

# Puritanism and the Political-Theological Problem

Elliot Bartky ▪ IPFW

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The significance of Puritanism for American political thought is well established. Yet political scientists have approached Puritan political thought as if it was ripped away and abstracted from the larger political-theological framework of Puritanism. My purpose in this article is to uncover the terms for understanding the Puritan approach to the political-theological problem. The Puritan approach to the political-theological problem derived from the voluntarism of their covenant theology. This has a twofold significance for understanding the origin and course of Puritanism. First, in regard to origins, although Puritan political thought is based on voluntarism, the Puritan founders believed that voluntary consent was legitimate only for establishing a political order that served a religious end. In this article I shall discuss the particular nature of the relationship between politics and religion in the mind of the Puritan founders. Second, in regard to the course of the struggle to maintain the proper relationship between religion and politics, voluntarism was not only the source of the Puritan covenant, it was also the source of the tension within the Puritan community, and ultimately the cause of the demise of the Puritan experiment. In reconstructing the grounds of Puritanism I am particularly interested in the question of whether the "City upon a Hill" could bear the weight that Puritan voluntarism required.

Reflecting on the origins of American democracy Alexis de Tocqueville (1988: 36) said that the Puritans were the first to put forth the idea that both political and religious order require voluntary consent. Tocqueville recognized that the Puritans narrowly construed the ends to which a voluntary covenant could be directed. A voluntary covenant was, as the Puritans understood it, only for the purpose of establishing a "New Jerusalem" in which the distinction between the "city of God" and "the "city of man" might be bridged. The Puritan contribution to the development of American political thought must therefore be qualified because the Puritans carefully limited the ends to which individual will could be directed. In this sense, the Puritan idea of a voluntary covenant establishing a community of "divines" is contrary to the fundamental assumption of modern constitutionalism in which the political and religious realms have distinct ends.<sup>1</sup>

It is difficult to assess the significance of Puritanism for American political thought. This is because the Puritan understanding of the role of politics in securing the proper relationship between the human and the divine is based on a voluntary covenant which appears to be a precursor of modern political thought, at the same time that it points to a pre-modern theocratic politics. For many years scholars followed Bernard Bailyn's (1967:34) argument that the Puritans took for granted "the ultimate inability of man to improve his condition by his own powers" and ignored the Puritan contribution to the development of idea of liberty. According to this position the religious trappings of Puritan voluntarism are so far removed from later notions of voluntary consent and natural rights that it is inappropriate to speak of a Puritan contribution to the development of the idea of liberty.

Fortunately Donald Lutz (1988) has done much to correct the record by establishing the significance of religion in general, and of Puritanism in particular, for the "origins of American constitutionalism." Lutz, having ably demonstrated the significance of biblical texts for the American founding period, has also established the course by which the Puritan idea of a voluntary covenant was transformed from a religious into a "secularized covenant" in the United States Constitution. Lutz (1988: 87) argues that the connection between Puritanism and the founding is so strong that "for at least one brief historical period, encompassing the founding era, the moral instruction of radical Protestantism was not in essential conflict with the prudent recommendations derived from Enlightenment theory." Ellis Sandoz (1990: 134), who along with Lutz has done much to establish the significance of religion for the American founding, argues that "reason and faith were readily reconciled on the American side of the Atlantic throughout the founding period, and John Locke and the Bible often were quoted as spokesmen of the same eternal verities in a single sentence." In reestablishing the religious character of the American founding Sandoz's purpose differs from that of Lutz since his claim is that the American founding reaffirms an older Christian political wisdom. Sandoz (1990: 3) sees in the founders' reliance on religious symbols a revalidation and restoration of Christian, as well as classical wisdom, in which "the notion of saving mankind through politics is, indeed, not only mistaken but ultimately disastrous." Whereas Lutz views religion as a precursor of modern constitutionalism, Sandoz (1990: 25)

views the American founding as "an anti-modernist rearticulation of Western civilization." Whatever the differences between Lutz and Sandoz both are in agreement that religion is an essential component of the American founding.

Lutz and Sandoz are probably correct in saying that few in the founding era would have had any difficulty reconciling Locke and the scriptural tradition. Yet for us to conclude that the American founding is compatible with an older religious tradition only confuses a very complex matter. Compatibility only begs the question: In what sense is the American founding compatible with the religious tradition? Is the Puritan understanding of the role of politics in mediating between the human and the divine the same as that of the American founders? The answer is, of course, that it is not. The Puritan contribution to American political thought has been obscured as much by those who have sought to establish the significance of the Puritan contribution for the American founding, as by those who have denied the relevance of Puritanism.

In the *Legitimacy of the Modern Age* Hans Blumenberg (1983) argues that "secularization" theories, which hold that modern "worldly" ideas such as progress are secular versions of Christian ideas, have only served to confuse both religious and secular thought. Blumenberg recognizes that new answers may emerge in what he calls a "reoccupying position" of old questions, even as the old answers to those questions are no longer able to order the world. Yet for Blumenberg these new ideas are not simply secularized versions of worn out answers. Instead, he argues that the task of the historiographer is to comprehend the existential program of "self-assertion" articulated in each epoch and which, even if it "inherits" the questions of the prior age, constitute new ideas.

It is not necessary to accept the whole of Blumenberg's thesis in order to profit from his insight into secularization theories. Applying his argument to the relationship between Puritanism and the American founding we may say that while the voluntary covenant established by the American founding derives from a set of issues related to Puritan voluntarism, the founding provides a new answer to the old question of the role of politics in securing the proper relationship between the human and the divine that is entirely at odds with Puritanism. In order to understand the founders' appropriation of the political-theological problem we would first have to establish the position which the founders were "reoccupying." In other words, rather than draw a facile account of the founders' secularization of Puritan voluntarism we must first establish the problematic of Puritan voluntarism. This is in itself no simple matter because of the elusiveness of the political-theological problem in Puritanism.

