not because men discover it in the sole exercise of their natural faculties and powers; but because it hath its foundation in the perfections of God, and in that constitution of nature which he has established, or which arises from the mutual relation between God and his creature man. 89

84 Ibid., p. xiv.
86 Ibid., p. xv.
87 Ibid., pp. xvii-xviii.
89 Eliot, A Discourse on Natural Religion..., p. xxi.
Thus “the religion of nature” was “written in the book of nature, in the works of God” and Eliot cited the reformed Scottish Presbyterian minister and theologian Halyburton in connection with his argument that “this religion, which is taught by the natural order and constitution of things, all men are capable in some degree of knowing, of embracing and practicing.”

The major problem for Eliot, when he tried to discern the limits of possible human knowledge and practice of principles arising from natural religion was the plain truth, as he saw it, that “man is evidently at present in a state of degradation.” As a result, if left to their own devices, without the benefit of special divine revelation, people “would certainly attain to very little knowledge of God or of [their] duty.” Having adduced the authority of the orthodox Calvinist Halyburton in support of the accessibility of natural religion, Eliot was not afraid to cite a source from the opposite end of the theological spectrum, the English Deist Tindal, to preface his claim that it was “impossible to determine how much or how little acquaintance man would have had with moral truths, by his own natural light, without instruction.” Moreover, such were Eliot’s doubts “whether according to the present constitution of our natures, any abstract ideas of the fitness or unfitness of things would produce a right moral conduct,” that he devoted a significant part of the closing pages of A Discourse on Natural Religion... to underlining the advantages of biblical revelation.

Eliot’s key distinction in this section was between “the religion of nature,” which was “the same it ever was,” and Christianity, which encompassed it, but “with some wise and merciful additions, accommodated to the state of mankind as sinners.” Thus “whereas the light of nature cannot assure us that God will forgive a sinner upon his repentance,” scriptural revelation unveiled a treasure trove of truths that directly addressed the most pressing needs of the human condition: The revelation with which God hath favored us, teaches how he can be just and yet justify the sinner; it opens the mysteries of redeeming love and grace; it contains the most gracious declarations of God’s readiness to pardon the penitent believer; it offers the most gracious assistance, and promises the most glorious rewards. By the help of this, we know many truths, which unassisted reason never would have taught us.

In the final analysis, Eliot thus argued, “the proper use and improvement of natural religion” that was the brief of all Dudleian lecturers, was to lead their hearers to “that which is revealed” and, therefore, superior. Furthermore, when authorities as diverse as Locke, Tindal, and the Scottish Calvinist Riccaultoun could all be cited in support of his view of the nature and limitations of natural

90 Ibid., pp. xxv-xxvi, citing and somewhat paraphrasing Thomas Halyburton, Natural Religion Insufficient... (Edinburgh, 1714), p. 38.
91 Ibid., pp. xxvii-xxviii.
92 Ibid., pp. xxx, xxviii, citing an unidentified passage from Matthew Tindal, Christianity as Old as the Creation... (London, 1730).
93 Ibid., p. xxxii.
94 Ibid., p. xxxviii-xxxix, xxxiv, xxxvi-xxxvii.
religion, Eliot’s clear implication was that his own view that biblical revelation was superior was not the exclusive preserve of reformed theologians like himself, but a rational conclusion for any thinking person. In that sense, he concluded, “we, in this favored land, are lift up to heaven, with respect to our spiritual privileges; we have many and great advantages to know our Master’s will.”

Judging from A Discourse on Natural Religion... (1771) and other works, therefore, Eliot can hardly be termed a “rationalist” thinker, if the intended implication of that term is that he prioritized reason over revelation in developing his ideas. His vision of Christianity was indeed that of a rational faith that would ideally be readily accepted and followed by any reasonable person. But such were his continuing Calvinist convictions of the gravity of human depravity and of the resulting separation between God and humankind, that he consistently stressed the necessity and primacy of divine grace and revelation both in conversion and spiritual growth. Eliot’s faith involved, in other words, a commitment to “rational Christianity,” but not to reason as an independently decisive source of religious authority in its own right.

5. A Providentialist Political Scientist.

When it comes to an analysis of Eliot’s political thought, similar tensions emerge. For while he drew liberally upon and was clearly inspired by the ideas of both English Whigs and continental European theorists, he tended to present his conclusions within the overarching framework of a biblicist, providentialist worldview that had much in common with that of his Puritan forebears.

A. Filiopietistic Vision.

Like Wise and others of his age, including Mayhew and Chauncy, Eliot embraced a filiopietistic vision of New England’s founders as pilgrims of grace and pillars of virtue. Thus in An Evil and Adulterous Generation... (1753), he compared the tarnished evidence of declension that he saw all around him with the shining example of virtuous predecessors:

Like the Jews, we descend from pious ancestors; the first settlers of New England were men of exalted goodness....What ardent zeal! What disinterested affection to God and his cause possess’d their souls, when they left a good and pleasant land, where some of them had large possessions, and sought in this New World, a covert from the storm of persecution, which was raised against them....A man might live seven years among them, and not hear a profane oath, or see a man drunk in the street: such was the honourable testimony which was once given of this land. But how is the gold become dim! How is the most fine gold changed! Oh New-England, how art thou fallen?

96Ibid., p. xliv.
Eliot returned to this theme in his Thanksgiving Sermon of 1759, where he praised the founders for having chosen “to venture their lives among salvages [sic], rather than to give up their religious liberty, and the rights of conscience.”\textsuperscript{96} In his other major political sermon, \textit{A Sermon Preached before His Excellency Francis Bernard…} (1765), Eliot reiterated the example of the first settlers’ sacrifice. It was “our fathers,” he wrote, who “dearly bought the privileges we enjoy. It is evident, when they left their native land, they thought the rights of Englishmen would follow them wherever they sat down, and be transmitted to their posterity; and we hope their posterity have done nothing to forfeit them.”\textsuperscript{99} Finally, in \textit{Twenty Sermons on the Following Subjects…} (1774), Eliot saw the founders as continuing exemplars of Christian virtue despite their obvious human mortality:

If we look back to the first settlement of New-England, not one is to be found who was then alive. Of those who laid the foundation of these rising colonies it would be hard to find even the dust. There are none now on the stage who have seen or known them. What was once visible of them is forgotten – the memory of these excellent men still remains – their names, their love to God, his truths and ways, will, we trust, be had in everlasting remembrance, and be an incitement to their posterity to imitate their virtues.\textsuperscript{100}

\textbf{B. Whig Politics.}

If Eliot’s moral and ethical analysis of contemporary New England society was grounded in this pristine vision of ancestral virtue, however, it was also, as Bailyn and others have argued, strongly influenced by the writings of 17th and 18th century political philosophers and by the network of Whig correspondents, in which he participated so enthusiastically during the last 20 years of his life. Such influences are most apparent, among Eliot’s published works, in \textit{A Sermon Preached before His Excellency Francis Bernard…}, the 1765 Election Sermon that Bailyn has described as “a ritualistic statement of the duties and characteristics of the just magistrate.”\textsuperscript{101}

Eliot delivered the sermon on May 29, 1765, just two months after enactment by the British Parliament of the Stamp Act that was due to go into effect November 1. Under the terms of the new legislation, which was fiercely resisted in Massachusetts and other colonies, the colonists would be “taxed without consent for purposes of revenue, their rights to common-law trial abridged, the authority of one prerogative court (admiralty) enlarged, and the establishment of another (ecclesiastical) hinted at.”\textsuperscript{102} Eliot thus found himself called upon to preach the year’s

\textsuperscript{96}Eliot, \textit{A Sermon Preached October 25th. 1759…}, p. 19.
\textsuperscript{99}Eliot, \textit{A Sermon Preached before His Excellency Francis Bernard…}, p. 52.
\textsuperscript{100}Eliot, \textit{Twenty Sermons on the Following Subjects…}, pp. 441-2.
\textsuperscript{101}Bailyn, “Religion and Revolution,” p. 95.
\textsuperscript{102}Edmund S. Morgan and Helen M. Morgan, p. 74.
major, formal political sermon in Massachusetts at a time of impending, if not actual political crisis. He was also working within the context of more than 130 years of homiletic tradition, with standard expectations that he would address certain topics, like God's covenantal relationship with New England, church-state relations and the duties and responsibilities of both rulers and ruled. Bailyn has pointed to the sermon's "rigid embodiment of inherited formulas" in its structure and its "fine articulation of a tradition of thought familiar to every New Englander." But he has also described "Eliot's thought" in the sermon as "platitudinous throughout," resting on "the solid bedrock of the contract theory of government, and the concepts of the innate corruption of man and of the Hobbesian consequences of unlimited freedom."104

The form of A Sermon Preached before His Excellency Francis Bernard ... is indeed conventional in the sense that Eliot systematically structured it, more or less explicitly, within the established framework of "exposition"-"doctrine"-"application" that was the standard pattern of Massachusetts Election Sermons. He also addressed two of the major themes expected on such occasions, namely "the character of a good ruler" and "the duty of subjects to their rulers." But in so doing, whilst Eliot stayed, for the most part, on familiar ground, and drew on what would have been, for many in his congregation, familiar sources, he also, as Bailyn has conceded, included "more personal and provocative elements." And it is these that have arguably tended to ensure the sermon's place as a staple item in the literature of American pre-revolutionary sentiment and ideology.

Eliot took as his text for the occasion 1 Chronicles 12:32, which he expounded as "the model of a happy state:...where rulers are wise and good, and the people are quiet and submissive! Moreover, he plainly stated a Lockean, social contract understanding of government authority right from the start. "All power has its foundation in compact and mutual consent," he argued, and:

If men could subsist as well in a state of independency and absolute liberty, there is nothing in reason or conscience to oblige them to subjection. The necessity of government arises wholly from the disadvantages, which, in the present imperfect state of human nature, would be the natural consequence of unlimited freedom.106

On Massachusetts election sermons and their history and content, see especially, A. W. Plumstead (ed.), pp. 3-37; Martha Counts, "The Political Views of the Eighteenth Century New England Clergy as Expressed in their Election Sermons" (PhD. diss., Columbia University, 1956).


Eliot, A Sermon Preached before His Excellency Francis Bernard ..., p. 8.


Eliot, A Sermon Preached before His Excellency Francis Bernard ..., p. 7, expounding 1 Chronicles 12:32: "And of the children of Issachar, which were men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do, the heads of them were two hundred; and all their brethren were at their commandment."

Above and beyond any human institution, however, it was crucial to recognize that "all power is from God, as that constitution, which makes government necessary, originates with him who is the author of nature." It was thus, "the design of heaven that there should be civil government," Eliot stated, and he justified this claim from a traditional text, Romans 13:4.109 He praised the peculiar virtues of the British system, which he described as "a happy mixture of monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy" and "perhaps the most perfect form of civil government." Yet Eliot freely admitted that while "reason dictates that there should be government; and the voice of reason is the voice of God," people had to make their own choice as to "what form...they will be under," because "God has never determin'd this."110 He thus appealed directly to the writings of the Swiss legal scholar Burlamaqui and the French political philosopher Montesquieu in support of the British model. Both these authors had also warned of the inherently temporal and passing nature of any type of government, however well constituted, and such considerations made the choice of good rulers all the more important.111

Eliot's list of qualifications for strong leadership was fairly standard, including awareness of "the public interest," "a good degree of wisdom and knowledge," acquaintance with the constitution, "prudence," and last but not least, "religion and virtue."112 He stressed this final point repeatedly, inasmuch as "rulers cannot come up to the character of the text, unless they are men of religion and virtue," and "whatever qualities a man has, it can by no means be safe, to entrust our lives, our estates, our liberty, everything that is dear and valuable, to one who evidences by his conversation, that he has no regard to God, and is destitute of virtue and goodness."113 In general terms, Eliot saw "the duty of subjects" to be submissive to such rulers and he cited a series of traditional biblical teachings to support that view.114 But it is significant to note that he also

109 ibid., p. 9. The full text of Romans 13:4, of which Eliot only cited from the first sentence, is: "For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if 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 doeth evil."
110 ibid., pp. 18, 17.
112 Eliot, A Sermon Preached before His Excellency Francis Bernard... pp. 9-10, 14, 23.
113 ibid., pp. 23, 30.
114 ibid., pp. 40-2, citing, more or less fully: Matthew 22:21: "They say unto him, Caesar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's;" Romans 13:1-2. 4: "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation....For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if 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 doeth evil;" 1 Peter 2:13-15: "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men."
argued for the right of civil disobedience and resistance from precisely the same text that he used
to justify submission. Thus in the following passage, Eliot actually contended for both from
Romans 13:4:

St. Paul very plainly teaches us how far subjection is due to a civil magistrate, when he gives it
as a reason for this subjection, "for he is the minister of God to thee for good." The end for
which God has placed men in authority is, that they may promote the public happiness: when
they improve their power to contrary purposes, when they endeavour to subvert the
constitution, and to enslave a free people, they are no longer the ministers of God; they do not
act by his authority; if we are obliged to be subject, it is only for wrath and not for conscience
sake and they who support such rulers betray their country, and deserve the misery they bring
on themselves. Happy would it be if it was confined to them!115

It is clear from later statements in A Sermon Preached before His Excellency Francis Bernard..., that
Eliot struggled with the whole issue of civil disobedience and that his general inclination was
to err on the side of caution rather than outright rebellion.116 But Bailyn has rightly highlighted
Eliot's “fierce insistence that when rulers ‘pervert their power to tyrannical purposes,
submission...is a crime....an offense against the state...an offense against mankind...an offense
against God.”117

In her 1956 dissertation on Massachusetts Election Sermons, Martha Counts showed how Eliot
was not unique in advocating such views. He was representative of a growing trend among
clergy, beginning with Mayhew in 1754 and continuing through Eliot to Samuel Cooke (1709-83)
in 1770, John Tucker (1719-92) in 1771, Charles Turner (1732-1818) in 1773 and Samuel West
(1731-1807) in 1776, to urge the right of resistance. Mayhew's Election Day comments were
relatively restrained compared with the sentiments expressed in his A Discourse Concerning
Unlimited Submission... (1750) that were discussed in the previous chapter. But he still made
the point that "it is not to be forgotten that as in all free constitutions of government, law, and not will,
is the measure of the executive magistrate's power, so it is the measure of the subject's
obedience and submission."118 Counts suggested that the people's “right to resist tyranny and
oppression stemmed from the theory” that ministers had expounded in sermons of the first half of
the 18th century. However, "by 1776," she contended:

115Ibid., pp. 42-3.
116Ibid., p. 43: “I am sensible, it is difficult to state this point with precision; to determine where submission ends and
resistance may lawfully take place, so as not to leave room for men of bad minds unreasonably to oppose government,
and to destroy the peace of society. Most certainly people ought to bear much, before they engage in any attempts
against those who are in authority...”
47-8.
118Counts, pp. 123-7 citing, in addition to Mayhew and Eliot; Samuel Cooke, A Sermon Preached at Cambridge... (Boston,
MA: 1770); John Tucker, A Sermon Preached at Cambridge... (Boston, MA: 1771); Charles Turner, A Sermon Preached
before His Excellency Thomas Hutchinson... (Boston, MA: 1773); Samuel West, A Sermon Preached before the
Honorable Council... (Boston, MA: 1776). See also: Mayhew, A Sermon Preach’d..., in A. W. Plumstead (ed.), p. 390.
Italics added for emphasis; above, pp. 153-5.
several premises had been accepted: The people had a right to judge for themselves whether or not they were being oppressed; it was their duty to complain of these oppressions; if they received no relief, then they were obliged to stand up and fight. Both the law of self-preservation and their commitment to pursue the common good required the people to do this. If they were to obey the magistrate to further the happiness of society, they had to resist when the magistrate invaded their rights and liberties and perverted the ends of government. 119

Within a New England context, Eliot's 1765 sermon was thus somewhat pioneering in the boldness with which he advocated a general right to civil disobedience. But inasmuch as he, with other ministers, "were not developing a new political theory" and "much of what they said might well have come from Locke's Second Treatise on Government," his ideas were not original. 120

Having defined "the character of a good ruler" and defended the right of resistance, as well as the duty of submission among Christian subjects, Eliot closed A Sermon Preached before His Excellency Francis Bernard... by offering a few applications of such principles to the contemporary situation of the growing Stamp Act crisis. But while he characterized the "present" as "a critical season" and reminded the assembled worthies of their responsibility to rectify any "mistakes" made by the British, Eliot's general tone remained protective of colonial authority. "I am far from impeaching the justice of the British Parliament," he said and he expressed his trust that "our King and his Parliament will yet hear us and confirm our liberties and immunities to us." 121

Such tensions between Eliot's sometimes forthright political convictions in principle and his generally cautious attitudes towards British rule in practice were to prove a persistent feature for the rest of his active life and ministry. As shall be seen, it is also clear from other sources that Eliot was strongly influenced not only by the writings of Locke and other political philosophers, but by the connections that he established and by the worldview that he came to share with like-minded correspondents in England. Eliot's thought cannot be understood in toto, however, without prior recognition of its foundational providentialist, as well as biblicist assumptions.

C. Providentialist Perspective.

Eliot's providentialism is apparent throughout his published works and he clearly saw God's sovereign and guiding hand superintending every aspect of human and natural history. 122 It was

119Counts, pp. 123, 127.

120Counts, p. 127. Cf., for example, Locke, Two Treatises of Government, pp. 424-46, passim.

121Eliot, A Sermon Preached before His Excellency Francis Bernard..., pp. 51-2, 54.

122As already implied above, Eliot's providentialism is not being represented here as in any sense exceptional in the context of 18th century New England. See, for example, Guyatt, p. 6. But it is highlighted as a significant element in Eliot's moderate Calvinist worldview and thus of the personal and political tensions with which he eventually struggled.
part of the very purpose of his 1750 memorial sermon delivered the Sunday after Pastor John Webb’s funeral to “inquire into the reasons of this part of the divine conduct.” Although Eliot was not afraid to offer possible grounds why divine providence might extinguish such “a burning and shining light,” he prefaced his conjectures with the bleak recognition that “it is indeed enough effectually to silence us, that God is a sovereign agent.” Moreover, in applying his message more directly to his own congregation of New North, Eliot described Webb’s death as a great “frown of heaven.” The demise of such ministers was, he observed, “a providence of a very dark aspect upon all whom their light and influence reached.”

If God could remove a prominent minister like Webb, God could also uproot whole churches. So Eliot saw no inconsistency in warning representatives of the “evil and adulterous generation” of his age, gathered to hear his 1753 fast sermon, of the harsh realities of historical precedent. “There have been Christian churches,” he noted, “who have left their first love, sunk into lukewarmness and indifference, and proceeded from one iniquity to another, till God has removed their candlestick out of its place.” Even while Eliot praised God that “we have magistrates, who discomfitance vice, and with some laudable zeal, endeavour to suppress it” and “ministers, who preach the pure doctrines and precepts of the Gospel,” he still described New England’s position as “dishonourable,” “dangerous” and cause for humiliation. His understanding of the accountability of peoples before God was thus closely linked to Eliot’s vision of a sovereign deity who could punish and reward whole nations according to their just deserts.

In his 1759 Thanksgiving Sermon “for the success of the British arms...in the reduction of Quebec,” Eliot argued that God’s blessings in the temporal and political realm should be cause “to rejoice and be glad,” whereas “afflictions are design’d to awaken and alarm us; to convince us of the evil of sin; to humble us for what has been amiss; to produce holy watchfulness and circumspection.” Eliot had no reservations about attributing direct government over all things to Christ himself:

Every new instance of divine goodness, every mercy in providence, every blessing of grace should lead our tho’ts to Christ who is the fountain from whence all our mercies flow, and we should take occasion from thence to bless God for redeeming love. Christ has purchased all the good we receive, and he is the immediate dispenser of it. All power is given to him, he rules in the Kingdom of providence, as well as in the Kingdom of grace.
Eliot was also prepared to list many events in biblical and post-biblical history that he saw as examples of God’s providence. These included not only the people of Israel’s victories over Ai and Jericho, as portrayed in the Old Testament, but their escape from Egypt, survival in the desert and eventual entry into the land of Canaan. Inasmuch as “no event comes to pass without the concurrence of his [God’s] providence,” the Protestant Reformation could be clearly traced to divine initiative, as could the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588 and of the Gunpowder Plot of Guy Fawkes and his co-conspirators in 1605. The Glorious Revolution of 1688 and the Duke of Marlborough’s defeat of the French forces of Louis XIV in the early 1700s were both ultimately the work of God, as was the settlement of New England by the first Puritans. In that sense, the conquest of Quebec by General Wolfe and his forces in 1759 was simply part of a divine plan, in which God had consistently prospered the Protestant cause of truth, justice and religious freedom over the forces of oppression and corruption associated with “popish superstition and error.”  

Although he did not dwell on the prospect, Eliot clearly nurtured a millennial vision of “a time, when the religion of Jesus will prevail throughout the world.”  

D. Colonial Ambivalence.  
One of Eliot’s major problems, when tensions between Great Britain and the American colonies escalated from the 1760s onwards, was how to reconcile his continuing loyalty to a providentialist vision of the progressive force of Protestant British ideals and influence in post-Reformation history with the obvious and increasing practical difficulties associated with British rule in action.
As the published letters of his later years show very clearly, the growth of Anglo-American hostilities left Eliot deeply perplexed and he never reached a point where he could wholeheartedly approve American independence despite his stated views on the right to civil disobedience and rebellion. Moreover, Eliot's ambivalence on such matters appears to have reflected more than simply a "temperamental" reluctance to declare for one side over the other, as Bailyn has argued.

Eliot's 1766-1775 correspondence with the English Whig leaders, Thomas Hollis, Francis Blackburne and Thomas Brand Hollis is revealing in this regard. Bailyn has arguably overstated the extent to which Eliot shared their darkly pessimistic interpretation of events in Britain and their causes. But there is little question that Eliot endorsed much of his correspondents' outlook on major events and issues of his day. Eliot began writing to Thomas Hollis Sr. in 1766 after Hollis approached him following the death of Mayhew, and in his first letter Eliot can hardly have left his English benefactor in any doubt as to where his sympathies lay, either religiously or politically. He praised Blackburne's The Confessional... (1766), which Hollis had sent to him, as "one of the most valuable performances of the age." The imposition of subscriptions to confessions of faith in churches was, Eliot thought "a yoke...not to be borne. It can answer no end but to promote bigotry and hypocrisy, and has occasioned more perjury and prevarication, than perhaps any one thing in the world."135

Eliot sounded a strongly anti-Catholic note when he expressed surprise that "we have attended so little to the settling a Popish bishop in Canada" and he voiced his support for Mayhew in his controversies with English clergics over the role in America of the SPG. In view of various newspaper articles sent by Hollis, Eliot also expressed forthright opinions about British politics in general. "In the present state of things," he wrote, "we must expect to find syndics, men of contracted minds and mean tools of power." Eliot particularly lamented the apparent defection of William Pitt, "the great patriot," following his 1766 elevation to the House of Lords as Earl of Chatham.136

Such evidence of aggressive religious non-conformity, anti-Catholicism and radical Whig political views is consistent throughout Eliot's 1766-1775 correspondence, as is his determination to resist what he saw as unjustifiable British encroachments on colonial prerogatives. As the elder Hollis sent him a continuous supply of relevant literature, Eliot was unstinting in his praise of such

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135 Andrew Eliot to Thomas Hollis, November 14, 1766, in "Letters from Andrew Eliot to Thomas Hollis," p. 399, citing Francis Blackburne, The Confessional... (London, 1766).

136 ibid., pp. 400-1.
luminaries as Sidney, Harrington, Locke and Milton.  

He defended “liberty of the press” as “the palladium of English liberty.” He described John Trenchard’s (1662-1723) A Short History of Standing Armies in England (London, 1698) as "excellent." “To have a standing army! Good God!” he wrote Hollis in September 1768, “What can be worse to a people who have tasted the sweets of liberty.”

In religious terms, Eliot revealed himself to his correspondents as anti-establishmentarian, as well as anti-Catholic. “I wish our fathers had contrived some other way for the maintenance of ministers, than by a tax,” he told Hollis in 1771. “Thank God, we have none in Boston. I do not like anything that looks like an establishment.” Moreover, Eliot’s anti-Catholicism extended well beyond the particular local concern of the establishment of a Canadian bishopric “to encourage the inhabitants of this newly conquered country in their fatal superstitions.” He wrote, for example, of “the papists...not ashamed, neither do they blush, to fly in the face of all history, and to assert the most infamous falsehoods.” In a letter of December 12, 1767, Eliot was even more direct. “I have observed,” he wrote, “with pleasure, the care taken by Parliament, one branch at least, to have a list taken of the papists. I wish success to every attempt to curb the violence of those enemies of truth, of liberty, of mankind.”

Eliot’s attitudes towards the attempts of various British institutions to control events in New England were similarly negative in some instances, although they were generally more ambivalent. In May 1767, Eliot was quite unequivocal in his positive assessment that “the people here have no notion of aiming at independence. They highly value their connection with their mother country.” It was as the colonial power’s influence threatened to become more interfering and oppressive that Eliot’s concern for the very liberties that he thought so integral to

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137See, for example, Andrew Eliot to Thomas Hollis, May 13, 1767 and December 10, 1767 in ibid., pp. 403-6, 412-21.


140Andrew Eliot to Thomas Hollis, January 26, 1771, in ibid., p. 455.

141Andrew Eliot to Thomas Hollis, November 13, 1767, in ibid., p. 410. Jean-Olivier Briand, who became Bishop of Quebec in 1766, was the first Catholic bishop whose position was formally recognized by the British Government following the conquest of Canada in 1760. See Andre Vachon, Briand, Jean-Olivier (Ottawa, Canada), Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online, online, Library and Archives Canada, <http://www.biographi.ca/EN/ShowBio.asp?BioID=35896>, September 20, 2004.

142Andrew Eliot to Thomas Hollis, October 17, 1768, in ibid., p. 432.

143Andrew Eliot to Thomas Hollis, December 10, 1767, in ibid., pp. 414-15.

144Andrew Eliot to Thomas Hollis, May 13, 1767, in ibid., p. 404.
English national identity and ideals prompted him to adopt a more independent and critical stance.

In the religious sphere, Eliot never produced the kind of systematic defence of New England polity advanced by the three other main subjects of this dissertation, although there is no reason to believe that his Congregationalist credentials were anything other than impeccable. In correspondence with Thomas Hollis, he thus opposed the possible establishment of a Church of England bishopric in North America on similar grounds to those expressed in his critique of the activities of the SPG in his Remarks on the Bishop of Oxford’s Sermon... (1766/7). The missionary society’s ultimate “design,” he thought, was “to episcopize the colonies” and history taught that the consequences of Anglican influence would be costly both financially and politically. 145 “Wherever she [the Church of England] gains the ascendancy,” Eliot wrote, “all must be taxed for her support, but the members of that church must never be taxed for the support of any other minister.” He opposed all forms of church establishment as “contrary to the natural rights of mankind, and to the religion of Jesus Christ, whose kingdom is not of this world.” Moreover, once established, Eliot feared that “an American bishop will be like other prelates; he will aim at power and pomp.”146 Writing to Hollis Sr. in 1767, he expounded on the full dimensions of his anti-episcopal anxiety:

> They who plead so strongly for an American bishop, have other ends in view; to make a more pompous show, by which they hope to increase their faction; to add to the number of Lord Bishops; to extend their episcopal influence; to subject the American dissenters to their yoke; ... and – as Dr. Blackburne judiciously observes in the letter I had the honor of receiving from him – to prevent any reformation at home. God prevent the execution of their pernicious designs!147

In the political arena, Eliot’s letters to Hollis Sr. provide something of a running commentary on his opposition to various British measures, but continuing, albeit somewhat equivocating allegiance to British authority. On December 12, 1767, Eliot wrote to Hollis, among other things, about the Townshend Acts. According to a helpful summary, this British legislation, which was sponsored by Chancellor of the Exchequer Charles Townshend, (1725-67) and enacted on June 29, 1767, was “intended to raise revenue, tighten customs enforcement, and assert imperial authority.” The main statute “levied import duties on glass, lead, paint, paper, and tea,” and one of its purposes was “to provide salaries for some colonial officials so that the provincial assemblies could not coerce them by withholding wages.” But the new duties were much resented in the

145Eliot, Remarks on the Bishop of Oxford’s Sermon..., p. 196.
American colonies and gave rise to retaliatory non-importation measures. \(^{148}\) "The people in this town are not pleased with the late regulations of Parliament," observed Eliot, "-- the new burthens laid upon them...the people are sullen, and think themselves ill-treated. They cannot be persuaded that the Parliament hath a right to impose taxes upon them."\(^{149}\) Just seven months earlier, Eliot could write of a relatively contented populace, happy to remain under British rule, but now he was more doubtful:

Unreasonable impositions tend to alienate the hearts of the colonists. We are not ripe for a disunion, but our growth is so great, that in a few years Great British will not be able to compel our submission....The colonies, if disunited from Great Britain, must undergo great convulsions before they would be settled on a firm basis....I hope not to live to see the American British colonies disconnected from Great Britain.\(^{150}\)

Less than a month later, Eliot informed Hollis that "our assembly is greatly warmed with the late Acts of Parliament" and he expressed the conviction that "the dispute between Great Britain and her colonies will never be amicably settled."\(^{151}\)

Of course, Eliot was not only an interested observer of the events of his day, but an engaged participant in them. In the former capacity he could observe in September 1768, for example, that "things are far from being in that happy state in which you, and all friends to Great Britain and her colonies, wish them to be."\(^{152}\) And on Christmas Day of 1769, he offered Hollis the following reportage:

The colonies wait with patience to hear the result of Parliament. Lord Hillsboro' has written a letter to soothe them, wherein he promises a repeal of the duties on glass, paper and painters' colors, but leaves out tea. The colonies will never be happy without a repeal of the whole....The Americans are determined to hold out. I wish in some things they were more temperate -- but certainly it is best for Great Britain to repeal the obnoxious Acts. The non-importation takes place throughout almost all the colonies.\(^{153}\)

In other passages, Eliot revealed a deeper personal engagement. "What can we do!?” he asked Hollis rhetorically when contemplating the situation in 1768. He had no doubt that:

\(^{148}\) Robert J. Chaffin, Larry R. Gerlach and Ronald W. McGranahan, The Townshend Acts (Freeport, ME) The American Revolution Homepage, online, <http://www.americanrevolution.com/townshendacts.html>, July 12, 2004. In addition, "other bills authorized blank search warrants called Writs of Assistance, created three additional vice-admiralty courts, which operated without juries, established a Board of Customs Commissioners headquartered in Boston, and suspended the New York assembly for not complying with the Quartering Act of 1765. Parliament also passed the New York Restraining Act, which, in effect, suspended the provincial legislature until it provided 'his Majesty's troops...with all such necessaries' as required by British law."

\(^{149}\) Andrew Eliot to Thomas Hollis, December 10, 1767, in "Letters from Andrew Eliot to Thomas Hollis," pp. 418-9.

\(^{150}\) Andrew Eliot to Thomas Hollis, January 5, 1768, in ibid., p. 422.

\(^{151}\) Andrew Eliot to Thomas Hollis, September 27, 1768, in ibid., p. 427.

\(^{152}\) Andrew Eliot to Thomas Hollis, December 25, 1769, in ibid., p. 446.
Tamely to give up our rights, and to suffer ourselves to be taxed at the will of persons at such a distance, and to be under military government, is to consent to be slaves, and to bring upon us the curses of all posterity; and yet how unable to cope with Great Britain!\textsuperscript{154}

On January 29, 1769, Eliot wrote that "the situation of my country, and the present aspect of things, lies near my heart," and despite recent provocations, he sought to exculpate his fellow colonists of charges of disloyalty:

We have just had the King's speech, and the echo of the Lords and Commons. They are exceeding high against this town and Province. What can the ministry propose further? We have troops. We do not resist them. The duties, unreasonable as we think them, are paid without opposition. Perhaps the town has not in every thing acted with that prudence that might be wished;...I will not say we have none among us of malevolent dispositions, but, in general, I believe the King has not more loyal subjects in any part of his dominions.

As time progressed, there is little doubt that Eliot's assessment of the prospects of reconciliation grew more pessimistic. Even as he proclaimed Bostonian loyalty in the above passage, he went on to express nostalgia for the \textit{status quo ante} "the unhappy Stamp Act," together with the opinion that "the colonies will never be so easily managed as they were before that fateful aera."\textsuperscript{155} Just six months later, Eliot conceded that he had begun to doubt his previous opposition to some measures of local resistance. But although he continued to voice his personal opposition to "independency," he was also of the view that "things will not be settled till we have an American bill of rights."\textsuperscript{156}

Eliot's resistance to advocating independence continued throughout his correspondence, but that did not prevent him, over time, from distinguishing his own, often rather cautious response to events from that of others who took a more radical position, or from plainly stating political realities, as he perceived them. In September 1768, Eliot repeated the view that "our increase is so great, that time will be, when we shall be free," but he still thought it "impolitic to precipitate a disunion."\textsuperscript{157} About a year later, noting growing opposition to the British military presence in Boston, Eliot predicted that "things cannot long remain in the state they are now in; they are hastening to a crisis," and he repeated the prophecy in another letter dated three months afterwards.\textsuperscript{158} By June 1770, when he decried "the impossibility of our living in peace with a standing army," Eliot opined that "unless there is some great alteration in the state of things, the

\textsuperscript{154}Andrew Eliot to Thomas Hollis, September 27, 1768, in \textit{ibid.}, p. 428.

\textsuperscript{155}Andrew Eliot to Thomas Hollis, January 29, 1769, in \textit{ibid.}, pp. 440, 439.

\textsuperscript{156}Andrew Eliot to Thomas Hollis, September 7, 1769, in \textit{ibid.}, p. 444. Cf. Andrew Eliot to Thomas Hollis, December 25, 1769, in \textit{ibid.}, p. 447: "Things must come to some crisis – and if the [Townshend] Acts are not repealed, I am very fearful of the consequences."
aera of the independence of the colonies is much nearer than I once thought it." But in adding the phrase, "or now wish it" to this last sentence, he again took pains to separate what he expected from what he actually wanted to see happen. It remained "for the interest of both countries to be united," he thought, "if it can be on equitable terms." Finally, in one of his last letters to Hollis Sr., Eliot declared his continuing doubts about the desirability of war with Britain:

We daily look for war. We are at a loss which is best — peace or war. Peace is in itself desirable — but war hath sometimes happy effects.

Against such a background, the grim but still hesitant and ambivalent tone of Eliot's later published letters to Thomas Brand Hollis and to members of his family from war-torn Boston is not surprising. In April 1775 Eliot described his home-town as "now almost depopulated" by "the late cruel and oppressive measures gone into by the British Parliament" and his own situation as "turned out of my house...perhaps to be destroyed by a licentious soldiery." His sole "design" was that "the friends of America, the friends of liberty, the friends of humanity, may unite their efforts for our deliverance." Eliot's description of Boston's trials and travails to his son John a few days later is not only dramatic, but highly revealing of his personal predicament:

Poor Boston! May God sanctify our distresses, which are greater than you can conceive. Such a Sabbath of melancholy and darkness I never knew. Most of the meeting-houses shut up, the ministers gone, our congregation crowded with strangers. A town meeting in the forenoon agreed to give up their arms, in order to get leave to depart. A provincial army in Rochester, Dorchester and Cambridge. College dispersed, &c. This town a garrison; every face gathering paleness; all hurry and confusion; one going this way, and another that; others not knowing where to go. What to do with our poor maid I cannot tell. In short, after the melancholy exercises of the day, I am unable to write anything with propriety or connection.

Even so, Eliot refused to leave Boston when he had opportunity, for fear that his "going would hurt religion," and he continued to express the hope, in another letter to John less than two months later, that present hostilities might "terminate in a lasting harmony between Great Britain and the colonies."

In many ways, Eliot's correspondence of 1775 reads like a catalogue of woes, as it documents his effective captivity in Boston and some of the horrors of pastoral ministry in time of war. "It is inconceivably difficult," he told his son Samuel in August 1775. "I have hardly time to think of it, being perpetually in sick and dying rooms.... I want supports myself, but am continually called to

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159 Andrew Eliot to Thomas Hollis, June 28, 1770, in ibid., p. 452.
162 Andrew Eliot to John Eliot, April 28, 1775, in ibid., p. 182.
163 Andrew Eliot to John Eliot, June 5, 1775, in ibid., p. 286.
give them to others." Just days later, he wrote again about his embarrassment at the thought of leaving and then about the hardships of his personal circumstances. "I have no fuel, and very little provision," he informed Samuel. "To tarry here through winter will be dreadful." Eliot eventually came to regret his decision to stay in Boston and he was very frank in his observation that "I have gone through the most trying scenes that I ever did through my whole life." But despite his sufferings, in his letter to Isaac Smith Jr. written just two days after the Battle of Bunker Hill, Eliot could still express the doubts about the wisdom of the colonial struggle that were noted at the beginning of this chapter. "Can no way be found to accommodate these unhappy differences?" he asked Smith.

If Great Britain should finally subjugate us, I fear for the College, I fear for the churches. There is great wrath against the President [of Harvard], and indeed against the Presbyterian ministers in general. If the Americans prevail....The God of heaven preserve us!

In view of what has already been documented concerning Eliot's political views, Bailyn's dismissal of his "reluctance to declare for [American] independence" as purely "temperamental" would thus seem misguided. Bailyn seemed closer to the mark in his later observation that Eliot was "deeply sympathetic with the American cause, yet equally convinced that Parliament's claims to absolute sovereignty were logically compelling and that independence would be a catastrophe for America as well as for England." At the same time, despite his earlier defences of the subject's right of civil resistance and even rebellion against unjust rule, Eliot clearly remained strongly attached to an overarching sense of English national identity which included ideals of personal and political liberty that inspired him throughout his public life.


Unlike Mayhew, Eliot presented no systematic schema, in which he expounded on different definitions of "liberty." But he did follow the example of his ministerial mentor in using the word in a variety of different senses, ranging from "philosophical" through "gracious" to "religious" and "civil" liberty. There is also evidence that he developed, in the process, a libertarian discourse that is of some significance to understanding his thought.

164 Andrew Eliot to Samuel Eliot, August 19, 1775, in ibid., p. 295.
165 Andrew Eliot to Samuel Eliot, August 27, 1775, and September 6, 1775, in ibid., pp. 296, 298.
166 Andrew Eliot to Samuel Eliot, undated, and October 20, 1775, in ibid., pp. 301, 300.
169 Ibid., p. 107.
Eliot's only extended treatment of "philosophical" liberty is found in his Discourse on Natural Religion (1771), in which he devoted some four pages to the topic of freedom and necessity.\(^{170}\) The context of Eliot's discussion is his previous argument that once the existence of an "all-perfect" God is allowed, "it is reasonable to conclude that he will evidence his approbation and dislike, by rewarding those who do his will, and punishing those who do it not" in an afterlife.\(^{171}\) Such conclusions would, however, be meaningless, Eliot argued, unless humankind was assumed to have genuine freedom of choice, as well as moral responsibility. Indeed, the whole of this reasoning is founded on the supposition that man acts freely; and upon any other supposition, it is idle to talk of moral government, of rewards and punishments, or indeed of religion or virtue. "That," says Mr. [William] Wollaston, "which hath not the opportunity or liberty of chusing for itself, and acting accordingly, from an internal principle, acts, if it acts at all, under a necessity incumbent ab extra."\(^{172}\)

Supporting his argument with a citation from James Beattie, Eliot maintained that the view that "all our volitions, determinations and actions proceed from God, as infrustrable effects from their proper cause, hath hitherto been embraced by a very few."\(^{173}\) Moreover, such a doctrine entailed, Eliot thought, in the words of Henry Home, Lord Kames, "a black conception of God, that he should be supposed irresistibly to determine the will of man to the hatred of his own most blessed self, and then to exact the severest punishments for the offence done."\(^{174}\) It was, therefore, partly to protect his understanding of divine justice that Eliot defended human freedom of choice. But he was also swayed by the common sense, empirical observation that people thought themselves free to act as they saw fit:

It is a conclusive argument against such a fatal necessity as some men plead for, that it is contrary to the perceptions of the human mind, - we have a consciousness of liberty, we perceive no external influence, we have a moral sense, we pass a judgment on our own actions, approve or disapprove our selves and others.\(^{175}\)

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\(^{170}\)Eliot, A Discourse on Natural Religion, pp. xviii-xxii.