Literary scholars such as Sacvan Bercovitch (1978) have recognized the significance of both the religious and political dimensions of Puritan thought. Unlike political scientists who neglect the theological dimension of Puritan thought, these studies typically neglect the political dimension. The point is not that literary studies deny the significance of politics. The difficulty, instead, is due to the fact that the concern with the mythic and poetic elements of Puritanism has led to the neglect of the larger political-theological issue. In neglecting the centrality of politics in Puritanism the result has been that Puritan orthodoxy is reduced to a matter of piety. Thus it is asserted that late seventeenth and early eighteenth century Puritanism is no less orthodox or pious than the founding generation.<sup>2</sup> It may be true that later generations were as religious as the founding generation. However, religious piety was not the issue either for the founding generation or for their progeny. Reducing the Puritan experiment to a matter of religious piety makes it difficult to comprehend both the character of the founders' vision and their struggle to maintain the "City on a Hill" over time.

Lutz (1988), Sandoz (1990) and other recent political scientists have recognized the significance of both religion and politics for the Puritans while at the same time they have neglected the relevance of the larger political-theological problem. Again, Puritanism is almost invariably reduced to one side of political-theological problematic. While we have accounts of Puritan contributions to ideas such as a voluntary covenant, authority, equality and democracy political scientists have neglected the larger issue of the place of the Puritan city in establishing the proper relationship between the human and the divine.<sup>3</sup> In other words, political scientists focus on political problems as if they may be ripped away and abstracted from the larger political-theological framework. Yet without careful attention to the larger political-theological context we cannot hope to fully comprehend the origin and course of Puritan politics.

The particular character of the Puritan approach to the political-theological problem derived from the voluntarism of their covenant theology. This has a twofold significance for understanding the origin and course of Puritanism. First, in regard to origins, the Puritan founders understood that voluntarism was not simply a matter of voluntary consent applied to civil and ecclesiastical orders, but that voluntary consent was only prescribed for the proper establishment of a political and religious order which enabled human beings to serve God. While this is obvious, what is not so obvious is the particular character of the Puritan model for serving God. Second, in regard to the course of the struggle to maintain the proper relationship between religion and politics, voluntarism was not only the source of the Puritan covenant; it was also the source of the tension within the Puritan community, and ultimately the cause of the demise of the Puritan experiment.

It is, of course, impossible to give a complete account of the origin and course of the Puritan struggle with the political-theological problem. Instead, my purpose is to establish the terms for understanding the approach of the Puritan founders to the political-theological problem. To do this I shall focus largely on John Winthrop's *A Modell of Christian Charity* (1931a). Then I shall discuss a few key moments which will allow us to better understand the conditions under which Puritan voluntarism prospered and ultimately declined. In reconstructing the grounds of Puritanism I am particularly interested in the question of whether the "City upon a Hill" could bear the weight that Puritan voluntarism required.

## THE PURITAN MODEL

In the Old World a soul could nourish itself upon the fellowship of its brethren in Christ. The church was always available to provide solace and encouragement. This religious fellowship, the saints often reminded themselves, was voluntary. "There can be no necessary tye of mutuall accord and fellowship come, but by free ingagement, free (I say) in regard of any human constraint" (Hooker, 1972: 47). The voluntary covenant did not, however, dismiss the possibility of restraint altogether. To the Puritans, because God's volition preceded man's own, it placed man under certain obligations or "rules." According to Thomas Hooker (1972: 69): "The rule bindes such to the duties of their places and relations, yet it is certain, it requires that they should first freely ingage themselves in such covenants, and then be carefull to fulfil such duties." In the most general terms, the rule meant that "wee must consider the maine end of our lives, and that is, to serve God in the serving of men in the workes of our callings" (Perkins 1965: 56). In America, the practice of that rule meant the establishment of a political order must be in conformity with God's larger purpose.

John Cotton's 1636 defense of New England politics demonstrates the necessity for resisting the temptation to characterize Puritan voluntarism as a democratic experiment. "Democracy," Cotton conceded, "I do not conceyve that ever God did ordeyne as a fitt government eyther for church or commonwealth" (Hutchinson, 1970: 415). Cotton exemplifies the fact that the Puritan community was anything but democratic in many of its doctrines and practices. Yet what Cotton added to his condemnation of democracy must be reckoned with: "But it is one thing, to submit unto what they have no calling to reform: another thing, voluntarily to ordeyne a forme of government, which to the best discerning of many of us (for I speak not of myself) is expressly contrary to rule" (Hutchinson, 1970: 416). The Puritan community in New England was a voluntary community, established by saints who came to found a "New Israel." The adoption of voluntarism to politics was the distinguishing mark of the Puritan calling in the New World.

In order to understand the problem underlying the Puritan political order we must begin with the problem of scriptural interpretation. This is both because Scripture provided the model for the Puritan covenant, and also because of the uniqueness of the Puritan approach to Scripture. However much the Puritans emphasized human will, they never denied the necessity of God's grace as a prelude to salvation. The Bible itself proved God's omnipotence. The word preceded the actions of men. Indeed, human actions derived their meaning only by being located in the context of the Scriptures. Perry Miller (1983, Vol. 1: 20) observes that in the Puritan mind "every proposition had to be bolstered by chapter and verse, and the margins of books, whether of divinity or politics, science or morals, the margins even of love-letters, had to be studded with citations."

Yet while the Puritans were able to draw upon the Scriptures, and upon teachings of their own divines, on Calvin, on Augustine, they were, in fact, thrown back on their own resources to create a world anew. This is difficult for us to comprehend because the Puritans were obsessed with traditional texts which they used to justify their "New Israel." Yet, however much this obsession with the authority of texts gave Puritan rhetoric the appearance of a return to pre-modern ideas, the Puritans were building on the ruins of the medieval world; if they were able to salvage texts which they thought worth preserving, their attempt to order their lives by those texts was something very new.