\(^{171}\)Ibid., pp. xv, xvii.

\(^{172}\)Ibid., p. xvi, citing Wollaston, p. 5.

\(^{173}\)Ibid., p. xix, citing Beattie, pp. 367-8.

\(^{174}\)Ibid., p. xx, citing Howe, Vol. 2, p. 502. Eliot made a similar argument in Sermon XVII of Twenty Sermons on the Following Subjects ..., "Practical Observations on the History of Judas and his Tragical End," where he cited (and somewhat paraphrased), pp. 405-6; a commentary on Matthew 26:23-24 in Philip Doddridge, The Family Expositor ..., (London, 1739-56), Vol. 2, pp. 434-5n.: "I say, without any necessitating agency, because I apprehend that this text, among many others, must entirely overthrow the scheme, which some laboriously endeavour to establish, that where God foresees an event, he always determines to render it necessary, and so, to suspend the moral agency and accountableness of the creature concerned in it. Were this the case, nothing could be more unjust, than to foretell punishments to be inflicted for such actions; which is plainly the case here, and indeed in other places where evil actions are foretold."

\(^{175}\)Eliot, A Discourse on Natural Religion, p. xx.
The Calvinist Eliot thus defended "philosophical" liberty, in that he allowed for freedom of the will on similar grounds to Jonathan Mayhew. But unlike the Arminian Mayhew, who felt free to dismiss Calvinist solutions to "some of the difficulties respecting fore-knowledge, predestination, and...conversion," Eliot's basic theology still required him to uphold the absolute sovereignty of God. So Eliot ended his consideration of this thorny philosophical question with a citation from John Locke that Bailyn has rightly portrayed as providing no real solution at all:

"I freely own the weakness of my understanding, that though it be unquestionable, that there is omnipotence and omniscience in God our Maker, and I cannot have a clearer perception of anything, than that I am free; yet I cannot make freedom in man consistent with omnipotence and omniscience in God, though I am as fully persuaded of both, as of any truths I most firmly assent to."  

In the final analysis, therefore, Eliot defended the "philosophical" liberty of humankind, even though he could not completely reconcile it with his doctrine of God. At the same time, his assumption of total human "depravity" entailed that he saw what Mayhew described as "gracious" liberty, "consisting in a will and a disposition to do good," as entirely dependent on the intervention of God's grace. In view of the demonstrable Calvinism of Eliot's overall theological position, there can be little doubt that he saw spiritual liberty as the central and most important form of human freedom. Thus Eliot portrayed the attitude of the "faithful minister" as involving "such an affecting sense upon his mind, of the inestimable value of precious and immortal souls, that he is in earnest to free them from that condemned state, in which we all naturally are, and to bring them into 'the glorious liberty of the children of God.'"  

In his memorial sermon for John Webb, Eliot likewise commended the "unwearied pains he took to 'set at liberty them that were bruised.'" Elsewhere in his writings, he also drew on biblical texts to urge masters to instruct their slaves "in the principles of religion, and to make them partakers of 'the glorious liberty of the sons of God,'" and in exegeting one of the most obscure passages in the New Testament epistles, 1 Peter 3:19, he referred to "that Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of liberty." Although it is

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176See also Eliot, Twenty Sermons on the Following Subjects, p. 39: "It is not easy to conceive how God could have done more than he hath done to make us happy, unless he had taken away the freedom of our wills, and compelled us to that, which he designed should be our own choice."

177Mayhew, On Hearing the Word, in Bradford, p. 163.


182Eliot, Twenty Sermons on the Following Subjects, pp. 320, citing Romans 8:21, and p. 184, also citing Isaiah 61:1: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound." 1 Peter 3:18-20 reads as follows (with verse 19 underlined): "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: By which also he
noteworthy that Eliot nowhere addressed the apparent inconsistency between his understanding of "gracious" liberty as resulting solely from spiritual regeneration and "philosophical" liberty as freely available to all, in his various references to "religious" and "civil" liberty, there is similar evidence of the power of biblical language in shaping his libertarian discourse.

Eliot's ideas of religious freedom, in Shain's "prescriptive" sense, emerge most clearly in his Remarks on the Bishop of Oxford's Sermon... (1766/7), part of which was subsequently published in England by Francis Blackburne.\textsuperscript{183} His main target in this work was a sermon preached 27 years earlier, when he was Bishop of Oxford, by the future Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Secker, in which Secker defended the record and ministry of the SPG and offered a negative interpretation of the state of religion in the American colonies.\textsuperscript{184} In his "Remarks," Eliot not only offered a vigorous response to Secker's factual allegations; he also made a strong case for the retention of American religious liberties. It was thus central to Eliot's understanding of history that "the glorious errand" of "those excellent and heroick men, who first settled New-England" was ultimately a quest for freedom. These "noble predecessors" had "left their native land, and ventured into the American deserts, that they might enjoy that religious liberty, which was denied them there."\textsuperscript{185} So it was incumbent on their latter-day descendants to beware and to "stand fast in the liberty, wherewith Christ hath made them free."\textsuperscript{186} As already noted, what such steadfastness involved for Eliot, as much as anything else, was maintaining freedom from the establishment of religion and from what he saw as a conscious British design "to episcopize the colonies."\textsuperscript{187} His view of the "fathers of New England" was not totally uncritical. In elsewhere stating his shared opposition with them to religious "subscriptions" of any kind, he also expressed the view that "they did not understand religious liberty," because "there was too much of an intolerant spirit among them."\textsuperscript{188} But inasmuch as he thought that "the principles of liberty and Christian candour have gradually obtained in New-England, as in other places," Eliot showed some optimism about longer-term prospects, and he repeatedly warned his contemporaries to guard their freedoms with care.\textsuperscript{189}


\textsuperscript{184}Thomas Secker, A Sermon Preached before the Incorporated Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts... (London, 1741).

\textsuperscript{185}Eliot, Remarks on the Bishop of Oxford's Sermon..., pp. 197, 209.

\textsuperscript{186}ibid., p. 197, citing Galatians 5:1.

\textsuperscript{187}ibid., p. 196.

\textsuperscript{188}Andrew Eliot to Francis Blackburne, May 13, 1767, cited in Shipton, p. 416.

\textsuperscript{189}Eliot, Remarks on the Bishop of Oxford's Sermon..., p. 204.
Like Mayhew, Eliot often linked religious and "civil" or political liberty as key elements in a package of prescriptive freedoms that was not only desirable in the present but definitive of what was most laudable in both his British and New England heritage. He may have taken the view that "the necessity of government" was primarily a matter of practical expediency "in the present imperfect state of human nature." He saw England, once free of "the papal yoke" as "the bulwark of the Protestant cause" and he bemoaned "how often...its religious, as well as civil liberties [had] been bro't into the most imminent hazard." England's "popish adversaries" had long been "forming plots and conspiracies to overthrow our religion and liberties." Yet thankfully, in events like the defeat of the Spanish Armada or more recently, military success in Quebec, such devilish schemes had been thwarted. In particular, it was the "Glorious Revolution in Britain, to which noble exertion of national virtue, we owe the preservation of our liberty, and the present happy establishment of the House of Hanover." As a result, Britain remained "a happy mixture of monarchy, aristocracy and democracy," which was "the glory of Britons and the envy of foreigners." Moreover, liberty was central to this. "In free governments people are apt to feel much quicker," he argued. "To touch their liberties is to touch the apple of their eye." In 1765, Eliot could still proclaim the happiness of "Great-Britain in a Prince, who accounts it his glory to reign over a free people, and who, we trust, will always make the laws of the land the rule of his administration."

It was the duty of rulers "to know very well what it is to act right, where power ends and liberty begins" and constitutional change could endanger the latter. Those in authority also had a responsibility to "promote the public happiness" and if they failed to preserve civil liberty, they deserved to forfeit the biblical title of "ministers of God." Eliot was deeply conscious of the sacrifices that New England's founders had made for "the privileges we enjoy," including "the rights of Englishmen." So even in the midst of the Stamp Act crisis, he expressed his trust that "our King and his Parliament will yet hear us and confirm our liberties and immunities to us." He also prayed for New England that:

that kind providence, which has so often appeared for our nation [may] still watch over it for good; disappoint every attempt to subvert their liberties, and preserve them from those internal

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190 Eliot, A Sermon Preached before His Excellency Francis Bernard..., p. 8.
191 Eliot, A Sermon Preached October 25th, 1759..., pp. 16-17.
192 Eliot, A Sermon Preached before His Excellency Francis Bernard..., p. 39.
193 Ibid., pp. 18, 20.
194 Ibid., p. 48.
195 Ibid., p. 21.
vices and corruptions, which they have more reason to fear than any foreign enemy, or open violence!196

In his correspondence Eliot echoed similar themes. He frequently wrote of liberty, both civil and religious, together with its "cause," its "spirit" and its "friends," in very general terms as a kind of ultimate good. In one of his earliest letters to Thomas Hollis, for example, he told how he rejoiced "to find the cause of liberty undertaken by one [Francis Blackburne] so every way able to defend it," and how he saw Mayhew's recent death as a "loss" to "the cause of learning, of liberty, and of religion." He also argued that "the spirit of liberty would soon be lost" without a vigilant press and that "syndics" deserved "to lose their liberty, who [could] so tamely resign it."197 Eliot repeated his concerns for the "liberty of the press" in later letters and he drew attention to a number of other "friends" to the cause of liberty, including Milton, the legendary 14th century Swiss hero William Tell, the English dissenter Caleb Fleming (1698-1779), Samuel Locke (1731-1777), who was President of Harvard from 1770 to 1773, and the Bostonian Baptist pastor Jeremiah Condy (1709-1768).198 When Eliot wrote of the lack of New England concern for independence in 1767, he proudly observed that "the people....glory in the name of Englishmen, and only desire to enjoy the liberties of Englishmen."199 He also described "liberty of the press" as "the palladium of English liberty" in the same letter.200

Significant to Eliot's internal struggles, as conflict with Great Britain escalated from the late 1760s onwards, were thus his competing concerns to maintain allegiance to his British libertarian heritage, as well as to see liberty in action closer to home. In January 1769, he wrote to Hollis in England, addressing him as "you who have such just sentiments of liberty," but he also justified Bostonians' possible lack of prudence by asking "what could be expected from a people struggling for liberty and made almost desperate by the measures taken with them?"201 Later that year, he not only praised Blackburne and echoed condemnations of William Pitt, but he warned that Lieutenant-Governor Thomas Hutchinson "must not attempt any thing against our liberties," and described the "declamations and forensic disputes" of Harvard students as breathing "the

196 *ibid.*, pp. 43, citing Romans 13:4, 52, 54, 49.

197 Andrew Eliot to Thomas Hollis, November 14, 1766, in "Letters from Andrew Eliot to Thomas Hollis," pp. 399, 401, 400. On Blackburne's contributions to the cause of liberty, see further: Andrew Eliot to Thomas Hollis, May 13, 1767, in *ibid.*, p. 406; and November 11, 1767, in *ibid.*, p. 408: "The fugitive pieces that worthy man writes in the papers, are admirably calculated to promote the cause of truth and liberty."


199 Andrew Eliot to Thomas Hollis. May 13, 1767, in *ibid.*, p. 404.

200 *ibid.*, p. 405.

201 Andrew Eliot to Thomas Hollis, January 29, 1769, in *ibid.*, pp. 439, 440.
spirit of liberty." In 1771, when discussing religious matters with Hollis, including the now diminished threat of an American episcopate, Eliot suggested that:

There is nothing in the present complexion of this country, that looks like persecution. Both magistrates and ministers are as free from it as they ever were in any age or country.

Nevertheless, Eliot noted internal tensions that had given rise to reports in the Philadelphia papers that the Massachusetts Charter was under threat and "this," he reported, "hath raised a spirit against them [local Baptists] among our sons of liberty."203

Eliot's last use of the word "liberty" in any general political sense in his published correspondence was in a 1775 letter to Thomas Brand Hollis, that has already been cited, where he expressed his "design" that "the friends of America, the friends of liberty, the friends of humanity, may unite their efforts for our deliverance."204 But two months later, he was still expressing his fears and forebodings about the possible outcome of colonial victory in the Anglo-American conflict.205 In the meantime, he continued to appeal to Scripture in his letters, as well as his sermons and other works. One of the "ends" of those pleading for an American bishop in 1767, for example, was "to tyrannize over those who yet 'stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made them free."206

So Eliot gave thanks, three years later, following the obvious delay of such a scheme, and argued that "the future friends of the cause of liberty will be under great advantages for its defence against any future attempts on it of the like nature."207

If Eliot failed to provide the kind of comprehensive treatment of different conceptions of liberty that Mayhew did, there is still, therefore, ample evidence that this was a major element in both his religious and political thinking. His various writings also show that Eliot, like Mayhew, prioritized notions of spiritual liberty and quite often deployed a libertarian discourse that was partly shaped by biblical texts, which served to inject scriptural content and to evoke spiritual allusions even in overtly political contexts.208 Moreover, such a conflation of what we might now consider sacred and secular themes is not surprising in light of the much broader account of Eliot's thought that

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203Andrew Eliot to Thomas Hollis, January 26, 1771, in ibid., pp. 454-9, esp. p. 456.
207Andrew Eliot to Thomas Hollis, June 28, 1770, in ibid., pp. 449-50.
208Key texts were Isaiah 61:1, Luke 4:18, Romans 8:21 and Galatians 5:1.
has been offered in this chapter. For Eliot was primarily a religious thinker, motivated by theological concerns.


As has been seen, Eliot was first and foremost a pastor and theologian who was a “faithful steward” of the classic tenets of orthodox “five-point” Calvinism that he inherited from his Puritan forebears. His religious ideas were ultimately derived from his biblical reading, as well as from reformed tradition, and although he approached it cautiously and he urged doctrinal reserve on notoriously unclear and/or contentious issues, Eliot consistently turned to the Bible as his primary source of authority. His preaching and teaching were strongly practical in focus and Eliot offered a morally demanding and inherently rational account of his faith. But his ethics and theology were neither particularly moralistic nor rationalistic in emphasis. On the contrary, Eliot’s religious worldview was thoroughly providentialist, as well as biblicist, and he repeatedly stressed the primacy of divine grace and initiative not only in matters of personal salvation, but in the much larger sphere of world events, including the affairs of nations.

As a result, Eliot’s political views, although strongly influenced by the leading thinkers of his age, were also decisively rooted in his understanding of guiding scriptural principles. He admired the piety and devotion of New England’s Puritan founders and he continued to be inspired by their example. Even in developing his ideas on civil disobedience, which were quite revolutionary in their day, he appealed to biblical precedent. So when faced with the challenges arising from growing hostilities with Britain from the mid-1760s onwards, Eliot found himself in a quandary.

On the one hand, he proudly adhered to the ideals of liberty that belonged to a vigorous sense of national identity that he shared with his English correspondents. His continuing respect for British authority also led him to resist calls for American independence throughout his published works. On the other hand, Eliot was highly critical of what he saw as British abuses of power and his political philosophy provided for legitimate rebellion in similar circumstances. In a sense, therefore, as Bailyn has perceptively suggested, Eliot’s political wavering between the causes of independence and loyalism mirrored his theological and philosophical uncertainties over the issue of free will and divine necessity. In the final analysis, he was unhappy yielding complete submission to, nor could he make a decisive break from British sovereignty. Thus he vacillated personally, as well as intellectually, reluctantly staying on in Boston once armed hostilities had begun.

Although Eliot can, therefore, justifiably be described as libertarian and even, on occasion, revolutionary in his political views, it was ultimately the strength of his attachment to English ideals, together with the sometimes contradictory complexities of his thought, that led him to take the positions that he did. Rather than giving way to what Bailyn has described as "temperamental" insecurities, Eliot was a reformed theologian swayed by an overarching sense of divine sovereignty operating through human means, including governments. But he was also a keen advocate of liberty in every shape and form, even when he could not completely reconcile it with his Calvinist and providentialist understanding of divine grace in action.
Chapter 5 – "The Mystery Hid" – Charles Chauncy’s Creative Defence of the “Standing Order."

1. Questionable Publications.
On May 6, 1768, Charles Chauncy, already in his fifth decade at Boston’s prestigious First Church, wrote quite a lengthy letter to his friend and colleague in ministry, Ezra Stiles (1727-1795), who was then pastor of the Second Congregationalist Church in Newport, Rhode Island. Stiles had asked for a list of New England “worthies,” whose memory was fit “to embalm in honour to the country,” and in response, Chauncy suggested an eclectic selection of no fewer than 36 individuals with whom he had had personal or historical acquaintance.1 But having dispatched his duty as chronicler and offered further help in the form of “a good many anecdotes,” he also took the liberty to inform Stiles about some of his own publishing plans.

In the same year that he wrote to Stiles, Chauncy released the first of two volumes designed to counter the arguments of the New Jersey clergyman Thomas Chandler (1726-1790) and so to defend the American colonies against the perceived threat of an Anglican bishop.2 But this was not his topic of immediate concern. Instead, Chauncy focused on at least five major works, more or less fully completed over the previous three-and-a-half decades, which had never seen the light of day. He readily admitted that since the late 1740s when he had been forced to attend to health problems that had apparently been brought on by over-work during the period of his first major controversy surrounding the Great Awakening, he had not been able to pursue his studies “with that constancy and long attention” of which he had previously been capable. Even so, after four years’ earlier intensive study following the decision by his then brother-in-law to seek orders in the Church of England, he had not only produced “materials for a complete view of all that is said by the Fathers of the first two centuries relative to the Episcopal controversy.” Chauncy also had to hand, he told Stiles, as a result of a further seven year’s biblical exploration, especially of the Pauline epistles:3

1Charles Chauncy, “A Sketch of Eminent Men in New-England. In a Letter from the Rev. Dr. Chauncy to Dr. Stiles,” CMHS, I:X (1809), pp. 154-65, esp. p. 161. Stiles seems to have been compiling materials for an eventually unpublished work, that Edmund Morgan, The Gentle Puritan: A Life of Ezra Stiles, 1727-1795 (New Haven, CT: 1962), pp. 145-6, identified as The Ecclesiastical History of New England. But according to Morgan, p. 145, despite repeated requests about Stiles’ progress with the work, “though his papers abound with compilations of data and one rough outline – it can scarcely be called a draft – of the first chapters, nothing more has survived.”

2Chauncy’s controversy with Chandler centred on The Appeal to the Public Answered... (Boston, MA: 1768), written in response to Chandler’s An Appeal to the Public... (New York, 1767) and A Reply to Dr. Chandler’s “Appeal Defended”... (Boston, MA: 1770), responding to Chandler’s The Appeal Defended... (New York, 1769). However, he had already written an earlier work countering the prospect of an Anglican bishop taking up residence in the colonies: Charles Chauncy, A Letter to a Friend, Containing Remarks on Certain Passages... (Boston, MA: 1767). He had also, in his Harvard Dudleian Lecture of 1762, produced The Validity of Presbyterian Ordination Asserted and Maintained... (Boston, MA: 1762).

i. "a finished quarto volume" about "a most interesting subject." This was "written with too much freedom to admit of a publication in this country," Chauncy thought, and he wondered whether it would "ever see the light till after my death," although he had been asked by friends to publish it anonymously in England.

ii. "materials for an octavo volume," which had been "mostly put together" and included three "dissertations" on the theological question of sin and the interpretation of Adam's Fall. Chauncy was at pains to stress that "the whole is written from the Scripture account of these matters, and not from any human scheme." But he conceded that the work was unorthodox and was unsure whether he would ever publish it under his own name.

iii. "materials for another work," although "as yet in a disjoined heap," which was intended as "a key to the New Testament, more especially the apostles' writings," and designed "to guard one against mistakes, and lead into a true understanding of the inspired writings." 6

iv. "another piece," which Chauncy felt free to publish openly after it had been fully transcribed, "upon the benevolence of God, its nature, illustration, and consistency with evil both natural and moral." 7

Chauncy's earlier work on the episcopacy question was finally published as A Compleat View of Episcopacy... just three years after his letter to Stiles, in 1771. 6 Of the other four writing projects listed above, the first is most probably to be identified with his The Mystery Hid... (1784), the second with Five Dissertations... (1785), and the fourth with The Benevolence of the Deity... (1784). 7 It is surely significant to note, however, that none of these saw publication until the mid-1780s, when Chauncy himself was around his 80th year, that two of them were first released in London, and that The Mystery Hid..., Chauncy's most controversial work because of its explicit advocacy of universalism, was indeed printed anonymously. 8 There is no evidence that his proposed "key to the New Testament" was ever published at all, and because of another limitation imposed by Chauncy's scrupulous caution about his writings, it was probably destroyed soon after his death. In another letter to Stiles, written just 17 days later, he explained why.

6 Charles Chauncy, A Compleat View of Episcopacy... (Boston, MA: 1771).

7 Ibid., p. 163.

8 Ibid., pp.163-4.
Chauncy was actually writing on this occasion with a brief and largely encomiastic memoir of his great-grandfather, also named Charles Chauncy (1592-1672), an English Puritan minister, who fled persecution to settle in New England in 1638 and went on to become the second President of Harvard College (1654-1672). Keenly aware of his exalted status as the eldest son of the eldest son of his namesake, Chauncy informed Stiles that some 40 years previously he had taken "considerable pains" to exercise a right of primogeniture and to locate the papers of his illustrious ancestor. Yet his efforts had been frustrated upon discovering from one of President Chauncy's grand-nephews that his great-grandfather's literary remains had met a tragic end. Because none of his sons had reached the age of maturity, President Chauncy's widow had reportedly remained in possession of his papers and she had subsequently married a pie-maker. "Behold now the fate of all the good President's writings of every kind!" Chauncy told Stiles. "They were put to the bottom of the pies, and in this way brought to utter destruction." But the news of this loss did not lead to plans for the preservation of his own personal archives on Chauncy's part. On the contrary,

I was greatly moved to hear this account of them [his great-grandfather's papers]; and it has rivetted in my mind a determination to order all my papers, upon my decease, to be burnt, excepting such as I might mention by name for deliverance from the catastrophe; though I have not as yet excepted any, nor do I know I shall.9

Judging from what remains of Chauncy's own prodigious output, he was apparently true to this rather mysterious commitment. Except for a limited number of letters that have survived in the papers of his correspondents, scholars have largely been left to contend with his considerable published legacy of more than 50 works. Moreover, what they have made of this collection of entirely religious writings has tended to centre on a few key issues that are partly foreshadowed in Chauncy's 1768 letters to Stiles. In particular, how does one reconcile his obvious caution and reserve, his inherent personal conservatism, with the unavoidable radicalism of his later theological views and with his frequent willingness to engage in heated controversy? More specifically, in the context of this dissertation, how does Chauncy, the avowedly liberal, universalist theologian, for example, square with Chauncy, the staunch defender of Congregationalist polity? And where did he really stand politically? When it came to the American Revolution, was he the socially conservative and thus somewhat reluctant patriot of Heimert, the "seasonable revolutionary" of Charles Lippy, or the radical leader who was among "the most ardent and influential in the American cause" of Baldwin?10 In seeking to address such questions, this chapter will argue that, like Wise, Mayhew and Eliot, the careful, but often unpredictable


Chauncy was primarily concerned to defend the values and structures of the New England Way, especially as he found them embodied in his conceptions of traditional church order and English civil liberties. In fact, it was his very conservatism in those areas, combined with a scrupulous concern for biblical and constitutional authority, that ultimately led him down the path both of significant theological heterodoxy and of revolutionary political commitment.

2. "Of Old Brick Church the First." Chauncy was born on January 1, 1705, the first of three sons of another namesake, his father Charles, who was a Boston merchant, and his wife Sarah Walley, daughter of Judge John Walley of the Massachusetts Supreme Court. Despite the death of his father when he was just six years old, a significant inheritance received by Chauncy's mother in 1712 seems to have enabled the Chauncys to continue the relatively comfortable lifestyle to which they had apparently been accustomed. There is strong evidence that Chauncy entered Boston Public Latin School that same year in preparation for Harvard, where he duly matriculated in 1717, graduating in 1721 and taking his M.A. in 1724.

Although Edward Griffin has offered some useful historical background and dug out a few biographical details, little is known of Chauncy's years at Harvard. But a clear personal influence to emerge from his student years was Edward Wigglesworth (c.1693-1765), who was installed as Hollis Professor of Divinity in 1722. Chauncy would later cite one of Wigglesworth's works, a 1724 defence of Congregationalist polity against the claims of the Anglican, John Checkley (1680-1754), in two of his own writings. He was also among the eminent New Englanders whom Chauncy commended to Stiles in his list of 1768, and in very glowing terms:

He was one of my best friends and longest acquaintance[s], and had courage to speak honourably of me in the new-light time, when it was dangerous to do so....He lived at college some years before there was an opportunity for his being chosen into the Professorship; all which time I had the pleasure of being many times a week in company with him, and since that time I familiarly corresponded with him by speech and writing till he died. He is highly deserving of being remembered with honour, not only on account of his

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11The heading is a line from a ballad on "The Boston Ministers" of 1774, cited by Baldwin, p. 93n.: "That fine preacher, called a teacher/ Of Old Brick Church the first, / Regards no grace, to men in place, /And is by tories curs, /At young and old, he'll rave and scold, /And is, in things of state, /A zealous Whig, than Wilkes more big/ In Church a tyrant great." "Old Brick" was the familiar nickname of Boston's First Church.


13Edward Griffin, pp. 13-23.

14Edward Wigglesworth, Sober Remarks ..., (Boston, MA: 1724) was a response to John Checkley, A Modest Proof of the Order & Government Settled by Christ and his Apostles ..., (Boston, MA: 1723). Chauncy cited it in The Validity of Presbyterian Ordination Asserted and Maintained ..., pp. 45-6, 86-7; The Appeal to the Public Answered ..., pp. 8, 42-3.
character as a man of learning, piety, usefulness in his day, strength of mind, largeness of understanding, and an extraordinary talent at reasoning with clearness and the most nervous cogency, but on account also of his catholick spirit and conduct, notwithstanding great temptations to the contrary. He was one of the most candid men you ever saw; far removed from bigotry, no ways rigid in his attachment to any scheme, yet steady to his own principles, but at the same time charitable to others, though they widely differed from him. He was, in one word, a truly great and excellent man.  

To what extent Wigglesworth’s “catholic” and independent spirit of mind had already influenced Chauncy’s thought by the time he entered ordained ministry in 1727 is unclear. But despite strong competition for the prestigious position, his progress from Harvard to Assistant Pastor of Boston’s conservative First Church under Thomas Foxcroft (1697-1769) was relatively smooth.  

According to the church’s official records for June 12, 1727, Chauncy was selected to assist Foxcroft by a congregational vote of 64 to 43 over his nearest rival, and his acceptance was announced publicly a couple of months later. Lippy has pointed out that “First Church had long held to the principle of strict congregational independency,” although under Foxcroft and Chauncy, it soon moved in a more inclusive direction, adopting the provisions of the 1662 “Half-Way Covenant” in 1731 and allowing the baptism of all professing adults in 1736.  

Notwithstanding such developments, there is every reason to believe, as shall be shown, that the young Chauncy was as orthodox in his Calvinist theology in his earliest years of ministry as his senior colleague Foxcroft was to remain throughout his career.  

In the 1730s, as he established himself at First Church, Chauncy engaged privately in the four-year period of study that would eventually lead to his various publications on episcopacy. But he seems to have remained relatively free from the public controversy that was to be such a feature of his later ministerial career.  

Together with his well-connected new wife, Elizabeth Hirst, whom Chauncy married in 1728, the two built a family with the arrival of a son and two daughters before

19In the 1740s, Foxcroft publicly defended (also against Chauncy) the Calvinist Great Awakening evangelist George Whitefield, for example, and in two published sermons from the 1750s, he upheld the doctrine of “imputed righteousness.” See Thomas Foxcroft, Some Seasonable Thoughts on Evangelic Preaching… (Boston, MA: 1740); An Apology in Behalf of the Revd Mr. Whitefield… (Boston, MA:1745); Humilis Confessio… (Boston, MA: 1750); Like Precious Faith Obtained… (Boston, MA: 1756). The tensions between Chauncy and Foxcroft, especially after the advent of the Great Awakening, on which they took opposing views, have not been explored in any depth by historians.  
20On Chauncy’s studies, see above, pp. 207-8, n.3.
her premature death in 1737 at the age of just 31. As early as 1731, Chauncy's sermons were attracting enough attention to command publication. Six of them were published in the 1730s, including four fairly traditional funeral homilies, an Artillery Election Sermon and a general Sunday sermon advocating the need to partake in Communion. Following a near fatal stroke in 1737, Foxcroft's incapacitation left Chauncy sole pastor of First Church for a period. Despite the inevitable burden of such responsibilities, he also found time to court his second wife, Elizabeth Phillips Townsend, a wealthy widow with two teenaged children, whom he eventually married in 1739.

It was the advent of the Great Awakening in 1740 and Chauncy's eventual response to it that really catapulted him into public prominence via a spate of publications addressing various problems allegedly associated with the religious "revival" led by George Whitefield and other itinerant ministers. A chronological listing of his works clearly shows how Chauncy began, in such publications as The New Creature Describ'd... (1741), An Unbridled Tongue a Sure Evidence... (1741), The Gifts of the Spirit to Ministers... (1742) and The Out-pouring of the Holy-Ghost... (1742), with relatively cautious and often indirect critiques of Awakening excesses, in which his major focus was generally on outlining what he saw as sound biblical principles in relevant doctrinal areas. But through involvement in such initiatives as a church council's dismissal of Samuel Mather (1706-1785) from his position of Assistant Pastor at Boston's Second Church, which Chauncy opposed, as well as in the growing polarization between those who supported and those who questioned or rejected the Great Awakening, Chauncy was unavoidably caught up in the increasingly contentious church politics of the early 1740s. The major triggers that seem to have provoked him into more outspoken opposition to the Awakening were a personal encounter with itinerant evangelist James Davenport and the publication of a significant pro-revivalist treatise by Jonathan Edwards in 1742.

21Edward Griffin, pp. 22, 27-34. Hirst was the grand-daughter of Judge Samuel Sewall (1652-1730).
22Charles Chauncy, Man's Life Considered... (Boston, MA: 1731); Early Piety Recommended... (Boston, MA: 1732); Nathanael's Character Display'd... (Boston, MA: 1733); Character and Overthrow of Laish Considered and Applied... (Boston, MA: 1734); Prayer for Help a Seasonable Duty... (Boston, MA: 1737); The Only Compulsion Proper... (Boston, MA: 1739).
23Edward Griffin, p. 34.
24Ibid., p. 35.
25Charles Chauncy, The New Creature Describ'd... (Boston, MA: 1741); An Unbridled Tongue a Sure Evidence... (Boston, MA: 1741); The Gifts of the Spirit to Ministers... (Boston, MA: 1742); The Out-pouring of the Holy-Ghost... (Boston, MA: 1742). These works were originally preached as sermons on June 4, 1741, September 10, 1741, December 17, 1741 and May 13, 1742 respectively.
26On the Mather affair, see Edward Griffin, pp. 58-9.
27Jonathan Edwards, Some Thoughts Concerning the Present Revival of Religion in New-England... (Boston, MA: 1742).
In a letter to Davenport prefaced to the publication of Chauncy’s *Enthusiasm Described and Caution’d Against...* (1742), dated July 17, 1742, the emerging anti-revivalist leader described a recent confrontation with him. “When you came to my house some days ago,” wrote Chauncy, “to enquire into the reason of the hope that was in me, my intention was to deal plainly and faithfully with you; and I believe, you do not think, I was wanting on that head.” That Davenport, who had already been denied access to the pulpits of Boston ministers because of his “enthusiasm,” should have personally challenged Chauncy about his Christian salvation in this way clearly caused deep offence. Chauncy thus showed no hesitation in detailing not only some of Davenport’s key errors, as he saw them, but those of revivalism in general, including the lack of spiritual discernment, undue emotionalism, failure to respect traditional boundaries between clerical and lay spheres of ministry and general disorder promoted by some revivalists.

Similar themes predominated in Chauncy’s major early work, *Seasonable Thoughts on the State of Religion in New-England...* (1743), which was written in response to Edwards’ first and highly influential defence of the Great Awakening, *Some Thoughts Concerning the Present Revival of Religion in New-England...* (1742). Chauncy has since, and arguably unfairly, often been seen as offering a rather pedestrian critique of the Awakening compared to the more compelling apologetics of Edwards. But it was this work, more than any other, with its comprehensive five-part analysis and detailed reporting of events, that really established Chauncy’s position as the prominent critic or “opposer” of mid-eighteenth century American revivalism. In all, as Edwin Gaustad has shown, Chauncy produced no less than 10 separate publications in connection with Great Awakening controversies over a period of just four years. In view of such prolific activity, it is perhaps not surprising that “this labour,” as he told Stiles more than 20 years later, “…in addition to my ministerial work…broke my constitution.” Nevertheless, “by a resolute severity as to regimen,” and following an exercise programme which involved “a great number of journeys of...
seven, eight, nine, and ten hundred miles, in the course of three or four years,” Chauncy deemed himself eventually able to resume his studies. 33

According to the time-line that emerges from a 1754 letter to his cousin Nathanael Chauncy, the seven years of study that were eventually to culminate in his three major and most theologically innovative publications of the 1780s seem to have begun as early as 1752. 34 But in professional, if not in always in personal terms, the period of the 1750s and early 1760s seems to have been one of relative calm prior to the further storms of controversy into which Chauncy was to plunge himself over the Anglican Episcopate and, to a lesser extent, the Sandemanian controversies of the late 1760s. Taking a keen interest in British military matters, he followed up Marvellous Things Done... (1745), a Thanksgiving Sermon after the reduction of Cape Breton, with two further publications on similar themes during the early years of the French and Indian War (1754-63), A Letter to a Friend... (1755) and A Second Letter to a Friend... (1755). 35 With The Counsel of Two Confederate Kings... (1746), addressing the Jacobite rebellion of 1745-6, and the Massachusetts Election Sermon, Civil Magistrates Must Be Just... (1747), Chauncy published his first more political sermons. 36 The 1745-57 period also saw publication of another three funeral sermons, as well as two on the occasion of major earthquakes and two on the more unconventional topics of aid to the poor and the sin of murder. 37

With the deaths of his second wife and of his daughter-in-law and grandchild, Chauncy’s family life was again deeply troubled in 1757-8. But he regained his personal equilibrium quickly enough to court and marry Mary Stoddard, his third and last consort, in 1760. 38

34Charles Chauncy, letter to Nathaniel Chauncy, April 14, 1754, in William Chauncey “President Charles Chauncy, his Ancestors and Descendants,” New England Historical and Genealogical Register, 10:4 (1856), pp. 323-36, esp. p. 335, where Chauncy informed his cousin: “I have made the Scriptures my sole study for about two years; and I think I have attained to a clearer understanding of them than I ever had before....I wish I could have an opportunity to converse with you, or to let you see what I have written upon Paul’s Epistles.” Cf. “A Sketch of Eminent Men in New-England,” p. 162, where Chauncy stated that after his three- or four-year period of recuperation from burn-out following his labours surrounding the Great Awakening, his “next study was the Bible, more particularly the Epistles, more particularly still those of the apostle Paul.”
35Charles Chauncy, Marvellous Things Done... (Boston, MA: 1745); A Letter To a Friend... (Boston, MA: 1755); A Second Letter to a Friend... (Boston, MA: 1755).
36Charles Chauncy, The Counsel of Two Confederate Kings... (Boston, MA: 1746); Civil Magistrates Must Be Just... (Boston, MA: 1747).
37The three funeral sermons were: Charles Chauncy, Comelius’s Character... (Boston, MA: 1745); The Blessedness of the Dead... (Boston, MA: 1749); Charity to the Distressed Members of Christ... (Boston, MA: 1757). The two sermons delivered following earthquakes were: Earthquakes a Token... (Boston, MA: 1755); The Earth Delivered... (Boston, MA: 1756). On aid to the poor and murder, see: The Idle-Poor Secluded... (Boston, MA: 1752); The Horrid Nature, and Enormous Guilt of Murder... (Boston, MA: 1754).
38Edward Griffin, pp. 107-8. Lippy, “Seasonable Revolutionary: The Mind of Charles Chauncy,” p. 65, noted that following his third marriage, “Chauncy now not only served Boston’s premier congregation but was also advancing in the ranks of the Boston social hierarchy.”
privately engaged, for much of the 1750s, in the studies that apparently led to his universalist works of the 1780s, as shall be seen, there is little evidence in contemporary works of such a radical intellectual re-orientation, except perhaps in The Opinion of One that Has Perused the Summer Morning's Conversation... (1758) and, more noticeably, in Twelve Sermons... (1765).39 Chauncy's sermon at the ordination of Joseph Bowman for ministry among New England's Mohawk Indians, All Nations of the Earth Blessed in Christ... (1762) centred on a simple call to renewed missionary endeavours in light of biblical mandates and promises, while his 1762 Dudleian lecture at Harvard, The Validity of Presbyterian Ordination Asserted and Maintained..., offered a scholarly, if traditional defence of Congregationalist practice.40 The Opinion of One that Has Perused the Summer Morning's Conversation..., was written in response to Danvers pastor Peter Clark (1694-1768) and his 1758 work, The Scripture-Doctrine of Original Sin, Stated and Defended... 41 But after praising Clark for his "Calvinistical orthodoxy," Chauncy actually took him to task for undermining the traditional, reformed doctrine of humanity's "imputed" guilt as a result of Adam's Fall and for inconsistently suggesting that spiritually unregenerate infants might not be subject to eternal damnation in hell. Inasmuch as he openly expressed his own qualms about the latter doctrine and his hope for a reconciliation between it and "the perfections of God," Chauncy also publicly, if very cautiously, signalled his possible departure from the traditional tenets of Calvinism for the very first time.42

The 1765 publication of Twelve Sermons... saw Chauncy engage more substantively in another theological controversy that arguably led him outside the stricter bounds of Puritan orthodoxy. The Scottish-born Robert Sandeman (1718-1771) followed the "Glasite" teachings of John Glas (1695-1773) and his 1757 publication, Letters On Theron And Aspasio..., advocated an essentially rationalist understanding of Christian faith, or what Williston Walker described as "a bare intellectual conviction of the exact truth of the gospel message," but nothing more.43 In 1764 Sandeman travelled to New England, initially undertaking some itinerant preaching before

39Charles Chauncy, The Opinion of One that Has Perused the Summer Morning's Conversation... (Boston, MA: 1758); Twelve Sermons... (1765).

40Charles Chauncy, All Nations of the Earth Blessed in Christ... (Boston, MA: 1762); The Validity of Presbyterian Ordination Asserted and Maintained... (Boston, MA: 1762). In the latter work, Chauncy defended the Congregationalist system of ordination by "presbyters" (i.e., pastors), not Presbyterianism as a system of church government per se.

41Peter Clark, The Scripture-Doctrine of Original Sin, Stated and Defended... (Boston, MA: 1758). Clark's work was itself a response to Samuel Webster, A Winter Evening's Conversation upon the Doctrine of Original Sin... (Boston, MA: 1757).

42Chauncy, The Opinion of One that Has Perused the Summer Morning's Conversation..., esp. pp. 3, 13, 16-17, 19. Edward Griffin noted, p. 122, that Chauncy's colleague Foxcroft had already endorsed Clark's work -- another example of the obvious theological tensions between the pastors of Boston's First Church.

settling, in the late 1760s, in Danforth, Connecticut, where he was to remain until his death. In response to Sandeman's teaching, Chauncy's Twelve Sermons... contained a direct attack on the Scottish preacher's minimalist definition of faith. But, as Lippy has noted, they were also "mildly Arminian in tone." Rather than laying a traditionally Calvinist emphasis on the absolute sovereignty of God, these "treatises sought to bring together the three components which he saw as integral to salvation: divine grace, human effort, and the 'means of grace' which enabled human effort to appropriate divine grace and thus achieve both salvation and justification.