Scholars have long recognized that the Puritan theology derived much from Hebrew Scriptures. Yet for all their adherence to Hebrew Scripture, and however legalistic their doctrine, the Puritans were not "almost" Jews.<sup>4</sup> In Judaism, the revealed Law establishes the foundation for a holy city, that is, the Law establishes the proper relationship between the human and the divine. Traditional Jewish thinkers, recognizing that the Law is essential in establishing the proper relationship between the human and the divine, sometimes turn to philosophy, but even then they do not depend on it for determining the nature of that relationship.

The Christian distinction between "the things that are Caesar's" and the "things that are God's," which later appears in Christian thought as the distinction between the "city of man" and the "city of God," radically alters the role of politics in establishing the proper relationship between the human and the divine (Matthew 22:21, Mark 12:17, Luke 20:25). In Christianity, the political-theological problem arose as the necessary result of the claim that the coming of Christ signaled the fulfillment of the Law.<sup>5</sup> Christian theologians were confronted with a unique

problem in discerning the meaning of both Scripture and of life itself once it was assumed that Christ had fulfilled the Law and that the Law was no longer the central and binding element for ensuring the holiness of God's chosen people. Since all of the commandments of the Torah no longer bound Christians, what were the keys to unlocking the meaning of Scripture? How was the Christian to know how to live?

For Christian theology the political-theological problem became the endless effort to piece together the puzzle of man's relationship to God. Precisely for this reason philosophy became an essential component of Christian theology. Whereas the revealed Law was essential in establishing the relationship between God and the Jews, Christian theologians turned to philosophy in order to discern the mysteries of revelation. Both the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures are replete with commandments and parables which direct the faithful to those mysteries. Yet the texts never provided Christian theologians with the answer to the questions of the right way to interpret Scripture, or the right way to live. The attempt to distinguish ceremonial or ritual from binding religious law may have set the terms for answering these questions, but that attempt could not solve the problem. In arguing that the whole of the law could not bind men in a holy city, Christianity introduced the tension between the sacred "city of God" and the profane "city of man." Christian theologians have, of course, produced a rich and varied tradition for discerning the proper relationship between the "city of God" and the "city of man."<sup>6</sup> Yet the arguments which form the core of that tradition are based on a radical break with Judaism.

In regard to this issue Puritan rhetoric assumed, as Reformation thought must necessarily assume, that the Scholastic tradition was misdirected and ultimately a failure. Nevertheless, even as the Puritans declared themselves in opposition to Scholasticism, they were, as their indebtedness to Augustine suggests, not entirely free from the arguments from which this tradition emerged. The Puritan attempt to overcome the distinction between "the things that are Caesar's" and the "things that are God's" is one of the most salient examples of struggle with the problem which Christianity introduced into political philosophy. Puritan arguments over Sabbath observance are, for example, rooted in scriptural interpretations which gives the appearance of a "Judaizing" tendency within the Puritan community. Yet such arguments have no place in Judaism since Judaism accepts that all laws are binding (Solberg, 1977).<sup>7</sup> However "literal" the Puritan approach to the revealed word of God, the Puritans inherited the fundamental problem which Christianity introduced.

The distance which Puritanism stands from Hebrew Scriptures may be gleaned by considering Winthrop's use of Deuteronomy 30:19 in the closing of *A Modell of Christian Charity*. A literal translation of the Hebrew biblical passage is stated as a command and reads "choose life, that you may live, you and your seed." Winthrop's use of the verse reads as follows: "therefore lett us choose life, that we and our Seede, may live" (1931a: 295). The biblical passage is in the form of a divine commandment; in Winthrop's use of it, the saints make a covenant amongst themselves of their own will.

Just as the strongest bond between God and man was voluntary, so too, the most secure political bond derived from a mutual covenant among men. Puritan covenant theology, given a political foundation, found a new source of strength, but one which also alerted the saints to the greatest threat to the establishment of a "New Jerusalem."<sup>8</sup> Winthrop (1931b: 121) insisted that the failure of the past regimes should be a reminder that the success of the Puritan experiment depended on a proper political foundation:

There were great fundamental errors in others [past settlement ventures], which are like to be avoided in this: for 1st there mayne end and purpose was carnall and not religious. 2nd, They aymed chiefly at profit and not at the propagation of religion. 3rd, They used too unfitt instruments, a multitude of rude and ungoverned persons. The very scums of the land. 4th, They did not establish a right fourme of government.

In *Christian Charity* Winthrop addressed both the conflicts menacing the new order and the means to overcome them. By the standards of modern constitutions the plan is simplistic and incomplete. The source of the model is Scripture; the application is set forth in a series of questions, answers and objections concerning the exercise of mercy in three kinds: "giving, lending and forgiving" (1931a: 284). The opening statement is worth citing in its entirety: "God almightie in his most holy and wise providence hath so disposed of the Condiçion of mankind, as in all times some must be rich some poore, some highe and eminent in power and dignitie; others meane and in subieccion" (1931a: 282). Winthrop first observed the threat which results from economic and political inequality. In this respect Winthrop recognized, as had Aristotle before, and Marx and Madison after him, the political problem created by inequality. Political societies, he realized, were divided by class and thus subject to the ravages of class warfare.<sup>9</sup> A Christian city, as much as any other, must recognize and address the economic source of disorder.

Winthrop's approach to dealing with inequality suggests that his model city is closer to Aristotle's than either Madison's or Marx's: rather than proposing to feed or eliminate economic desires, Winthrop seeks, like Aristotle, to moderate and direct those desires to higher ends. Winthrop's example of the exercise of mercy according to God's

law is a model of his view of economic intercourse. By enumerating the extremes, that some are "high and eminent" while others "meane and in subieccion," Winthrop admitted the diversity of economic and social stations and the potential for conflict underlying the natural order. The diversity of mankind is stated not merely to praise God's splendor. Men, Winthrop argued, who under the best circumstances were capable of acting justly, are prone to commit malevolent acts. Even the "lawe of the gospell," which teaches men to love one another, furthers distinctions among men. The "lawe of nature," given to man in a state of innocence, teaches men to love one another, but he observed that the "lawe of grace" drew a distinction between friends and enemies, the most obvious distinction being that between the Christian and all others (1931a: 284). This distinction remained despite the fact that once the "law of grace" admitted the distinction between friends and enemies it then commanded love to one's enemies.

However, to Winthrop even in the very differences obtaining between men, indeed, in the latent war brewing beneath the surface, lay the means to man's redemption. The division between those who labored and those who controlled wealth was God's doing. But in so dividing mankind, God made each group dependent on the other. The purpose of Winthrop's model was to raise men from the mere diversity of stations to a covenant binding each to the other in the pursuit of a righteous city. As a Puritan, he believed that the original cause of diversity and conflict was the sin which led to Adam's and Eve's fall from Eden. Moreover, he believed that the fall was more than punishment for mankind. Adam's chastisement set the stage for Christ's coming and the final redemption of man. The extremes so evident in "the Conditio of mankind" pointed to the organic unity of God's order (1931a: 282). The diverse parts were parts of a whole. The "City upon a Hill" was intended to point to the final wisdom of God's plan.

A godly city depended on man's acts. The consequences of man's will and "workes" are evident throughout *Christian Charity*. In setting forth his justification for the model Winthrop (1931a: 283) argued that God counts "himselpe more honoured in dispencing his guifts to man by man, than if he did it by his own immediate hand." Thus if economic inequality is a given which threatens to disrupt the city, the saints could overcome the disordering effects of inequality by providing for their brothers' welfare. Winthrop's examples teach that "our owne Interest wee have must stand aside" for the good of the city (1931a: 286). In setting aside their own particular interests the saints would be able to achieve a greater good. To true divines the argument was not specious. In exercising mercy men furthered their own freedom and redemption. The effect was immediate and personal for those concerned with their souls.

Winthrop's model was not, of course, a plea for economic democracy. It did, however, introduce, a different sort of equality. If the covenant was the "sement which soders" there was a prior attraction which brought the saints together in mutual pursuit (Hooker, 1972: 50). Christian charity, love, was the source of the community's strength. The covenant was the seal to the bond; love, "the bond, or ligament" which "knitts these parts together" and "gives the body its perfection" (Winthrop, 1931a: 288). Love taught men the equality necessary for individuals to make a covenant. Where material wealth suggested inequality, the saints knew they were equal in the love of Christ (Winthrop, 1931a: 283).

In this respect the exercise of love was twofold, inward and outward. The inward love Winthrop spoke of was psychological and depended on the recognition of the individual in his fellow man: "Thus it is betweene the members of Christ, each discernes by the worke of the spirit his owne Image and resemblance in another, and therefore cannot but love him as he loves himselpe" (1931a: 290). This love is sensuous "in regard of the pleasure and content that the exercise of love carries with it." The metaphors Winthrop relies on-he spoke over and again of the pleasures of the mouth-are often erotic. The recompense of love is even more fulfilling than material exchange. The benefits of "love and affection are reciprocally in a most equal and sweete kinds of Commerce" (1931a: 291-292).

Love, in his view, was more than a psychological bond. Inward love, he felt, leads to a bond between men which is strengthened by each individual's attempts to improve the relationship. The outward expression of love is accomplished through the exercise of mercy. If Christian charity is practiced material differences will not tear the community apart, but rather will bring the saints closer together. Thus, as Winthrop (1931a: 291) understood it, though love is not entirely rational and requires "familiar and constant practice," it depends on the voluntary acts of men.

This pointed to the greatest threat to the city, the saints themselves. Winthrop recognized the inherent dangers when erotic, as well as material, goods were at stake. The potential for war in and between men was the greatest threat of all. What would result "if our hearts shall turne away soe that wee will not obey?" (1931a: 295). In passage between the Old and New Worlds Winthrop warned of the tribulations the divines would face in their new home. A saint could escape from the corruption of Europe, but not entirely from corruption itself. New England would afford them a situation in which they would "be better preserved from the Common Corruptions of this evill world" (1931a: 293). The purpose of the voyage was not in doubt. However, the success of the Puritan wayfarers was not at

all assured.<sup>10</sup> Prior to judgement day the saints had to ready themselves for earthly conflict. They had to defend themselves from the corruption which threatened their mission.

Their voluntaristic principles encouraged the saints to appreciate their freedom while furthering their dependence on one another. The ease with which the Puritans applied their conception of voluntarism to politics would likely, however, have brought a puzzled look to Calvin and even to Perkins. "No commonweale," Winthrop (1931c: 422) argued, "can be founded but by free consent." In adapting a voluntarist approach to politics the Puritan founders hoped to strengthen the relationship between civil and ecclesiastical government, and thereby to further the communal bond. Individuals who voluntarily entered into the covenant according to the dictates of their conscience were expected better to feel "their ingagements each to other, to attend such terms, to walk in such orders, which shall be suitable to such a condition, gives being to such a body" (Hooker, 1972: 50). Politics and religion were actively engaged in a common enterprise: the establishment of a righteous polity in the New England wilderness.

In holding that a righteous order might be improved through civil policy the Puritans had raised the status of politics. In *Christian Charity* Winthrop argued that to establish a "due forme of Government both civil and ecclesiastical" required that not "onely conscience, but meare civill pollicy doth binde us" (1931a: 293). Just as conscience in religious matters required the subordination of the individual to God's will, so too, in the Puritan ethos, civil liberty could only be secured by the proper establishment of authority. Freedom, they believed, could be attained only through the right exercise of political authority; liberty could only be secured in a properly ordered polity. Distinguishing natural liberty, "a liberty to evil as well as good," from civil or moral liberty, Winthrop (1966: 238-239) wrote that "this liberty is the proper end and object of authority, and cannot subsist without it; and it is a liberty to that only which is good, just, and honest."

Winthrop did not ignore the tension inherent in the relationship between liberty and authority. "The great questions that have troubled the country," he admitted, "are about the authority of the magistrates and the liberty of the people" (1966: 238). Answering those who complained of the authority of the magistrates he referred doubters back to the covenant. Free volition was a means to an end. Voluntarism made sense only in the context of a political order which furthered God's will. Civil and moral liberty were secured by maintaining the covenant; and the covenant subordinated private will to the public good.