Among Chauncy's other publications in the late 1760s were two ordination sermons and three further funeral sermons, including one for his close friend Jonathan Mayhew and another for his pastoral colleague, Foxcroft, who died in 1769 after an incapacitating stroke seven years earlier. In A Discourse on "The Good News from a Far Country"... (1766), Chauncy also took occasion from the repeal of the Stamp Act to publish a fulsomely patriotic Thanksgiving Sermon, in which he carefully hedged his bets over the thorny question of whether or not such legislation would have justified American colonists in pursuing violent rebellion against the British authorities. But his major writings of this period concerned the Anglican Episcopate controversy.

The threat of plans for a possible Anglican bishop had worried New Englanders for decades and Mayhew had been the most prominent recent champion against it. It was after Mayhew's death in 1766 that Chauncy first engaged the topic in A Letter to a Friend, Containing Remarks on Certain Passages... (1767), which was a direct critique of a sermon preached earlier that year by the Bishop of Llandaff, John Ewer, at the Anniversary Meeting of the SPG missionary society. Ewer had had the gall not only to call for Anglican bishops in the American colonies, but to criticize the poor state of religion generally there, which he connected with a lack of episcopal leadership. Chauncy was not the only New England minister to be outraged by the Welsh bishop's allegations; Andrew Eliot also took up his pen. But the cautious Eliot soon demurred, as

44Walker, pp. 151-4.
46The Duty of Ministers... (Boston, MA: 1766); Charles Chauncy, A Sermon Preached May 6, 1767... (Boston, MA: 1767); A Discourse Occasioned by the Death of the Reverend Jonathan Mayhew... (Boston, MA: 1766); A Discourse Occasioned by the Death of the Reverend Thomas Foxcroft... (Boston, MA: 1769); A Discourse Occasioned by the Death of the Reverend Dr. Joseph Sewall... (Boston, MA: 1769).
48The most comprehensive studies of this issue remain those of Cross, op. cit., and Bridenbaugh, op. cit. For more recent accounts, see further: Donald F. M. Gerardi, "The Episcopate Controversy Reconsidered: Religious Vocation and Anglican Perceptions of Authority in Mid-18th Century America," Perspectives in American History, 3 (1986), pp. 81-114; Nancy L. Rhoden, Revolutionary Anglicanism: The Colonial Church of England Clergy during the American Revolution (Basingstoke, 1999), pp. 37-63.
49See above, pp. 134-8.
50Charles Chauncy, A Letter to a Friend, Containing Remarks on Certain Passages... (Boston, MA: 1767).
he told his English correspondent, Thomas Hollis, in case his initiative “interfered” with Chauncy. $^{51}$ The result, according to Griffin, was Chauncy’s “best seller,” to be soon followed, in 1768, with The Appeal to the Public Answered..., a spirited and comprehensive 205-page reply to Thomas Chandler’s An Appeal to the Public... (1767), that had openly revealed a plan for the introduction of a limited episcopate into America with solely spiritual powers. $^{52}$ Over the next three years, Chauncy then returned to battle stations to conduct the kind of full-scale publication war in which he had not really participated since the Great Awakening. Chandler’s The Appeal Defended... (1769) accordingly elicited a 180-page response in the form of A Reply to Dr. Chandler’s “Appeal Defended”... (1770). Finally, with the publication of A Compleat View of Episcopacy... (1771), Chauncy was able to unleash the full panoply of the anti-episcopacy scholarship which resulted from his earlier patristics studies. $^{53}$

By the early 1770s, perhaps because of the impact of Chauncy’s writings, the transatlantic furor over the Anglican Episcopate controversy seems to have at least partly abated. But Griffin and others have helpfully highlighted the significance of connections between colonial fears of ecclesiastical oppression under imposed Anglican bishops and of the growing civil tyranny that was seemingly threatened by British measures to assert authority over colonists through legislation such as the Stamp Act (1765), the Townshend Acts (1766) and eventually both the Tea Act (1773) and the Coercive or “Intolerable” Acts (1774). $^{54}$ Perhaps because of his advancing years, with the exception of A Compleat View of Episcopacy... (1771), Chauncy’s publications were not as prolific as they had been in the 1770s, and two appear totally unconnected to the dramatic events of the period in which they emerged. In “Breaking of Bread”... (1772), for example, Chauncy issued a collection of five pastoral sermons on the importance of participating in Christian Communion, while in his Thursday Lecture sermon, Christian Love... (1773), he expounded on a text from Acts 4 to argue against common ownership of property, but in favour of the church’s care for the poor, especially through the ministry of deacons. $^{55}$ There is clear evidence from other works and sources, however, that he took a cautious, but active role in the inevitable controversies surrounding the American Revolution.

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$^{51}$ Andrew Eliot letter to Thomas Hollis, December 10, 1767, in “Letters from Andrew Eliot to Thomas Hollis,” p. 418.

$^{52}$ Edward Griffin, p. 135; Chandler, An Appeal to the Public...; Chauncy, The Appeal to the Public Answered....

$^{53}$ Chandler, The Appeal Defended...; Chauncy, Reply to Dr. Chandler’s “Appeal Defended”...; A Compleat View of Episcopacy... For a helpful summary of events surrounding these publications, see Edward Griffin, pp. 127-38.

$^{54}$ Edward Griffin, pp. 138-58, passim.

$^{55}$ Charles Chauncy, “Breaking of Bread”... (Boston, MA: 1772); Christian Love... (Boston, MA: 1773), expounding Acts 4:32: “And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.”
As early as 1770, in his occasional sermon, *Trust in God...*, Chauncy counselled leading Bostonians, reeling in the immediate aftermath of the Boston Massacre, to follow the example of pious ancestors by trusting God for deliverance, whatever their circumstances. He noted the obvious difficulties that all were experiencing, but continued to commend the loyalty of Massachusetts to the Crown.⁵⁶ Four years later, in *A Letter to a Friend. Giving a Concise, but Just, Representation of the Hardships and Sufferings...* (1774), Chauncy gave a heart-wrenching and bitter account of the situation of the people of Boston and strongly criticized oppressive measures taken against them.⁵⁷ Yet he still fell short of publicly endorsing open rebellion until 1775 and unlike Eliot, Chauncy did not remain in Boston for the duration of revolutionary hostilities, leaving for a period of voluntary exile in Medfield between May 1775 and April 1776.⁵⁸ The complexities of his position during this period, reflected in his extant letters, as well as in his published writings, remain to be explored.⁵⁹ But it is worth noting that even in his 1778 Thursday Lecture sermon, *The Accursed Thing...*, when commenting on the progress of a war that he now quite clearly supported, Chauncy’s major emphasis was on the colonists’ need to seek spiritual renewal and to repent of social injustice and greed if the American cause was to prevail.⁶⁰

In January 1778, the congregation of First Church, mindful of “their present pastor, Doctor Chauncy, being aged and infirm,” voted to appoint John Clarke (1755-98) as his assistant.⁶¹ A reduced pastoral workload may subsequently have encouraged Chauncy finally to address the delayed publication of the series of controversial works on which he had begun work in the early 1750s. He was already under some pressure to do so from friends who had been exposed to what had famously become known as his long-simmering theological “pudding.”⁶² At the same time, the activities of John Murray (1741-1815), who began preaching his own brand of universalism in New England in the 1770s, may have been a precipitating factor. Whatever the precise chain of events that ultimately led Chauncy to break his silence, he did so with some reticence in the first instance. In *Salvation for All Men...* (1782), he worked with his new colleague

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⁵⁸On Chauncy’s activities immediately before and during the American Revolution, see Edward Griffin, pp. 144-67, passim.

⁵⁹The major published letters to be considered are included in Richard Price et al., “The Price Letters,” *PMHS*, XVII (May 1903), pp. 263-378.


⁶²Edward Griffin, p. 170, suggested that Jeremy Belknap, John Clarke, John Eliot and Ezra Stiles had all tasted at least parts of Chauncy’s “pudding” prior to publication. Lippy, pp. 108-9, also named Ebenezer Gay in that connection.
Clarke to prepare for publication what amounted to little more than a collation of quotations on universalist themes from previous works.63

This brief pamphlet soon gave rise to at least six rejoinders from orthodox Calvinists.64 But it was Joseph Eckley (1751-1811) in his Divine Glory Brought to View in the Condemnation of the Ungodly... (1782) who apparently provoked Chauncy's next public excursion into such controversial theological waters. In a second work, Divine Glory Brought to View in the Final Salvation of All Men... (1783), Chauncy not only rejected Eckley's arguments as inconsistent with the goodness and justice of God, but with traditional Calvinism. The forcefulness of his presentation was unmistakable:

The God, to whom you pay your religious homage, needs the introduction of sin and misery, in order to illustrate his own character, and display his divine perfections. I bow my knee to a power intrinsically excellent, who can shine without contrast; whose glory is essential; whose happiness is immutable; and who would be the admiration of all his creatures, even were guilt and suffering banished the universe. You expect to look down from heaven upon numbers of wretched objects, confined in the pit of hell, and blaspheming their creator forever. I hope to see the prison-doors opened; and to hear those tongues, which are now profaning the name of God, chanting his praise. In one word, you imagine the divine glory will be advanced by immortalizing sin and misery; I by exterminating both natural and moral evil, and introducing universal happiness. Which of our systems is best supported, let reason and Scripture determine.65

Yet despite such rhetorical panache, Salvation for All Men... and Divine Glory Brought to View in the Final Salvation of All Men... ultimately turned out to be little more than opening salvos to the full-scale presentation of a universalist theology that Chauncy unveiled in his final major publications, The Benevolence of the Deity... (1784), The Mystery Hid... (1784) and Five Dissertations... (1785). As shall be seen, in the course of these works, Chauncy not only explicitly rejected or reinterpreted key tenets of five-point Calvinism; he redefined the ultimate goal of divine providence as human happiness and systematically argued for a radically revisionist interpretation of biblical theology in terms of the universal salvation or ultimate restoration of the whole of humankind. In the process, as Lippy has argued, his final treatises thus "left an indelible mark on the New England theological landscape."66 Although, as Griffin has noted, "printed

63Charles Chauncy, Salvation for All Men... (Boston, MA: 1782).
64Lippy, "Seasonable Revolutionary: The Mind of Charles Chauncy," p. 112, noted the work of the following authors in this connection: Jonathan Edwards Jr., Brief Observations on the Doctrine of Universal Salvation... (New Haven, CT: 1784); William Gordon, The Doctrine of Final Universal Salvation Examined... (Boston, MA: 1783); Samuel Hopkins, An Inquiry Concerning the Future State of those who Die in their Sins... (Newport, RI: 1783); Samuel Mather, All Men Will Not Be Saved Forever... (Boston, MA: 1782); Peter Thacher, That the Punishment of the Finally Impenitent Shall Be Eternal... (Salem, MA: 1783).
65Joseph Eckley, Divine Glory Brought to View in the Condemnation of the Ungodly... (Boston, MA: 1782); Charles Chauncy, Divine Glory Brought to View in the Final Salvation of All Men... (Boston, MA: 1783).
responses, surprisingly, were few in number and slow to appear," the publication of these works also ensured that the last few of Chauncy's 83 years cannot have been entirely peaceful.67

Chauncy became a widower for the last time following the death of his third wife Mary in 1783. With Clarke’s assistance, his pastoral responsibilities seem to have been considerably reduced, although he stayed on to support First Church’s continued moves in a more progressive direction.68 His final published sermon, A Sermon Delivered at the First Church in Boston, March 13th, 1785..., was delivered on the occasion of the congregation’s return to a newly refurbished sanctuary, when Chauncy took the occasion not only to remind the people whom he had served for nearly 60 years of the importance of public worship, but of his own impending departure for another world.69 He apparently remained busy until stricken with the illness that finally led to his death on February 10, 1787.

When Clarke preached the sermon at his funeral, he offered a typically laudatory character sketch. But among the familiar themes that were often highlighted on such occasions, he observed two that have tended to preoccupy scholars down through the centuries. He noted Chauncy’s “attachment to his country” and how he “entered warmly into those measures, which appeared to be founded in justice, and dictated by wisdom,” while condemning “those which he thought unjust, or impolitick.” He then singled out Chauncy’s devotion to “the ministerial profession” and to theological scholarship in general. But it was what Clarke said in qualifying such observations that arguably provided the most food for thought. “If he sometimes mistook,” he observed of Chauncy’s patriotism, “his mistakes were of a very pardonable nature. They were those of an aged head, and a well-meaning heart.” Clarke also alluded to possible problems, or at least differing interpretations, of Chauncy’s scholarship:

Rejecting human systems, he applied himself to the infallible Word of God. During seven years, he has often informed me, he attended to no other object....And the result of his inquiries has been honestly submitted to the judgment of the Christian world. However his opinions may be received, everyone must revere the author for his patience and application.70

In progressing to an analysis of how historians and theologians have assessed Chauncy's work over the years, the issues of his theological heterodoxy, his personal politics and the connections between them are most pressing. Following analysis of the relevant historiography, this chapter

67Edward Griffin, p. 176, also noted that “by far the most important response” was Jonathan Edwards Jr., The Salvation of All Men Strictly Examined... (New Haven, CT, 1790).
68See ibid., pp. 177, 180-1, re. the introduction of an organ at First Church, for example, and the adoption of a minimalist statement of faith.
69Charles Chauncy, A Sermon Delivered at the First Church in Boston, March 13th, 1785... (Boston, MA: 1785).
70John Clarke, A Discourse, Delivered at the First Church in Boston, February 15, 1787... (Boston, MA: 1787), esp. pp. 26-7.
will accordingly proceed to a detailed examination of Chauncy's theology, focusing on his pioneering journey from orthodox Calvinism through Arminianism to universalism before highlighting the consistently biblicist, Christocentric and Congregationalist emphases that grounded his theological oeuvre in more traditionalist themes and sources. An exploration of Chauncy's political thought will subsequently show how the First Church pastor's constitutionalist defence of a providentially conceived socio-political status quo reflected similarly conservative tendencies, even after he came to embrace the revolutionary cause in 1775, and how his views of liberty were rooted in a primary understanding of spiritual liberty to serve God and others. In that sense, it will be concluded, "the mystery hid" about Chauncy was his inherent conservatism, both religiously and politically.

3. Competing Profiles.
Charles Chauncy has attracted the attention of historians for more than two centuries. Interpretations of his life and work have not always fallen neatly under the three categories that Corrigan sought to apply to scholarship of Chauncy and Jonathan Mayhew in his 1987 study The Hidden Balance: Religion and the Social Theories of Charles Chauncy and Jonathan Mayhew. But it is fair to say that allowing for individual variations in emphasis, most historians adopted one of two main interpretative focuses until the 1960s.

Making passing comments in his The Origin and Progress of the American Rebellion to the Year 1776, the loyalist commentator Peter Oliver (1713-1791) saw Chauncy six years before his death as a prime instigator of revolution. "Among those who were most distinguished of the Boston clergy were Dr. Charles Chauncy, Dr. Jonathan Mayhew & Dr. Samuel Cooper," he observed, "and they distinguished themselves in encouraging seditions and riots, till those lesser offences were absorbed in rebellion." Oliver thought little of Chauncy's personality, describing him "as of a very resentfull, unforgiving temper," and observing that "when he was in the excess of his passion, a bystander would naturally judge that he had been educated in the purlieus of Bedlam." But such a characterization seemed part and parcel of his portrayal of Chauncy as seditious preacher. Oliver's focus on Chauncy's revolutionary role was echoed in many other 19th and early 20th century accounts which can be classed under Corrigan's first category of Chauncy scholarship focusing on his political writings, albeit from a more positive perspective. Another major "school" of academic interpretation has been preoccupied with Chauncy's theological

\[\text{footnote}{\text{Corrigan, p. x. See above, esp. pp. 121-2.}}\]
\[\text{footnote}{\text{Oliver, p. 43.}}\]
\[\text{footnote}{\text{Idem. Cf. pp. 92, 96, 101.}}\]
views, which have been seen, even more than Mayhew's, as exemplary of an 18th century liberalization in Congregationalist thought, which eventually resulted in Unitarianism.  

In *Ten New England Leaders* (1901), Williston Walker was the first to offer a fairly detailed and nuanced brief biography of Chauncy, which considered both his theological and political thought, although with a primary focus on the former. Theologically, Walker described Chauncy as "a man of courage in the expression of his convictions," who had no superior in "patient scholarly investigation." He expounded on Chauncy's Arminian sympathies, but whilst he plainly affirmed that "Chauncy...was no Calvinist," he also maintained that "the 'orthodox' and the 'liberal' are inextricably intermixed in him." Walker's account of Chauncy's moves into universalism and even Arianism somewhat belied a concluding judgement that "he stood in much nearer sympathy with the founders of New England than with [Joseph] Priestley, [Theophilus] Lindsey, or their associates who then bore in England the Unitarian name." But politically, he stayed on more familiar ground, suggesting that the work of Chauncy in the Anglican Episcopate controversy was "an important forerunner" of revolution, "and in the fortunes of the struggle when it came he felt a keen and patriotic interest. To him there seemed but one side that could possibly be right."  

Although the view of Chauncy as patriot preacher had been prominent for more than a hundred years previously, Baldwin did much to encapsulate it for future generations in her *The New England Clergy and the American Revolution* (1928). As early as his 1747 Election Sermon, *Civil Magistrates Must Be Just...*, she portrayed Chauncy as a single-minded rebel, "who dwelt long upon the nature and advantages of a balanced government," who was "outspoken in laying the evils of the day upon the general Court" and who was "one of the most ardent and influential in

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74William Emerson, *An Historical Sketch of the First Church in Boston...* (Boston, MA: 1812), esp. pp. 181-214, offered a largely hagiographical account of Chauncy, based primarily on an earlier theological exposition by Clarke of his late colleague's writings until 1765, to which he acknowledged, p. 181, his indebtedness. In his 1861 introduction to Chauncy's *Stamp Act* sermon of 1766, Thornton (ed.) called him, pp. 114-15, not only "one of the greatest divines in New England," but "a leader of the hosts." He was "zealous for liberty," argued Thornton, "and, on the death of Dr. Mayhew, continued the war against its most specious enemy with great power and learning." Tyler, p. 433, took a similar view, describing Chauncy as "a man of leonine heart, of strong, cool brain, of uncommon moral strength." While noting some of Chauncy's personal eccentricities, Ellis, pp. 188-89, esp. p. 191, continued the tone set by Emerson. In their *History of the Unitarians and Universalists in America* (1894), pp. 177, 382-3, Joseph Allen and Richard Eddy were primarily concerned with Chauncy's theological ideas as "the intellectual leader at this period in the new advance towards a rational theology," especially in *The Mystery Hid...* and *Salvation for All Men...*. But they also expressed the view that Chauncy was "an ardent patriot, a political reformer, and a ready controversialist."


76Ibid., pp. 299-300.

77Ibid., pp. 300-310, passim, esp. p. 310. Walker argued, p. 308, that Chauncy's "language regarding the Saviour is generally that of the New Testament, but as far as I have observed he employs only those descriptive terms of Holy Writ which may be held to imply subordination....These, and similar proofs that could be adduced, make it evident that Chauncy was a high Arian....Christ...is not God, nor equal with God." But his evidence for Chauncy's Arianism is far from conclusive. For a definition of Arianism, see above, p. 133, n.113.

78Ibid., p. 296. Two early 20th century scholars to concentrate, in very general terms, on Chauncy's theology were Cooke, op. cit.; James Truslow Adams, "The History of New England," Vol. 2, pp. 198-9.
the American cause. It was only to be expected, Baldwin argued, that he would be part of “a group of influential ministers...who were leaders in the revolt against the Stamp Act” and with Mayhew, one of the two “most prominent opponents of the [Anglican Episcopate] scheme. In the revolutionary period itself, Chauncy continued to display his patriotic colours. He was among those accused of attacking the British Governor through the press, his letters were of special value to the patriot cause, and he encouraged Boston ministers to cease reading official proclamations in church after 1774. With others, he performed special service by “stirring and keeping alive a spirit of active resistance to the acts of Great Britain between 1765 and 1774 and in developing and spreading abroad the arguments on which it was based.

Over the 20 years following Baldwin’s portrayal of Chauncy as radical revolutionary, other scholars pursued a more theological focus. Although he made only passing references to Chauncy in The New England Mind: From Colony to Province (1953), Miller devoted quite considerable attention to him in his innovative, but flawed biography, Jonathan Edwards (1949), where his overall judgement was somewhat conflicted. Miller clearly admired Chauncy’s later theological liberalism and his willingness to progress beyond the traditional Puritanism that he had initially embraced and defended. He had high praise for Seasonable Thoughts on the State of Religion in New-England..., which he described as "a massive, Johnsonian, indignant work, a source-book for American communal behavior; learned and dignified...monumentally honest" and "scholarly to the point of pedantry...formally Calvinist...a classic of hard-headed, dogmatic rationalism." He saw Chauncy as a "courageous and devoted" patriot, who “fought for tangible ends, for freedom from taxation and for habeas corpus." So inasmuch as “Chauncy was to become a patriotic agitator,...he goes down in history...a liberal in theology, an advocate of the rights of man, and a champion of Americanism in all its phases. Yet in the context of Miller’s exuberant, expansive, but anachronistic portrayal of Edwards as a Lockean philosophical genius preternaturally ahead of his time, Chauncy also fell short, especially in his interpretation of the

79Baldwin, p. 43.
80Ibid., pp. 90-91.
81Ibid., pp. 116, 120-21, 123.
82See further Morais, pp. 62-3; Haroutunian, pp. 134-45, passim; Wilbur, pp. 386-7; Savelle, pp. 32-3, 70-1. Harold Bernhard, "Charles Chauncy: Colonial Liberal, 1705-1787" (PhD. diss., University of Chicago, 1945) continued such themes, although from a somewhat unconventional, Christian providentialist perspective. Despite his clear focus on Chauncy’s theological departures from orthodoxy, Bernhard was also perhaps the first to foreshadow the later work of Helmer and others by highlighting, p. 82, his social conservatism.
84Ibid., pp. 24-8, passim, 107, 113, 254.
85Ibid., pp. 175-6.
86Ibid., pp. 326, 322.
Great Awakening. Thus “Chauncy’s and Edwards’ publications between 1740 and 1746 constitute a great debate,” Miller contended, but “the irony is that the theological liberal, who in every trait stands for the rational Enlightenment, spoke in the language of outmoded science.” He was also a “self-confessed rationalist” who lacked “compassion.”

Notwithstanding Miller’s philosophical caveats, Norman Gibbs, in his 1953 doctoral dissertation, “The Problem of Revelation and Reason in the Thought of Charles Chauncy,” was really the first to question seriously the traditional understanding of Chauncy as a pioneering theological liberal. Gibbs worked from the assumption that Chauncy “undertook to reinterpret the Puritan teaching concerning reason and revelation, formulated in the seventeenth century, in the light of eighteenth century rationalism and the emotionalism of the Great Awakening.” Paying particular attention to the views of John Tillotson (1630-1694) and Richard Baxter (1615-1691), which he claimed were influential on, and thus illuminative of Chauncy’s discussions of these issues, Gibbs concluded that Chauncy “sought to sift and synthesize the Puritan and the Latitudinarian traditions.” But for Gibbs, who also had an eye to the contemporary theological relevance of Chauncy’s work, “his faith was evangelical first” and “the eternal gospel, as he understood it, transcended the rational ideology of his day.”

Rossiter (1953) showed a similar interest in Chauncy’s “Christian rationalism,” seeing him and Mayhew, both “sons of latitudinarian Harvard,” as key representatives of one side of a split in “the apparent monolith of Puritanism” that took place in the aftermath of the Great Awakening. But unlike Gibbs, Rossiter’s main focus was on the political arena, where he highlighted Chauncy’s role in promoting both Stamp Act and revolutionary resistance.

In The Beginnings of Unitarianism in America (1955), Conrad Wright offered one of the most influential accounts of Chauncy’s theological development from Calvinism through Arminianism to universalism and Arianism, if not outright Unitarianism. “The shaping of the culture of the Boston elite in the direction of Arminianism seems to have depended very much on the leadership of Charles Chauncy at the First Church and Jonathan Mayhew at the West Church,” Wright argued, although “in taking a stand against the Great Awakening, Chauncy and the opposers had no idea that they were starting down the path to Arminianism.” By the time Chauncy had fully developed his Arminian position in Twelve Sermons... (1765), “the pattern” of his “thinking was in all

87 Ibid., pp. 177-8, 185-6.
85 Gibbs, p. 302.
91 Wright, pp. 8, 56.
essentials the same as that of the first generation of New England Unitarians," although expressed in more traditional theological terms, and his Benevolence of the Deity... represented a "complete surrender to the Age of Reason." Wright thus saw clear areas of continuity between Chauncy's Arminianism and his universalism. But although he highlighted, like Walker, Arian elements in his Christology, he stressed that unlike fully-fledged Unitarians, "men like Chauncy, or John Clarke, or William Emerson still regarded Christ as central to Christianity." Wright also traced connections between Chauncy's Arminianism and revolutionary politics. Of particular importance, he contended, was "the concept of man as a free moral agent." Moreover, "that the end of all government is the welfare and the happiness of the governed was the common assumption of the Arminian theology and of the philosophy of the Declaration of Independence."

Barney Lee Jones's 1958 dissertation, "Charles Chauncy and the Great Awakening in New England" offered a quite detailed biographical analysis of Chauncy and his role in controversies over the religious revivals of the 1740s. In the process, however, Jones was able to offer useful correctives to what he saw as previous misconceptions. He rejected, for example, "the wide assumption that Chauncy's opposition to the Great Awakening was a predictable consequence of a coldly rationalistic and dispassionate nature," as well as "the supposition that on theological grounds Chauncy was inescapably alienated from the Revival." Instead, Jones argued, "Chauncy's controversy...arose...more from professional or ecclesiastical...considerations," among which he especially highlighted Chauncy's concern to protect the integrity of New England polity and thus his own position as a leading member of the clerical establishment.

It is another measure of the sheer originality of Religion and the American Mind from the Great Awakening to the Revolution that by 1966, when Heimert finally offered a fully revisionist understanding of Chauncy, few had questioned traditional views of him as a radical thinker, either theologically or politically. Heimert's portrayal of Chauncy can only be properly understood

92 Ibid., pp. 133, 163.
93 Ibid., pp. 193-5, 209, 222.
94 Ibid., pp. 176-77.
96 Ibid., esp. pp. 497-98.
98 Corrigan, p. 126, n.5, also cited Wright, op. cit., and John C. Miller, "Religion, Finance, and Democracy in Massachusetts," pp. 29-56 among scholars opposing an interpretation of Chauncy as a political revolutionary and claiming, p. x, that "Chauncey and Mayhew were more interested in preserving the status quo than in fomenting rebellion." But Miller mentioned neither by name in his article, while Wright focused on Chauncy's theology, including his more conservative tendencies with respect to the Great Awakening (e.g., pp. 50-57).
within the context of his overarching thesis that in a divided Congregationalist establishment after the Great Awakening, whilst evangelical Calvinists embraced an ultimately revolutionary vision of a millennial society informed by ideals of liberty and fraternity, theological "liberals" and rationalists nurtured more conservative preoccupations with the preservation of the socio-political status quo. Within that framework, Chauncy was "the greatest Liberal of all," and although Heimert nowhere developed this thesis with any systematic precision, it emerges very clearly from densely scattered references throughout his work.\footnote{99}

Inasmuch as "the premises of rational religion were first unfolded in the criticisms of the Awakening published by the leading Boston Liberal," Chauncy's thought was central to Heimert's whole understanding of 18th century American theological liberalism.\footnote{100} However, while Heimert conceded that "Liberal religion seemed to open to all men the way to holy felicity" and that "it was just such a doctrine that Chauncy developed and published....[in] his theory of universal salvation," unlike previous historians, Heimert did not find evidence that the democratizing tendencies implicit in Chauncy's universalist theology extended to his socio-political views.\footnote{101} So Heimert consistently stressed more reactionary emphases in Chauncy's thought. Beginning with the enthusiastic excesses of the Great Awakening, which he saw as a threat to "the preservation of property rights and political stability," Heimert argued, Chauncy shared "a conviction that the evangelical scheme in whatever form contained a [dangerous] revolutionary potential."\footnote{102} He accordingly contested it whenever possible and espoused complementary, deliberately rationalist rhetorical strategies.\footnote{103} Politically, in such publications as Civil Magistrates Must Be Just... (1747), The Idle-Poor Secluded... (1752) and A Discourse on "The Good News from a Far Country"... (1766), Chauncy "yielded to no man as a cautious Liberal,"\footnote{104} Even in revolutionary-era sermons like Christian Love... (1773) and Trust in God... (1770), Chauncy held to an ordered vision of society in which rich and poor knew their place and the "mobocracy of Boston" was not to be trusted.\footnote{105} Heimert's rather cynical view of Chauncy sometimes led him to question his motives. Thus "Liberal political theory was...deliberately contrived as justification for restraining the people," he argued, and in the Anglican Episcopate controversy of the 1760s, Chauncy "succeeded in gaining acceptance and in mollifying...domestic critics by engaging in ever more

\footnote{99}[Heimert, p. 418.]
\footnote{100}[Ibid., p. 5.]
\footnote{101}[Ibid., p. 47.]
\footnote{102}[Ibid., pp. 92-3.]
\footnote{103}[E.g., Ibid., pp. 160, 209.]
\footnote{104}[Ibid., pp. 244, 246-9.]
\footnote{105}[Ibid., pp. 250-51, 417-18.]}
Whiggish activity in politics. In the final analysis, Heimert was willing to concede that Chauncy's A Letter to a Friend... (1774) was "a contribution to the Whig movement," which "marked a significant departure from the tenets of Boston Liberalism" and that his Trust in God..., "undoubtedly marked a high point in his commitment to a patriotism that, by the standards of the day in Boston, was clearly radical." Even so, Heimert's Chauncy was ultimately a pretty reluctant revolutionary, whose "proper jeremiad [Trust in God...] was something less than an incitement to rebellion"

As with other revisionist arguments in Heimert's Religion and the American Mind from the Great Awakening to the Revolution, it took a few years before historians began to engage his interpretation of Chauncy seriously. In the meantime, other scholars revisited more familiar themes. In 1972, Lippy completed a Princeton doctoral dissertation which advanced a more conservative, Heimertian interpretation of Chauncy, although his more influential works, based on that thesis, were two articles (1975, 1977) and especially his 1981 intellectual biography, Seasonable Revolutionary: The Mind of Charles Chauncy. The main thrust of Lippy's thesis, as presented in his most recent monograph, was that Chauncy was both an inherently conservative thinker who was concerned to protect and preserve the New England Way and a creative innovator, who was willing and able to deploy his considerable gifts and to draw on new sources in order to do so. Thus "as the [18th] century wore on, more and more Chauncy came to epitomize, symbolize, and indeed speak for that curious breed of persons who wished to remain faithful to the heritage of the past as they understood it, while reinterpreting it in fresh ways to serve future generations." Moreover, he deliberately acted in ways that were "seasonable' in a technical sense," denoting "a line of thinking or a course of action which is particularly appropriate to a given situation.

For Lippy, Chauncy was "first and foremost a traditional Puritan cleric" who was "propelled by a passion for order and a fear of disorder." In the Great Awakening, Chauncy saw a "challenge to

106 Ibid., pp. 258, 355.
108 Charles N. Foshee, "The Great Awakening: Pro And Con," Radford Review, 22:3 (1968), pp. 37-59 offered a brief account of the writings of Edwards and Chauncy for and against the Great Awakening. For James Jones, op. cit., pp. 165-97, esp. p. 181, "Chauncy's originality was that he redid all Puritan theology to arrive at a doctrine of man whereby man is able to make himself into whatever he becomes."
111 Ibid., pp. 12, 15.
the authority of established religious ways – whether the authority of the clergy over religious life or the hegemony of particular churches over given regions.” In opposing its excesses, he therefore “asserted the primacy of reason in religious experience because he viewed the rational process as integrating individual experiences of all sorts into a unified whole in much the same way as covenant structures brought coherence to common life.” Chauncy’s special opposition to itinerancy was thus an obvious example of such motivations to preserve “the structures and symbols of order associated with the covenant tradition in a manner ‘seasonable’ to the times.”

Similar concerns were apparent politically during the 1760s, when “his opposition to the Stamp Act represented an effort to maintain intact the structures of political authority which he believed had been operative prior to its passage.” In his exchanges with Thomas Chandler over the Anglican Episcopate controversy, Chauncy likewise “opposed what he considered to be a threat to both the religious and political liberties of New England,” although “to structure a church and to worship according to traditional Puritan precepts comprised the core of what he sought to protect.” Even during the revolutionary period, Chauncy was not driven by any radical vision of a newly independent nation, but by concerns for “the transmission of those social and political patterns which he perceived as integral to a developing American identity and self-awareness.” In that sense, “Chauncy’s reluctant, but relentless, advocacy of the patriot cause” from 1774 onwards was based on his pursuit of “what he saw as a lost ideal – the ideal of human liberty. He was a revolutionary,” Lippy argued, “because it was ‘seasonable’ to be such.”

In the radical reformulations of traditional theological doctrine that Chauncy released towards the end of his life, Lippy also saw an essentially “conservative passion to preserve the essential structures and categories of Puritan religious thought.” Chauncy was admittedly concerned to “lend them fresh plausibility in the wake of the rising Enlightenment rationalism which had the potential...to destroy the foundations of Puritan belief” and his attempts to do so led him as far as “providing an embryonic ideology for advocates of Unitarianism in the nineteenth century.” Yet even when shifting the very “cornerstone of religious thought from a theocentric anthropology to an anthropocentric theology,” Chauncy “had not intended to undercut the heart of orthodox theology, although that was the effect of his works. As far as he was concerned,” Lippy

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112 Ibid., pp. 23, 27.
113 Ibid., pp. 36, 40-1, esp. p. 40.
114 Ibid., p. 72.
115 Ibid., pp. 82-3.
117 Ibid., pp. 109, 112.
contended, "he was...preserving what he saw as vital to the New England Way by providing a rational and logical defense of present practice and experience." 

It is fair to say that both the other major monographs to have appeared on Chauncy in the past 30 years have paid more attention to conservative elements in Chauncy's thought, although not to the extent of Lippy or Heimert. Thus the now standard biography, Griffin's *Old Brick: Charles Chauncy of Boston, 1705-1787* (1980), which actually appeared a year earlier than Lippy's study and was based on his 1966 doctoral dissertation, stressed from the outset that Chauncy "considered himself simply a good Congregationalist, true to his own heritage of dissent and free enquiry." 

Chauncy "insisted, even in his most 'heretical' works," Griffin contended, "that he was conducting his speculations within the framework of reformed Protestantism. In doing so, he firmly believed, he was pledging allegiance to the true spirit of the ancient New England Way." However, Griffin also sought to show Chauncy as "a Representative Man" in 18th century America, a "supernatural rationalist" who occupied "the middle ground" between "Edwards's evangelicalism and [Benjamin] Franklin's Deism." In that sense, Griffin's Chauncy was more progressive than Heimert's social reactionary or Lippy's "seasonable" traditionalist. He was also an enthusiastic revolutionary.

In the course of providing by far the most detailed factual account of Chauncy's life and work, Griffin succinctly chronicled Chauncy's journey from Calvinist orthodoxy through Arminianism to universalism. He argued that in his first major theological controversy over the Great Awakening, Chauncy prioritized the value of "an enlightened mind" over "raised affections," but that "disorder, not Jonathan Edwards or Edwards's psychology, was the main target of Chauncy's criticism." 

Even when considering the major changes in Chauncy's theology that began as early as the 1750s, Griffin stressed that "with his emphasis on the Bible as authoritative for faith, on the necessity of the atonement, on justification by faith, on the operation of Providence, on the congregational form of church government, and on Puritan practices such as Bible-reading, rigorous keeping of the Sabbath, self-examination, discipline, industry, and moral living, he was a true son of the seventeenth century." What Griffin thus saw Chauncy doing as he reworked his doctrinal understandings of "the nature of God, the creation and destiny of humans, original sin, salvation, ethics, eschatology, and ecclesiology," however radical the results, was attempting "to

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118 Ibid., pp. 114, 122.


121 Ibid., pp. 84, 88.
reconstruct New England theology by applying to his basic Puritan principles the lessons he had learned from the Awakening.\textsuperscript{122}

Griffin found similarly conservative influences at work in Chauncy’s contributions to the Anglican Episcopate controversy, based on a strenuous insistence “that the colonies would forfeit their religious liberty if bishops settled in America.” He endorsed Bridenbaugh’s view that “the threat of civil tyranny, symbolized by the Stamp Act, coalesced with the threat of ecclesiastical tyranny, symbolized by the episcopacy ‘plot,’ and that the union of the two issues in the colonial mind helps explain the bitterly intense reaction against the Grenville Acts.”\textsuperscript{123} But Griffin departed quite markedly from Heimert and Lippy in portraying Chauncy as a willing and active revolutionary, who “probably worked with the Whig Club and other patriotic societies to nullify the Stamp Act,” became “politically radicalized” in the 1770s and was recognized “by the people of Boston as a pugnacious champion of political liberty.”\textsuperscript{124} Politically, Griffin thus returned to the more traditional interpretations of Baldwin and others, claiming that Chauncy publicly endorsed rebellion against British rule as early as 1770, for example, and that he “had a part in most of the important crises that jolted New England from 1771 to 1775.”\textsuperscript{125}

As has already been noted in the earlier chapter on Mayhew, in The Hidden Balance: Religion and the Social Theories of Charles Chauncy and Jonathan Mayhew (1987), Corrigan basically offered a comparative study of Chauncy’s and Mayhew’s ideas on religion, government and society. Having distinguished his central argument from those of previous scholars, he sought to show how in face of religious, political and socioeconomic tensions in colonial life, Chauncy and Mayhew offered “an understanding of the cosmos” that was based on the “key principles” of “wholeness and balance.”\textsuperscript{126} Such an understanding was grounded in Enlightenment preconceptions, which led Chauncy to conclude that “the moral world and the civil world were aspects of creation that fitted together with the natural world, under the same laws, in a system of dependencies that ensured order and common direction.”\textsuperscript{127} In the area of religion, Chauncy thus “upheld the necessity for an ‘undogmatical spirit,’” as he strived to balance “individual and social elements.”\textsuperscript{128} In face of the divisive turmoil resulting from the Great Awakening, he sought
reintegration "by shaping a religious individualism that blended reason with the affections, and...by balancing that individualism with an emphasis on the social elements in religion (morality and public, institutionalized means of grace)." The latter was "characterized by a devotion to ecclesiastical institutions," including ministerial authority, "– a devotion that Mayhew and Chauncy had inherited from Cotton Mather and other New England clerical forefathers." In the process, liberals like Chauncy, "though accused of evasiveness and imprecision, managed to construct a theory of social order that took seriously both the individual and the collective." For Corrigan, even Chauncy’s later theological heterodoxy could be understood, rather tendentiously, in terms of his quest for “balance.” Although "ideas contained in these [later] treatises were a departure from previous Puritan theology," they should thus "be understood not as amendments to or a revision of Chauncy's theology in the 1740s to 1760s but rather as an integral part of his thinking in those years, as a balance or complement to more conservative arguments in his published work." Chauncy’s theories of government and society were influenced by similar considerations. Thus “mutual dependency’ was the key to [his] vision of government....government could require deference to superiors, but it must balance this with respect for the good of society as a whole, and the recognition of individual liberties and property." In analyzing Chauncy’s social views, Corrigan acknowledged the conservatism that Heimert had earlier observed. “Chauncy often wrote in defense of social deference,” he contended, “and of the static character of social order, arguing that society was divided into ‘spheres’ or ‘stations,’ the boundaries of which were not to be crossed.” But Corrigan also stressed that “equality of opportunity made vertical mobility an integral part of the social system in the colonies in the eighteenth century,” and that “Chauncy...believed that perfectibility in nature came through the cultivation of one’s potential, and that advancement in one’s worldly circumstances was possible in the same way.”

Corrigan’s account is arguably marred by a lack of sufficient contextualization and by the imposition of an interpretative framework that finds little explicit support within Chauncy’s own writings. But it represents the most recent substantive monograph on Chauncy’s life and work and it offers a quite original view of its subject. With a few noteworthy exceptions, scholarly

129 Ibid., p. 30.
130 Ibid., p. 37.
131 Ibid., pp. 57, 23.
132 Ibid., pp. 64-5.
133 Ibid., pp. 88, 90-91.
attention to Chauncy over the 20 years since its publication has been relatively limited and references in more general works have tended to repeat earlier themes.  

The most important and revisionist recent work on Chauncy's theology has been that of Norman and Lee Gibbs in two articles for the *Harvard Theological Review* (1990, 1992), where they persuasively argued against previous Arian interpretations. Instead, they argued, Chauncy "made available for the first time in America a kenotic Christology that was neither conventionally orthodox nor heretically Arian." Moreover, "a close reading of his works reveals," they contended, "that this kenotic interpretation of the gospel provides the foundation" for much of Chauncy's theology. Following insightful analyses of Chauncy's Christology and soteriology, the Gibbses thus concluded that previous accounts stressing his heterodox theological liberalism had been somewhat misguided. It was more accurate to describe Chauncy, they rather improbably suggested, as a "liberal evangelical."  

The Gibbses' bold attempts to reinterpret and reposition Chauncy's theology have largely been ignored or rejected by subsequent scholars, however. Among few recent authors to have offered fresh contributions to Chauncy scholarship have been Gerald McDermott (1992) and Noll (2002), both of whom proposed brief, if thought-provoking reconsiderations of his political thought. In *One Holy and Happy Society: The Public Theology of Jonathan Edwards* McDermott thus added a somewhat different dimension to Heimert's interpretation of Chauncy's political conservatism by identifying him with the "Court" side of a "Court/Country" divide in New England politics which mirrored that between English political parties. McDermott's goal was to "help put to rest the old [non-Heimertian] opinion that Boston's liberal clerical elite were more socially..."  

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136Norman B. and Lee W. Gibbs, "In Our Nature: The Kenotic Christology of Charles Chauncy," pp. 232-3: "The kenoticism encountered throughout his writings is that of the Reformed tradition of the eighteenth century....The kenotic views expressed...throughout the whole corpus of Chauncy's writings are demonstratively worked out within a trinitarian framework....In the final analysis..., Chauncy ought to be classified neither with Jonathan Edwards and the New Divinity thinkers, nor with the Old Calvinists or Old School Congregationalists, nor with the theological liberals who were inclined to Unitarianism and Arianism. Rather, it is more accurate to describe Chauncy as a 'liberal evangelical.' "  

conscious than evangelical ministers like Edwards." In his efforts to demonstrate that, he cited from three of Chauncy's works to claim that the First Church pastor not only consistently defended the Boston political establishment and sought to prevent parishioners criticizing their magistrates, but "believed that the greatest danger to a state comes from ambitious, discontented members of the citizenry."138

In his magisterial overview of American theology "from Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln, Noll probed Chauncy's "liberal Congregationalist" theology, as well as his politics. He saw the former as an expression of a "Boston liberalism" which "broke from the path of Puritan theology" in rejecting "Calvinist dogmas," in exalting "the role of natural revelation at the expense of special revelation," in upholding an Arminian view of "the human capacity for self-determination," and in tending "toward the belief that God would eventually redeem all of humanity." Although he acknowledged the innovative nature of such ideas, he classified them as outside the American theological mainstream, however, in the sense that they reflected the influence of "rarefied British thought and pragmatic Boston circumstances."139 Moreover, Noll viewed Chauncy, whose politics he interpreted in both libertarian and reactionary terms, as a classic example of this. Thus in a fascinating, albeit limited analysis of Chauncy's public statements between 1766 and 1783, Noll highlighted his "devotion to libertarian [i.e., Whig] thought and a conviction that God was preoccupied with the welfare of New England." But Noll thought Chauncy less concerned with the kind of revolutionary idealism that Baldwin and others had highlighted, or even with the "spiritual betterment of New England," than with its economic prosperity.140 He also, like Heimert, stressed the anti-democratic and socially elitist nature of Chauncy's Whiggism. "Where Chauncy did call for spiritual reform," he argued, "his appeals were usually directed more toward the well-ordering of society than toward the salvation of souls." Moreover, his "defense of New England was infected by none of Bernard Bailyn's 'contagion of liberty.'" In fact, Noll concluded:

His kind of theological liberalism fit well with a gentleman's vision of classical republicanism, but not with the republican liberalism that became so important in the new nation....Chauncy and his liberal colleagues were responsible for some of the freshest theology in the colonies during the middle decades of the eighteenth century. Yet with their self-conscious reliance on British authorities and their marriage to the ideal of a stratified, elite-dominated, mercantile Boston, they were leading where the most important theologies of the American national period did not follow.141

138McDermott, pp. 118-23, passim, citing Chauncy, Seasonable Thoughts on the State of Religion in New-England...., pp. 30, 368, 368-9: Civil Magistrates Must Be Just...., pp. 28-31, 34-5, 42-4, 67; A Discourse on Good News...., p. 30. According to McDermott, p. 118, "the New England Court was an elite group who rejected the voluntaristic elements of Puritan political theory and adopted English manners, morals and dress. Most urban ministers in early eighteenth century New England were of the Court persuasion....these people looked to the magistrate as a guarantor of social order."


140Ibid., p. 141.

141Ibid., pp. 142-3.
In a sense, Noll's rather laboured attempt to account for both liberal/libertarian and more conservative elements in Chauncy's thought thus encapsulates some of the major tensions with which scholars have wrestled over the past two centuries. Such tensions may also help explain why J.C.D. Clark virtually avoided Chauncy altogether in his The Language of Liberty, for example, where one might have expected him to adduce the example of the Boston theologian and patriot in support of his thesis that theological heterodoxy was a major factor in activating Congregationalist revolutionary ardour. But in the final analysis, as shall be seen, neither traditional "Whig" portrays of Chauncy as a radical patriot nor more Heimertian views of him as a social reactionary, neither progressive readings of Chauncy as a theological free thinker nor mediating interpretations of him as a "seasonable revolutionary" or Enlightenment moderate can do full justice to the thought of this complex figure. As with Wise, Mayhew and Eliot before him, a much more promising interpretative key is to be found in Chauncy's conservative commitment, even in his most liberal theological writings, to preserving the New England Way both ecclesiastically, by protecting Congregationalist church polity, and politically, by upholding traditional British freedoms.

4. Defending the "New England Way."

There is little doubt that Chauncy valued his Puritan heritage, and that he did so throughout his long and varied career. In only his fifth published sermon, Prayer for Help a Seasonable Duty... (1737), issued just 10 years after his ordination at Boston's First Church, he took occasion in an otherwise standard funeral homily to mourn not only "many holy good men, men of eminent piety and fidelity, both in church and state...remov'd out of the land by death, within the compass of a few years," but his own generation's moral decline in comparison with "the great piety of our progenitors."

30 years later, in his first direct contribution to the Anglican Episcopate controversy, Chauncy lauded "ancestors, who subdued and cultivated this rude wilderness, amidst a thousand difficulties & hazards, so as to make it the pleasant fruitful land we now behold it." In 1770, in an alternative Boston Election Sermon delivered after the British authorities had removed the Massachusetts General Court to Cambridge, he again praised "pious progenitors," who "trusted in God"; that is, made God alone the ultimate object of their dependence in every time of need.

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142 Clark, "The Language of Liberty," pp. 153n., 323n., 369, made only passing references to Chauncy, none of them central to his main argument.

143 Chauncy, Prayer for Help a Seasonable Duty..., pp. 15, 17.


145 Chauncy, Trust in God..., p. 6.
Yet Chauncy had more than simple professional or patriotic reasons for his filiopietism. As he informed Ezra Stiles in the letter of May 23, 1768, which included a brief biography of his great-grandfather and namesake, the second President of Harvard College, an ancestral, Puritan vision of Protestant providentialism lay right at the heart of his family history and thus, to some extent, of his self-understanding. When the “Gunpowder Plot” of the Catholic Guy Fawkes (1570-1606) had been foiled on November 5, 1605, Chauncy’s famous forefather, who was then a pupil at London’s Westminster School, was spared almost certain destruction. As his great-grandson proudly related, Chauncy senior subsequently went on to become a Puritan minister, who was persecuted at the hands of Archbishop of Canterbury William Laud (1573-1645) before emigrating in 1637 to begin a highly successful career as pastor and scholar in New England. The story of the Harvard President’s early escape from death, which he saw in plainly providential terms, thus had a deep impact on Chauncy:

I particularly mention this fact, because it is an emphatically important one as relative to myself, and strongly points out the special obligation I am under to set an asterism on the 5th of November, which, to this day is commemorated in the colonies, as well as mother country, as I hope it always will be, with expressions of joy and gratitude. My existence, with all its connections in this world and another, which were then only possible futurities, were absolutely dependent on this deliverance by an extraordinary interposition in God’s all governing providence. 146

But Chauncy’s great-grandfather’s memory entailed an even greater legacy in view of his subsequent ministry and final instructions to posterity. Not only had his whole future depended, like that of his family and even nation, on divinely orchestrated deliverance from an arbitrary act of Catholic aggression. Chauncy senior, who had generally resisted, but once bowed the knee to Laudian Anglo-Catholicism, had also directly instructed those who came after him “not to conform...to rites and ceremonies in religious worship of man’s devising, and not of God’s appointing.” 147

As Griffin has rightly pointed out, therefore, Chauncy’s “heritage was Protestantism of the most vigorous Puritan stamp.” 148 Moreover, this was not something that he ever took lightly. In fact, like Wise, Eliot and Mayhew, much of his life’s work is best understood from that perspective, including those aspects of his thought that scholars have most often interpreted in radical or revolutionary terms. Thus even when espousing heterodox ideas, Chauncy often did so for largely conservative ends and as shall be seen, a primary goal was to defend the “New England Way” in both church and state that he had inherited.

147ibid., p. 173.
A. Chauncy's Theology - From Orthodox Calvinism to Heterodox Biblicism.

1. Early Calvinism (1727-1757).

When Chauncy was ordained at First Church and Cotton Mather, perhaps the most vigorous defender of Puritan orthodoxy of John Wise's generation, gave him the traditional "right hand of fellowship," there is every reason to believe that despite the moderating influence of Edward Wigglesworth at Harvard, the 22-year-old assistant pastor was himself an orthodox Calvinist. There is also strong evidence from his works that he maintained that position publicly at least until the publication of The Opinion of One that Has Perused the Summer Morning's Conversation... (1758), although the intensive private studies that led to his eventual departure from it had begun as early as 1752. The easiest way to demonstrate the extent of Chauncy's early Calvinism is to show how he upheld the five key doctrines outlined by the 1618-19 Synod of Dort: total depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace and the perseverance of the saints.

Thus in his first two published funeral sermons, Chauncy clearly identified human "tempers" as "perverse & depraved...since our Fall from God" and human nature as "corrupt." The biblical character of Nathanael whom Chauncy took as an example in his funeral sermon for Judge Nathanael Byfield was undoubtedly "a real good man; a true saint and faithful servant of the most high," but he could not be "perfectly and indefectively so. In such a sense, there is not a just man upon earth, that doth good and sinneth not." In his pivotal Great Awakening sermon, Enthusiasm Described and Caution'd Against... (1742), Chauncy did not hesitate to warn his hearers that they were inherently vulnerable to sin, including the enthusiastic excesses of revivalism, because they were "in a corrupt state. The Fall has introduc'd great weakness into your reasonable nature." His Seasonable Thoughts on the State of Religion in New-England... (1743) then offered an extensive catalogue of human excess, as did many of his later sermons. In Earthquakes a Token... (1755), delivered the Sunday after Boston's "terrible earthquake" of November 18, 1755, for example, Chauncy was in no doubt about the major precipitating cause. "Sin is the ground, and the only moral ground, of the anger of God, that anger of his, which causeth the earth to shake and tremble," he told the no doubt anxious congregation of Old Brick. "'Tis this that transgresseth his law, opposes his will, affronts his sovereignty, reflects contempt upon his government, and brings confusion into the moral world." Among transgressions that had

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150 See above, p. 84, n.159.

151 Chauncy, Man's Life Considered..., p. 14; Early Piety Recommended..., p. 4.

152 Chauncy, Nathanael's Character Display'd..., pp. 5, 6.

153 Chauncy, Enthusiasm Described and Caution'd Against..., p. 18.
offended God prior to the earthquake, Chauncy saw some particularly obvious causes for divine indignation:

The sins included in the term, uncleanness, have so offended God, as that he has testified his anger against them by an earthquake....We might do well to esteem ourselves warned of God against uncleanness....Sabbath-breaking is likewise a sin, God has threatened to testify against by shaking the earth....Pride is another sin God has testified his anger against by earthquakes.

Also threatening were "unrighteousness," "drunkenness," which was "an awakening consideration...to the people of New-England," and worst of all, "enmity to Christ."\(^{154}\)

Sin had not only infected humanity in the form of total depravity, as Chauncy consistently warned his hearers throughout the first 30 years of his public ministry. It had also, according to a view that he continued to express for the duration of his career, affected the earth itself, and irretrievably so until its final restoration in the purging flames of the "day of God's wrath." According to the millennial vision expressed in a 1756 Thursday Lecture sermon "occasioned by the late earthquakes in Spain and Portugal, as well as New-England:"

It should seem...very plain, that the new heavens and new earth, so particularly spoken of, both by the apostle Peter, and the apostle John, are this world of ours bro't back to its paradisalck state, or one that is better; and that the very world we now live in, thus changed and made new, is the place, where good men, after the resurrection, and judgment, shall live and reign with Christ forever and ever.

In the meantime, however:

the earth, in its present state, is such, as that it is impossible for any son or daughter of Adam to possess life on it, but in suffering circumstances, in a less or greater degree....the present state of existence may properly be considered as a scene of vanity, suffering, and death....The plain truth is, we, the posterity of Adam, come into existence since his lapse, and live on this earth in consequence of it, not as it was in its pristine state, but as it lies under the actual curse of God, that is, adapted to render life, as long as it lasts, a scene of labor, vanity, and sorrow.\(^{155}\)

Faced with such a predicament, there was ultimately only one place to turn, Chauncy told those present on January 22, 1756, and that was to Christ. There were obvious means to pursue, such as repentance. But "the plain truth is, there is no safety, no security for us...but by making him [God] our friend thro' Jesus Christ," and even at this juncture in his theological development, just two years before he openly expressed reservations about Calvinism, Chauncy was careful to qualify such a statement with a clear acknowledgement of the primacy of divine grace in human salvation. Turning to God in Christ must be "as God pleases," he stressed, and "that moral change which will render us meet objects of the divine favour" needed to be "introduced in us." It

\(^{154}\)Chauncy, \textit{Earthquakes a Token...}, pp. 15-17, 19-22.

\(^{155}\)Chauncy, \textit{The Earth Delivered...}, pp. 13, 15, 6, 8.
could not be secured automatically.\textsuperscript{156} In that sense, Chauncy was implicitly affirming Calvinist doctrines of unconditional election and irresistible grace that were also consistent features of nearly half his published works despite a parallel and growing emphasis on human free will that was eventually to assume priority in his thought.

In his earliest sermons, Chauncy left absolutely no doubt of his convictions that those who died faced a truly eternal reward or punishment in heaven or hell according to their possession or lack of saving faith in Christ. He warned hypocrites in \textit{Nathanael's Character Display'd}... (1733), for example, that they were "persons whose portion it will be to dwell with devouring fire, to dwell with everlasting burnings: - 'Tis against this kind of sinners that our Saviour has said, \textit{Wo unto you; for ye shall receive the greater damnation.}"\textsuperscript{157} In \textit{The New Creature Describ'd}... (1741), his first major Great Awakening account of Christian conversion, he told those present at the Thursday Lecture of June 4, 1741, in remarkably Edwardsean terms: "There is nothing betwixt you and the place of blackness of darkness, but a poor frail, uncertain life. You hang, as it were, over the bottomless pit, by the slender thread of life; and the moment that snaps asunder, you sink down into perdition."\textsuperscript{158} In another Awakening sermon, \textit{An Unbridled Tongue a Sure Evidence}... (1741), Chauncy's imagery was equally graphic:

\begin{quote}
Multitudes will be condemned, at the great and last judgment, for their hypocrisy; for their seeming to be religious, while they had really no religion at all...But if you are yet unmoved, O turn your thoughts to the bar of the coming judgment, and reflect, seriously reflect, on what will then be the awful doom of all those, who only seem to be religious. They shall be sent away to dwell with devouring fire; yea, they shall dwell in the hottest place of that lake, which burneth with fire and brimstone.\textsuperscript{159}
\end{quote}

In 1755, he warned those reeling from a Boston earthquake:

\begin{quote}
While we refuse to have this man [Christ] to reign over us, and express our disregard to him by our unbelief and disobedience, we are in danger not only of judgments in this world, but of the damnation of hell. O that we had upon our minds a due sense of this! And that we might herefrom be awakened to a speedy flight to Christ, in the Gospel way! We shall then be safe from evil here, and secure from the divine wrath hereafter.\textsuperscript{160}
\end{quote}

But while consistently calling people to salvation in Christ, Chauncy was equally clear during the first half of his public ministry that "of our selves we can never turn to God, or serve him to his

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{156}Ibid., p. 24.
\textsuperscript{159}Chauncy, \textit{An Unbridled Tongue a Sure Evidence}..., pp. 8, 12.
\textsuperscript{160}Chauncy, \textit{Earthquakes a Token}..., p. 23.
\end{footnotes}
acceptance. The assistances of divine grace are absolutely necessary hereto.\textsuperscript{161} He acknowledged, for example, the possibility of saving, death-bed repentance, but only "thro' the uncovenanted mercy of God."\textsuperscript{162} In society in general, "when a people are become...corrupt and wicked, the powerful interposition of God, and this only, will be effectual to restrain them from vice, and bring them back to the practice of religion and virtue."\textsuperscript{163} Physical compulsion was never appropriate to enforce Christian belief or practice and since God had created people as "rational, free agents, they can't be religious but with the free consent of their wills."\textsuperscript{164} However, there was no doubt for the Calvinist Chauncy, just as there would ultimately be no question, rather paradoxically, for the Arminian and universalist Chauncy more than 40 years later, about who held the upper and decisive hand in the process of conversion:

God himself does not...go about to make men religious. He uses violence with no man; forces no one, contrary to his will, to betake himself to a religious course. Whenever \textit{he draws men to a life of holiness}, 'tis with the cords of a man, and with the bonds of love, i.e. in a way suited to their character as men; in a way adapted to their make as free agents. He does not make use of the methods of force, turning men from sin to himself, whether they will, or no; but \textit{so manages the affair, as to gain the free and full consent of their wills}. \textit{He opens the eyes of their mind}, and gives them to see the ugliness of sin, the beauty of holiness, the need they stand of Christ, his sufficiency and infinite readiness to be a Saviour to them; and he gives them such a sight of these things, such an apprehension and persuasion of them, as they never had before: and having thus removed the ignorance that was in them, through the blindness of their mind, he persuades and enables them to chuse and act, according to the dictates of their enlightened understanding. And so, the whole of what he does, is in a way suited to their character, as creatures endowed with reason, and a capacity of making a free choice.\textsuperscript{165}

In that sense, divine grace, however well adapted to human nature, was ultimately irresistible. Moreover, salvation was the direct result of God's election and predetermination, however accommodated to freedom of choice. One of the main reasons why "joy" could justifiably be termed "the duty of survivors, on the death of pious friends and relatives, Chauncy informed those mourning Lucy Waldo in 1741, was that "they are gone to dwell with patriarchs, prophets, and apostles; with their pious departed friends, and progenitors; and with \textit{all, whom God, in all ages, from the days of Adam, has been selecting from among men, and preparing to be heirs to the future, eternal inheritance}."\textsuperscript{166} Grace was thus paramount and the connection between divine "selection" [or election] and human conversion was unbreakable, because the latter came not by force of will but by the sovereignty of God. It involved people's eyes being opened "to see the

\textsuperscript{161}Chauncy, \textit{Early Piety Recommended}.... p. 6. Cf. pp. 9, 11.

\textsuperscript{162}Chauncy, \textit{Man's Life Considered}.... p. 27.


\textsuperscript{164}Chauncy, \textit{The Only Compulsion Proper}.... p. 10.

\textsuperscript{165}ibid., pp. 10-11 – Italic added for emphasis.

\textsuperscript{166}Chauncy, \textit{Joy, the Duty of Survivors}.... p. 12 – Italic added for emphasis.

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force of the great motives of Christianity” and “their stubbornness” being “herewith...overcome”. In that sense, Chauncy told those at the Boston Thursday Lecture of June 4, 1741, a sinful humankind could only be God’s abject debtor:

What hast thou, 0 man, 0 woman, that thou didst not receive? ‘Twas not by your own works of righteousness, but according to his mercy, that God has saved you by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost....Look upon the divine Spirit, as sovereign in the kingdom of grace; and realise that he may dispense the grace of God, as to whom he will; so where he will, and in what way or manner soever he will.167

He repeated the theme in two of his other Great Awakening publications. “He that has an immediate access to our spirits can certainly work upon them,” he told the people of First Church on a 1741 day of prayer “to ask of God the effusion of his Spirit,” “and, in a reasonable way, influence them both to will and to do of his own good pleasure.” God was nothing less than “the author of conversion” in the sense that “the change signified by conversion or the new creature, is the work of God.”168 In seeking to define “the work of God” for the readers of his Seasonable Thoughts on the State of Religion in New England... (1743), Chauncy again went back to Calvinist basics: ”Tis in one word, that work of divine grace, which is sometimes, called the new-creation; sometimes the new-birth; sometimes the Spirit’s renovation; sometimes conversion, or as 'tis otherwise express’d, a being turned from darkness to light, and from the power of sin and Satan unto God.”169

As shall be seen, an overarching emphasis on the ultimate sovereignty of God was to remain a paramount theme for Chauncy throughout his life. But in his earlier years, he interpreted it within an almost fully Calvinist theological framework, which involved allegiance not only to the doctrines of total depravity, unconditional election and irresistible grace, but to the centrality of Christ’s atonement and to the inevitable perseverance of all true Christians in saving faith for eternity. It is fair to say that there is no definitive evidence in Chauncy’s works that he ever decisively embraced the doctrine of a limited atonement, according to which Christ died only to pay the price for the sins of the elect, rather than for those of the whole world. But Chauncy’s commitments to an orthodox Christology and to a thoroughly reformed understanding of justification by grace through faith are unmistakable throughout the works of his first 30 years as a published theologian.

Thus in defining the character of a “godly man” in Prayer for Help... (1737), Chauncy stressed his possession of faith as “an active living principle, suitably exciting and moving the several

169Chauncy, Seasonable Thoughts on the State of Religion in New England..., p. 5 - italics added for emphasis.
passions and affections of his mind," his confidence in the "faithfulness and veracity" of the Bible and his submission to God's providential sovereignty. But he laid major emphasis on belief in Christ's atonement:

he so believes in God as sending his only begotten son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world thro' him might be saved, that he hopes for salvation in none but in Christ; and thro' him, and the merits of his mediatorial undertaking for sinners, he trusts in the mercy of God to eternal life.\textsuperscript{170}

In \textit{The Only Compulsion Proper...} (1739), Chauncy reminded his hearers how God "has even parted with his own dear and only begotten Son. He spared him not, but delivered him up, to shed his blood on the cross; and by this means has got ready for our acceptance a provision of mercy, equal to the needs of our souls."\textsuperscript{171} Five years later, at the installation of Thomas Frink as pastor, he gave a classic exhortation to justification by faith. ""We must be men in Christ, justified in his righteousness, and sanctified by his Spirit;" he told members of Plymouth's Third Church, "or nothing will prevent our being doom'd, at the great and last day, to a departure from Christ among the workers of iniquity....it is on the account of Christ's righteousness that we are justified and saved," Chauncy later repeated, "and it would be highly injurious to his merits to suppose otherwise."\textsuperscript{172}

Chauncy's 1757 statement of "the plain truth" that "there is no safety, no security for us...as God pleases, but by making him our friend thro' Jesus Christ" has already been noted.\textsuperscript{173} Perhaps even more remarkable from one who has since been placed near the pinnacle of 18th century American theological liberalism, are his doctrinal statements in two sermons of 1744-45. "And he was careful, not only that his aims and principles might be good," Chauncy said at the funeral of First Church deacon, Cornelius Thayer, "but that he might also place his dependance right; not only on his own works of righteousness, but the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ." Then he quoted Thayer personally making an exemplary affirmation of reformed soteriology: "I must be justified freely by the grace of God, thro' the redemption that is in the Lord Jesus Christ."\textsuperscript{174} "The Scripture ever takes notice of three things with reference to the affair of man's redemption," Chauncy told Massachusetts ministers assembled in Annual Convention on May 31, 1744:

The first is the grace of God purposing it. It's particular in its care to fix our thoughts on the good-will and free mercy of God, as the true, original, eternal source of this blessing. Next to the grace of God, it gives all due honour to the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ. 'Tis with a view to him, for his sake, and on his account, that the sinner is spoken of as justified and

\begin{footnotes}
\item Chauncy, \textit{The Only Compulsion Proper...}, p. 19, alluding to Romans 8:32.
\item Chauncy, \textit{Ministers Exhorted and Encouraged...}, pp. 6, 21.
\item Chauncy, \textit{The Earth Delivered...}, p. 24.
\item Chauncy, \textit{Cornelius's Character...}, p. 28, citing Romans 3:24.
\end{footnotes}
saved. These great gospel favours are granted to him, not for any works of righteousness which he has done, but in consideration of the mediatorial performances and sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ. This righteousness of the Redeemer is considered as the ground and reason, that on the account of which he is interested in the mercy of God to eternal life. But besides the grace of God, and the merits of Christ, there is what the Scripture calls a meetness for the inheritance, a preparedness in the frame of the sinner's heart for the heavenly glory, wrought in him by the power of the Holy Ghost...He must be chang'd from a servant of sin, to a servant of righteousness; he must be made to put off the old man, and to put on the new man, or he cannot inherit the Kingdom of God. 175

Few committed Calvinists might have provided a more cogent summary of their orthodox plan of salvation. But the Calvinist Chauncy was not only a firm adherent to the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith in Christ alone. He also maintained that there was no way of losing Christian salvation once it had truly been received. Thus in The Out-pouring of the Holy-Ghost... (1742), he went to some lengths to define faith as a divine gift whereby "we are justified freely of God's grace, without the deeds of the law." But he also saw it as a crucial work of the Holy Spirit that by the Spirit's "influence," Christians "are kept from falling, and preserved through faith unto salvation" - a protection that was all too necessary in view of life's ever-present temptations. "They should draw back to perdition," Chauncy observed, "were they not under the special and continual guidance of the Holy Ghost: and to this it is always attributed in Scripture, that they are preserved unto Christ's heavenly Kingdom." 176 Seeking to distinguish, in Seasonable Thoughts on the State of Religion in New-England... (1743), between genuine works of God and false claims to such, Chauncy reiterated, if more implicitly, his clear affirmation of the perseverance of the saints:

The influence of the Spirit does not consist in sudden impulses and impressions, in visions, revelations, extraordinary missions, and the like; but in working in men the preparations for faith and repentance, by humbling them for sin, and shewing them the necessity of a Saviour; then by effecting such a change in them, as shall turn them from the power of sin and Satan, and make them new creatures; and in fine, by carrying on this good work begun in them, enabling them to grow in grace, and patiently continue doing well, till of the mercy of God, thro' Christ, they are crowned with eternal life: all which he does in a way agreeable to our make as reasonable creatures, by his blessing on the instituted means for the accomplishment of these purposes of mercy. 177

If Chauncy's early theology can be characterized as anything, therefore, it deserves the label of Calvinist. There is consistent evidence from his earliest sermons through to those published in the mid-1750s that when he exhorted his readers, as he did, in his major Great Awakening treatise of the 1740s, that "now is the time, when we are particularly called to stand up for the good old way, and bear faithful testimony against every thing, that may tend to cast a blemish on

175Chauncy, Ministers Cautioned against the Occasions of Contempt..., pp. 31-2.
177Chauncy, Seasonable Thoughts on the State of Religion in New-England..., p. 218 – italics added for emphasis.
true primitive Christianity," he saw orthodox, reformed theology right at the heart of it. And the theological inheritance of the "good old [New England] way" centred on the primacy of divine grace: "Tis one of the most obvious truths," Chauncy told his church members in a 1757 discourse that otherwise focused on the need for Christian good works, "that all that we have, and are, we derive from God....it must forever be acknowledged, that an admission to blessedness in heaven is a reward of grace, and not of debt."179

Earlier scholars, like Miller and Barney Jones, who acknowledged Chauncy's Calvinism at the time of the Great Awakening were, therefore, making an important point. Chauncy's controversy with Edwards and other revivalists is best seen as involving points of contention within a shared Calvinist theological framework, rather than as a rationalist, even Arminian attack on essentials of reformed orthodoxy. Chauncy clearly did argue from different psychological premises from those of Edwards in Some Thoughts Concerning The Present Revival Of Religion In New-England... (1742) or especially in A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections... (1746). But as Miller suggested, Chauncy's theological anthropology was arguably more traditionally Puritan than that of Edwards, not less.181 At the same time, in his obvious commitments not only to Calvinist orthodoxy in general, but to a carefully elaborated, but very conventional understanding of the process of conversion and to a critique of revivalist excesses that owed much to well-established Protestant historical precedent, Chauncy had good reason to justify his position as inherently conservative of New England tradition. It is certainly very clear from the amount of attention that Chauncy devoted to them in his 10 Great Awakening publications that his major criticisms of the revival's excesses centred on aspects of its theological "enthusiasm," which he found fundamentally unbiblical, and on the social and ecclesiastical disorder to which they allegedly gave rise. As works like The New Creature Describ'd... (1741), The Gifts of the Spirit to Ministers... (1742), The Out-pouring of the Holy-Ghost... (1742) and even Some Thoughts Concerning the Present Revival of Religion in New-England... (1743) provide ample evidence, Chauncy did not have problems with seeking a revival of religion per se or with understanding such a revival in Calvinist terms.183

178Ibid., pp. 337-8 - italics added for emphasis.
179Chauncy, Charity to the Distressed Members of Christ..., p. 8.
182Chauncy's "conventional understanding of the process of conversion" is evident in The New Creature Describ'd..., for example, as in his earlier work, Early Piety Recommended..., in Seasonable Thoughts on the State of Religion in New-England..., he also clearly styled himself as a defender of Protestant order and orthodoxy against revivalist excesses. See esp., pp. iii-xxx, 337-8, 366.
183In Seasonable Thoughts on the State of Religion in New-England..., for example, Chauncy especially critiqued as disorders associated with the Great Awakening: itinerancy (pp. 36ff.), abnormal physical and emotional effects (pp. 76ff.),
II. Mid-Life Arminianism (1758-1782).

On April 14, 1754, when Chauncy wrote to his cousin Nathanael, who was then a pastor in Durham, Connecticut, he was just two years into the decisive seven-year period that apparently led to a complete reorientation of his theology. But he already indicated ill-defined problems with the Calvinist doctrine of original sin. On the one hand, he had clearly been reading the work of John Taylor (1694-1761), an English dissenter “of pronounced Arminian sympathies,” whose The Scripture-doctrine of Original Sin... (1740) questioned traditional Calvinist notions of imputed guilt [from Adam to the whole of humanity] and total depravity. But while he expressed his “great value” of Taylor, he thought him “very much mistaken in his doctrine of original sin, and in his performance of the Epistle of Romans.” On the other hand, he informed his cousin:

I wish I could have an opportunity to converse with you, or to let you see what I have written upon Paul's Epistles.... The commonly received [i.e., Calvinist] opinions are quite remote from the truth.

By 1768 Chauncy already had three “dissertations” virtually ready for publication on the topics of sin and the Fall, but these would not be finally released, with two others, until 1785. Chauncy was, however, prompted to give an inkling of his theological struggles when public controversy was sparked in New England by the publication of the work of Salisbury, Massachusetts pastor Samuel Webster (1718-1796), A Winter Evening's Conversation upon the Doctrine of Original Sin... (1757), which openly advocated Taylor’s views. As Lippy has pointed out, “Taylorism” would eventually prompt an overwhelming, posthumously published response from Jonathan Edwards in one of his most creative apologetics for Calvinist orthodoxy. The more moderate pastor of First Church, Salem Village, Peter Clark meanwhile took up the cause in a much less substantial treatise, The Scripture-Doctrine of Original Sin, Stated and Defended... (1758).

It was Clark's work that provoked Chauncy once more into public controversy, but as has been noted, The Opinion of One that Has Perused the Summer Morning's Conversation... (1758) was hardly the kind of vigorous, Calvinist refutation of Taylorism that his colleagues might have

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185Chauncy in Fowler, p. 335.

186Samuel Webster, A Winter Evening's Conversation upon the Doctrine of Original Sin... (Boston, MA: 1757).


188Peter Clark, The Scripture-Doctrine of Original Sin, Stated and Defended... (Boston, MA: 1758).
expected. Chauncy’s caution in engaging such a topic may be gauged from the fact he chose to publish anonymously in the form of “a letter to a friend.” Yet while he stated that his “expectations...were considerably raised, when [he] heard, that the Rev. Mr. Clark, a gentleman noted for piety, good sense, learning and candor, as well as for Calvinistical orthodoxy, had undertaken to answer the Winter Evening’s Conference about Original Sin,” he actually ended up criticizing Clark’s work, rather than Taylor’s or Webster’s. The two main grounds on which he chose to do so were ostensibly thoroughly orthodox:

The first is, that this gentleman, so far as I am able to judge, has unhappily said that, which renders it impossible the doctrine of the imputation of Adam’s guilt to his posterity should be true, I mean in the full sense in which it is maintained by Calvinists. The second is, that tho’ he wears the appearance of a friend to the doctrine of imputed guilt, as held by Calvinists, yet he has deserted this doctrine, nay, given it up, as it maintains that mankind universally, infants as well as others, are liable to the damnation of hell-fire, on account of Adam’s first sin. 189

Such objections, with much of Chauncy’s accompanying argumentation, thus involved precisely the kind of subtle distinctions that might have been expected in scholarly debate between reformed theologians. The problem was that when it came to his second main criticism of Clark, Chauncy could not forebear expressing agreement with one of Clark’s departures from strict Calvinist doctrine. For while he argued that Clark was undermining an orthodox understanding of original sin, including the imputation of Adam’s guilt to all humanity, by contending that those who died before reaching the age of accountability were not liable to eternal damnation in hell, he personally endorsed this contention. “’Tis not a secret thing,” Chauncy wrote, “in the opinion of Calvinists, that infants, as well as others, are justly liable, viewed as the children of Adam, to the damnation of hell,” and Clark had departed from this teaching. But Chauncy could not:

blame this gentleman for hoping the best concerning the future state of infants: nor do I find any fault with him. I rather think the better of him, for not saying, with Calvinists, that the first sin is so imputed to them, as that they are liable to the damnation of hell, and might justly have it inflicted on them, if he don’t believe it.

Chauncy also suggested that holding such a view with integrity should be no bar to continuing in pastoral office. 190

Compared with the forceful language and controversial style of Seasonable Thoughts Concerning the Present Revival of Religion in New-England... (1743) or some of Chauncy’s other works, the reservations stated in The Opinion of One that Has Perused the Summer Morning’s Conversation... (1758) were thus very carefully phrased. He also expressed a wish at one point that “this gentleman, notwithstanding his hoping so well of those who die in infancy, had gone

189Chauncy, The Opinion of One that Has Perused the Summer Morning’s Conversation..., pp. 3, 5.
190ibid., pp. 16-17, 27.
particularly and largely into a reconciliation of the Calvinistical doctrine, as opposed by his antagonist, with the perfections of God." Yet even as he voiced that wistful hope, he implicitly acknowledged his own internal theological conflict. "There is yet opportunity [for such reconciliation];" Chauncy wrote. "and he may hereby greatly serve the cause of orthodoxy, by removing away the greatest stumbling-block in the way of its being embraced." 191

It would be 27 years before Chauncy finally felt able to express a thorough reinterpretation of the doctrine of original sin in his *Five Dissertations...* (1785). In the meantime, having signalled at least a serious question with, if not a major rejection of orthodox Calvinism in 1758, his published theological positions moved in a perceptibly more Arminian direction from the 1760s onwards. The primary work in which this first became clear was his *Twelve Sermons...* (1765), which marked a major shift from Chauncy's previous views on the nature of faith, Christian salvation and the relationship between divine grace and human good works.

The provocation of *Twelve Sermons...* by the work and New England ministry of Robert Sandeman, and especially by his teaching of a minimalist understanding of faith as mere intellectual conviction, is obvious from its many critiques of Sandeman's ideas, and especially of his *Letters On Theron And Aspasio...* (1759). But the work's full title makes clear that its aims and ambitions were much broader, for Chauncy sought to offer his readers nothing less than *Twelve Sermons on the Following Seasonable and Important Subjects, Justification Impossible by the Works of the Law. The Question answered, "Wherefore th[e]n Serveth the Law?" The Nature of Faith, as Justifying, Largely Explained, and Remarked on. The Place, and Use, of Faith, in the Affair of Justification, Human Endeavours, in the Use of Means, the Way in which Faith is Obtained. The Method of the Spirit in Communicating the "Faith, by which the Just Do Live." The Inquiry of the Young Man in the Gospel, "What Shall I Do that I May Have Eternal Life?" With Interspersed Notes, in Defence of the Truth, especially in the Points Treated on, in the Above Discourses.*

Within this ambitious agenda, certain general themes are clear. First, Chauncy continued to advocate a strong view of God's sovereignty and of the primacy of divine grace in human salvation. He began *Twelve Sermons...* with clear and very orthodox-sounding arguments, for example, that people were "universally sinners, in the eye of law" and so if they were to enjoy God's saving favour, they needed "justification," whereby God must "approve, accept, vindicate or adjudge [them] as just." He contended that "all works, whether of Jews, pagans, or Christians," were "excluded from justification, law, rigid law being the rule of tryal," and that "nothing but the interposition of grace [through the mediatorial work of Christ]" could "deliver them from the power

[191](#) *ibid., p. 19 – italics added for emphasis.*
of the grave." Second, if divine law, like good works, could not save, it nonetheless had two key purposes:

The first is contained in those words, the law "was added because of transgressions [either to prevent the commission of them, or, if they should be committed, to make them an occasion of spiritual service], till the seed should come to whom the promise was made" – The second is thus expressed, "The law was our school-master to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith." Third, genuine Christian faith involved much more than Sandeman's simple intellectual acceptance of gospel truth, or even a heartfelt reliance on Christ. It "must be...such a persuasion of the truth," Chauncy argued, "as shall be effectual to conform our hearts and lives to the will of God, and the example of our Savior and Master, Jesus Christ." So "the faith which denominates...a justified believer must contain in it, in God's estimation, repentance, the new-birth and gospel-obedience."

Although Chauncy did not say as much, this was a very different understanding from the definition of faith that he had embraced during the Great Awakening, as:

the produce of that internal work of his [God's] upon the mind of the sinner, whereby, the eyes of his understanding being opened, he has such a view of the suitableness of the gospel method of salvation in general, and of the loveliness of Christ in particular, his all-sufficiency to be his Saviour, as that he is persuaded and enabled to embrace him as such, giving himself up to him, to be instructed, governed and saved by him.