To the Puritans, to be sure, the political covenant was secured and maintained through the will of the saints. Yet in stressing the consequence of man's political will they heightened the tension between individual liberty and political authority. Who was to measure the legitimate extent of political liberty, on the one hand, and authority, on the other?

### **THE THREAT FROM WITHIN**

Important as these questions were they did not address the central conflict the Puritans faced in establishing and maintaining an ideal commonwealth. By referring his fellow saints back to the covenant Winthrop asserted that the ultimate source of all authority was not man but God. The belief that political authority depended on the will of the governed followed from the religious convictions of the Puritans, one of which ironically, was that the individual had to arrive at his religious convictions on his own. Consequently, the turbulence underlying the Puritan order grew not from the claims made for political liberty, but rather, as one of the contestants put it, from "a spiritual combate" regarding the exercise of man's will in his journey to redemption (Wheelwright, 1968: 158).

Neither Anne Hutchinson nor Roger Williams was cast out of the community because of a commitment to political liberty. Their religious beliefs were a far greater threat to the Puritan order than mere political beliefs could pose. Hutchinson's and Williams' challenge of the underlying assumptions behind Winthrop's model pointed to the dilemma of the Puritan experiment; but interestingly, the challenge of these unrepentant dissenters were primarily theological. Their attack on the political order stemmed from their theological perspective on the nature of will. The discord that resulted from their intervention was not, of course, confined to ecclesiastical affairs but led the dissenters, as Winthrop complained, to "miserably interrupt the civill Peace" (1968a: 213). Winthrop, thus, was not so much perturbed by civil disturbances such as those produced by the Hutchinson trial, as by the rejection, on the part of both Hutchinson and Williams of the belief that the expression of the individual will in both political and religious affairs was necessary for the redemption of both man and the city. This was nothing short of heretical to those who considered politics vital to the success of the "New Israel."

Ironically, the outcome of the Puritan experiment demonstrates that in a sense the Puritan outcasts, Hutchinson and Williams, were correct in pointing to the limits of human will. The "City upon a Hill," like all earthly cities, was bound to degenerate.

Hutchinson and Williams were extremists, but a consideration of extremes sometimes enhances our understanding of the orthodox. Although they departed from the orthodox path, the dissenters agreed not only on the goal set forth

by the orthodox but on the fundamental questions of the Puritan "errand." The questions Hutchinson and Williams pressed on their orthodox brethren concerning the nature and significance of the will are central to the Reformation. Once this is appreciated it becomes apparent that the authoritarianism of Puritan orthodoxy and the libertarianism of the dissenters were two sides of the same coin. Winthrop's vision, which valued politics as instrumental in man's salvation, and that of the dissenters, which denied any spiritual value to politics, share the same source.

John Cotton, one of the most respected Puritan ministers, bears witness to the turmoil produced by the debate that was conducted over the human will. The very eminence in which Cotton was held suggests that the conflict was at the very core of the Puritan faith. At first, Cotton was a friend and defender of Hutchinson's party; then he became a reluctant antagonist of the dissenters; and in the end, he served as the chief prosecutor of Roger Williams. Cotton's metamorphosis reflects not so much a change in his beliefs as an attempt to balance the needs of the new order with its Calvinist origins.

Cotton was of the opinion that righteous men thrive best in a righteous community. However, Cotton was more willing than most to admit the limits of man's efforts to establish a righteous community. Cotton's theological arguments were intended to prove the limits of the will. God's free grace, he argued, provided the cause of an individual's "justification" (salvation). One's "sanctification," or "workes" provided neither the cause nor the evidence of that "justification" (Cotton, 1968a: 54). Just as the will was of limited benefit to salvation, so too were men, in their collective capacity, limited in their ability to further their regeneration. Law, in his view, might be no more than a "legall Reformation," at best a "sandy Foundation," which hid men from the true source of righteousness (Cotton, 1968a: 54). Cotton was moved by the knowledge that individuals and communities inevitably degenerate. Saints who overemphasize the efficacy of human action ignored the ease with which the sacred was replaced by the profane.

Cotton was attracted to Anne Hutchinson and her colleague John Wheelwright because they preached the futility of placing one's faith in human works rather than in divine grace (Cotton, 1968b: 412). There were some, such as Peter Bulkeley (1968: 34), who insisted that both active faith and good works were necessary for salvation. If Bulkeley was more extreme than most in this regard, to Cotton he reflected the danger that men who relied on their own acts would lose their way.

Cotton's teaching pinched the nerve of Puritan orthodoxy. In America, Puritan orthodoxy taught that the exercise of the will was essential in the proper establishment of civil and ecclesiastical government, as well as in the government of one's soul. Cotton did not reject this reasoning, yet his insistence on the primacy of God's grace led some to doubt his purpose. Fellow ministers were alarmed by the implications of his sermons. Might not man rest satisfied with grace and ignore the calling to do good works? Though Cotton denied that his intent was to deny the significance of works some found cause for alarm.<sup>11</sup> He was, his inquisitors politely informed him, called to an accounting so that he could serve as "a happy Instrument of calming these storms and cooling these hot contentions and parapoxysmes" (Cotton, 1968a: 61).

Cotton's ultimate rejection of Hutchinson's party was not so much a reaffirmation of his orthodoxy as an acknowledgement of the threat posed by their opinions. Hutchinson's cause was, as was Cotton's, religious. The political and social implications of her doctrine, however, merited as serious consideration as her heterodoxy. The most radical of her claims rejected the principles Winthrop had set forth in *Christian Charity*.

During her trials, Hutchinson made assertions that surprised even her admirers and outraged many in the community, for when examined closely by the magistrates, she asserted that God had revealed His plan to her "by an immediate revelation" (Winthrop, 1968b: 337). By making this claim, she implicitly raised herself above the accepted norms of discourse, and, in so doing, caused a stir that threatened to undermine the peace of the city.<sup>12</sup> If every individual could lay claim to the true word of God while denying the special authority of Scripture, the basis for reasoned public discourse was impossible. The danger was all too apparent to Winthrop, who noted: "for they being above reason and scripture, they are not subject to controll" (Winthrop, 1968a: 274).