Chauncy had previously taken the traditional Puritan view that saving faith would give rise to holiness of life, or that sanctification would be evidence of justification. But now he included "gospel-obedience" as part of faith itself. He recognized that in doing so, he was laying himself open to criticism. "It will probably, be thought by some," he wrote, "that I have been greatly deficient in not making the essence of faith, as justifying, to consist in the soul's relyance on Christ, or trusting in his righteousness, as the only pleadable title to life....In answer whereto I would say, I know of no text, in all the Bible, that gives this idea of faith."

A last major theme to emerge from Twelve Sermons... was Chauncy's advocacy of a much more Arminian or "synergistic" understanding of the whole process of Christian salvation than in his earlier writings. Just as he had come to see obedience as a vital constituent part of the saving

192Chauncy, Twelve Sermons..., pp. 10, 3, 5, 27.
193Ibid., p. 47, citing Galatians 3:19, 24. The words in parentheses have been transposed from the same page for purposes of explication.
194Ibid., pp. 111, 112. Cf. pp. 101-2n..
195Chauncy, The Outpouring of the Holy-Ghost..., p. 16.
196Chauncy, Twelve Sermons..., p. 113n..
faith that would lead to justification, he also now stressed the importance of the use of appropriate means, not only to prepare for spiritual regeneration and salvation, but in some sense to achieve it. Thus “sinners...may do a great many things in religion,” Chauncy argued, and:

what makes these endeavours of sinners most of all reasonable, and fit, is the consideration that they may, of the mercy of God, thro’ Jesus Christ, turn out, in the end, to their spiritual and everlasting advantage. And this leads me on to say,...that tis “ordinarily” in concurrence with “these endeavours” of sinners, that God bestows his Spirit to “begin,” as well as carry on, the work of faith in their hearts. 197

Chauncy’s views on this topic were not always clear, and he seemed almost painfully aware of the dangers of moving too far towards any suggestion that people might in any way earn their salvation. So even as he urged the importance and saving significance of Christian obedience and good works, he also underlined the supremacy of divine grace. But the result was a typically Arminian compromise. On the one hand, Chauncy thus argued in the last of his Twelve Sermons..., “eternal life, in regard of its being an obtainable blessing, has no connection with, or the least dependence on, anything we can do.” In fact, “no doings of ours are to be look’t upon, as the reason, or consideration, upon which the gift of life is made. In this sense, all works of righteousness, done by us, are totally useless.” But on the other hand, conversion is “not only spoken of, in the inspired writings, as ‘the work of God,’ but a work that he begins, maintains, carries on, and compleats, with the ‘concurring agency of men themselves,’ in the use of various means wisely adapted to the purpose.”198

In subsequent works issued prior to the full revelation of Chauncy’s radical theological reorientation in the 1780s, it is significant to note that the doctrinal content is often virtually indistinguishable from that of earlier products of his Calvinist orthodoxy. In an ordination sermon of 1766, for example, Chauncy summarized “the whole Christian scheme of redemption” in the following terms:

its occasion; the undone state of the lapsed sons of Adam: its original rise; the free favour of the infinitely benevolent Deity: and the method of its execution; the advent of God’s only begotten Son into our world, to take on him our nature, and accomplish the work laid out for him, as expedient in order to the purchase and bestowment, not only of pardon, justification, and a glorious immortality beyond the grave; but of that ‘meetness’ for these blessings, without which they could neither be dispensed or enjoyed. 199

Preaching at the funeral of Thomas Foxcroft in 1769, Chauncy upheld his late ministerial colleague as a model of saving faith, “fixing his dependence, not on his own worthiness, not on any works of righteousness which he had done, but on the mercy of God, and the atoning blood,

197Ibid., pp. 210, 215-16.
198Ibid., pp. 333, 334, 338-9 – italics added for emphasis.
199Chauncy, The Duty of Ministers..., p. 6.
and perfect righteousness, of Jesus Christ the Savior.\footnote{Chauncy, \textit{A Discourse Occasioned by the Death of the Reverend Thomas Foxcroft}..., p. 27.} In his 1772 series of sermons about Communion, "\textit{Breaking of Bread}"..., Chauncy asked his listeners: "Have you any hope of the pardoning mercy of God, but through the merit of his blood, that blood of his, this institution is a memorial of?\footnote{Chauncy, "\textit{Breaking of Bread}"..., p. 32.} He later reminded them in classically Calvinist terms:

> whatever our sins may have been, and whersoever committed, whether before or after a profession of Christ, and eating and drinking in his presence, they come within the reach of offered, and promised forgiveness, and shall certainly, upon our repentance, be pardoned for the sake of Christ and on account of that atonement he has made for the sins of men....the gospel of the blessed God has provided, through Christ, and promised, pardoning mercy to repenting sinners, however many, or heinous, their sins may have been.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 67, 147.}

As late as his penultimate published sermon, \textit{The Accursed Thing}... (1778), Chauncy wrote of sin in a manner that might have gladdened the heart of the most rigid adherent to the traditional doctrine of total depravity:

> mankind are under the law of God...and when they transgress this law, they are chargeable with sin. This is its nature. And it carries in its idea rebellion against the most rightful authority....Nor is sin an accursed thing in its nature only, but in its effects and consequences also....Tis this that has blinded our understandings, perverted our judgments, stupefied our consciences, corrupted our passions and affections. 'Tis this that has deprived us of our original glory, sunk our natures, and from creatures but little lower than the angels, reduced us to a level with the beasts that perish. 'Tis this that has commenced a war in our faculties, disturbing the peace of our minds and filling them with tumult and vexation, intestine jars and horrid inward recoilings....whenever the judgments of God have been abroad in the earth, 'tis sin that has brought them down....'Tis this that guards the heavenly paradise as with a flaming sword, so that there is no admission for sinners, continuing such, into that blessed place.\footnote{Chauncy, \textit{The Accursed Thing}..., pp. 7, 8, 9, 10. Chauncy's last published sermon was \textit{A Sermon Delivered at the First Church in Boston, March 13th, 1785}..., although several other works were issued in the interim.}

After 1765, however, Chauncy's works also included continuing evidence of the clearly Arminian soteriology that he first outlined in \textit{Twelve Sermons}.... Thus in \textit{A Discourse Occasioned by the Death of the Reverend Dr. Joseph Sewall}... (1769), he again defined faith as "not an empty speculation....It is that faith," he contended, "by which 'the just do live,' and that is an abiding, habitual, powerful principle of all holy conformity to the will of God, both in heart and life, in a way of suffering as well as doing."\footnote{Chauncy, \textit{A Discourse Occasioned by the Death of the Reverend Dr. Joseph Sewall}..., p. 11.} In his alternative Election Sermon of 1770, Chauncy likewise reminded his hearers that divine grace was normally synergistic with positive human initiative, for "tho' it is God ultimately who protects, helps, and saves; yet, he ordinarily does this by the
intervention of second causes, adapted in their nature to the purpose. On a similar note, he informed those present at his Thursday Lecture sermon in Boston on August 3, 1773 that "the faith which constitutes men Christians in truth, and love to their fellow-brethren in Christ...are so far connected together in the sacred books, as to lead us most obviously into the thought, that they are, and ought always to be, inseparable concomitants." Those who "would hope to be acquitted at the bar of the future judgment" should, therefore, do more than simply rely on God. They must "put on bowels of mercy, be kind to one another, tender-hearted, ever being in readiness...to do good to 'the household of faith.'"

So as late as the early 1780s, there would thus have been little reason to believe, based on Chauncy's published works, that his theological position had shifted any further from orthodox Calvinism than to a fairly moderate Arminianism. It was only when he began to release the more radical works that appeared in that decade that the wider world was finally exposed to the heterodox ideas that Chauncy had been developing for some 30 years, although they had been well concealed, except from a small group of trustworthy friends.

### iii. Final Universalism (1782-1787).

On December 10, 1780, John Eliot (1754-1813), the second son of Andrew, who had followed his father into the ministry in Boston, wrote to Jeremy Belknap (1744-1798), who was then pastor in Dover, New Hampshire. In the course of a very conversational letter, Eliot mentioned "a droll affair" about Belknap, which he thought necessary to "find room to mention." Belknap had apparently been preaching "before the Association of Ministers," and in the process, "threw out so many heretical hints that you was obliged to appear as a candidate for a moderate reproof." Eliot was clearly worried about his friend, but he also had other concerns:

> "Be ye wise as serpents," says our great Master, &c. It will not do to vent these sentiments at present. (You know what I mean, the pudding, as Dr. Chauncy calls it.) People's minds are not ripe enough. [John] Murray has tended to irritate the passions of those whom we call worthy men, rather than to mollify their minds with ointment to receive a doctrine any ways similar to what he hath propagated. They are not able to distinguish between the restitution of all things upon his plan, and the other scheme which employs the attention & arrests the assent of so many of the wise and learned of the modern New England clergy.

Two months later, Eliot addressed similar topics in another, longer letter to Belknap. By this stage the pioneering universalist preacher Murray had been ministering in Massachusetts for more than five years, teaching a simple form of universalism, based on the ideas of James Relly.

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205Chauncy, *Trust in God...*, p. 10.


(c.1722-1778), which held that “since Christ had already atoned for all...sins, the debt to God was satisfied and sinners therefore faced no more punishment.” Murray had obviously attracted something of a following in Boston which Eliot dismissed as “the young, gay, volatile part,” and Eliot admitted that he had previously thought that Murray’s ministry might provide a useful opportunity to introduce Chauncy’s universalism of more “substance.” But now he disagreed with Belknap and took a different view.

Eliot’s reasons for caution were various. He was worried that “many serious, good Christians” would be offended by an apparent departure from orthodoxy, and that those “not learned in other languages, or mighty in the Sc[ri]p[ture]s” would not understand Chauncy’s ideas. He did not think Murray’s influence very great “among men of thought” and he believed that his ministry had, if anything, prejudiced people against universalism. In the longer term, Eliot predicted that “by prudence, or what in my apprehension is styled Christian policy, we may persuade men.” Many of “the first divines in New England” had already progressed to “the faith of an universal salvation” and with appropriate wisdom and “necessary caution,” more might follow. In the meantime, those who had already come to a knowledge of “universal restitution” could afford to bide their time. This was “an object of speculation affording great comfort to rational enquirers, but by no means necessary to be commonly known.” So Eliot saw no need for Chauncy’s manuscripts to be published immediately. More to the point, nor did Chauncy, he said, who agreed with Eliot in thinking Belknap “to be erroneous.”

Men will have their own ways of thinking. There are Deists in England. Dr. Chauncy says that the present is the worst time which could ever happen, for men’s minds are too absorbed in politics to attend unto anything else.... The pudding is a word which he uses when persons are nigh not acquainted with our sentiments, thus styling the MSS. A word that happen[ed] to come uppermost once when he wanted to know the sentiments of an absent gentleman, - doth he relish the pudding?

Eliot’s letters thus provide rare evidence of the opinions of the limited group of confidants familiar with the contents of Chauncy’s long-stewed, universalist “pudding.” Yet their caution is all the more striking in view of the fact that just two years later Chauncy finally broke his public silence with the joint publication, together with John Clarke, of Salvation for All Men... (1782). As already noted, this was little more than a republication of the views of previous authors, including Jeremiah White (1629-1707) David Hartley (1705-1757) and James Nicol Scott (1703-1769), with a preface by Chauncy in which he specifically criticized Murray’s teachings as “very like an

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210 ibid., pp. 202, 203, 204, 206, 207.
encouragement to Libertinism" and so possibly "as hurtful to civil society as to religion." In a December 19, 1782 letter to his friend, Ebenezer Hazard (1744-1817), Belknap sought to explain why the work had been issued in the form that it had:

The truth of the case is this: the doctrine of universal restitution has long been kept as a secret among learned men. Murray has published some undeniable truths concerning it, mixed with a jargon of absurdity; and one Winchester among you has followed his example. Many serious minds were unsettled, observing that the Scriptures contain very universal expressions respecting the redemption and reconciliation of the world, which are eagerly laid hold of by Murray, and yet not being able to give into his forced allegories and mystical nonsense; while, on the other hand, libertines swallow all at once, and deny any future state of punishment, and from thence take occasion to "continue in sin that grace may abound." This view of things occasioned very earnest and repeated applications to a venerable gentleman, whom I have already mentioned [i.e., Chauncy], - who has had for some years prepared for the press a very laboured, judicious, and strongly argumentative, as well as deeply critical, treatise upon the subject, - that he would publish to the world the true state of the doctrine, as supported by Scripture, and void of all mystical trash. In consequence thereof, the above pamphlet, entitled "Salvation for All Men," came forth as a forlorn hope, or, rather, as a scouting party, to make discoveries and try the temper of the public. The consequence has been that some serious minds are disgusted, some are agog for further discoveries, some are vexed beyond measure, &c.\(^2\)

Notwithstanding or perhaps because of the mixed reactions to *Salvation for All Men...*, which included, as noted, at least six rejoinders from orthodox Calvinists, Chauncy decided to state his own views more explicitly in an anonymous 19-page "letter to a friend," *Divine Glory Brought to View in the Final Salvation of All Men...* (1783), that critiqued the position of Joseph Eckley.\(^3\)

Having once committed himself to open publication, he then unveiled the three major works that he had kept under wraps for years. *The Benevolence of the Deity...* (1784), *The Mystery Hid...* (1784) and *Five Dissertations...* (1785) hence soon revealed the full extent of Chauncy's theological heterodoxy, which involved not only a thorough re-interpretation of his earlier Calvinism, but open advocacy of the universal salvation of all humanity as a result of the divine benevolence of a sovereign God.


21\(^{2}\)Jeremy Belknap to Ebenezer Hazard, December 19, 1782, in Jeremy Belknap et al., "The Belknap Papers," CMHS, VII (1787), pp. 169-74, esp. pp. 171-2, citing Romans 6:1. In a 1782 letter to Belknap, John Eliot also indicated something of the growing tensions resulting from Chauncy's suppression of his views. Relating how Chauncy grew indignant with laymen questioning Oliver Everett (1752-1802) about his theology prior to his settlement at New South Church earlier that year, Eliot commented: "it was lucky the dispute turned upon the article of the Trinity and exhausted the patience of the Council, for this was only a prelude to other matters which would have set us all aghast. We might have been obliged to eat the pudding, bag & all." See John Eliot to Jeremy Belknap, February 1, 1782, in Belknap et al., CMHS, VI IV (1891), pp. 222-7, esp. pp. 225-6.

21\(^{3}\)See further John Eliot to Jeremy Belknap, September 30, 1782, in *ibid.*, pp. 234-8, esp. pp. 236-7, on the initial backlash following the publication of *Salvation for All Men...*: "Dr. Chauncy & Clarke have let the cat out of the bag...Instead of pleasing the rational part of the town & country, such I mean as are even friendly to this subject as a matter of speculation, it is thought by them that it will admit of very bad consequences, and that this time was the improper to start such a controversy."
Chauncy's widescale rethink of Calvinism ultimately lay at the heart of his theological reorientation. Thus in *Five Dissertations...*, he completely reworked the traditional doctrine of original sin to argue that;

we do not come into existence with a morally corrupt or sinful nature: nor, may I pertinently add here, is our nature, as transmitted to us, so destitute of all capacity for that which is morally good, as that a native total corruption of heart becomes hereupon universal, without the exception of a single descendant from the one man Adam.\(^\text{214}\)

Chauncy did not deny it to be "an undisputed truth...not only that the human race descended from Adam as their first progenitor, but that existence was communicated to them in his lapsed state."\(^\text{215}\) But he interpreted this state as relating to two elements of the human condition which did not entail total depravity, namely, "subjection universally to a life of vanity and sorrow, ending in death" and "such imperfection of nature as renders it impossible, upon the foot of mere law...[to] attain to a righteousness that could avail to their justification before God."\(^\text{216}\) In other words, as a result of Adam's sin, human beings came into the world mortal and imperfect, but not morally depraved; nor could they be said to be guilty of any other sin than of those which they subsequently went on to commit. At the same time, grace remained paramount:

mankind may, in consequence of the advantage they are placed under by means of Christ, obtain the gift of pardoning mercy, notwithstanding their personal sins, however many they have been. And...they might be prepared, not only for the bestowment of this gift, but the enjoyment of an eternal reign in happy life after death.\(^\text{217}\)

However, while Chauncy continued to uphold the centrality of the mediatorial work of Christ to the divine plan of salvation and he maintained that "deliverance from the bondage of sin, however great it has been, or however early contracted, is obtainable upon the foot of grace through Jesus Christ," he also made clear that he now thought the extent and application of Christ's atoning sacrifice to be truly universal.\(^\text{218}\) Thus, "the same grace through Christ which continued Adam in being after his lapse; so as that innumerable multitudes might descend from him, provided also for his and their deliverance from the death to which they were subjected by the righteous judgment of God." More specifically, Chauncy argued:

redemption from the death *all* die in Adam...was brought about: not by an act of mere sovereignty, but through the obedience of Jesus, the only begotten Son of the Father, to death, the cursed death of the cross. By thus submitting to die, *he made atonement*, not only for the original lapse, but for *all the sins* this would be introductory to, and might be the occasion of being committed by *any of the sons of men, in any part or age of the world.*\(^\text{219}\)

\(^{\text{214}}\)Chauncy, *Five Dissertations...*, p. 191.

\(^{\text{215}}\)ibid., p. 129.

\(^{\text{216}}\)ibid., p. 133.


\(^{\text{218}}\)ibid., p. 237.

\(^{\text{219}}\)ibid., pp. 243, 244-5 – italics added for emphasis.
Chauncy had thus clearly departed from a Calvinist understanding of Christian atonement and he now stressed that “the appointment of Christ to be the Saviour of men, took rise from the grace of God”, not to “pacify God’s wrath” or “to move compassion in him towards sinners”. Moreover, while the notion of Christ making a gracious atonement for human sin was still central to his theology, Chauncy no longer conceived this, if he ever truly had, as a limited sacrifice on behalf of those pre-ordained or “elected” by God for salvation. According to Five Dissertations..., as in the full exposition of his universalism, The Mystery Hid..., “the whole human race, in consequence of a divine constitution, occasioned by the obedience of the one man Jesus Christ, are as certainly under the advantage of a deliverance from death, as they were subjected to it in consequence of a counter-constitution, occasioned by the offence of the one man Adam.” As Divine Glory Brought to View in the Final Salvation of All Men... made clear, the root of Chauncy’s universalism thus lay in his revised understanding of the atonement. “I agree with you,” he informed Eckley:

in opposition to all the Calvinists that ever wrote upon the subject, that nothing could be a greater insult on the weakness and misery of mankind, than to offer them all salvation, unless there was a foundation laid for the bestowment of it. And I further acknowledge, “the obedience and death of Christ” are the moral ground of that general proclamation which is made in the gospel, and the pardon which is offered unto all men.

In that sense, “the doctrine of universal redemption necessarily infers [i.e., implies] universal salvation” – an argument that Chauncy further expounded through detailed consideration of relevant biblical passages and summarized in six key propositions in The Mystery Hid:...

I. “From the time that sin entered into the world by the first man Adam, Jesus Christ is the person through whom, and upon whose account, happiness is attainable by any of the human race;”

II. “The obedience of Christ, and eminently his obedience to death, when he had assumed our flesh, in the fullness of time, is the ground or reason upon which it hath pleased God to make happiness attainable by any of the race of Adam;”

III. “Christ died, not for a select number of men only, but for mankind universally, and without exception or limitation”...[and] “if Christ died for all, the scheme we are establishing perfectly falls in with the great design of his death;”

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220 Ibid., pp. 245, 246.
221 Ibid., p. 136.
222 Chauncy, Divine Glory Brought to View in the Final Salvation of All Men..., p. 7, citing Eckley, p. 8.
223 Chauncy, The Mystery Hid..., p. 17.
224 Ibid., p. 19.
225 Ibid., pp. 20, 22.
IV. “It is the purpose of God, according to his good pleasure, that mankind universally, in consequence of the death of his Son Jesus Christ, shall certainly and finally be saved;”

V. “As a mean in order to men’s being made meet for salvation, God, by Jesus Christ, will, sooner or later, in this state or another, reduce them all under a willing and obedient subjection to his moral government;”

VI. “The Scripture language, concerning the reduced, or restored, in consequence of the mediatory interposition of Jesus Christ, is such as to lead us into the thought, that they are comprehensive of mankind universally.”

One of the most intriguing aspects of Chauncy’s later theology is thus the tension, even paradox, that emerges between his rather deterministic commitment to universal salvation as a result of Christ’s universal redemption of humankind by an act of sovereign grace and his more voluntaristic understanding of the innate freedom of women and men to “work out” and even, in some sense, to achieve their own salvation. Propositions IV and V of The Mystery Hid... would seem to leave little room for doubt, for example, that Chauncy believed that the salvation of all humanity would be the inevitable result of divine sovereignty. He accordingly devoted considerable time and attention to outlining a potentially multiple-stage scheme of redemption whereby human beings would be repeatedly presented with God’s offer of salvation in this life and even in hell until they eventually accepted it. It could, therefore, be argued that in rejecting a traditional reformed understanding of original sin and in adopting a theology of a universally applicable and effective atonement, Chauncy actually ended up more or less implicitly endorsing key tenets associated with Calvinist notions of unconditional election, irresistible grace and perseverance of the saints. The irony is that in The Mystery Hid..., as in Divine Glory Brought to View in the Final Salvation of All Men..., he publicly and quite vigorously repudiated Calvinism. So even while listing among “horrible absurdities...which Protestants receive for revealed truths...the doctrines of election and reprobation; of the eternity of hell-torments; and of the partial design, and final effect, of the mediatory interposition of Jesus Christ,” he redefined the meaning of election and advocated a truly irresistible understanding of the role of divine grace in

226Ibid., p. 22.
227Ibid., pp. 170-1.
228Ibid., p. 237.
229According to ibid., pp. 219-20, for example: “a second period of the reign of Christ will commence at the general resurrection [of the dead], when, as Head of the Kingdom of God, he will open a new dispensation, with respect to both the righteous and the wicked. As to the righteous, whom he has already, or in the first period of his mediatory reign, reduced under subjection to the moral government of God, he will, at his second coming, bestow upon them the reward of good and faithful servants....And as to the wicked...they, while the righteous are reigning in life and glory, shall be sent by the Lord Jesus Christ, in execution of his mediatory trust, to the place of weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth; not to continue there always, but till the rebellion of their hearts is subdued, and they are wrought upon to become the willing and obedient servants of Christ.” Chauncy also allowed, e.g., p. 404, for the possibility of further resurrections and periods in hell, if necessary, for those who remained unrepentant, but he was confident, p. 9, that “all men will finally be happy.”
salvation. At the same time, he reiterated his Arminian stress on the use of means to achieve righteousness before God and in his other major work of the 1780s, *Benevolence of the Deity*..., Chauncy went to significant lengths to stress the importance of human “free agency.”

Chauncy’s central aims in *Benevolence of the Deity*... were “to remove away...objections [to divine benevolence], wipe off...aspersions, and set forth the benevolence of the Deity, in its true glory.” In a three-part work he thus sought to define the sense in which he attributed “perfect and absolute benevolence to the Deity,” to show how the natural order provided evidence of it and to answer objections against it, especially those based on empirical observation of the world’s disorders and those deriving from the problem of moral evil. The result was largely a work of natural theology, which relied much less on biblical exegesis than many of Chauncy’s other publications. But *Benevolence of the Deity*... was also a work of apologetics, inasmuch as it attempted to demonstrate how ascribing “the general notion of goodness” to God was perfectly consistent with earthly reality and the human condition as Chauncy understood them.

Scholars have rightly pointed out that the promotion of human happiness was central to Chauncy’s vision of divine benevolence. “A principle disposing and prompting to the communication of happiness” was, in fact, “the first idea that enter[ed] into its composition” and Chauncy could conceive of no “constitution...more worthy of the Deity...than that which supposes him to exist, not only with the powers of intelligence and volition, heightened in degree of perfection beyond all bounds; but with the principles also of self-love, and benevolence, heightened in like manner, disposing him to seek his own, and the happiness of others.”

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230 Chauncy, *The Mystery Hid...*, pp. 385-3. Chauncy redefined, pp. 230-1, “the terms elect, chosen, [which] are often used in the New Testament, with respect to the whole body of Christians, as signifying nothing more than their being selected from the rest of the world, and admitted into the visible Kingdom of God, in order to their being under peculiar advantages that they may be fitted for eternal life.” But he also allowed for another biblical usage “to signify particular persons certainly selected for salvation” and further asked: “why may we not understand by them those, whom God knew would be wrought upon, in this present state, under the government of Jesus Christ, and therefore fixed upon them as the persons that should, in the next state, be glorified by him, though not to the exclusion of others; as has already been said, and need not be again repeated?” Chauncy had particularly strong objections to the doctrine of eternal reprobation. See below, p. 257, n.235. In *Divine Glory Brought to View in the Final Salvation of All Men...*, p. 5, Chauncy freely conceded that “could those pious worthies [New England’s Calvinist forefathers] (for such I really esteem them) return to this world, they would reprobate your doctrines as earnestly as they would mine. Universal redemption, which you allow, they never admitted as an article of their faith.” See further, *ibid.*., p. 7.

231 See *The Mystery Hid...*, pp. 85-6, for example, where Chauncy rejected a traditional Calvinist understanding of “imputed righteousness,” stressing instead that “it ought always to be kept in mind, that righteousness is as truly a moral good quality, as sin is a moral evil one. They are both connected with personal agency, and absolutely dependent on it...That part therefore of the advantage through Christ, which consists in our being made righteous, and in this way becoming qualified for a happy reign in life, after we are delivered from death, essentially supposes use of means, and such too as are proper to be used with moral agents, in order to their being formed, agreeably to their natures, into righteous persons, or, what means the same thing, a meekness for an eternal reign in happy life.” Cf. *Five Dissertations...*, p. 309.


233 *ibid.*, p. 11.

234 *ibid.*, pp. 11, 25.
when Chauncy came to expound on the relationship between divine benevolence and human happiness, he voiced similarly strong objections to the Calvinist doctrine of eternal reprobation as in *The Mystery Hid...* "A more shocking idea can scarce be given of the Deity," he argued, "than that which represents him as arbitrarily dooming the greater part of the race of men to eternal misery." Yet he saw this as "the true import of the doctrine of absolute and unconditional reprobation" and found it nothing short of scandalous to:

make the infinitely benevolent God the grand and only efficient, not only in the bestowment of good, but even in the abuse of it; and [to argue] that he has so laid his plan, and connected a chain of causes, as that this abuse shall inviolably be brought into event, and on purpose that its final result should be the everlasting damnation of a great number of the creatures his hands have formed.\(^\text{235}\)

Not only was eternal reprobation inconsistent with the affirmation of divine benevolence and the promotion of human happiness, however. The whole Calvinist scheme of predestination robbed human beings of free will by depriving them of a genuine power to choose. It was a matter of common perception, Chauncy argued, that "we are at liberty to will or not to will, to chuse or not to chuse, the doing of these and those actions. We feel in ourselves a power over our volitions, and such an one as enables us to direct, suspend, overrule, or put an intire stop to them." It was also "essential to free agency, and such a use of it as to make us capable of good or ill deserts, that our volitions, upon which our actions follow, should be within the reach of our command."\(^\text{236}\)

A rigid scheme of predestination would prevent this and diminish human happiness accordingly, because "the most exalted happiness, it is possible we should enjoy, is that which is connected with, and dependant on, a free, but wise and good, use of that power [of exercising free will]."\(^\text{237}\)

As shall be seen, Chauncy's advocacy of human free agency was a consistent feature elsewhere in his works. But with his parallel commitment to universal salvation, it also led him into a theological and intellectual impasse, which he only addressed on a couple of occasions in *The Mystery Hid...* Commenting on the meaning of a key New Testament passage, for example, Chauncy considered the possible objection to his argument that "[God] may...use proper moral means that all men might be saved; but, as men are free agents, they may mis-improve these means, and bring final ruin upon themselves, notwithstanding God's willingness they should be saved," and he found himself in something of an intellectual quandary.\(^\text{238}\) His response was to offer a somewhat speculative solution:


\(^{236}\)Ibid., pp. 132-3.

\(^{237}\)Ibid., pp. 142-3.

\(^{238}\)The biblical passage in question was 1 Timothy 2:4, referring to God, "who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth."
I readily own, in answer hereto, that men, as they are free agents, have the power of resisting, or opposing, those means, which God, from his desire of their salvation, may see fit to use with them; which power ought not to be over-ruled, nor indeed can it be in consistency with moral agency. [But] is infinite wisdom, excited by infinite benevolence, and accompanied with infinite power, incapable of devising, and then executing, a scheme, with reference to all men, which shall, in event, without breaking in upon their liberty, or using any means but such as are moral and rational, and therefore adjusted to their character as moral agents, infallibly issue in their salvation?  

Chauncy had made a similar argument in Divine Glory Brought to View in the Salvation of All Men... “Inasmuch as the Saviour of the world has atoned for the sins of every creature, and God earnestly desires the salvation of all,” he contended, “it is inconceivable that any should perish everlastingly. His infinite power, wisdom and goodness forbid such a dishonourable supposition.” Yet it was also true that “men are free agents.” So how could their freedom be preserved? “Though free,” Chauncy continued, “yet surely, infinite power, guided by infinite wisdom, and excited by infinite goodness, may devise such a scheme, as shall bring all men into a state of moral subjection, without breaking in upon their liberty.”

In the final analysis, therefore, while purportedly breaking free of the theological straitjacket of predestinarian Calvinism, when faced with the intractable tensions of simultaneously upholding divine grace and human free will, Chauncy found himself returning to summary affirmations, however questioning, of the primacy of the former. In that sense, the radical universalist theology of the septuagenarian and octogenarian Chauncy had much more in common with the reformed orthodoxy of his earlier years than scholars have often allowed. In that sense too, his theological revisionism may be viewed in a more conservative light, as Chauncy saw his universalism - not as a “novel doctrine” published solely for the sake of innovation, but as a biblically inspired attempt to redefine Christian essentials in order to remove unnecessary “stumbling blocks” to belief and so restore credibility to “the ancient...doctrines of this country.”

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239 Chauncy, The Mystery Hid..., pp. 166-7. Cf. pp. 1-3: “Should it be suggested, free agents, as men are allowed to be, must be left to their own choice...the answer is obvious, their Creator, being perfectly benevolent, would be disposed to prevent their making, or, at least, their finally persisting in, such wrong choices....Should it be said further, such free agents as men are may oppose all the methods that can be used with them, in consistency with liberty, and persist in wrong pursuits,...this is sooner said than proved. Who will undertake to make it evident, that infinite wisdom, excited by infinite benevolence, is incapable of deriving expedients, whereby moral agents, without any violence offered to their liberty, may certainly be led...into such determinations, and consequent actions, as would finally prepare them for happiness? It would be hard to suppose, that infinite wisdom should be finally outdone by the obstinacy and folly of any free agents whatsoever. If this might really be the case, how can it be thought, with respect to such free agents, that they should ever have been produced by an infinitely benevolent cause. If the only good God knew...that some free agents would make themselves unhappy...why did he create them?”

240 Chauncy, Divine Glory Brought to View in the Salvation of All Men..., pp. 8-9.

241 Chauncy, Salvation for All Men..., p. i; The Mystery Hid..., p. vi.; The Opinion of One that Has Perused the Summer Morning's Conversation..., p. 19; Divine Glory Brought to View in the Salvation of All Men..., p. 5.
With occasional exceptions, a strong biblicist focus was one of the most notable qualities of all Chauncy's publications. It was also central to his theological development in that even in his last, most heterodox works, he claimed to be doing nothing more nor less than uncovering the true meaning of Scripture as he interpreted it.

A thoroughgoing biblicism is thus evident right from one of his earliest sermons, *Early Piety Recommended...* (1732), in which he commended “the Word of God” as “the best and most suitable rule, by which to govern our selves in the business of religion” and urged that “all our views, all our hopes, all our encouragements and dependances in and from religion, be regulated by the Word.” Five years later, Chauncy defined “the godly man” as one who “so believes the faithfulness and veracity of God, as to rely on his Word, confide in the truth and depend on the fulfilment of his promises.” But in singing the praises of “the first fathers of this country, who were, perhaps, a set of as holy men as the world ever saw” in *The Gifts of the Spirit to Ministers...* (1741), he made clear that even their “authority” should be subject to that of “reason and Scripture.” At the height of Great Awakening excesses, Chauncy was in no doubt as to the best source of discernment. There was “a rule by which you may judge of persons, whether they are enthusiasts, meer pretenders to the immediate guidance and influence of the Spirit,” he told the members of First Church in 1742. “And this is, in general, a regard to the Bible, an acknowledgement that the things therein contained are the commandments of God. This is the rule in the text.” Chauncy had a high view of the calling and status of church ministers, but he was very clear that they too were men under authority. So they “should take heed to their doctrine, that it be sound, in opposition to that which is false and erroneous. It should be the pure, uncorrupted Word of God.” “To the Law and to the Testimony:” he warned fellow ministers in 1774, “if what we say does not agree herewith, there is no light nor truth in it,” because “the Holy Bible” was “that one only test of all religious truth.”

In the political arena, one of the main reasons why *Civil Magistrates Must Be Just...* (1747) was that “they are...obliged to be just, in virtue of the will of the supreme legislator, made known in the revelations of Scripture.” Moreover, when analyzing claims to any form of special revelation or


244Chauncy, *Enthusiasm Described and Caution'd Against...* p. 7.

245Chauncy, *Ministers Exhorted and Encouraged...* p. 18.

246Chauncy, *Ministers Cautioned against the Occasions of Contempt...* pp. 9-10.

247Chauncy, *Civil Magistrates Must Be Just...* p. 46.
insight, there was only one acid test. "The divine Spirit, in enlightening men's minds, lets them
into the knowledge of no truths, but those that are contained in the sacred books of Scripture,"
Chauncy wrote in Twelve Sermons... (1765). So "what saith the Scripture?" ought...to be the
grand question in all supposed illuminations, manifestations, suggestions, and discoveries from
the Spirit."\(^{248}\) In a 1766 ordination sermon written several years after the intensive period of study
that led to his own radical theological re-orientation, Chauncy gave a clear indication of the kind
of intellectual restraints under which he operated. "It is not...any part of the work of ministers, in
these days, to publish 'new revelations,'" he warned, "...their proper work is, to explain 'the
mystery of the gospel,' as it has been manifested by Jesus Christ, and his apostles, in the books
of the New Testament."\(^{249}\) He reiterated such a theme in several of his works and it was
grounded in Chauncy's apparently unshakable conviction of the absolute reliability and infallibility
of the Bible. "The inspired writings only are exempt from error and defect," he wrote in his
*magnum opus* of patristics, *A Compleat View of Episcopacy*... (1771), "and...those of the most
eminent men...are to be...examined by the only touch-stone of religious truth, the perfect and
unerring Word of God, and approved of so far only as they are found to agree herewith."\(^{250}\)

Chauncy clearly set such a standard for himself. So when it came to justifying the radical
conclusions of his theological treatises of the 1780s, there was only one place to go. "What I...
now offer to the world is...fetched...solely from the fountain of revealed truth, the inspired
oracles of God," he claimed when introducing *The Mystery Hid*... (1784). Moreover, he
considered that "those only...are proper judges in this debate, who have made the sacred
writings in general, and the apostolic writings in particular, especially the writings of the apostle
Paul, their careful and diligent study."\(^{251}\) Chauncy's final published work, *Five Dissertations*... (1785) displays evidence of a similar biblicism. Not only did he ground his reformulations of the
doctrine of original sin in detailed biblical exegesis. He explicitly pointed out, for example, that "it
is with me one of the strongest evidences of the divinity of the Scriptures, that this [Genesis 3:14-
15], and other ancient promises and predictions, are so worded, that the scheme of salvation, as
it has been gradually unfolding till these last days, is very obviously, however comprehensively,
pointed out in them."\(^{252}\) In short, throughout his pastoral and theological career, Chauncy seems
to have maintained the high view of scriptural authority that he recommended to his colleagues in
*The Duty of Ministers*... (1766):

\(^{248}\)Chauncy, *Twelve Sermons*..., pp. 301, 304.

\(^{249}\)Chauncy, *The Duty of Ministers*..., p. 15.


\(^{251}\)Chauncy, *The Mystery Hid*..., pp. vi, viii-ix.

\(^{252}\)Chauncy, *Five Dissertations*..., p. 102 – italics added for emphasis.
"What saith the Scripture?" should be their [ministers'] grand inquiry. To this sacred text they should constantly repair; receiving nothing, delivering nothing, for revealed truth, but what they have found there. They are, by office, "stewards of the mysteries of God:" and where should they go, but to his written Word, for the knowledge of them? They are no where infallibly contain'd, but in this sacred book. The Bible therefore, the Bible, I say, should be the guide of their thoughts, the only rule of their faith: and they should make it evident by their preaching, that this has engrossed their time, and chiefly engaged their labor in their studies.253

Chauncy's biblicism was also crucially linked to another main theme of theological continuity throughout his works, which was his Christocentric focus on the person and work of Christ, however he came to understand them. A major reason why the Bible was so crucial for Chauncy was that "the light he [God] has given the world, in the revelations of Scripture, is that alone, by which we are let into the knowledge of the gospel method of 'redemption thro' Jesus Christ."254 Moreover, while his soteriological position may have shifted from Calvinism to Arminianism and from Christian exclusivism to universalism, his emphasis on the centrality of the atonement remained unchanged and there is no convincing evidence to support the claims of some scholars that Chauncy ever embraced a truly Arian understanding of Christ.

As might have been expected, there is certainly no indication in the writings of the first 30 years of his published career to show that his understanding of Christ was anything other than orthodox. Chauncy thus affirmed the sinlessness of the "perfectly holy Jesus" and described him as God's "only begotten Son," who came to provide a unique way of salvation through the mediatorial sacrifice of his death.255 He stressed that Christ "used violence with no man" by compelling him to come to faith, although he had both "sufficiency and infinite readiness to be a Saviour." He explained how God had "even parted with his own dear and only begotten Son. He spared him not, but delivered him up, to shed his blood on the cross; and by this means has got ready for our acceptance a provision of mercy, equal to the needs of our souls," and then asked "is he [Christ] not our law-giver, and King, and Judge, as well as Saviour?" 256 Chauncy spoke consistently of Christ's atonement, including "the glorious purchases of his cross," and acknowledged his great gifts as a preacher.257 He stressed that Christian salvation and justification could come only "on the account of Christ's righteousness" and stated that humanity could only find "safety" and

254Chauncy. Twelve Sermons,. p. 283.
255Chauncy. Nathanael's Character Display'd,. p. 8; Prayer for Help,. p. 3.
256Chauncy, The Only Compulsion Proper,. pp. 4, 11, 19, citing Romans 8:32, p. 22.
“security” with God through Christ. He upheld a classically reformed understanding of the incarnation as a “wonderful” act of “condescension,” whereby “the Son of God, our Saviour and Judge,” took “notice of the charities of such poor, imperfect, selfish creatures” and “was pleased to become a partaker of flesh and blood, in fashion as a man, like as we are, sin only excepted.”

As his public theology moved in a less Calvinist direction from the late 1750s, Chauncy allowed more room for human cooperation and even initiative in the process of salvation. But that did little to diminish his statements of a high, albeit “kenotic” (i.e., self-emptying) Christology. Christ was thus “the Saviour it pleased the all-merciful God early to provide for a perishing world, thro’ whom alone any of the race of men could be delivered from sin and wrath, and obtain salvation with eternal glory.” So it was “the incarnation of Christ,” with “his obedience in our nature even to the death of the cross, which ought always to be esteemed the true and only moral ground of the bestowment of spiritual and heavenly blessings.” Even in Chauncy’s most Arminian work, the “capital truth” remained that “Jesus, who is the Christ, died for our offences, and rose again for our justification.” As a result:

The sinners...that are in a justified state are those only, who are distinguished from others by being believers in Christ. Their faith gives them a discriminating character, which character is connected, by the appointment of God, with that deliverance from wrath, and right to life, which are the gift of grace thro' the atonement by Christ.