Winthrop was not merely concerned with controlling Hutchinson and her party but with the larger political-theological implications of her doctrine. To deny the authority of Scripture was to reject "the will of God in the Word" (Winthrop, 1968a: 220). Equally important Hutchinson was said to have denounced the belief that the exercise of the will and good works were essential to salvation. Her prosecutors were concerned with the distinction she preached between a covenant of grace and a covenant of works.<sup>13</sup> A fundamental principle of the Antinomians, as the orthodox referred to her party, was to ascribe salvation directly and solely to Christ, and to argue that faith, justification and sanctification were in the hands of no one but Jesus Christ (Wheelwright, 1968: 161). According to this doctrine the idea that human will or human actions were in any way responsible for salvation was nothing more than a "covenant of workes." Through grace, Christ, and Christ alone, they felt "worketh in you both to will and do his good pleasure" (Wheelwright, 1968: 163).

Where Puritan orthodoxy asserted the importance of exercising the will in civil and ecclesiastical matters the Antinomians denied it in both. Not only was Christ solely responsible for the individual's salvation, but human will played no role in the proper ordering of the city. It is not surprising then that one of the most telling accusations to be used against Hutchinson was her insistence that "No created worke can bee a manifest signe of God's love" (Winthrop, 1968a: 231). Hutchinson denied that "love to the Brethren" was in any way important for redemption (Winthrop, 1968a: 220). Wheelwright (1968: 162) had similarly preached that "some worke of righteousness in themselves, as love to the brethren and the like" had nothing to do with assurance of justification or sanctification. This, of course, directly repudiated the principles upon which the city had been founded. In one of the closing charges of Hutchinson's second trial one of the saints was moved to observe that "the Misgovernment of this Woman's tongue hath bine a greate Cause of this Disorder."<sup>14</sup>

The Antinomian crisis produced a spiritual combat and civil disturbance which provided the enemies of the New England experiment with proof of the failure of the model.<sup>15</sup> Because the colony's charter depended on the good graces of the Old World brethren it was necessary to refute hostile charges while defending their way. Cotton, most prominently, replied once again to the queries of his fellows by refuting the accusation that Antinomianism was rampant in New England (Cotton, 1968b: 398). That Cotton thought it necessary to reply shows the seriousness with which New England viewed the threat from outside. Yet when the controversy involving the most renowned of the dissenters reached its high point, the issue did not concern relations between the Old and New Worlds, but once again raised an issue which shook the very foundation of the Puritan political order.

Roger Williams' assault on Puritan orthodoxy was essentially theological. Perry Miller (1974: 37) is correct to say that Williams was "too theological" for Puritan orthodoxy and that freedom, for him, was only a secondary concern. However, it was not Williams' theological beliefs alone that led to his banishment, but his conception of the proper relationship between religion and politics. "True volunteers," in Williams' estimation, those who "give and devote themselves to the service and ministry of Christ Jesus in any kind," must reject the New England model. In this he was even more direct than Hutchinson. According to Williams' theological scheme there could be no covenant based on Hebrew scriptures because the "types" related in the Hebrew Bible could never provide models for contemporary men. This was so not because of the impracticality of the venture, but because this method was contrary to Christianity. The Hebrew Bible was not intended to provide a model which should be imitated in the saints' lives. Thus, Williams (1963) felt that insofar as Winthrop's *Christian Charity* relied on the Hebrew Scriptures, it was necessarily an erroneous model.<sup>16</sup>

Most significantly, in rejecting the model Williams was led to the conclusion that religion and politics could not be united to further a righteous city. Like Luther, Williams held that no church was able to force adherence to its doctrine. Unlike Luther, Williams denied that government could discipline any breach of orthodoxy. Conscience could not be regulated by force without ceasing to exist. Williams was ready to grant that the civil magistrate should be "armed by God with a civil sword to execute vengeance against robbers, murderers, tyrants."<sup>17</sup> Those who violated the "Second Table" of the Decalogue, those who committed civil crimes, were properly punished by the state, in his view. However, those who violated the "First Table," those who committed spiritual crimes, were subject neither to the discipline of the church nor the discipline of the state. Only the "spiritual sword with two edges, the soul-piercing (in soul saving and soul killing), the Word of God" could discipline the conscience of man (Williams, 1963: 160-161).

In one sense, Williams' argument for promoting religious liberty prefigures early liberal thought in claiming that civil peace, and the dignity of those in authority, would be advanced by toleration. Yet Williams' defense of religious freedom, his call for "true volunteers," was not so much a praise of political liberty as a condemnation of the collective political will of the city. In comparison to those orthodox Puritans who viewed politics, at least potentially, in elevated terms, Williams had little positive to say about politics. Yet in a very crucial sense Williams was not so far removed from his brethren. That both the orthodox and those considered renegades were concerned with issue of voluntarism pointed to the fact, and this Winthrop knew, that the enemy grew from within. Williams' attack on the idea that political will could be exercised to further a righteous order made him an outcast. Although he could not fully accept the principles on which the city was founded he did expose the underlying tension which the Puritans inherited from the Christian contribution to the political-theological problem.

Consider the Puritan task. To the Puritans, everything made by Christians must further God's purpose. However, Puritan voluntarism left men too free. For a time, the apparent authority of scripture and the framework of interpretation established by the divines was enough to direct the language of Puritan political discourse, and therefore the terms of the Puritan experiment. Yet Christ's "volunteers" could not overcome the uncertainty which the commitment to voluntarism introduced. When the saints could no longer agree on the terms of the model, the authority of the model was transformed into a cold shell of authoritarian dogma which could no longer reach the

hearts, souls or minds of men. The complement to this was the other extreme which led men to fall back solely on their own consciences, and which rendered them unable to share in life of the city.

In some respects, however, the Puritan experiment can be regarded as successful—at least in the sense that certain essentials of the covenant were maintained well into the eighteenth-century. For example, Robert Pope (1969) has pointed out that a greater proportion of the population actually appear to have been church members around the beginning of the eighteenth century than in 1650. But though church membership is an indication of the religiosity of the New England population, it tells us nothing about the meaning of the relationship between the civil and ecclesiastical realms. The important question to consider is the way in which the Puritans conceived of the political order in relation to the religious journey over time. There can be no doubt about the religious fervor of a seventeenth-century exemplary figure such as Jonathan Edwards. There is, however, a world of difference between Edwards and the founding generation with regard to the idea of the political order and its relationship to salvation.

When John Davenport, in his election sermon of 1669, preached that "the orderly ruling of men over men, in general is from God, in its root, though voluntary in the manner of coalescing," the old language was maintained (Miller, 1983a: 421). Davenport's language sounds much the same as so many other statements of the covenant ideal. Davenport hoped to maintain the Puritan belief that in a world preordained by a God's volition, man still retained his own volition, and thus some measure of responsibility for salvation or damnation. But Davenport, more than most, understood the change that had taken place. Winthrop's notion of a "due forme of government" was rather different from that which his posterity had come to accept. A voluntary polity not contrary to rule was one thing. To maintain a polity in accord with that rule was quite another thing altogether.

The difficulty is evident in the fight over the adoption of the half-way covenant. Prior to the adoption of the half-way covenant individuals were accepted into membership only on demonstration of having received saving grace.<sup>18</sup> This they took to be an additional sign of one's voluntary commitment to accept church discipline. As a way of furthering church membership the new covenant allowed that those who had never made a public confession of faith to receive affiliation, though not full membership, on the basis of baptism and "owning" of the covenant (a statement of intent to accept church discipline).<sup>19</sup> The half-way covenant was an ecclesiastical response to the passing of the old order. Yet it encompassed more than ecclesiastical issues. Adopted by the Congregational Synod of 1662, it was a response to changes in the New England way of life. The propositions put forth in 1662 were, however, long in the making and took some time for all the congregations to accept.

Davenport, the major voice against the half-way covenant, argued that any weakening of the original requirements of the covenant would lead to apostasy. With the acceptance of the half-way covenant, he realized the voluntary nature of both church and civil polities, and the voluntary coalescing of the orders would be endangered.<sup>20</sup>

A number of factors contributed to the changes which the half-way covenant is both a cause and symptom. Among the children of the founding generation many were not able to demonstrate saving grace, the elders believed that by accepting those children into partial membership on the basis of baptism the influence of the church would not be lost on those of the new generation who could not offer proof of saving grace; however, the principle of voluntarism was inevitably vitiated in the process. As a result, the new immigrants who failed to meet the old standards soon overwhelmed both the founding generation and their children. By easing the qualification for membership the church was able to maintain discipline in the community, but only at the cost of losing touch with its original principles.

Davenport and his supporters argued that because the half-way covenant placed less demands on those accepted into the church the voluntary quality of the covenant was impaired. But the adoption of the half-way covenant could not of itself have been the cause of the change in the voluntarist ideal. The defenders of the innovation were probably correct in asserting that the covenant remained personal and voluntary, even if it did not demonstrate the full exercise of regeneration. Yet to the extent that the voluntarist character of commitment was insisted upon at the expense of "the familiar and constant" practice of love and affection - firstly, between parent and child, and secondly between fellow saints - the organic sense of community could be expected to decline. The commitment to voluntarism had not changed. What had changed was the nature of the bonds which knit the body together (Hutchinson, 1970: 216-217).

Puritan education, as Winthrop understood it, was intended to inculcate one with a commitment to the covenant based on the positive obligation of love. That the divines increasingly came to attribute the origins of disorder to sources outside the community suggests that the fragility of the bonds of love were such that they were no longer able to look inward.<sup>21</sup> When they did search inward they were often content to resort to some kind of self-righteous absolutism, rather than to examine the ties that bound them together.<sup>22</sup>

If Davenport was unsuccessful in stopping the movement from accepting the half-way covenant, this was not due to any lack of effort on his part. The ideals which the founding generation bequeathed to their posterity seemed impossible to maintain. Though the half-way covenant enabled the saints to maintain their influence in both civil and ecclesiastical matters it did so by accepting a different relationship between those realms. As secular affairs came to play an increasingly important part in the community the congregational system could only maintain its influence by accepting a new role. As the phrase suggests, the half-way covenant was a compromise, a compromise which recognized the tension between the religious and secular realms. The saints were able to maintain their influence in both secular and political affairs only by relegating the question of volition to the status of a private concern. On the one hand, politics came to mean less. Granting one church membership while limiting the franchise to full members suggested as much. On the other hand, individuals were attracted to church membership for solace and relief from the private anxiety of the wilderness experience rather than for the opportunity to further a collective enterprise (Pope, 1969: 271).

There were, in fact, formidable outside forces threatening the Puritan experiment. The fierce Puritan-Indian wars of the 1670's, the revocation of the original charter in 1686, so that the Puritans no longer had the right to determine their own policy, and the forced acceptance of Andros, the king's governor, were enough to deflect the community from internal to external woes (Hutchinson, 1970: 271).<sup>23</sup> These events were viewed, however, in a context far different from the one in which Winthrop would have seen them. By 1690 the half-way covenant was a central part of the new Puritan orthodoxy. The new orthodoxy recognized the declining status of politics and the personalizing of the voluntarist ideal.

Calvin had attempted to build a community in a world where men had known fear and uncertainty. He could demand that his followers look inward and recognize their limitations because he understood the liberating effect this would have. Winthrop, too, was a founder. He was able to mold the fears and strengths of the divines by applying the voluntarist ideal to the creation of a new order. Those Puritans who celebrated the advantages of the half-way covenant were addressing an order in decline. As the voluntarist ideal became personalized, the Puritans could only consider the external source of their trials. Perhaps the Puritans, being only human, can be excused for their inability to face the internal source of their disorders. Yet this would be to impose a standard that the Puritans themselves could never accept. The Puritans labored to meet heavenly standards and would not have allowed such easy absolution.