The method of execution of “the whole Christian scheme of redemption” was “the advent of God’s only begotten Son into our world, to take on him our nature, and accomplish the work laid out for him.” He described “the incarnation of the Son of God” as a “revealed mystery,” but was very clear that even if “revelation does not go on, and describe the ‘modus’ of that union between these different natures which denominate them one person,” he accepted the classically orthodox and so definitely non-Arian doctrine that Christ was “in true propriety, ‘the Son of Man,’ as well as ‘the Son of God.’” Some may have deviated from an orthodox understanding of Christ or his atonement, but when preaching at the funeral of his friend, Jonathan Mayhew, who had been labelled an Arian, in 1766, Chauncy went out of his way to assert, perhaps rather disingenuously, that “there was not one, to my knowledge, that was more firm and steady in his faith as to this

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258Chauncy, Ministers Exhorted and Encouraged..., p. 21; The Earth Delivered..., p. 24. Cf. Ministers Cautioned against the Occasions of Contempt..., pp. 31-2.
259Chauncy, Charity to the Distressed Members of Christ..., pp. 20-21.
260Chauncy, All Nations of the Earth Blessed in Christ..., pp. 5-6, 11.
261Chauncy, Twelve Sermons..., p. 123, citing Romans 4:25.
263Chauncy, The Duty of Ministers..., pp. 6, 12n.
doctrine of the gospel." Chauncy highlighted how "he took care to let his hearers into the grand design of the death of Christ; representing its necessity as an expedient contrived by the wisdom of God to atone for the sins of men, and in this way to procure their pardon." He also considered "the great doctrine of 'remission of sins,' as founded on the 'propitiation' made for them by the 'blood of Christ,'" to be "the grand point aimed at, by the wisdom of God, in the sufferings and death of his son Jesus." He affirmed that without the resurrection of Christ, "the whole gospel-scheme of salvation is a nullity" and noted how the New England founders' "trust in God was exercised thro' Jesus Christ," whom "they esteemed the divinely appointed medium of communication between God and man, and the only one that was so." Chauncy called "a crucified Christ...the true basis of the religion of Jesus" and assured his hearers that "the gospel of the blessed God has provided, through Christ, and promised, pardoning mercy to repenting sinners, however many, or heinous, their sins may have been." In his last published sermon before the release of his universalist works of the 1780s, he affirmed that "the Lord Jesus Christ...has taken upon him the curse of sin" and then expressed the typically Arminian hope that "this will inspire us with zeal and vigor, in the use of all means, that we may obtain, through him, redemption from the curse of the law and the wrath of God." As has already been seen, Chauncy's universalism entailed significant changes in his soteriology, and especially in his theology of the atonement, which he now openly declared to be unlimited. But in general terms, he continued to make remarkably consistent statements about the person and work of Christ throughout his final works. In Salvation for All Men... (1782), Chauncy and Clarke thus quoted from Jeremiah White to urge the continuing centrality of Christ's atonement in the universalist plan of salvation:

"there is much more in the heart of God to make men righteous by the second Adam [i.e., Christ] without their own personal merit, than to make men sinners by the first Adam, without their personal demerit. Here you see, grace has the preference, in the plot. God hath a design to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, but more to glorify his grace....as sin hath reigned universally unto death, so grace shall reign through righteousness as universally, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Grace will triumph at last....By taking upon him our sins, and expiating them on the tree, he has reconciled the world unto God, slain the enmity between them, and made provision for an universal restoration to favour."
A year later, in Divine Glory Brought to View in the Final Salvation of All Men... (1783), Chauncy reiterated the point that "the obedience and death of Christ' are the moral ground of that general proclamation which is made in the gospel, and the pardon which is offered to all men.\(^ {270} \) In The Benevolence of the Deity... (1784), he argued, when listing evidences of divine goodness that:

the mission of his own son from heaven, into our world to become incarnate, that he might by being obedient to death, make atonement for the sins of men, and by his exaltation, in consequence of this obedient submission, at the right hand of God to finish the work, he had begun on earth, are the grand means by which this stupendous benevolence of the Deity, in the business of salvation, is carried into effect.

In that sense, "the gift of Christ, through which we have redemption, sprang originally from the love of God."\(^ {271} \)

Norman and Lee Gibbs arguably exaggerated their position, when they concluded that Chauncy was a "liberal evangelical," but their re-examination of Chauncy's Christology, which drew heavily on The Mystery Hid... (1784), provided some helpful insights.\(^ {272} \) They clearly demonstrated, for example, that in affirming the presence and activity of Christ as the divine "Logos" in the creation, government and redemption of the world, Chauncy also upheld a view of him, pre-existent to the incarnation, that was inconsistent with Arianism.\(^ {273} \) The Gibbses' "kenotic" interpretation of Chauncy's Christology, based, in part, on his understanding of Philippians 2:6-10, was insightful.

Yet their parallel contention that the incarnate Jesus did not, for Chauncy "possess absolute or essential Deity," but was "a special creation of the Logos," seems unsubstantiated by their evidence and inconsistent with their earlier observation that "Chauncy affirmed the identity of the preexistent Logos, the crucified servant, and the exalted and reigning Lord."\(^ {274} \) What is much clearer from The Mystery Hid... is that the person and work of Christ were absolutely central to Chauncy's vision of universal salvation. Thus all six of the work's main "propositions," which have been listed above, were decidedly Christocentric. Christ was the source of human happiness and the "ground" on which God made it "attainable." He died for all and so secured their salvation. He was the instrument through whom God would reduce all people to "willing and obedient subjection to his moral government" and it was through his "mediatory interposition" that they would finally be saved.\(^ {275} \)

\(^ {270} \text{Chauncy, Divine Glory Brought to View in the Final Salvation of All Men..., p. 7, citing Eckley, p. 8. Cf. pp. 8, 10.} \)

\(^ {271} \text{Chauncy, The Benevolence of the Deity..., pp. 166, 170.}\)

\(^ {272} \text{Norman B. and Lee W. Gibbs, "In Our Nature: The Kenotic Christology of Charles Chauncy," esp. p. 233.}\)

\(^ {273} \text{Ibid., pp. 222-5, citing The Mystery Hid..., pp. 17-18, 159-61, 20, 72, 124-5. See also, p. 228, where the Gibbses cited from The Duty of Ministers..., pp. 12-13n., and concluded: "Chauncy is not Arian but unequivocally Chalcedonian: Christ is 'truly God' and 'truly man.'"}\)

\(^ {274} \text{Ibid., pp. 227, 224.}\)

\(^ {275} \text{Chauncy, The Mystery Hid..., pp. 17, 19, 20, 22, 171, 237. Cf. p. 36. See above, pp. 254-5.}\)
The fact that Chauncy repeated elements of such themes in his last two published works only serves to underline the Christological continuity to be found throughout his oeuvre, despite the radical changes in his theology. Thus when he urged the congregation of First Church in his last published sermon to them to “pay all due honour to the ordinance of the supper...in remembrance of him who died for your sins, that, by making atonement for them, he might open a way for the display of God's mercy in their pardon,” he was advising nothing that he might not have recommended nearly 60 years earlier when he began his ministry there.276 Likewise in Five Dissertations... (1785), Chauncy’s reconceptualization of the doctrine of original sin did not prevent him from arguing that “mankind may, in consequence of the advantage they are placed under by means of Christ, obtain the gift of pardoning mercy, notwithstanding their personal sins, however many they have been.”277

In light of such considerations, the many scholars who have tended to view Chauncy’s theology, in largely proleptic terms, either as an evolutionary stage en route or a radically liberal precursor to 19th century New England Unitarianism, have clearly done his thought an injustice. For despite his late universalism and his reinterpretation of Calvinist doctrines, he remained a biblicist, Christocentric thinker to the last, whose fundamental commitment to the primacy of divine grace remains unmistakeable. Lippy’s argument that the theological transformation of Chauncy’s later years was motivated by “a conservative passion to preserve the essential structures and categories of Puritan religious thought,” while lending them “fresh plausibility,” has already been noted. According to his Seasonable Revolutionary: The Mind of Charles Chauncy:

Chauncy had not intended to undercut the heart of orthodox theology, although that was the effect of his works. As far as he was concerned, he was simply doing for religious doctrine what he had tried to do for religious structures in the Awakening and episcopal controversies and for political order in the Revolutionary era: preserving what he saw as vital to the New England Way by providing a rational and logical defense of present practice and experience.278

However, while Chauncy clearly was attempting to preserve “the good old way” during the Great Awakening and he arguably had similar motivations during the Anglican Episcopate controversy and the revolutionary period, Lippy provided no direct evidence from Chauncy’s writings that his major goal in reconceptualizing important elements of traditional Congregationalist theology was to preserve Puritan “structures.”279

276Chauncy, A Sermon Delivered at the First Church in Boston, March 13th, 1785... p. 20.
A more promising way of understanding what Chauncy was trying to do in his latter works is to take him at his word and to explore his methods, as well as his conclusions. As his many citations show, Chauncy undoubtedly was influenced quite heavily by the writings of other theologians. But with the exception of The Benevolence of the Deity, which was primarily a work of natural theology, his last major treatises drew mainly on detailed biblical exegesis to develop their conclusions. They were the eventual result of seven years' intensive scriptural study and Chauncy explicitly claimed that the findings of his most radical publication were derived from the New Testament. Chauncy's self-proclaimed mandate as a minister and theologian "to explain 'the mystery of the gospel,' as it has been manifested...in the books of the New-Testament" has already been quoted. Moreover, the titles of two of Chauncy's last works confirm that that is precisely what he was attempting to do, however heterodox the results. In his 1783 pamphlet, his goal was to show Divine Glory Brought to View in the Final Salvation of All Men and when he gave a full presentation of his universalism the following year, he did not offer it as a radically new discovery. It was rather The Mystery Hid from Ages and Generations, Made Manifest by the Gospel-Revelation, as this was "opened in the New-Testament writings, and entrusted with Jesus Christ to bring into effect." Right to the end of his writing career, Chauncy can thus be fairly described as something of a theological conservative. But his conservatism, such as it was, was fundamentally biblicist and it was his commitment to the ultimate authority of the Bible that led him to question, reject and reinterpret traditional doctrines, where he found necessary.

B. Chauncy's Ecclesiology – Consistently Congregationalist.

An obvious area where Chauncy saw no need for any kind of reconsideration or revision of previous theological precedent was that of church polity. In fact, despite his willingness to depart from received orthodoxy in other ways, ecclesiologically, he ranked, with Wise, Mayhew and to some extent Eliot, as one of the most vigorous defenders of established New England practice. Moreover, much like Mayhew and Eliot, his motivations for conducting such a defence were clearly political, as well as theological.

The initial and very personal origins of Chauncy's more than usual interest in ecclesiological matters have already been noted, as has the delayed publication of his resulting research. It is important to stress, however, that unlike Wise, whose widescale defence of New England polity

260 In The Mystery Hid,... Chauncy made at least 45 citations to other works, for example, and in Five Dissertations,... at least 30. The publications of such prominent English Arminians as John Taylor and Daniel Whitby (1637/8–1726) featured prominently in these references, often on biblical and exegetical topics.

261 Chauncy, The Mystery Hid,... p. vi. It is fair to say, however, that Chauncy's biblical exegesis was clearly shaped by the prior interpretations of others, not least those of Taylor and Whitby.

262 Chauncy, The Duty of Ministers..., p. 15.
was maintained against the internal threat of more Presbyterianizing "proposals" within Congregationalism, or Mayhew and Eliot, whose engagement was confined solely to disputes surrounding the Anglican Episcopate controversy and the role of the SPG in the 1760s, Chauncy's focus was consistently on the general question of episcopacy, which he pursued in two main types of publication. Over a period of less than 10 years, between 1762 and 1771, Chauncy thus issued two studies largely addressed to a more scholarly readership, The Validity of Presbyterian Ordination Asserted and Maintained... (1762) and A Compleat View of Episcopacy... (1771), together with three more controversial works targeted directly at the Anglican Episcopate controversy: A Letter to a Friend, Containing Remarks on Certain Passages... (1767), The Appeal to the Public Answered... (1768) and A Reply to Dr. Chandler's "Appeal Defended"... (1770).

Chauncy's purposes in his general studies of Presbyterian ordination and episcopacy were basically to uphold the validity of the former and to deny the biblical necessity of or early patristic precedent for the latter. Thus The Validity of Presbyterian Ordination Asserted and Maintained..., which was delivered as Harvard's 1762 Dudleian Lecture, was basically intended to show precisely what its title implied. "The design of the present discourse," wrote Chauncy, was "to vindicate the New-England churches in their method of ordination by presbyters...to the purposes of the gospel ministry," and in its first part, he sought to argue:

That the apostles of Christ, in settling the churches, constituted (besides the order of deacons) no more than one order of standing pastors; that these pastors, in their day, were called sometimes bishops, sometimes presbyters, and promiscuously pointed out by either of these names; and finally, that these bishops or presbyters were endowed with all the ordinary powers that were to be exercised in the church of Christ, particularly with that of ordination.

Much of the remainder of Chauncy's work was devoted to the case for episcopacy, which he rejected, before he attempted to show how "the Protestant churches abroad, in common with ours, far from owning the jus divinum ["divine right"] of episcopacy, assert a parity between bishops and presbyters, allowing the latter, equally with the former, to perform the work of ordination." In keeping with the occasion, Chauncy then concluded by "speaking a few words to the young gentlemen" of Harvard, urging adherence to New England's Congregationalist traditions. He also added to the published version of his lecture an appendix on the letters of the apostolic church father, Ignatius of Antioch, who had often been cited in support of a separate

\[283^\text{See Mayhew, Observations... A Defence of the Observations... Remarks on an Anonymous Tract...; Eliot, Remarks on the Bishop of Oxford's Sermon...} \]

\[284^\text{Chauncy, The Validity of Presbyterian Ordination Asserted and Maintained... pp. 7, 13-14. Here and elsewhere, Chauncy clearly understood "presbyter," from New Testament Greek usage, as simply meaning church elder or pastor.} \]
order of the episcopate, "exhibiting some of the many reasons, why they ought not to be
depended on as his uncorrupted works." 285

Chauncy’s authorities in The Validity of Presbyterian Ordination Asserted and Maintained... were
both biblical and historical. His clearly stated assumption was that "episcopal-ordination....must
be considered necessary, if so at all, by the revelations of God, and in fair and legible characters
too." So he argued on scriptural grounds, for example, that "gospel-presbyters...are true Scripture
bishops and cloathed with authority to do everything that is done in the business of ordination." 286
But Chauncy also made the historical contention that "those ecclesiastical superiorities and
inferiorities which have, for a long time, been visible in the Christian world, were unknown in the
first and purest ages" and he argued that "Ignatius only excepted, the fathers, within the first two
centuries, unitedly concur in speaking of bishops and presbyters much in the same language with
the sacred Scriptures," 287 The appendix on the exceptional Ignatius was thus designed to show
that the letters that had been credited to him were essentially unreliable as historical sources.

In A Compleat View of Episcopacy..., which was finally issued in an attempt to overwhelm
demands for an Anglican bishop in the American colonies, Chauncy concentrated on the
historical aspects of his argument to produce an impressive volume of 18th century scholarship
which drew on the most authoritative sources in patristics studies available to him. The result was
a laborious, comprehensive and detailed analysis of relevant texts "from the fathers of the
Christian Church, until the close of the second century," which was intended to show "concerning
bishops and presbyters," to quote from the work’s full title, “that they esteemed these one and the
same order of ecclesiastical officers.” The main church fathers that Chauncy addressed included
Barnabas, Dionysius Areopagita, Hermas, Clement of Rome, Polycarp, Ignatius, Justin Martyr,
Irenaeus and Clement of Alexandria, but he predictably devoted most attention to Ignatius,
developing a much longer treatment of his works than in The Validity of Presbyterian Ordination
Asserted and Maintained.... 288 The model of episcopacy that he opposed was that of a diocesan
bishop of a superior order to that of presbyters or pastors with an “exclusive right of government,”
“sole power of ordination,” and “the power of confirmation.” 289 Chauncy associated such a model
with the dangers and excesses of Catholicism and the ultimate conclusion of his scholarship was

285Ibid., pp. 74, 87, 91.
286Ibid., pp. 59, 13.
287Ibid., pp. 64, 68.
288Chauncy devoted nearly 30% (pp. 187-316) of A Compleat View of Episcopacy... to Ignatius alone.
289Ibid., pp. vii-xiii.
that it was historically as well as biblically unwarranted. "I may venture to say, with the highest assurance," he concluded:

that he [the reader] will be in no danger of calling in question the authority of the New-Testament books, for want of testimonies in their behalf, though he should utterly reject episcopacy, in the impleaded sense, as having no support, either in point of right, or practice, from any thing he may have met with in the writers within the first two ages of the Christian church.\footnote{ibid., p. 474.}

The circumstances surrounding the threat of plans for a possible Anglican bishop have been well explored by historians and will not be repeated here.\footnote{See above, p. 216. n.48.} As noted, in addition to his academic \textit{magnum opus}, \textit{A Compleat View of Episcopacy...} (1771), Chauncy's contributions to the resulting controversy came in the form of \textit{A Letter to a Friend, Containing Remarks on Certain Passages...} (1767), \textit{The Appeal to the Public Answered...} (1768) and \textit{A Reply to Dr. Chandler's "Appeal Defended"...} (1770). Moreover, the central themes of Chauncy's three most combative anti-episcopal works were consistent.

Thus in \textit{A Letter to a Friend, Containing Remarks on Certain Passages...} (1767), he vigorously and filiopietistically defended the state of religion in New England, which Bishop Ewer had impugned, and saw efforts by the SPG and others to expand Episcopalianism as unnecessary.\footnote{E.g., Chauncy, \textit{A Letter to a Friend, Containing Remarks on Certain Passages...}, pp. 9, 16, 34, 36-7, 46, 52.} But Chauncy also perceived a deeper threat in an expansionist and episcopally aggressive Church of England and in that sense his theological and practical objections to episcopacy became political. The founders, he argued, had emigrated to New England expressly to find "liberty to worship God agreeably to the dictates of conscience" and in so doing, they had abandoned "a blind submission to church-power, arbitrarily exercised" in pursuit of "this undoubted gospel-truth, namely, that Jesus Christ only is supreme Head and Lord of the Christian church."\footnote{ibid., pp. 26, 12.} One of his main fears was that such freedoms would be impinged upon by imported bishops, who would "make use of their superiority, as most probably they would, sooner or later, to influence our great men here, and much greater ones at home, to project, and endeavour to carry into execution, measures to force the growth of the church."\footnote{ibid., p. 47.}

In \textit{The Appeal to the Public Answered...} (1768), Chauncy's agenda was more explicitly theological in the sense that he again sought to counter Chandler's arguments in favour of a separate order of bishops divinely established by apostolic succession and uniquely empowered
to perform such rites as ordination and confirmation. In doing so, Chauncy appealed to familiar precedents drawn from the New Testament and the writings of the early church fathers.\textsuperscript{295} But he also advanced strong criticisms of the declining state of the Church of England and of the role of bishops in it. Despite, or more probably because of the fact that “bishops, with the whole church-clergy, are creatures of the state, and the church itself a Parliamentary church,” Chauncy contended:

The plain truth is, the constitution of the church, at least in the affair of discipline, is in a miserably defective, if not ruined, state. It greatly wants amendment; and unless it should vastly differ in America from what it is in England, bishops would be of little service with respect to discipline. The church may, perhaps, do as well without them, as with them.\textsuperscript{296}

Chandler’s arguments that colonial Anglicans needed bishops for practical as well as disciplinary reasons to offer local ordinations and confirmations were simply specious, and without the financial support of the SPG, which had unnecessarily and disproportionately targeted funds to New England, the colonial church would be in a more parlous position than it already was.\textsuperscript{297} Chauncy thought the current situation particularly threatening, because “there never was a time, since the incorporation of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, wherein such earnest and vigorous efforts were made, both in the colonies and in England, to obtain the long wished-for blessing, an American episcopate.”\textsuperscript{298}

As in \textit{A Letter to a Friend, Containing Remarks on Certain Passages...}, Chauncy clearly perceived this threat in political, as well as ecclesiastical terms. New England’s founders had “fled hither, as to a place of safe retreat from the oppressive power of tyrannising bishops; choosing rather to expose themselves to external hardships and dangers, sadly grievous, and extraordinarily trying, than wrong their consciences by submitting to mere human impositions in the worship of their maker.” It would, therefore, be an insult “to the memory of our progenitors,” if Chauncy’s generation “should encourage the establishment of that very [prelatical] power which was so injuriously harrassing to them, and may in time be so to us.”\textsuperscript{299} At the same time, he simply did not believe Chandler’s assurances that the current plan for an American episcopate would invest bishops with spiritual authority over colonial Anglicans, and over clergy in particular, but with no civil powers in society at large. Even as he expressed “fidelity and loyalty to the British Crown” and referred to “that wisely contrived mixture of power, which gives the British state-

\textsuperscript{296}Chauncy, \textit{The Appeal to the Public Answered}, e.g., pp. 14, 20, 22, 26, 37, 38, 51.

\textsuperscript{297}Ibid., pp. 58, 63. Chauncy also, pp. 114-15, 155-6, vigorously disputed Chandler’s claims as to the numerical strength of Episcopalianism in the American colonies.

\textsuperscript{298}Ibid., pp. 78, 81, 83, 87, 89-90.

\textsuperscript{299}Ibid., p. 103.
constitution the preference to any on the whole earth," Chauncy thus argued that "the Church of England knows no such bishops as are specified in this plan, nor can they, in consistency with its constitution, be sent to the colonies." He quoted extensively from Mayhew to highlight the dangers that would likely result from the introduction of an American episcopate, including increased episcopal power, a general rise in Anglican adherence, the possible establishment of the Church of England in the colonies, the imposition of a Test Act and church taxes, and a growth in Episcopalian political power. We are as fully persuaded, as if they had openly said it, Chauncy concluded, "that they have in view nothing short of a complete church hierarchy after the pattern of that at home." Such a prospect was deeply threatening both to church and state, especially in a situation, in 1768, where "most of the colonies' think themselves as nearly touched in their constitutional rights by the late Parliamentary proceeding, as by the Stamp Act itself; and they are every day groaning out their complaints; though they are resolved to do it in those ways that are legal."

Two years later, in A Reply to Dr. Chandler's "Appeal Defended"... (1770), Chauncy returned to similar arguments, albeit within the context of a devastating rebuttal in which he systematically dismantled Chandler's positions in every section of his The Appeal Defended.... Thus he rejected the notion that episcopacy by divine right was ever part of the authentic ecclesiology of the Church of England and sought to adduce historical evidence from the English Reformation to that effect. He repeated his denial of the doctrine of apostolic succession, as Chandler understood it, and his contention that managing large dioceses "destroys their [bishops'] capacity to serve the ends, designed by Christ in the institution of their office." Chauncy still saw "the propagation of episcopacy" at the heart of Anglican designs and openly expressed his concerns that "the present struggles of the missionaries and others to introduce episcopacy into America, originate from ambitious designs for establishing an opulent hierarchy in this country, with prelatical distinction and power." But his ultimate fear remained political and it centred on the prospect of an established Church of England that would threaten colonial freedoms:

It is strange the Doctor, while arguing for nothing more than that limited episcopate he had proposed, should endeavour to do it upon a plan that would make it reasonable, that the Church of England should exist here in all respects, and in all its parts, as it does at home. But he ought to know, that in order to this, something more than 'a fair and full toleration' would be necessary. There must be an establishment....And if the state interposes to

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300 Ibid., pp. 96, 198-9, 149.
311 Ibid., pp. 161-78, passim, citing Mayhew, Remarks on an Anonymous Tract..., pp. 57, 59ff..
302 Ibid., pp. 202, 110.
303 Chauncy, A Reply to Dr. Chandler's "Appeal Defended"..., pp. 20, 38, 54, 56, 58, 62, 66, esp. p. 73.
constitute a colony episcopate, it must under their patronage, guidance and control, as to the exercise of its powers. And what is this, in real meaning, but an establishment?305

In that sense, as in his other, more controversial anti-episcopacy writings, a key objective for Chauncy in A Reply to Dr. Chandler’s “Appeal Defended”... was to present political, as well as religious and theological objections to the appointment of Anglican bishops. However, in doing so, he was not advancing radically new ideas of freedom or independence from metropolitan institutions. Much like Wise, Mayhew and Eliot before him, he was conservatively upholding the New England Way and the legacy of its founders. It was out of “regard to the memory of our progenitors” and a concern to protect the freedoms that they had secured, in addition to deeply held ecclesiological convictions, that Chauncy was motivated to defend Congregationalist polity against the threat of episcopacy. Moreover, similar concerns were operative in Chauncy’s wider political thought.

C. Chauncy’s Political Thought – Defending Tradition.

On January 10, 1775, Chauncy wrote to the Welsh moral and political philosopher, Richard Price, thanking him for his letter of three months earlier and some pamphlets that Price had sent. The situation in Boston was very difficult, Chauncy reported. There were 11 regiments of British troops in town and the harbour, which was surrounded by warships, was “so blocked up as that an entire stop is put to trade.” Bostonians had thus far endured the presence of British soldiers, he thought, because they were “subjects of the same sovereign with ourselves.” But resistance was growing:

The people in England have been taught to believe that five or six thousand regular troops would be sufficient to humble us into the lowest submission to any parliamentary acts however tyrannical. But we are not so ignorant in military affairs and unskilled in the use of arms as they take us to be. A spirit for martial skill has strangely caught from one to another throughout at least the New-England colonies....It is not doubted, but by next spring, we shall have at least one hundred thousand men well qualified to come forth for the defence of our liberties and rights, should there be a call for it....We shall not betake ourselves to the sword, unless necessarily obliged to it in self-defence; but in that case, so far as I can judge, tis the determination of all North America to exert themselves to the utmost, be the consequence what it may. They chuse death rather [than] to live in slavery, as they must do, if they submit to that despotic government which has been contrived for them.306

Chauncy had been encouraged by the unity of the first Continental Congress of the previous year, especially in adopting resolutions to enforce non-importation agreements to counter a British trade blockade that he described as a “plan of despotism.” Some were reported to be employed “upon the hire of unrighteousness to do all that lies in their power to effect a submission to the late acts which would enslave us.” But Chauncy was confident that they would

305bid., pp. 174-5, 177.

fail, because "the inhabitants of these colonies, one it may be in an hundred excepted, are firmly united in their resolution to defend themselves against any force which may be used with them to deprive them of the[ir] rights."

But how did Chauncy define those rights? They were those the colonists had "a just claim to, not only as men made of one blood with the rest of the human species, but as Englishmen, and Englishmen born heirs to a royal grant of Charter rights and privileges." In other words, right on the verge of revolutionary hostilities which were to break out little more than three months later, Chauncy not only recognized allegiance and indebtedness to the British monarchy; he interpreted his "rights and privileges" as those of a freeborn Englishman. Although there is clear proof that he ultimately supported the cause of American independence, this letter thus points to elements of conservative continuity that are consistently evident in Chauncy's political thought through to the revolutionary era and beyond.

In the course of a long career, Chauncy wrote much about the political challenges of his era. But although he was prepared to speak his mind against the excesses and hypocrisies of his day, his writings are more easily reconcilable with a general tendency to defend or conserve the socio-political status quo, rather than to reject or undermine it. Thus in his early Artillery Election Sermon of June 3, 1734, Chauncy expounded on Judges 18:27-8 to urge that "our town and land may be both put and kept in a suitable posture of defence." He noted with pleasure "the reviving of a martial spirit in our land," although he also thought that "our militia...is not so large and honorable, as it might and ought to be." In The Only Compulsion Proper... (1739), Chauncy struck notes of royalism and patriotism that he echoed consistently over the years, as he requested God "to protect the persons, and prolong the lives of His present Majesty, His Royal Highness, with the rest of the royal family, on whom, under God, the nation depends for their enjoyment of this blessing of liberty, on which depends every thing else that is dear and valuable to them." The need for proper order in both church and state preoccupied him throughout his life, but especially at times of social and/or ecclesiastical turmoil, like the Great Awakening or revolutionary periods. Chauncy accordingly saw itinerancy and the expansion of lay ministry into unfamiliar roles as particular threats in the 1740s. "Government is as necessary in church as state;" he warned the ministers of Massachusetts in 1744, "tho' the ends to which it is designed, and the manner of administration may be different." Then he added:

Nor should they [ministers] suffer the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, in this, or any other use of them, to lie by neglected, where persons break in upon the rules of decency, or

308 Chauncy, Character and Overthrow of Laish Considered and Applied..., pp. 11, 13, 14.
309 Chauncy, The Only Compulsion Proper..., p. 16.
otherways walk in a disorderly manner. 'Tis discipline, my fathers and brethren, not the mere name, but the vigorous and impartial execution of the thing, that must preserve and establish our churches.

On a similar note, he told the people of Old Brick at the height of Awakening enthusiasm "'tis not the pretence of being moved by the Spirit, that will justify private Christians in quitting their own proper station, to act in that which belongs to another. Such a practice as this naturally tends to destroy that order, God has constituted in the church, and may be followed with mischiefs greater than we may be aware of."

Chauncy took occasion from the reduction of Cape Breton in 1745 to strike another consistent theme that he found of obvious relevance in any victory over Catholic France. "May all proper care be taken, that the pure Gospel of Christ be preached in this part of the Dominion of Antichrist [i.e., the Pope]," Chauncy urged. "May the Man of Sin, that Son of Perdition, be no longer acknowledged as Christ's viceroy. May all graven images be pulled down, all superstition removed, and the religion of our Lord Jesus Christ, as it is contained in the Bible, be upheld and practiced there." Not surprisingly, Chauncy's vigorous royalism and Protestant anti-Catholicism came even more to the fore in a sermon occasioned by "the present [Jacobite] rebellion in favour of the Pretender," which he preached at Boston's Thursday Lecture in February 1746.

Looking back to 1688, Chauncy hailed "the glorious King William, under God, the great deliverer of the nation from popery and slavery," as well as New England's "revolution" against Sir Edmund Andros that had followed England's "Glorious Revolution." He viewed the attempted enthronement of the Catholic Charles Edward Stuart (1720-1788), aided and abetted by those "natural and inveterate enemies of England," the "Kings of France and Spain," as a development that tended "directly and surely..., in the natural course of things, to...utter ruin; the subversion of the constitution, the depriving the people of their just rights and liberties, as Englishmen and Protestants, and the putting them under a government which knows no rule but that of meer will and pleasure." He described the present King George II (1727-1760) as "the head of a Kingdom, its rightful and lawful Sovereign, with whose ruin the ruin of a whole nation is inseparably connected." Chauncy was in no doubt that George II "really received the Kingdom from God, and in a manner truly wonderful, and in which the pleasure of God was indubitably

310 Chauncy, Ministers Cautioned against the Occasions of Contempt..., pp. 36, 37.
311 Chauncy, Enthusiasm Described and Caution'd against..., p. 12.
312 Chauncy, Marvellous Things Done..., p. 22.
313 Chauncy, The Counsel of Two Confederate Kings..., p. 28.
314 Ibid., pp. 23, 30.
made known.” By contrast, *Bonnie Prince Charlie* was “a known avowed enemy to that constitution, and those liberties both civil and religious, which our present King has all along defended and protected.”315 The threat of the Pretender thus presented a direct challenge, in both church and state, to the English Protestant liberties that Chauncy, like Eliot, Mayhew and Wise, held so dear. He knew that “popish princes” had “made use of their power and influence to extirpate the true Protestant religion.” His hope and prayer, therefore, was that God would not “suffer the Man of Sin, that Son of Perdition, who hath exalted himself into the seat of Christ, to be again acknowledged and adored, by a nation who have declared their abhorrence of worshipping him, instead of the Son of God.”316

In his 1747 Massachusetts Election Sermon, *Civil Magistrates Must Be Just...* Chauncy had his first public opportunity to present his political outlook more extensively, and except for some more controversial comments about the hardships of ministers on limited incomes, the result was a very conventional exposition of Congregationalist governmental theory. His basic argument was very simple. “There is a certain order among mankind, according to which some are entrusted with power to rule over others,” Chauncy contended, and “those who rule over others must be just, ruling in the fear of God.”317 Chauncy saw the origins of government as founded “on the will of God” as well as “in the reason of things.” Because of sin, it was necessary for people, “for their mutual defence and safety, [to] combine together in distinct societies, lodging as much power in the hands of a few, as may be sufficient to restrain the irregularities of the rest, and keep them within the bounds of a just decorum.”318 Although the need for government was commanded by God, there was no divine mandate for any particular form of it or for any single manner of vesting rulers with authority. The general purposes of civil governance were, however, very clear, namely:

for the general good of mankind; to keep confusion and disorder out of the world; to guard men’s lives; to secure their rights; to defend their properties and liberties; to make their way to justice easy, and yet effectual, for their protection when innocent, and their relief when injuriously treated; and, in a word, to maintain peace and good order, and, in general, to promote the public welfare, in all instances, so far as they are able.319

Within such a teleological framework, Chauncy defined “just rulers” in very predictable terms as those who were “positively righteous,” did not abuse their power and enacted and administered appropriate laws with justice and impartiality. They should be good creditors, avoid vulgarity, and

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315*ibid.*, pp. 31, 32, 37.
316*ibid.*, pp. 24, 41.
317Chauncy, *Civil Magistrates Must Be Just...*, p. 7.
318*ibid.*, p. 9.
319*ibid.*, pp. 11, 13.
"preserve and perpetuate to every member of the community, so far as may be, the full enjoyment of their liberties and priviledges, whether of a civil or religious nature." They should take particular care to preserve people's religious freedoms, or at least, "such as may consist with the public safety." They should defend the state, "promote the general welfare and prosperity of a people," especially morally, and be influenced by "the fear of God." They should remember the example of pious ancestors, as well as the providence and judgement of God, to which they were accountable. Chauncy regretted, in almost jeremiad terms, that "religion is not in such a flourishing state, at this day," informing assembled officials that "it needs the countenance of your example, and the interposition of your authority, to keep it from insult and contempt." He pled especially for the welfare of pastors, and urged rulers to make better provision for clerical economic well-being by doing their utmost to stabilize currency values.

Chauncy's special pleading for ministers' salaries reportedly almost prevented his sermon from being published. But the general content of Civil Magistrates Must Be Just... like that of subsequent political works, can have done little otherwise to upset the powers that were. Chauncy pursued a similarly safe socio-political line in The Idle-Poor Secluded... (1752), with his advocacy of poor relief for the helplessly indigent, but of work for those capable under the auspices of Boston's new Society for Encouraging Industry and Employing the Poor. In two "letters to a friend" of 1755, Chauncy's comments on a victory at Lake George and a defeat in Ohio during the French-Indian War were predictably providentialist. But they also showed a willingness to criticize British leadership, where necessary. The conquest of the French at Lake George had been "the greatest action, in its kind, that ever happened in North-America" and gave Chauncy confidence that "we shall soon be able...under the smiles of providence, to bring down the pride of the American French, and make them to be at peace with us upon any terms." Even so, "the burden laid upon the New-England colonies" was "far beyond what they are able to bear, if Great-Britain does not interpose for our help." So he called for "a large remittance." The Ohio defeat had been "a terrible evil." Yet it might ultimately prove a providential link "in that chain of causes, by which heaven may intend to chastise the French, curb their insolence, drive them out of the encroachments they have made on us, and reduce them to a necessity of keeping within

\[320\] Ibid., pp. 14, 17, 23, 26, 29, 31, esp. 33.
\[321\] Ibid., pp. 36-7, 42, 44, 49.
\[322\] Ibid., pp. 54-5, 53, 48, esp. 60, 38-9, 41, 21-2.
\[324\] See also, Charity to the Distressed Members of Christ..., for Chauncy's attitudes to poor relief.
their own boundaries without disturbing us in the possession of ours. An important key would be the actions of British leaders, who would be well advised to appoint more officers from New England, to protect New Englanders from unnecessarily harsh disciplinary procedures, and to fund their war effort with hard cash. "American irregulars, in an American war, are full as necessary as British regulars," Chauncy contended. Moreover, "New-England in general, and the Massachusetts-Province in special, are the chief, I may say the only, sources that may be rely'd on for a supply of effective men to carry into execution any future designs against the French."

In All Nations of the Earth Blessed in Christ... (1762), when speaking at the ordination of Joseph Bowman for missionary work "among the Mohawk-Indians," Chauncy later took the opportunity to infer further providential significance from recent victories over the French. "By crowning the British arms, in these American lands, with success beyond even our biggest expectations," he contended, God had "opened a wide door for sending the gospel to the Gentiles inhabiting here." More particularly, "the providence of God, by so succeeding His Britannic Majesty's arms as to put Canada into English hands, seems evidently to point our view to these [northern and eastern] tribes of Indians." Chauncy's interpretation of the repeal of the Stamp Act in 1766 was equally providentialist. But his Thanksgiving Sermon on that occasion also gave him scope to express some of the most Anglophile, loyalist and royalist statements in all of his writings.

Chauncy acknowledged that there had been problems with the Stamp Act:

This tender sympathy with our brethren at home, it is acknowledged, began to languish from the commencement of a late Parliamentary Act. There arose hereupon a general suspicion, whether they esteemed us brethren, and treated us with that kindness we might justly expect from them. This jealousie, working in our breasts, cooled the fervor of our love; and had that act been continued in force, it might have gradually brought on an alienation of heart, that would have been greatly detrimental to them, as it would also have been to ourselves.

But in repealing the legislation, "the supreme authority in England, to which we inviolably owe submission" had revealed its true colours. It was clear that "the affectionate regard of the American inhabitants for their Mother Country was never exceeded by any colonists, in any part, or age of the world," and justly so. Their affection for King George III (1760-1820) was especially strong. There were, in fact, "no subjects, not within the realm of England itself, that are more strongly attached to his person and family, that bear a more sincere and ardent affection towards

326Chauncy, A Letter To a Friend..., p. 5.
327ibid., pp. 9, 11.
328Chauncy, All Nations of the Earth Blessed in Christ..., pp. 46, 29.
329Chauncy, A Discourse on "The Good News from a Far Country"..., e.g., p. 27.
him, or that would exert themselves with more life and spirit in defence of his crown and dignity."

Although he openly deplored "mobish actions" like "the outrage at Lieut. Governor Hutchinson's house," Chauncy clearly had mixed feelings about the prospect of open resistance that the Stamp Act had raised. On the one hand, the example of the Glorious Revolution showed that "there may be such exercise of power, and in instances of such a nature, as to render non-submission warrantable upon the foot of reason and righteousness." Chauncy also conceded that "the colonists generally and really thought...it [the Stamp Act] might be opposed without their incurring the guilt of disloyalty or rebellion." On the other hand, he refused to pass judgement on the morality or legality of such opposition and much as he did later, during the revolutionary period, Chauncy clearly deemed the ultimate criteria for justifiable resistance, even against British authority, to be defined by English constitutional standards. So he contended that "none...who are the friends of liberty, will deny, that it [resistance] would have been justifiable, should it be first supposed, that this act essentially broke in upon our constitutional rights as Englishmen."

Although the colonists, Chauncy claimed, had no desire to be "an independant people," it was "a sentiment they had imbibed, that they should be wanting neither in loyalty to their King, or a due regard to the British-Parliament, if they should defend those rights which they imagined were inalienable, upon the foot of justice, by any power on earth." They were thus "led into this way of thinking upon what they imagined were the principles which, in their operation, gave King William, and Queen Mary, of blessed memory, the Crown of England."

Two years after the repeal of the Stamp Act, while acknowledging recent strains in the imperial relationship, Chauncy again affirmed the loyalism and royalism of American colonists in The Appeal to the Public Answered... (1768). He also sought to draw attention to the plight of native and African Americans, whom he thought deprived, among other things, of gospel ministrations.

The evidence for Chauncy's political attitudes during the revolutionary period is almost entirely confined to his published writings, which included three sermons and a public letter, as well as several letters addressed to Richard Price. In his alternative Election Sermon, Trust in God... (1770), Chauncy spoke less than three months after the Boston Massacre, when "the opened earth in one of our streets, in the month of March last, received the streaming blood of many slaughtered, and wounded innocents," to a group of people for whom "the removal of the General Court [from Boston to Cambridge]...unhappily exercises in our breasts those sensations of

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331Ibid., pp. 7, 16, 30.
332Ibid., pp. 25, 21n., 20-1 – italics added for emphasis.

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grief." He recognized that "the face of providence is angry and threatening" and that "our mother-country is in a state of great perplexity, difficulty, and confusion." He acknowledged, more particularly, that:

new [Townshend] duties have been imposed on us, and without any to represent our persons in Parliament, or to act on our behalf; new officers have been appointed...; in consequence of which our trade was never before so incumbered with difficulties...we have, in a measure, been treated as tho’ we were rebels; otherwise what occasion could there be for this metropolis to be, as it were, garrison’d with the King’s troops, to the infinite hurt of the morals of its inhabitants, and to their being in a variety of ways insulted, injured and abused?335

But Chauncy’s main advice in such a situation was to follow the example of “pious progenitors,” by whom he primarily meant New England’s founders, and trust in God to work out everything for the best. This was not the first time that New Englanders had suffered at the hands of oppressive authorities, but God had consistently delivered them. They should, therefore, also look to themselves and seek moral improvement, because “our sins are the worst enemies we have. They are, properly speaking, the true moral cause of all that we now suffer, or have reason to fear."336 In the meantime, Chauncy continued to give voice to familiar expressions of monarchist loyalism. “Our prayer to the God of heaven is that the [Hanoverian] succession may abide forever!” he said, and “notwithstanding the base and false representations which have occasioned His Majesty, and many of his ministers, to look upon us with a jealous and angry eye,” King George III had “no subjects, in any part of his extended dominions, that would more readily venture their lives and fortunes in defence of his person, the succession in his Royal House, and his government within the bounds of the English Constitution, than we in the Massachusetts-Province."337

By 1772, it is clear from Chauncy’s October 5 letter to Price that he continued to view the state of New England as a deteriorating one. “The situation of political affairs in this Province, particularly, is very unhappy,” he informed his friend, and he had particular complaints about the bias of judges, which he voiced in strong terms. The British authorities were “endeavouring to fasten on us the chains of slavery,” he thought, and the Governor was “an absolute despot.” The colonists faced either “a submission to slavery, or an exertion of our selves to be delivered from it,” and Chauncy was unsure of the outcome. However, he continued to uphold and appeal to “our privileges by Charter and rights as Englishmen."338 Despite the obvious challenges, Chauncy was

334Chauncy, Trust in God..., pp. 35, 32.
335ibid., pp. 22, 23.
336ibid., pp. 6, 15-18n., 29.
337ibid., pp. 20, 37.
338Chauncy to Richard Price, October 5, 1772, in Price et al., p. 265.
able to set more immediate political concerns aside the following year, in his Thursday Lecture sermon, *Christian Love*... In a fairly unremarkable exposition of Acts 4:32, he sought to show that while Christians had a duty to help the poor, the common ownership of property was not a biblical commandment. But Chauncy also voiced continuing complaints about the moral decline of the church and “the lamentably bad state of religion among us.” ³³⁹

In three letters to Price of 1774, Chauncy continued to chronicle increased tensions as a result of British measures which he consistently described as tyrannous, but he was yet to endorse rebellion of any kind. On May 30, he thus described the Boston Port Act as “so palpably cruel, barbarous, and inhumane, that even those who are called the friends of government are bitterly opposed to it; nor do I know of any whose eyes are not opened to see that despotism, which must end in slavery, is the plan to be carried into execution.” But while he warned that “we have more virtue and resolution than to sit still and suffer chains to be fastened on us,” he looked to the effectiveness of non-importation agreements to secure “the enjoyment of our constitutional rights and privileges.” ³⁴⁰ On July 18, 1774, Chauncy noted that oppressive British measures had brought “the whole Continent” to a state of “readiness to exert themselves to the utmost in all reasonable ways to bring forward our deliverance” and he looked forward to the Philadelphia Continental Congress in September. Yet he assured Price that it was not “the intention of the Deputies going to the above-mentioned Congress, or of any of the people in this, or the other colonies, to contend with Great Britain,” and he thought that it would be “highly grievous, and the last thing the colonies would wish, to be obliged to stand upon their own defence against military force should it be used with them.” All that the colonists sought was:

> the full enjoyment of their rights and privileges; and should this be granted to them, Great Britain would hear of no commotions or disturbances, but that we were all united in love to the Mother Country, and in concern to promote the honor and welfare of the English nation: nor would His Majesty have, in any part of his extended dominions, any subjects who would more readily venture their fortunes and lives in defence of his crown and the support of his government. ³⁴¹

In a September 13, 1774 letter of introduction for Josiah Quincy, Chauncy bluntly described Massachusetts as “the first, in the view of administration, to be reduced to a state of slavery.”³⁴² But he offered a much lengthier portrayal of the situation in Boston after the imposition of the Port Act in *A Letter to a Friend. Giving a Concise, but Just, Representation of the Hardships and Sufferings*... ³⁴³

³⁴¹Chauncy to Richard Price, July 18, 1774, in *ibid.*, pp. 269-70.
³⁴²Chauncy to Richard Price, September 13, 1774, in *ibid.*, p. 270.
Chauncy’s public letter offered moving detail. “Vast numbers,” he wrote, “not less...than fifteen thousand at the lowest computation, are reduced to a starving condition” and “the wharfs and landing-places in the town of Boston, which are the property of numerous individuals...are...wrested out of their hands, and put into the King’s, to be disposed of at his pleasure.”343 But his main focus was on the political abuses that Boston had suffered at British hands. “Boston, as a town, is considered as chargeable with this destruction [the Boston Tea Party],” he reported, “and punished for it in an awfully severe manner; and this too, without giving them notice of their crime, or opportunity of saying a word in defence of themselves. If this is not unconstitutional, arbitrary conduct, mankind in common will, I am sure, call it rigorously hard and cruel.” Despite the agreement of “all the American colonies...in thinking it unconstitutional to be taxed by the Parliament, as they are not represented there,” the British Government seemed set on reducing “America, by the iron hand of power, to submit to sovereign pleasure.” There was no other conclusion, Chauncy argued, than that “the plan to be carried into execution, and by forcible measures, is, intire obedience to the demands of despotism, instead of those constitutional laws we are perfectly willing to be governed by.”344

The “Whiggish” tone of Chauncy’s comments in A Letter to a Friend. Giving a Concise, but Just, Representation of the Hardships and Sufferings... and other writings of the revolutionary period has often been highlighted by scholars.345 But what is also striking here and elsewhere was the kind of appeal to the “constitutional” entitlements of Englishmen that he had actually been making for more than 30 years. Although Chauncy still did not advocate open rebellion, he acknowledged that “knowing that forcing from us our rights and privileges as English subjects, is the grand point in view, we shall naturally be urged on to contrive expedients to prevent, if possible, our being in this way, brought into bondage.” He found it unimaginable that “a decree thus mixed with contrived severity, and thus big with distress and ruin to thousands of poor innocents, could have had existence given it by an English Parliament,” especially since “the inhabitants of Boston are English subjects, as well as the citizens of London and may with equal justice utter their cries against that arbitrary exercise of power, which indiscriminately makes the use of their rightful property.”346 At the same time, in that Bostonians had “always been as much disposed to honor and support constitutional government as any of the people in England,” Chauncy continued to affirm loyalty to the Crown. He even expressed the hope that colonial counter-measures, like non-

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344Ibid. pp. 18-19, 20, 24-5.
345See, for example, most recently, Noll, “America’s God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln,” pp 140-1.
346Chauncy, A Letter to a Friend. Giving a Concise, but Just, Representation of the Hardships and Sufferings..., pp. 25, 9, 12.
importation agreements, might prove "expedients reasonable in themselves and wisely adapted
to secure the enjoyments of their rights and privileges, and to promote, at the same time,
harmony and love between Great-Britain and America...for the common interest of all."347

Writing to Price on January 10, 1775, just three months before the Battles of Lexington and
Concord, Chauncy persisted with his appeal to the "rights and privileges" of Englishmen in face of
the rapidly deteriorating situation in Boston and elsewhere.348 But by July 18 of that year, his tone
from exile in Medfield had understandably become more defiant and even militaristic. Offering an
account of "facts as they have happened, previous to the present civil war and since it began to
this day," including the Battles of Concord and Bunker Hill, Chauncy claimed that the former was
"wholly occasioned by those who are seeking our ruin" and that in the latter, "not more than 15
hundred [Americans] fought with three thousand, and killed and wounded one half of the
whole."349 Above all, he stressed American unity in opposition to British leaders, like Governor
Gage or Lt. Governor Oliver, who were no longer regarded as "constitutional officers:"

Our spirits continually rise in warmth, our union is daily growing in strength and vigor, and
such care is taken throughout the colonies to bring into event the commercial plan, that,
humanely speaking, there is not the least probability of a failure....Our people in all the
colonies are firmly united and resolutely fixt to defend their rights, whatever opposition they
meet with....I have never heard one who was not a Tory, so much as lispe, – Let us submit
to the Parliamentary Acts.

The acid test remained, however, constitutional standards that Chauncy had upheld for decades.
The war was thus being pursued by the colonies "in defence of their rights and privileges" and the
general view, he reported, was that they might constitutionally act in taking hostile action against
those who had forfeited their right to rule.350 Five days later, Chauncy wrote again to express his
astonishment that:

the people in England are so blind as not to see that every thing that is done against us is
done against them. They may be ruined; but this will not be our case, tho we may suffer
greatly....the colonies are all united and courageously resolute to suffer death, rather than
submit to arbitrary, despotic government.351

In arguing that Chauncy supported "active resistance to British policy," including "the armed
conflict which might ensue" before 1775, Lippy thus went beyond the evidence of Chauncy's
extant writings.352 At the same time, as Griffin suggested, following Shipton, no great significance

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347Ibid., pp. 16, 27.
350Ibid., pp. 295, 299.
351Chauncy to Richard Price, July 22, 1775, in ibid., p. 301.
need be attached to Chauncy's inclusion in a list of 15 "authors" of "rebellion," according to a September 19, 1774 advertisement in the Boston Evening Post. His support of a resolution passed by Boston clergy that same year to cease reading official government proclamations in their churches is more suggestive. But while clearly an act of civil disobedience, this hardly constitutes decisive proof of proto-revolutionary resistance to British rule. All that can reliably be deduced from available evidence is that whatever his position previously, Chauncy had clearly joined the patriot cause by the year the American Revolution began, and quite enthusiastically so. In a letter of August 14, 1776, Abigail Adams (1744-1818) was thus able to inform her husband and future second President of the United States, John Adams, that when she had attended Boston's First Church the previous Sunday, "the Declaration of Independence was read from the pulpit by order of Council." "Dr. Chauncy's address pleased me," reported Adams. "The Dr. concluded with asking a blessing upon the United States of America even until the final restitution of all things."

Yet despite Chauncy's clear endorsement of the Revolution in 1775, his last published sermon of the revolutionary period, The Accursed Thing... (1778) was hardly a ringing, jingoistic or "Radical Whig" call to arms. It provided, in fact, a strong reminder that while Chauncy ultimately came over to the cause of independence in great part to defend and conserve the English and so traditional New England "rights and privileges" that he saw British measures themselves threatening, his underlying analysis of the conflict was conceived in providentialist and theological terms. He accordingly returned to the theme of war as a means of divine chastisement and potential moral improvement, which had been so significant for him during the French-Indian War some 25 years earlier. "The parties in the war may both of them have sinned against the Lord...," he observed, "in which case, they are both made use of in the providence of God to chastise one another; and to which of them God will give the advantage is known only to himself; unless that party in the war, whose cause is just, should put away the accursed thing." Chauncy saw a direct correlation between progress or set-backs in warfare and the spiritual and moral health of the combatants:

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The “accursed thing,” as Chauncy defined it, based on his exposition of Joshua 7:13, was predictably human sin, not “in its nature only, but in its effects and consequences also.”

Moreover, while Chauncy questioned generally whether New England had ever been “in a more corrupt and degenerate state” or “in a more unhappy situation, morally speaking, to engage in war,” he perceived one central moral problem at the heart of current military unreadiness. “As oppression of the poor, the fatherless, and the widow, is eminently the accursed thing in the midst of us,” he contended, “it ought to be taken away, so far as may be, by the powers ordained of God to be his ministers for good.” As a result of currency depreciation caused by a relaxation in monetary policy to fund the war, some of the weakest members of society were suffering financially. Chauncy also reiterated the sad plight of “salary-men, and particularly the clergy” in this connection and thought “some special provision for their relief...a matter of justice, and not meer favor, as it is by means of government bills, and a government law, however contrary to the design of government, that they are oppressed.”

Three years into the Revolutionary War, Chauncy thus saw divine providence and Christian morality, conceived in very traditional terms, as the keys to colonial victory. Moreover, two years later, in his final extant letter to Richard Price, while he again expressed his admiration for the people’s resolve and commitment, with Congress, “to the liberties and independence of America,” Chauncy continued to bemoan economic challenges and the sin that lay creeping at American doors. “One great fault they are justly chargeable with,” he wrote of the states. “It is this; they have almost universally been too attentive to the getting of gain, as there have been peculiar temptations hereto since the commencement of the present contest.”

The full record of Chauncy’s political writings thus reveals an inherent conservativism which scholars have often neglected or ignored. As with Wise, Mayhew and Eliot, Chauncy’s spiritual and moral concerns were central to his political thought, which included a staunch commitment to the maintenance of English constitutional privileges that he providentially regarded as his birthright. He was fiercely protective of the New England Way and it was only when he saw that inheritance threatened by British measures, and only once the war had started in earnest, that his extant writings reveal a clear declaration of support for the patriot cause.

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358 Ibid., pp. 13, 16, 18, 20.
360 Although Chauncy’s stance as a “conservative revolutionary” is here highlighted, this is not meant to imply that Chauncy was unique or unusual in appealing to British constitutional standards to justify revolution; nor is any implication intended that his patriot position was somehow inferior to that of a more obvious “radical” like Thomas Paine (1737-1809). It is simply contended that Chauncy’s political constitutionalism was thoroughly consistent with more general conservative...
Lippy has argued, Chauncy was indeed a "seasonable," as well as a conservative revolutionary. Such a stance was also fully in keeping, as Heimert highlighted, with a generally traditionalist approach to socio-political questions, which led him to be a consistently strong defender of an ordered vision of society, in which social elites, including clergy, held sway, even while he advocated for the needs of the poor and the oppressed on Christian ethical grounds.\footnote{Chauncy, Divine Glory Brought to View in the Final Salvation of All Men..., pp. 8-9.}

5. Upholding the "Principles of Christian Liberty."\footnote{Chauncy, Benevolence of the Deity..., pp. 132-3.}

Chauncy's political concerns to protect and preserve the standing order, even if that meant overturning British rule, thus paralleled his ecclesiological objectives to defend New England polity and his general theological agenda to strive for a more biblically authentic understanding of areas of traditional doctrine, however heterodox the results. Moreover, his ideas of liberty, which were grounded, like those of Wise, Mayhew and Eliot, in a fundamentally spiritual vision of freedom in Christ, similarly reflected traditional scriptural precedent, although detailed analysis reveals consideration of four main definitions of liberty in Chauncy's works, including "philosophical," "prescriptive" and "civil," as well as Christian freedom.

References to philosophical liberty were very limited and often general in Chauncy's earlier publications.\footnote{On Chauncy's clericalism and his role as "strong defender of an ordered vision of society," see, for example, The New Creature Described..., p. 42; Enthusiasm Described and Caution'd against..., p. 12. On his concern for the poor, see The Idle Poor Sacked, and Christian Love...} But he devoted major attention to the topic in two of his treatises of the 1780s. As has been noted, he was particularly concerned to uphold human free will and divine sovereignty in those works, and although he ultimately conceded primacy to the latter, he went to some lengths to argue that if human beings were to enjoy genuine happiness and to have proper accountability before God, they must first have freedom of action.\footnote{See, for example, Chauncy, Man's Life Considered..., p. 12; Seasonable Thoughts on the State of Religion in New-England..., p. 282; Christian Love..., p. 13.} Thus in The Benevolence of the Deity... (1784), Chauncy argued:

We feel in ourselves a power over our own volitions, and such an one as enables us to direct, suspend, overrule, or put an intire stop to them: nor, unless we were possessed of this dominion, could we be agents, however great liberty might be allowed us in bringing into event what we have previously willed. It is essential to free agency, and such a use of it as to make us capable of good or ill deserts, that our volitions, upon which our actions follow, should be within the reach of our command.\footnote{Cf. Chauncy, A Letter to a Friend, Containing Remarks on Certain Passages..., p. 53.}

\textit{tendencies in his thought, especially in his theology. On the standing of the British Constitution as the "lodestar of colonial Whigs," as well as of loyalist opponents of the American Revolution, see, for example, Reid, p. 84. See further Kammen, pp. 26-7.}
Furthermore, "the most exalted happiness" was itself "dependant on, a free, but wise and good, use" of a power to do what we choose and "had we not this power, we could be happy in no other sense, than that in which all meerly percipient beings are so." In that sense, Chauncy argued, "if there was no free agency, there could be no virtue, nor any of that sublime happiness, which may be the result of it. There could not, in one word, be any such thing as moral government."

In the same way, Chauncy contended, when expounding Philippians 2:9-11 in *The Mystery Hid...* (1784), Christ had been "highly exalted:"

not that he might, by superior power, compel mankind, who are free agents, to submit to his authority and government, owning him, by constraint, to be their Lord; for there is no moral worth in such forced submission: but, that he might, being now qualified for it, use such means, in the execution of his regal trust, as should influence them universally, sooner or later, in a rational moral way, and as is befitting free and intelligent agents, to bow down before him, practically confessing him to be Lord, to the glory of the Father.

For Chauncy then, philosophical liberty or genuine freedom of the will was essential to his conceptions of both divine benevolence and moral order in the world. But God also had ultimate responsibility for the establishment and enjoyment of those prescriptive liberties which New Englanders had inherited from their English Protestant forebears, especially since the Glorious Revolution, including "Charter-rights, not only setting them free from the oppression of church power, but intitling them to distinguishing liberties and privileges, both civil and religious." As has been seen, although he rarely defined them with great specificity, Chauncy set such great store by what he saw as English constitutional "rights and privileges" that he ostensibly ended by endorsing the American Revolution in a bid to protect them. But he wrote of the value of such liberties, including freedom of conscience and a limited measure religious toleration, throughout his works.

In *The Counsel of Two Confederate Kings...* (1746), he repeatedly stressed the threat of the Jacobite rebellion to people's "just rights and liberties, as Englishmen and Protestants," for example, and prayed that God would "mercifully save his people from popery and slavery; perpetuating to them the enjoyment of their rights and liberties." Like Wise, Mayhew and Eliot, Chauncy saw Roman Catholicism as a particular threat to Protestant freedoms and he regularly sought to highlight such dangers. In *Civil Magistrates Must Be Just...* (1747), he cited it as a special duty of just rulers to "preserve and perpetuate to every member of the community, so far

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369 Chauncy, *The Counsel of Two Confederate Kings...* pp. 30, 43.

370 See above, pp. 274-5.
as may be, the full enjoyment of their liberties and priviledges, whether of a civil or religious nature." Immediately after repeal of the Stamp Act, Chauncy waxed almost lyrical about "the hopeful prospect it gives us of being continued in the enjoyment of certain liberties and privileges, valued by us next to life itself." These included, he stated, "being 'tried by our equals,' and...making grants for the support of government of that which is our own, either in person, or by representatives we have chosen for the purpose." Such rights had an illustrious lineage as the natural inheritance of those "born subjects to the British Crown," as "additional Charter-grants," and as the "righteous due in consequence of what they, and their fore-fathers, had done and suffered in subduing and defending these American lands." The Stamp Act repeal thus meant that "instead of being slaves to those who treat us with rigor, we are indulged the full exercise of those liberties which have been transmitted to us, as the richest inheritance, from our fore­fathers."  

In *A Letter to a Friend, Containing Remarks on Certain Passages...* (1767), Chauncy cited "liberty to worship God agreeably to the dictates of conscience" as "the grand motive" in the immigration of the founders. The Church of England already enjoyed a similar freedom, he argued in *The Appeal to the Public Answered...* (1768), although the introduction of bishops should be resisted because it would threaten the religious liberty of others if they had any civil powers:

Should it be said, we claim liberty of conscience, and fully enjoy it. And why should we confine this privilege to ourselves?...we are as willing they should possess and exercise religious liberty in its full extent, as we desire to do it ourselves....We desire no other liberty, than to be left unrestrained in the exercise of our religious principles, in so far as we are good members of society. And we are perfectly willing Episcopalians should enjoy this liberty to the full.....If Episcopalians would rest satisfied, as the other denominations do, with what they apprehend to be purely scriptural ministers, they would be perfectly upon a par with them, as to the enjoyment of religious liberty in its fullest extent: but if they must have what they call these scriptural ministers upon a state-establishment, they can have no reason to complain, unless of themselves, if they do not enjoy that liberty which others do; not because they are more favored or distinguished, but because they claim no other religious liberty, than what is granted in the gospel-charter.  

Chauncy repeated such arguments in *A Reply to Dr. Chandler's "Appeal Defended"...* (1770). Episcopalians were "at full liberty to provide themselves with such spiritual officers, discipline, and worship, as they shall think agreeable to the will of Christ," he contended, but not with bishops empowered to intervene in the civil affairs of the colonies. Therefore, "if we oppose bishops of a contrary species [i.e., with civil powers]," Chauncy concluded, "we oppose no part of that..."
episcopal liberty which is religious; and should great inconveniences be likely to follow from the sending such bishops, opposition to their mission would, on this account, be highly reasonable, and not the least infringement on religious liberty.\footnote{375}

In Chauncy’s pre-revolutionary sermon, Trust in God… (1772), he appealed, as noted, to the memory of godly ancestors, whom God had brought to “this then desolate land, with Charter-rights, not only setting them free from the oppression of church power, but intitling them to distinguishing liberties and privileges, both civil and religious.” He also remembered the struggles of those, including John Wise, who had opposed the oppressive measures of the Dominion of New England Government, because they “thought themselves intitled to the liberties and immunities of free and natural born English subjects, and consequently that no monies ought to be raised from them but by their representatives.”\footnote{376} For the providentialist and still royalist Chauncy, the Hanoverian succession of 1714 under George I had likewise been a “signal interposition” of God to ensure the continuation of “religious and civil liberties and privileges, both of the mother-country and the American colonies.” Indeed:

Had it not been for this marvelous appearance of divine providence, in favor the people in Old, as well as in New-England, they would have been governed, not by law, but by sovereign will, absolute pleasure; that is, in plain words, they would, instead of being free-men, have been made abject slaves.

The moral lesson that Chauncy thus drew from such a brief excursion into the providential glories of New England history was that “if we would hope, upon just grounds, to be a happy people and to have continued to us those invaluable rights and liberties that have been transmitted to us from our fathers, we must be imitators of their virtue.”\footnote{377}

Chauncy’s references to civil liberty were even more general in nature. In theological terms, he clearly allowed for the existence of a state of natural freedom, like that of “Adam…at liberty, in his original state,” before the formation of society.\footnote{378} Subsequent to that, his obvious valuation of the “blessing of liberty” knew no bounds.\footnote{379} Thus he commended “the principles of liberty,” “the wiser sons of liberty,” “the friends of liberty,” and “patrons of liberty.”\footnote{380} He described his friend Jonathan Mayhew as “eminently a friend to liberty both civil and religious” and noted that “his first

\footnotetext[375]{375}{ibid., pp. 104, 163.}
\footnotetext[376]{Chauncy, Trust in God…, pp. 13, 15-17n., citing Thomas Hutchinson, The History of the Colony of Massachusetts-Bay… (Boston, MA: 1764), pp. 391-2.}
\footnotetext[377]{ibid., pp. 20, 30.}
\footnotetext[378]{Chauncy, Five Dissertations…, p. 54.}
\footnotetext[379]{Chauncy, The Only Compulsion Proper…, p. 16.}
\footnotetext[380]{ibid., p. 15; Chauncy, A Discourse on “The Good News from a Far Country”…, pp. 19, 21n., 31.}
printed discourses were upon the subject of liberty.\textsuperscript{381} Most strikingly of all, Chauncy was also one of the few of his generation to apply his general concern for civil liberty to the desperate conditions suffered by so many African American slaves. At the 1762 ordination of Joseph Bowman for missionary work among indigenous peoples, Chauncy had already spoken out strongly against cultural assimilation and called for their local schooling, even as he urged renewed efforts to share the Christian faith with them.\textsuperscript{382} In The Appeal to the Public Answered..., further to a dispute with Thomas Chandler over the number of Anglicans in North America and Chandler’s inclusion of African-Americans in his estimates, Chauncy pulled no punches in describing the plight of slaves. “It is most horribly shameful,” he wrote:

that so many of the human species, as good by nature as their masters, and that have as good a right to the freedom of men, should be bought and sold as though they were cattle; and dealt with as though they were an inferior order to dogs!...It is a dishonor to Englishmen, who esteem it their distinguishing glory, that they enjoy the fullest reasonable liberty, to make slaves, and in the most abject sense, of such amazing numbers of their fellow-men. It is an abomination highly worthy of a parliamentary interposition.

As so often for Chauncy, the ultimate ground of his concern for African-American liberty was religious. “I have often wondered,” he continued, “nothing has been done in the colonies to put a stop to the cruelly unjust practice of making slaves of the poor negroes; especially, as they have, for some years, been sighing out the most bitter complaints against all tendencies towards their being enslaved themselves. Is this to act a consistent part? Is it, in any equitable sense, doing to others as they would others should do to them?”\textsuperscript{383}

Moreover, if there was one type of liberty that was absolutely central to his whole vision of freedom, it was Christian or spiritual liberty in Christ. His references to spiritual liberty clearly overlapped with those to other types of freedom, and especially to the religious liberty that was a vital element of those prescriptive freedoms which he valued as part of his New England inheritance. In one of his last works, The Mystery Hid..., Chauncy made it very clear, however, that he continually adhered, even in one of his most heterodox publications, to an understanding of spiritual liberty that the earliest New England Puritans would not have disavowed. Like Wise, Mayhew and Eliot, therefore, he espoused a basic conception of Christian freedom as human “deliverance...into the glorious liberty of the children of God,” which he described as “precisely the same thing, in import, with the free gift that is come upon all men unto justification of life.”\textsuperscript{384}

\textsuperscript{381}Chauncy, A Discourse Occasioned by the Death of the Reverend Jonathan Mayhew..., p. 27.

\textsuperscript{382}Chauncy, All Nations of the Earth Blessed in Christ..., pp. 25, 26, 26-7n., 29, 32-3n., 34-6nn..


\textsuperscript{384}Chauncy, The Mystery Hid..., p. 110, citing from Romans 8:21: “Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God” and Romans 5:18: “Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.”
other words, Chauncy's fundamental notion of Christian liberty was freedom from sin and ultimately death through the mediatorial work of Christ. Humankind had "all along been interested in the gift and grace through Christ," he argued, "...and in the deliverance from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of children." So true spiritual freedom did not entail doing exactly what one wanted. That would constitute "licenciousness, which is the excess of liberty" and which Chauncy consistently warned against through nearly 60 years of publications. Instead, the Christian's goal should be "voluntary...submission; a submission of freedom and love, rather than of constraint."

If spiritual liberty was freedom from sin to serve God and others, as Chauncy maintained, it was, therefore, crucial to stand firm in it, and he consistently appealed to similar biblical texts to encourage such resolve to those observed above in the writings of Wise, Mayhew and Eliot. The two main verses were Galatians 5:1 and Romans 8:21 and he used them, sometimes ambiguously, so often that the centrality of his commitment to spiritual liberty becomes unmistakable. Thus in Twelve Sermons..., as in The Mystery Hid..., Chauncy specifically cited Romans 8:21 with reference to the freedom resulting from Christian salvation and he made similar references in "Breaking of Bread"... and Five Dissertations.... In The Only Compulsion Proper..., which was basically a sermon upholding prescriptive religious liberties, Chauncy urged his readers:

And as for us, the professed disciples of Christ, in this land, Let us stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free. And as we have appeared against the methods of force in matters of religion, against the impositions of men in the worship of God, let us go on to do so; esteeming it to be our glory. And let us always plead for the use of liberty in the affairs of our souls, and another world.

He was keenly aware of how biblical texts could be misused for the purposes of argument and in Seasonable Thoughts on the State of Religion in New England..., Chauncy explicitly critiqued Joseph Emerson's (1760-1767) citation of Galatians 5:1 to urge the practice of itinerancy. But in The Validity of Presbyterian Ordination Asserted and Maintained..., he quoted from the text

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386 Ibid., p. 107, also alluding to Romans 5:15: "But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many."

387 Chauncy, The Only Compulsion Proper..., p. 15n.

388 Chauncy, The Mystery Hid..., p. 196.

389 Chauncy, "Breaking of Bread"..., p. 37: "You [the securely wicked] may...with propriety use the appointed means in order to a 'deliverance from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the sons of God';" Twelve Sermons..., pp. 26-7; Five Dissertations..., pp. 103-4, 135, 203. Cf., further, The Mystery Hid..., pp. 99, 101, 119, 154.

390 Chauncy, The Only Compulsion Proper..., p. 16, citing Galatians 5:1.

391 Chauncy, Seasonable Thoughts on the State of Religion in New England..., p. 65, citing and critiquing Joseph Emerson, Mr. Emerson's Exhortation to his People with Respect to Variety of Ministers (Boston, MA: 1742), esp. p. 6.
personally, as he urged New England's churches to hang on to "the right of electing their pastors in the most ample manner of any in the whole Christian world." He made similar quotations in A Discourse Occasioned by the Death of the Reverend Jonathan Mayhew,..., The Appeal to the Public Answered..., A Discourse Occasioned by the Death of the Reverend Thomas Foxcroft..., and A Reply to Dr. Chandler's "Appeal Defended"..., again referring to more general religious liberty in a prescriptive sense.391 Two other texts which Chauncy cited in connection with libertarian themes in Twelve Sermons... were Luke 4:18 and James 1:25.392 Taken together, therefore, the use of such texts constituted a biblicist discourse that lay at the heart of Chauncy's overall "language of liberty" and when he used such phrases as "Christian liberty" or "Gospel-liberty" or otherwise wrote of spiritual liberty in more general terms, such usage was clearly informed by its resonances.393 At the same time, although Chauncy devoted significant attention to other forms of liberty in his works - philosophical, prescriptive and civil, all of them carried more or less religious significance within an overall worldview, where spiritual liberty was central. From that point of view, the inherent conservatism of Chauncy's discourse of liberty was consistent with that of his ecclesiological, political and even general theological thought. Chauncy was no Radical Whig or Lockeian liberal. He was, in the final analysis, a rather conservative thinker, who primarily understood the foundation of all liberty as freedom in Christ to serve God and others.


While they have captured important aspects, especially of his theological achievement, scholars who have solely portrayed Chauncy as an innovative radical theologically and/or politically have thus failed to do justice to the whole legacy of his considerable published œuvre. As has been seen, in theological terms, his journey from the orthodox Calvinism of his first three decades of pastoral ministry through the cautious Arminianism of his middle years to the public universalism

391 Chauncy, The Validity of Presbyterian Ordination Asserted and Maintained..., p. 9. See also Chauncy, A Discourse Occasioned by the Death of the Reverend Jonathan Mayhew..., p. 39: “Dr. Mayhew was a friend to these churches, and their able advocate; especially in regard of that liberty wherewith our Lord Jesus Christ has made them free;” The Appeal to the Public Answered..., p. 200: “The 'other Christians' do not enjoy, nor do they desire to enjoy, any religious liberty but that wherewith Christ, without discrimination, has made his disciples free;” A Discourse Occasioned by the Death of the Reverend Thomas Foxcroft..., p. 23: “he [Foxcroft] was a friend to liberty, especially that liberty wherewith our Lord Jesus Christ has made his churches free;” A Reply to Dr. Chandler’s “Appeal Defended”..., p. 163: “So purely spiritual bishops might [settle in New England] without it [the Massachusetts Charter], or in any part of the Christian world, in virtue of that liberty wherewith Christ has made the professors of his religion free.”

392 Chauncy, Twelve Sermons..., pp. 230, 294, citing from Luke 4:18: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised;” James 1:25: “But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.”

that he finally unveiled in the 1780s is unmistakable. But those who have argued that his Christology was ultimately Arian, or that his theology is best seen as proto-Unitarian have gone beyond the available evidence. On the contrary, throughout his career, Chauncy consistently maintained a biblicist and Christocentric focus which meant that his later religious thought had much more in common with that of his earlier years than has often been allowed. At the same time, even when openly redefining such central Christian doctrines as those of original sin or the atonement in his final works, Chauncy did so on ultimately biblical grounds. He believed that he was unveiling a "mystery hid" that had been present in the Bible and occasionally acknowledged in church tradition all along. Although he was clearly influenced by more "enlightened" trends in 18th century thought, he never saw himself as a radical pioneer advancing totally new interpretations of doctrine.

His ecclesiological writings were meanwhile quite self-consciously protective of traditional Congregationalist polity. Like Eliot and Mayhew, he saw a clear political threat in the prospect of a Church of England episcopate in the American colonies, especially as it related to the possible aggrandizement of episcopal power and metropolitan influence generally into colonial civil affairs. But his anti-episcopalianism was primarily rooted in deep theological convictions, which he expounded at length, that the episcopate was an unbiblical order of ministry for which there was no reliable historical precedent prior to what he saw as the ungodly growth of Catholicism from the third century onwards. In common with all the main subjects of this dissertation, Chauncy nurtured a profound anti-Catholicism throughout his career and strongly identified with a Protestant heritage that descended, in his case, not only from New England's founders, to whom he showed consistent devotion, but from his family origins in Puritan England. In defending New England polity against the threat of Episcopalianism, Chauncy was thus protecting what he saw as a vital and thoroughly biblical ecclesiastical inheritance.

Chauncy's political views were similarly motivated. Over the course of his 60-year ministry at one of Boston's most prestigious and prosperous churches, Chauncy upheld a vision of a free, but traditionally ordered society distinguished by the maintenance of English constitutional rights and privileges. His providential understanding of England's and New England's history led him to believe that both had been uniquely favoured by God, especially since the Glorious Revolution of 1688. Until the outbreak of the Revolutionary War, although quite prepared to voice specific criticisms from time to time, he showed a fierce loyalty to Britain and a deeply committed monarchism. His consistent tendency, rooted in a providentialist understanding of the origins of government and thus of prevailing social structures, was to defend the sociopolitical status quo whenever possible, especially against disorders of the kind threatened by the Great Awakening or even revolutionary excesses. Chauncy's anti-Catholicism was also linked to a keen awareness of
the dangers of "arbitrary" power of any kind, either from Catholic nations like France and Spain or from more internal threats like the Jacobite rebellion in the 1740s and the oppressive measures of British authorities in the 1760s and 1770s. But such was his allegiance to English constitutional ideals that it was only after the Revolution had finally begun and Chauncy became convinced that the British authorities were undermining the values of their own constitution that he decisively joined the patriot cause. At the same time, he continued to view the progress of the Revolutionary War within a primarily theological interpretative framework and he saw the major issues at stake to be moral and spiritual. Such concerns were exemplified and predictably reflected in his understanding of the nature of liberty, which ranged over Shain's philosophical, prescriptive, civil and spiritual definitions, although the last was clearly primary and there is strong evidence that Chauncy, like Wise, Mayhew and Eliot, deployed a biblicist discourse of liberty based on key texts from the New Testament.

Despite his liberal reputation among both historians and theologians, the "mystery hid" about Chauncy was thus his inherent conservativism. But this extended beyond Lippy's or Heimert's more limited interpretations of him as a "seasonable revolutionary" or social reactionary to embrace the whole of his thought in different ways. At the height of the Great Awakening, no less than 25 years before he informed Ezra Stiles of the proud Puritan family legacy that he had providentially inherited through his great-grandfather, Chauncy issued a remarkable rallying cry to "stand up for the good old way."394 The evidence would suggest that such a defence was one of Chauncy's main objectives over much of his career, however creatively and sometimes unorthodoxly he may have pursued it.

394Chauncy, "Life of the Rev. President Chauncy, Written at the Request of Dr. Stiles;" Seasonable Thoughts on the State of Religion in New England..., p. 337.
Chapter 6 – “Conservative Revolutionaries.”

When Charles Chauncy wrote to Richard Price on January 10, 1775, just three months before the formal outbreak of revolutionary hostilities, his anti-British rhetoric was unmistakable. “You can’t easily imagine the greatness of our embarrassment,” he informed Price in a key passage already cited:

especially, if it be remembered that the town, while filled with troops, is at the same time encompassed with ships of war, and the harbour so blocked up as that an entire stop is put to trade....Can it in reason be thought that Americans, who were freeborn, will submit to such cruel tyranny?....It is not doubted, but by next spring we shall have at least one hundred thousand men well qualified to come forth for the defence of our liberties and rights, should there be a call for it....We shall not betake ourselves to the sword, unless necessarily obliged to it in self-defence; but in that case, so far as I can judge, it is the determination of all North America to exert themselves to the utmost, be the consequence what it may. They choose death rather than to live in slavery, as they must do, if they submit to that despotic government which has been contrived for them.1

Elsewhere in the same letter, he described recent British legislation as “the late acts which would enslave us” and he referred to British notions of enforcing a total trade blockade, as a “plan of despotism.”2 Yet Chauncy’s loyalty to British authorities remained strong and his criteria for passing judgement on some of their actions were still metropolitan in origin. He noted, for example, that “the [royal] livery of the troops among us...is the true and only reason they were either suffered to come, or to continue here, without molestation.” He also spoke of the colonists “rights...not only as men made of one blood with the rest of the human species, but as Englishmen, and Englishmen born heirs to a royal grant of Charter rights and privileges.”3

A similarly conflicted rhetoric has been observed in the works of Andrew Eliot, including his roughly contemporaneous correspondence with his English friends, Thomas Hollis and Thomas Brand Hollis, during the revolutionary and pre-revolutionary periods. More explicitly than Chauncy, Eliot openly recognized his indebtedness to Whig luminaries like Sidney, Harrington, Locke and Milton.4 In addition to bemoaning the dangers of British arbitrary power and the threat of American “slavery” as a result, Eliot also applauded “liberty of the press” and Trenchard’s arguments against standing armies.5 Yet however he struggled with aspects of British

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1Chauncy to Richard Price, January 10, 1775, in Price et al., pp. 275-6 - italics added for emphasis. See above, p. 272.
2Ibid., p. 278.
3Ibid., pp. 275-6, 278.
4See, for example, Andrew Eliot to Thomas Hollis, May 13, 1767 and December 10, 1767 in “Letters from Andrew Eliot to Thomas Hollis,” pp. 403, 412
5Andrew Eliot to Thomas Hollis, September 27, 1768, in ibid., p. 428; Andrew Eliot to Thomas Hollis, May 13, 1767, in ibid., p. 405. Cf. Andrew Eliot to Thomas Hollis, December 25, 1769, in ibid., p. 445; Andrew Eliot to Thomas Hollis, June 28, 1770 in ibid., p. 452.
Government in the 1760s and 1770s, he shared Chauncy's deep affection for the mother country and such loyalty to its authority structures and constitutional ideals, including the monarchy, that unlike Chauncy, he was ultimately unable to declare decisively for the patriot cause at all. The British Constitution was "a happy mixture of monarchy, aristocracy and democracy," which was "the glory of Britons and the envy of foreigners," he thus preached in his Election Sermon of 1765, and it was to the "Glorious Revolution in Britain" that "we owe the preservation of our liberty, and the present happy establishment of the House of Hanover." "The people...glory in the name of Englishmen," he told Thomas Hollis the following year, "and only desire to enjoy the liberties of Englishmen." 

Jonathan Mayhew never lived to face the challenge of the American Revolution. But it is clear from his writings that he had similarly ambivalent views in the 1750s and 1760s. On the one hand, like Eliot, Mayhew acknowledged his love of liberty and his debt of gratitude to "such as Sidney, Milton, Locke and Hoadley, among the moderns." So he spoke out strongly against "the hereditary, indefeasible, divine right of kings, and the doctrine of nonresistance," and he thought that because the Stamp Act threatened "unmerited slavery," "the colonies...had great reason to remonstrate...on the footing of inexpediency, the great hardship, and destructive tendency of it." On the other hand, he described it as "our happiness to live under the government of a Prince who is satisfied with ruling according to law" and he believed it appropriate to be "contented and dutiful subjects." He stressed "how great the blessing is, of having the life of a good Protestant King, the British Government, and with it our rights and liberties, secular and sacred, preserved to us," among which he listed free speech, personal autonomy and trial by jury.

Despite such inherent tensions and possible contradictions, the general tendency has been to interpret the more negative, anti-British elements of such discourse as part of a burgeoning Whig, or, since Bailyn's highly influential work, "Real Whig" ideology that directly contributed and eventually led to revolutionary resistance. All of the last three subjects of this dissertation have

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7Eliot, A Sermon Preached before His Excellency Francis Bernard,. pp. 18, 39.

8Andrew Eliot to Thomas Hollis, May 13, 1767, in "Letters from Andrew Eliot to Thomas Hollis," p. 404.


11Ibid., p. 247.

been seen as contributors to this and even their pro-British monarchism and constitutionalism have been interpreted as elements of an explosive ideological construct that clung to an idealized vision of British Government, although it ultimately condemned British authorities for failing to live up to it. As discussed in the opening chapter, attempts have been made to offer alternative explanatory paradigms, not least religious and theological ones. But none has found widespread acceptance and those that have been more positively received have tended, like the work of Hatch and Noll on revolutionary origins, to give ultimate primacy to political factors. Yet through the study of the earlier writings of Wise alongside those of Mayhew, Eliot and Chauncy, the findings of this dissertation highlight considerations that would urge the need for continuing re-examination of basic assumptions informing more politicized readings of some revolutionary discourses in the very religious society of 18th century New England.

In the first place, it becomes very clear from analysis of the works of Wise that, as Clark and Shain have suggested, albeit in different ways and from differing perspectives, the “Whiggish” sentiments of Mayhew, Eliot and Chauncy, such as they were, were nothing peculiar to the latter half of the 18th century. Nor did such preoccupations flow solely or even primarily from the “Real Whig” or “Commonwealth” works that Bailyn and others have deemed so significant. Writing some 60 years before the American Revolution and with no apparent reference to the publications of Trenchard, Gordon, or even Locke, for example, Wise struck the following familiar themes:

1. He saw “slavery” to arbitrary power, in either church or state, as among the worst of evils. For that reason, he described “that government which sensibly clogs tyranny, and preserves the subject free from slavery, under the ambition of men of great fortune and trust” as “the only government in the state, to advance men’s temporal happiness.” He also thought “such a constitution in church government” to be “the only way to advance grace and man’s eternal happiness.”

2. He extolled the values of English constitutional government in the most glowing terms, including among its seven key “principles” the observations that “all English men live and dye by laws of their own making,” that “English Government and law is a charter-party settled by mutual compact between persons of all degrees in the nation,” and that “English men hate an arbitrary power (politically considered) as they hate the devil.”

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13 See, for example, Bailyn, “The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution,” pp. 94-143, passim.
further described rights to parliamentary representation and trial by jury as “two grand pillars of English liberty” and “the fundamental vital privileges whereby we have been, and are still preserved more free and happy, than any other people in the world; and we trust shall ever continue so.”

3. He espoused a deep commitment to the English monarchy, praying for “the great [Queen] Anne, our wise and Protestant Princess,” calling her “New-England’s royal nurse and great benefactress” and pleading that “she may live to see all the Protestant churches thro’ her vast empire, more virtuous and more united.” He even viewed the monarchy as “a kingdom that of all the kingdoms of the world, is most like to the Kingdom of Jesus Christ, whose yoke is easie, and burden light.”

In view of such obvious areas of thematic continuity between his thought and that of Mayhew, Eliot and Chauncy, the example of Wise would thus suggest the influence of an older, more religiously rooted intellectual tradition in such discourse. Moreover, one of the most promising candidates is clearly that identified by J.C.D. Clark in the form of dissenting Protestantism generally and its various denominational expressions. Rejecting almost completely and somewhat unfairly, the influence of “Real Whig” ideology, Clark described “the public ideologies widespread in the Anglophone world by the late eighteenth century” in the following terms:

[They] warned against “slavery,” denounced “tyranny,” pointed out the ways in which men could be defrauded of their ancient liberties, recorded the threat posed by standing armies, and lamented the enervating effects of vice and luxury. All these themes were prominent in the rhetoric of American revolutionaries, but it was rare that they were greatly owed to a reading of authors like Henry Neville, Walter Moyle or Robert, Viscount Charlesworth. Most were standard themes of the folk memories of Protestant denominations; they formed part of their myths or histories of their origins, of the reason for dissent from the Church of England, and of their principled resistance to episcopacy or “Popery.”

Clark further noted that “all parties to many different disputes claimed the ‘rights of Englishmen’ or appealed to the libertarian inheritance of the Reformation; but they interpreted these in different ways....the American colonies seemed to triumph in the success of the Glorious Revolution.”

Further support for the significance of such a dissenting, Protestant intellectual tradition derives from two other, more explicitly religious considerations that are highlighted in comparisons of the thought of Wise, Mayhew, Eliot and Chauncy - namely their staunch anti-Catholicism and often by

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17Wise, A Vindication... p. 95, citing Care, p. 4.
18Wise, The Churches' Quarrel... p. 32.
21Ibid., p. 219.
extension, anti-Episcopalianism, and their vigorous defences of New England polity. Clark especially highlighted the former, when he wrote of "principled resistance to episcopacy or 'Popery'" and of New England's "frenzied anti-Catholicism," which he described as "the most consistent theme both of popular sentiment and of ideological exegesis" through "all the vicissitudes of English politics from the 1530s to the 1830s and beyond." But he also stressed and assumed the consistent concern of Congregationalists, with other denominations, to protect their "ancient principles of ecclesiastical polity."23

The defence of New England polity was obviously the primary concern of both Wise's major works, The Churches' Quarrel... (1713) and A Vindication... (1717). But his vigorous Protestantism and anti-Catholicism have also been seen in his consistent assessment of the excesses of Rome as both a political and religious threat to proper constitutional government. He pictured "the Pope's...broaths and restoratives" as "enough to strangle a free-born English-man," for example, and argued that "the government of this ecclesiastical monarch has instead of sanctifying, absolutely debaucht the world, and subverted all good Christianity in it."24 "The very name of an arbitrary government is ready to put an English man's blood into a fermentation," Wise argued, and he especially associated this with Catholic clerical aggrandizement.25 Mayhew, Eliot and Chauncy were equally strong defenders of Congregationalist ecclesiology, especially against the threatened incursions of Anglican episcopacy and they bowed to no-one in their similar denunciations of the perceived sins and dangers of Rome.

In his A Discourse Concerning Unlimited Submission... (1750), Mayhew gave thanks, for example, that "one may, in any part of the British dominions, speak freely...both of government and religion; and even give some broad hints that he is engaged on the side of liberty, the Bible, and common sense, in opposition to tyranny, priestcraft, and nonsense, without being in danger either of the Bastille or the Inquisition."26 Sixteen years later in The Snare Broken..., he portrayed Britain as "the principal support of liberty in Europe" and "the chief bulwark against that most execrable of all tyrannies, popery."27 In his correspondence with English Whig leaders, Eliot echoed such themes. In 1767-8 letters to Thomas Hollis, for example, he saw the effect of the establishment of a new Catholic bishopric in Canada as "to encourage the inhabitants of this

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22Ibid., pp. 250, 238.
23Ibid., p. 364.
24Wise, The Churches' Quarrel..., p. 141; A Vindication..., p. 56.
newly conquered country in their fatal superstitions." He described "papists" as "not ashamed...to fly in the face of all history, and to assert the most infamous falsehoods" and as "enemies of truth, of liberty, of mankind." It was observed in the previous chapter how Chauncy's anti-Catholicism was a significant element of his self-identity, as well as of the Protestant inheritance that he shared with Wise, Mayhew and Eliot, and he expressed his prejudices very openly. To repeat examples from just two of his works, he thus described Cape Breton as "part of the Dominion of Antichrist," and called the Pope "the Man of Sin, that Son of Perdition," who should be "no longer acknowledged as Christ's viceregent." He also saw the threat of the Jacobite Pretender as a direct challenge to English Protestant liberties, because he knew that "popish princes" had "made use of their power and influence to extirpate the true Protestant religion." His hope and prayer, therefore, was that God would not suffer the Pope, "who hath exalted himself into the Seat of Christ, to be again acknowledged and adored, by a nation who have declared their abhorrence of worshipping him, instead of the Son of God." 

Taken together, therefore, the rampant anti-Catholicism, the staunch apologetics for New England Congregationalist polity, the fear of slavery at the hands of arbitrary power, whether in church or state, the high valuation of English constitutional values and structures, especially following the Glorious Revolution, and the ardent admiration for England's Protestant monarchy, and particularly for the royal Houses of Orange and Hanover, that are such consistent themes in the works of Wise, as well as of Mayhew, Eliot and Chauncy, make more sense in the context of a vigorously dissenting Protestant worldview which they all shared, than of a more limited ideology derived from "Real Whig" sources, with which Wise showed no evidence of strong familiarity. This is not to deny the influence of Whig thinkers on Mayhew, Eliot and Chauncy, which is clear in some places. But it is to suggest that the latter was not decisive in the development of their thought, in that it arguably supported, rather than furnished ideas and preoccupations that ultimately stemmed from more traditional, religious sources of the kind that Clark has foregrounded. Such historical contextualization also helps explain why the religious and political ideas of the four subjects of this dissertation were much more conservative, even sometimes reactionary, than scholars have often suggested, especially when they have argued from an inherently proleptic conception of 18th century theological and philosophical development culminating in Enlightenment, revolution and religious liberalism.

28 Andrew Eliot to Thomas Hollis, November 13, 1767, in "Letters from Andrew Eliot to Thomas Hollis," p. 410.
29 Andrew Eliot to Thomas Hollis, December 10, 1767, in ibid., pp. 414-15; Andrew Eliot to Thomas Hollis, October 17, 1768, in ibid., p. 432.
30 See, for example, above, pp. 274-5.
31 Chauncy, Marvellous Things Done, p. 22.
32 Chauncy, The Counsel of Two Confederate Kings, pp. 24, 41.

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Prima facie, Wise's apparently orthodox Calvinism, accompanied, as it was, by a thoroughly biblicist worldview, would seem much more significant to his defences of New England polity than his exceptional foray into the philosophy of natural law in A Vindication..., and detailed examination of his works clearly bears out such an interpretation. Taking appropriate account of his self-consciously filiopietistic appeal to Puritan sources and his rigorous, almost legalistic adherence to the inherited strictures and structures of the Cambridge Platform, as well as of the English Constitution, as he understood it, the general picture to emerge of Wise's thought is thus that of a thoroughgoing Congregationalist traditionalist, rather than a preternaturally rationalist democrat. The democratic themes in Wise's ecclesiological and political writings are unmistakable, but primarily because both the New England polity and the metropolitan constitution that he sought to defend contained clearly democratic elements, not because he independently and anachronistically prioritized them as any kind of proto-revolutionary blueprint for the future.

Inasmuch as he openly rejected all five points of traditional Calvinism and moved to a decidedly more Arminian position, Mayhew's theology was clearly recognized as unorthodox by many of his contemporaries. But scholars have read too much into available evidence by classifying his Christology as decisively Arian. At the same time, elements of more traditional continuity in Mayhew's religious thought have often been underestimated, not least the biblicism that he shared with the other subjects of this dissertation, and his continued appeals to themes of "sin-salvation-service" that were consistent features of 18th as well as 17th century Congregationalist homiletics. In that sense, Mayhew's theology was more conservative than it has often been made out to be, as was his political outlook. Politically, Mayhew was clearly influenced by Lockean and Whig sources and he can justly be termed at least an ideological "revolutionary," in that he offered, like Wise, Eliot and Chauncy, a stirring defence of the right to civil disobedience and even rebellion. But such influences were limited by his dissenting Protestant worldview and by a continuing allegiance to historical British constitutional checks and balances. When an incendiary sermon actually led to public disorder in 1765, Mayhew thus soon retreated from the consequences of his rhetoric and ended his brief career in paeans of praise for the British Government following the repeal of the Stamp Act.

Although it has sometimes been portrayed as progressive, even heterodox, Eliot's theology bore a similar stamp of moderate Calvinism to that of Wise. Much like Mayhew, Eliot was unafraid to draw on contemporary rationalist and Whig philosophical sources, but both his religious and political thought were ultimately grounded in a thoroughly biblicist and providentialist worldview, in which a filiopietistic vision of the virtues of New England's Puritan founders played an important
part. Politically, Eliot struggled with the consequences of ultimately divided loyalties both to a right to civil resistance against unjust leaders, and to the moral necessity of showing due submission to biblically authorized authorities, especially those representing a British constitutional system for which he expressed deep admiration. In practical terms, such struggles remained unresolved to the extent that Eliot could never bring himself fully to endorse the American Revolution, although his position as a “reluctant revolutionary” was theoretically consistent with his religious conservatism.

In some ways, Chauncy travelled further from Calvinist orthodoxy than any of the other subjects of this dissertation, especially in his final embrace of universalism and of a thoroughly heterodox understanding of original sin. But his was a long and cautious journey, which included a mid-life staging post in Arminianism, as well as years of subterfuge, during which he concealed just how radical his theology had become from all but a few close friends before finally declaring his universalist position in old age. Those who have labelled Chauncy an Arian or prophetically seen his ideas as an intermediate stop on the inevitable march of New England Congregationalism towards Unitarianism have meanwhile overstated his heterodoxy. In fact, consistent themes of biblicism and Christocentrism show greater areas of continuity in Chauncy’s theology than have often been allowed. At the same time, Chauncy’s thoroughgoing commitment to biblical authority entailed a self-understanding of his final publications as uncovering revealed truths, rather than deliberately departing from them. Analysis of Chauncy’s political views demonstrates a similarly tempered conservativism. Cherished commitments to the maintenance of a providentially conceived vision of the virtues of the sociopolitical status quo and of English rights and privileges might easily have led Chauncy to a similar dilemma to Eliot’s during the American Revolution. He was able to join the patriot cause only after squaring the circle of his parallel respect for British constitutional authority, yet outrage against metropolitan injustices, when he arrived at the conviction that the British authorities were undermining the values of their own constitution. But even then, much like Eliot, he continued to view the progress of the Revolutionary War in primarily theological rather than political terms.

Based on such evidence, it is, therefore, difficult to label any of the subjects of this dissertation an outright “liberal,” either theologically or politically. Contrary to the opinions of many scholars, there is little to suggest that either Wise or Eliot ever seriously departed from moderate Calvinism. The heterodoxy of Mayhew’s and Chauncy’s views has meanwhile been exaggerated and more conservative themes in their theology have frequently been neglected. Moreover, whilst all four Massachusetts ministers periodically wrote in favour of a right to civil rebellion and Wise and Chauncy participated in revolutionary activism, albeit in very different circumstances, the general conservatism of their political views is arguably more remarkable than their oft-alleged radicalism.
In that sense, as the title of this dissertation would indicate, if these men were revolutionaries at all, they were, as Heimert suggested of Mayhew and Chauncy more than 40 years ago, decidedly conservative ones. *Contra* Clark, there is no support for the view that any of them were galvanized towards revolutionary attitudes or actions by theological heterodoxy. *Contra* Baldwin, Bailyn and many others, there is a similar lack of conclusive evidence that Whig or Radical Whig political philosophy was a primary motivating force for them. As has been seen, other concerns were much more central to and influential on the development of their thought, and these were primarily religious, based on the inherently conservative, dissenting Protestant worldview that they all shared. Examination of the four authors’ views of liberty reveals important evidence in this connection, because it shows, as Shain has contended more generally in an 18th century colonial American context, that spiritual liberty defined in biblical terms was their most important conception.

Reflecting the major argumentative thrust of *A Churches’ Quarrel...* and *A Vindication...*, which was to defend what he called on no fewer than four occasions the “Gospel liberties” of Congregationalist churches, Wise’s primary focus in discussing “liberty” was to uphold prescriptive “liberties” and entitlements, such as freedom of worship and conscience, which he saw as central to New England’s Protestant inheritance in both church and state. However, Wise also paid keen attention to defining human philosophical and/or natural freedom and he was very clear that he supported a traditional Puritan understanding of spiritual freedom in Christ to serve God and neighbour. “They alone live as they will,” Wise argued, citing Plutarch, “who have learnt what they ought to will. So that the true natural liberty of man, such as really and truly agrees to him, must be understood, as he is guided and restrained by the tyes of reason, and laws of nature,” which were ultimately those of God.

Mayhew, Eliot and Chauncy appealed so often to certain biblical texts about liberty that they can justifiably be said to have deployed something of a biblicist discourse of liberty. But this only served to underline the extent to which spiritual ideas of freedom were central to their thought. In Mayhew’s case, such a discourse was derived from both sacred and secular sources, but grounded in eight specific biblical texts and in a New Testament understanding of “ceremonial” and “gracious” liberty from the bondage of sin and law for Christian service. Mayhew wrote more about different conceptions of liberty than any other subject of this dissertation, especially in defence of his position following the violent incident that was allegedly provoked by one of his sermons in 1765. But while he also expounded on the significance of philosophical, natural and civil liberty, three of his six definitions of liberty were spiritual in orientation and he even based his

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defence of civil liberty in *A Discourse Concerning Unlimited Submission...* (1750) on exegesis of Romans 13:1-8.

Eliot followed the example of his ministerial mentor in defining liberty in a variety of different senses, including philosophical, religious and civil liberty, all of which he treated in his works. But while Eliot's writings also show obvious evidence of the influence of Whig philosophical sources, his conception of spiritual liberty, which was rooted in his Calvinist theological heritage, was foundational and he appealed to some of the same biblical texts as Mayhew, including Isaiah 61:1, Luke 4:18, Romans 8:21 and Galatians 5:1. The same can be said of Chauncy, who wrote of philosophical, civil and prescriptive forms of liberty, including a limited freedom of religious conscience. But despite his ultimate theological liberalism, Chauncy clearly saw spiritual liberty as crucial, regularly citing familiar biblical texts, and defining it in quite traditional terms as freedom to serve God and others.

Perhaps not surprisingly in view of their education and profession as Congregationalist ministers, the examples of Wise, Mayhew, Eliot and Chauncy thus lend support to Shain's contention about the general primacy of spiritual conceptions of liberty in 18th century colonial America, although much more evidence would be obviously be needed to justify his thesis as a whole. They also raise questions of the arguments of scholars who have tended to prioritize the political at the expense of the spiritual content of ministerial contributions to revolutionary and pre-revolutionary political thought, including ideas of liberty, or to focus on the "double meanings" of Congregationalist discourse. Inasmuch as they applied relevant biblical texts quite widely and often spoke of "Christian" or "Gospel" liberty in very general terms, ambivalence clearly was a feature of the "languages of liberty" of the four subjects of this dissertation. If applied more broadly, this consideration might thus support the findings of previous historians in suggesting interesting implications for how what would now be defined as largely secular events or causes, like the American Revolution, could have been construed in both religious and political terms in 18th century New England. But the central source of the libertarian discourses of Wise, Mayhew, Eliot and Chauncy was primarily theological and it was located in the dissenting Protestant worldview which they all shared, whatever their differences.
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Charles Chauncy, *An Unbridled Tongue a Sure Evidence, that our Religion Is Hypocritical and Vain*. A Sermon Preach'd at the Boston Thursday-Lecture, September 10th, 1741. and Publish'd at the Desire of the Hearers (Boston, MA: 1741) [Evans, 4689] (An Unbridled Tongue a Sure Evidence,..).

Charles Chauncy, *The Validity of Presbyterian Ordination Asserted and Maintained*. A Discourse Delivered at the Anniversary Dudleian-Lecture, at Harvard-College in Cambridge New-England, May 12, 1762. With an Appendix, Giving a Brief Historical Account of the Epistles Ascribed to Ignatius; and Exhibiting Some of the Many Reasons, why they Ought not to Be Depended on as his Uncorrupted Works (Boston, MA: 1762) [Evans, 9089] (The Validity of Presbyterian Ordination Asserted and Maintained,..).

John Checkley, *A Modest Proof of the Order & Government Settled by Christ and his Apostles in the Church*. By Shewing I. What Sacred Offices Were Instituted by them. II. How those Offices Were Distinguished. III. That they Were to Be Perpetual and Standing in the Church, and IV. Who Succeed in them, and Rightly Execute them to this Day. Recommended as Proper to Be Put into the Hands of the Laity (Boston, MA: 1723) [Evans, 2417] (A Modest Proof of the Order & Government Settled by Christ and his Apostles,..).

Peter Clark, *The Scripture-Doctrine of Original Sin, Stated and Defended*. In a Summer-Morning's Conversation, between a Minister and a Neighbour. Containing Remarks on a Late Anonymous Pamphlet, Intituled, "A Winter-Evening's Conversation upon the Doctrine of Original Sin, between a Minister and Three of his Neighbours, Accidently Met," &C. With an Appendix, in Reply to a Supplement in the New-Haven Edition of that Pamphlet (Boston, MA: 1758) [ECCO: ESTC, W002991] (The Scripture-Doctrine of Original Sin, Stated and Defended,..).


Samuel Clarke, *A Discourse Concerning the Being and Attributes of God, the Obligations of Natural Religion, and the Truth and Certainty of the Christian Revelation; in Answer to Mr. Hobbs, Spinoza, the Author of The Oracles of Reason, and Other Deniers of Natural and Revealed Religion: Being Sixteen Sermons Preach'd at the Cathedral Church of St. Paul, in the Years 1704 and 1705, at the Lecture Founded by the Honourable Robert Boyle, Esq, 3rd edition*, (London, 1711) [ECCO: ESTC, N000561] (A Discourse Concerning the Being and Attributes of God,..).


Late Thanksgiving Sermons on Psal. Cxlv. 9. in which Some of the Doctor's Mistakes, Inaccuracies and Inconsistencies, Are Pointed out (Boston, MA: 1763) [Evans, 9364] (An Essay, to Defend Some of the Most Important Principles in the Protestant Reformed System of Christianity...).

John Cleveland, A Reply to Dr. Mayhew's Letter of Reproof to Mr. John Cleveland of Ipswich, Containing Some Observations on Said Letter, and a Particular Consideration of the Proof or Evidence Exhibited by the Doctor, for the Support of his High Charges (Boston, MA: 1765) [Evans, 9932] (A Reply to Dr. Mayhew's Letter of Reproof...).

George Coade, A Letter to a Clergyman, Relating to his Sermon on the 30th of January: Being a Compleat Answer to All the Sermons that Have Ever Been, or Ever Shall Be, Preached, in the Like Strain, on that Anniversary, By a Lover of Truth (London, 1746) [ECCO: ESTC, T075800] (A Letter to a Clergyman, Relating to his Sermon on the 30th of January...).

A Confession of Faith Owned and Consented to by the Elders and Messengers of the Churches in the Colony of Connecticut in New-England, Assembled by Delegation at Say Brook September 9th 1708 (New London, CT, 1710) [Evans, 1486] (Saybrook Platform).

Convention of Congregational Ministers of Massachusetts, The Testimony of the Pastors of the Churches in the Province of the Massachusetts-Bay in New-England, at their Annual Convention in Boston, May 25, 1743; against Several Errors in Doctrine, and Disorders in Practice, which Have of Late Obtained in Various Parts of the Land; as Drawn up by a Committee Chosen by the Said Pastors, Read and Accepted Paragraph by Paragraph (Boston, MA: 1743) (The Testimony of the Pastors of the Churches in the Province of the Massachusetts-Bay...).

Samuel Cooke, A Sermon Preached at Cambridge, in the Audience of His Honor Thomas Hutchinson, the Honorable His Majesty's Council, and the Honorable House of Representatives, of the Province of the Massachusetts-Bay in New-England, May 30th, 1770, Being the Anniversary for the Election of His Majesty's Council for the Said Province (Boston, MA: 1770) (A Sermon Preached at Cambridge...).


Joseph Eckley, Divine Glory, Brought to View, in the Condemnation of the Ungodly; or the Doctrine of Future Punishment, Illustrated and Vindicated, as Rational and True, in Reply to a Late Pamphlet, Entitled, Salvation for All Men, By a Friend to Truth (Boston, MA: 1782) [Evans, 17524] (Divine Glory, Brought to View, in the Condemnation of the Ungodly...).


Jonathan Edwards, The Great Christian Doctrine of Original Sin Defended: Evidences of it's Truth Produced, and Arguments to the Contrary Answered, Containing, in Particular, a Reply to
the Objections and Arguings of Dr. John Taylor, in his Book, Intitled, "The Scripture-Doctrine of Original Sin Proposed to Free and Candid Examination, &c."... (Boston, MA: 1758) [Evans, 8118] (The Great Christian Doctrine of Original Sin Defended...).

Jonathan Edwards, Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God. A Sermon Preached at Enfield, July 8th 1741, at a Time of Great Awakenings; and Attended with Remarkable Impressions on Many of the Hearers (Boston, MA: 1741) [Evans, 4713] (Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God...).

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Andrew Eliot, A Burning and Shining Light Extinguished. A Sermon Preached the Lord's-Day after the Funeral of the Late Reverend Mr. John Webb, Pastor of the New-North Church in Boston.... (Boston, MA: 1750) [Evans, 6493] (A Burning and Shining Light Extinguished...).

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Andrew Eliot, The Faithful Steward. A Sermon Delivered by Andrew Eliot, M.A. at his Ordination to the Pastoral Charge of the New North Church in Boston... (Boston, MA: 1742) [Evans, 4940] (The Faithful Steward...).


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Andrew Eliot, A Sermon Preached before His Excellency Francis Bernard, Esq; Governor, the Honorable His Majesty's Council, and the Honorable House of Representatives, of the Province of the Massachusetts-Bay in New-England, May 29th 1765... (Boston, MA: 1765) [Evans, 9964] (A Sermon Preached before His Excellency Francis Bernard...).

Andrew Eliot, A Sermon Preached October 25th. 1759. Being a Day of Public Thanksgiving Appointed by Authority, for the Success of the British Arms this Year; Especially in the Reduction of Quebec, the Capital of Canada... (Boston, MA: 1759) [Evans, 8343] (A Sermon Preached October 25th, 1759...).

Andrew Eliot, A Sermon Preached September 17, 1766, at the Ordination of the Reverend Mr. Ebenzer Thayer, to the Pastoral Care of the First Church in Hampton... (Boston, MA: 1766) [Evans, 10290] (A Sermon Preached September 17, 1766...).

Andrew Eliot, Twenty Sermons on the Following Subjects... (Boston, MA: 1774) [Evans, 13266].

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Thomas Foxcroft, An Apology in Behalf of the Revd Mr. Whitefield: Offering a Fair Solution of Certain Difficulties, Objected against Some Parts of his Publick Conduct, in Point of Moral Honesty, and Uniformity with his Own Subscriptions and Ordination-Vows &C.; as the Said Exceptions Are Set Forth in a Late Pamphlet, Intitled, A Letter to the Reverend Mr. George Whitefield, Publickly Calling upon him to Vindicate his Conduct, or Confess his Faults.- Signed, L.K. by Thomas Foxcroft, A.M, One of the Pastors of the First Church in Boston. Being Several Letters, Written for the Satisfaction of a Friend, and Publish'd by Desire...To which Is Prefix'd Dr. Watts's Opinion of Mr. Whitefield (Boston, MA: 1745) [Evans, 5595] (An Apology in Behalf of the Revd Mr. Whitefield...).

Thomas Foxcroft, Humilis Confessio: The Saints United Confession, in Disparagement of their Own Righteousness. A Sermon Preach'd (Summarily) at the Tuesday-Evening Lecture in Brattle-Street, Boston, Jan. 30. 1749.50. Representing the Commonly Receiv'd Protestant Sense & Use of Two Scripture-Passages, which Depreciate All our Personal Righteousness, under the Comparison of Filthy Rags, and of Despicable Dung. In Opposition to Popish Abuse and Calumny (Boston, MA: 1750) [Evans, 6500] (Humilis Confessio...).

Thomas Foxcroft, Like Precious Faith Obtained, through the Righteousness of Our God and Saviour, by All the True Servants of Christ. A Sermon. Preach'd (in Sum) at the Old-Church-Lecture in Boston, Thursday, March 25th. 1756 (Boston, MA: 1756) [Evans, 7666] (Like Precious Faith Obtained...).

Thomas Foxcroft, Some Seasonable Thoughts on Evangelic Preaching: its Nature, Usefulness, and Obligation. A Sermon Deliver'd (in Part) at the Old-Church-Lecture in Boston, Thursday, Oct. 23. 1740. to a Numerous Audience. Occasion'd by the Late Visit, and Uncommon Labours, in Daily and Powerful Preaching, of the Rev. Mr. Whitefield. - the Brother, whose Praise Is in the Gospel, throughout All the Churches (Boston, MA: 1740) [Evans, 4510] (Some Seasonable Thoughts on Evangelic Preaching...).

Patrick Gordon (fl. 1700), Geography Anatomiz'd; or, the Geographical Grammar. Being a Short and Exact Analysis of the Whole Body of Modern Geography, after a New and Curious Method, Comprehending, I. A General View of the Terraqueous Globe...II. A Particular View of the Terraqueous Globe...Collected from the Best Authors..., 7th edition (London, 1716) [ECCO: ESTC, T001303] (Geography Anatomiz'd...).


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William Gordon, The Doctrine of Final Universal Salvation Examined and Shewn to Be Unscriptural: in Answer to a Pamphlet Entitled Salvation for All Men Illustrated and Vindicated as a Scripture Doctrine (Boston, MA: 1783) [Evans, 17959] (The Doctrine of Final Universal Salvation Examined...).

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Weakness of their Pleadings for the Sufficiency of Nature's Light to Eternal Happiness: and Particularly the Writings of the Learn'd Lord Herbert . . . Are Consider'd, and Fully Answer'd: to which Treatise Are Annex'd Several Essays upon Other Subjects (Edinburgh, 1714) [ECCO: ESTC, T101442] (Natural Religion Insufficient...).

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Henry Home, Lord Kames, Essays on the Principles of Morality and Natural Religion. In Two Parts (Edinburgh, 1751) [ECCO: ESTC, T070373] (Essays on the Principles of Morality and Natural Religion...).

Thomas Hooker, A Survey of the Summe of Church-discipline wherein the Way of the Churches of New-England Is Warranted out of the Word, and All Exceptions of Weight, which Are Made against It, Answered; whereby also it Will Appear to the Judicious Reader that Something More Must Be Said than yet Hath Been, before their Principles Can Be Shaken, or they Should Be Unsettled in their Practice (London: 1648) [EEBO: Wing/H2658] (A Survey of the Summe of Church-discipline...).

Samuel Hopkins, An Inquiry Concerning the Future State of those who Die in their Sins: wherein the Dictates of Scripture and Reason, upon this Important Subject, Are Carefully Considered; and whether Endless Punishment Be Consistent with Divine Justice, Wisdom and Goodness: in which also Objections Are Stated and Answered (Newport, RI: 1783) [Evans, 17977] (An Inquiry Concerning the Future State of those who Die in their Sins...).

John Howe, The Works of the Late Reverend and Learned John Howe...In Two Volumes (London, 1724) [ECCO: ESTC, T114875] (The Works of the Late Reverend and Learned John Howe...).


David Hume, Philosophical Essays Concerning Human Understanding. By the Author of The Essays Moral and Political (London, 1748) [ECCO: ESTC, T004022] (Philosophical Essays Concerning Human Understanding...).


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John Locke, The Reasonableness of Christianity, as Delivered in the Scriptures. To which Is Added, Two Vindications of the Same, from Mr. Edwards's Exceptions... (London, 1748/1695) [ECCO: ESTC, T199381] (The Reasonableness of Christianity...).


Cotton Mather, A Collection, of Some of the Many Offensive Matters, Contained in a Pamphlet, Entituled, The Order of the Gospel Revived (Boston, MA: 1701) [Evans, 991] (A Collection of Some of the Many Offensive Matters...).


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Increase Mather, Cases of Conscience Concerning Evil Spirits Personating Men, Witchcrafts. Infallible Proofs of Guilt in Such as Are Accused with that Crime. All Considered according to the Scriptures, History, Experience, and the Judgment of Many Learned Men (Boston, MA: 1693) [Evans, 658] (Cases of Conscience Concerning Evil Spirits...).

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Assemblies. To which Is Added, Proposals Concerning Consociation of Churches, Agreed upon by a Synod, which Convened at Boston, in New-England. With a Preface, Containing a Further Vindication of the Congregational Discipline (Boston, MA: 1716) [Evans, 1836] (A Disquisition Concerning Ecclesiastical Councils...).

Increase Mather, A Dissertation, wherein the Strange Doctrine Lately Published in a Sermon, the Tendency of which, Is, to Encourage Unsanctified Persons (while Such) to Approach the Holy Table of the Lord, Is Examined and Confuted. With an Appendix, Shewing what Scripture Ground there Is to Hope, that within a Very Few Years there Will Be a Glorious Reformation of the Church throughout the World (Boston, MA: 1708) [Evans, 1366] (A Dissertation...).

Increase Mather, The Order of the Gospel, Professed and Practised by the Churches of Christ in New England, Justified, by the Scripture, and by the Writings of Many Learned Men, both Ancient and Modern Divines; in Answer to Several Questions, Relating to Church Discipline (Boston, MA; 1700) [Evans, 938] (The Order of the Gospel...).

Increase Mather, Several Reasons Proving that Inoculating or Transplanting the Small Pox, Is a Lawful Practice, and that it Has Been Blessed by God for the Saving of Many a Life (Boston, MA: 1721) [Evans, 2258] (Several Reasons...).

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Jonathan Mayhew, Christian Sobriety: Being Eight Sermons on Titus II, 6. Preached with a Special View to the Benefit of the Young Men Usually Attending the Public Worship at the West Church in Boston. Published Particularly at their Desire and Dedicated to them (Boston, MA: 1763) [Evans, 9440] (Christian Sobriety...).

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Jonathan Mayhew, A Discourse Occasioned by the Death of King George II and the Happy Accession of His Majesty King George III to the Imperial Throne of Great-Britain: Delivered Jan. 4th 1761 (Boston, MA: 1761) [Evans, 8925] (A Discourse Occasioned by the Death of King George II...).

Jonathan Mayhew, A Discourse Occasioned by the Death of the Honourable Stephen Sewall Esq. Chief-Justice of the Superiour Court of Judicature, Court of Assize, and General-Goal-Delivery; as also a Member of His Majesty's Council for the Province of the Massachusetts-Bay in New-England: who Departed this Life on Wednesday-night, September 10. 1760. Aetatis 58. Delivered the Lord's-Day after his Decease (Boston, MA: 1760) [Evans, 8666] (A Discourse Occasioned by the Death of the Honourable Stephen Sewall...).

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Jonathan Mayhew, The Snare Broken, a Thanksgiving Discourse Preached at the Desire of the West Church in Boston, N.E. Friday May 23, 1766, Occasioned by the Repeal of the Stamp Act (Boston, MA: 1766) [Evans, 10388/9] (The Snare Broken...).

Jonathan Mayhew, Striving to Enter in at the Strait Gate Explain'd and Inculcated; and the Connexion of Salvation therewith, Proved from the Holy Scriptures. In Two Sermons on Luke XIII.24 (Boston, 1761) [Evans, 8926] (Striving to Enter...).

Jonathan Mayhew, Two Discourses Delivered November 23d. 1758. Being the Day Appointed by Authority to Be Observed as a Day of Public Thanksgiving: Relating, More Especially, to the Success of His Majesty's Arms, and those of the King of Prussia, the Last Year (Boston, MA: 1758) [Evans, 8192] (Two Discourses Delivered November 23d. 1758...).

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Jonathan Mayhew, Two Sermons on the Nature, Extent and Perfection of the Divine Goodness. Delivered December 9. 1762. Being the Annual Thanksgiving of the Province, etc. on Psalm 145.9 Published with some Enlargements (Boston, 1763) [Evans, 9443] (Two Sermons on...Divine Goodness...).


John Mellen, The Great and Happy Doctrine of Liberty. A Discourse, Delivered at Hanover, Commonwealth of Massachusetts, February 19, 1795, on the Day of Public Thanksgiving and Prayer, Appointed by the President, to Be Observed throughout All the United States of America.
By John Mellen, A.M. Pastor of the Church of Christ in Hanover. Published by Desire of the Hearers (Boston, MA: 1795) [ECCO: ESTC, W020416] (The Great and Happy Doctrine of Liberty...).

Charles [de Secondat, Baron de] Montesquieu, The Spirit of Laws. Translated from the French of M. De Secondat, Baron De Montesquieu, With Corrections and Additions Communicated by the Author... (Dublin, 1751) 2 Vols. [ECCO: ESTC, N023464] (The Spirit of Laws...).

Nathaniel Niles, Two Discourses on Liberty; Delivered at the North Church, in Newbury-Port, on Lord's-Day, June 5th, 1774, and Published at the General Desire of the Hearers (Newbury-Port, MA: 1774) [Evans, 13502] (Two Discourses on Liberty...).

Nicholas Noyes, New-England's Duty and Interest, to Be an Habitation of Justice, and Mountain of Holiness, Containing Doctrine, Caution & Comfort with Something Relating to the Restaurations, Reforms and Benedictions, Promised to the Church and World in the Latter Daves; with Grounds of Hope, that America in General, & New-England in Particular, May Have a Part therein, Preached to the General Assembly of the Province of the Massachusetts-Bay, at the Anniversary Election. May, 25. 1698 (Boston, MA: 1698) [Evans, 850] (New-England's Duty and Interest...).


John Owen, An Enquiry into the Original, Nature, Institution, Power, Order and Communion of Evangelical Churches. With an Answer to the Discourse of the Unreasonableness of Separation Written by Dr. Edward Stillingfleet, Dean of Paul's, and in Defence of the Vindication of Non-conformists from the Guilt of Schisme (London, 1681) [EEBO; Wing/0764] (An Enquiry...).


Richard Price, Observations on the Nature of Civil Liberty, the Principles of Government, and the Justice and Policy of the War with America. To which Is Added an Appendix... (London, 1776) [ECCO: ESTC, T041824] (Observations on the Nature of Civil Liberty...).


Thomas Symmes, *Utile Dulci. or, A Joco-serious Dialogue, concerning Regular Singing: Calculated for a Particular Town, (where it Was Publickly Had, on Friday Oct. 12. 1722.) but May Serve Some Other Places in the Same Climate* (Boston, MA: 1723) [Evans, 2481] (*Utile Dulci...*).

John Taylor, *A Paraphrase with Notes on the Epistle to the Romans. To which Is Prefix'd a Key to the Apostolic Writings...* (London, 1747) [ECCO: ESTC, T170511] (*A Paraphrase with Notes on the Epistle to the Romans...*).


Peter Thacher, *That the Punishment of the Finally Impenitent Shall Be Eternal; or, that All Men Shall not Be Saved. Attempted to Be Proved and Illustrated in Three Sermons. Preached at Malden, October, 1782* (Salem, MA: 1783) [Evans, 18207] (*That the Punishment of the Finally Impenitent Shall Be Eternal...*).
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