## A NEW CHARITY AND A NEW POLITICS

Compare a Cotton Mather sermon of 1690 with Winthrop's admonitions in *Christian Charity*. To Winthrop, the attacks from outside were chastisements for the saints' transgressions. But, to Mather (1965: 242): "The enemies of New England have not been few or small; and it is because we are, A people of God, that we still have enemies...Wares have been made upon us, for our keeping the Commandments of God, and having the testimony of Jesus Christ." Though Mather, in the sermon from which this passage is drawn, claims to be praising the old covenant, his assertions are far from the spirit of the old orthodoxy. The covenant Winthrop and the founders spoke of asked men to turn inward and reflect on their own condition. Mather's attitude toward the covenant is self-righteous, and in his view the covenant serves only to improve the lot of individuals.<sup>24</sup>

If, as the Puritans often would do, we were to take signs as occasions for greater events we might surmise that the publication of Locke's *Two Treatises of Government* about the same year as Mather's sermon was a portent of the coming age. The nature of the voluntarist ideal had undergone substantial revision by the time Winthrop's conception of charity had been transformed into Mather's piety. The voluntarist ideal was no less important than righteousness to Winthrop's posterity in the decades leading to the American Revolution. Yet the change in the voluntary ideal reflected a new understanding of the relationship between religion and politics. The freedom which could obtain only in a constitution supporting the union of those realms was no longer possible.

Cotton Mather represents the Puritan response to this world in transition. The influence of his grandparents, John Cotton and Richard Mather, and of his father, Increase Mather, was deeply felt. Cotton also lived long enough to have a singularly important influence on Benjamin Franklin (Franklin, 1964: 58). In Mather we can locate an unusual conjunction of the righteousness of the fathers and the utilitarianism of the children. It is thus appropriate that Mather holds the distinction of being known as the father of American piety.

Typical of Mather is the idea that "from faith unfeigned proceeds a good conscience; from a good conscience a pure heart; and from a pure heart, charity to all around us" (Mather, 1815: 43).<sup>25</sup> For Mather the exercise of charity no longer required a civil order. Indeed, Mather's idea of charity is alien to the earlier Puritan view. Winthrop insisted that charity required a public enterprise, and he considered charity a value which must be exercised among equals. By Mather's time religion was no longer able to command the same attention of the civil authorities that it

had in the past; politics was no longer able to promote the salvation of souls. Mather relegated politics to a minimal role and celebrated the inability of politics to further an ordered whole.<sup>26</sup> Charity was now understood to be an effect of good conscience and of individual initiative in serving one's peers.

It would be unfair to argue that to Mather piety was merely the furtherance of individual salvation. Mather's most prominent effort in the furtherance of morality, his various attempts to promote voluntary associations, does, however, attest to the new condition. These unions of men of society, so "formidable to the powers of darkness" (Mather, 1815: 159), brought individuals together to promote the common good of mankind. Yet when Mather proposed that every individual ask himself, "What can I do for the service God, and the welfare of man?" his intent is clear (Mather, 1815: 140; Mather, 1690: 21). The logic of Mather's voluntary association of men reverses the order of the earlier ideal. To the founders the covenant began with a voluntary act of conscience, but the fulfillment of righteousness required public deliberation and a collective effort; the covenant demanded as much. Voluntary associations, in their view, took their conception from private acts of conscience but came to fruition through public actions, including especially charitable acts. The associations were not meant to educate individuals to their equality of condition in God's eyes. One only need consult oneself. Mather denied the significance of politics and stressed only the primacy of the individual and social relationships. It is revealing that Mather could write that "There are I suppose, more than a Hundred of those Holy Societies among us, which would, in Luther's Judgement, render the meanest Village more glorious than an Ivory palace" (Morgan, 1965: 241). In many respects Mather's piety was more attuned to Luther's teaching than the teachings of his own fathers. For the voluntary ideal subordinated politics to voluntary associations while praising the voluntary congregation of men.<sup>28</sup>

To draw the parallel with Luther too far would be a mistake. The quality which the deist Franklin found so attractive in Mather, his practical piety, did not, for instance, correspond well with Luther's teaching. A more telling parallel would be in how they conceived of their enemies and the plan of attack. Luther's diatribes against the authority of papal imperialism followed from his belief in the priesthood of all believers. To preserve that priesthood he was led to insist on the national limits of religion. Mather saw a new sort of threat. The mere intention to do good was enough to bring out enemies be they from abroad or from the community. If the saints now saw themselves as under attack because they were chosen, their own attack was the offensive of goodness. The task was no longer the jealous guarding of the covenant, but the spreading of charity around the world (Mather, 1815: 161).<sup>28</sup>

The voluntarist ideal which came to nourish American thought with a belief in the primacy of the individual and his conscience, and in the subordination of politics to society, developed from the covenant theology of the Puritans. As Perry Miller has argued, "The covenant theology, having conceived and cradled the principle of voluntary consent, set the New England mind at work destroying that theology" (Miller, 1983b: 267). The voluntarist ideal, which the founders had thought required a collective enterprise, nevertheless contained the seeds of its own destruction.<sup>29</sup> The Puritans did not require Locke's authority to argue, as Mather did, that "Liberty of Conscience is the Native Right of Mankind; and that every Good Neighbour and Good Subject, has a Right unto his life, and all the comforts of it" (Miller, 1983b: 375).

Even those who were not wholly in agreement with Mather's efforts were, in the first quarter of the century, forced to admit the new conditions of the Puritan order. John Wise, whose 1717 sermon was widely reprinted in 1772, sought to maintain the religiosity of the fathers and the significance of politics. "A Civil State," he wrote, is a "Compound Moral Person whose Will (United by those Covenants before passed) is the Will of all" (Wise, 1772: 31). But again, if the language of the old covenant was maintained, the meaning had been altered. Winthrop's covenant, as Wise asserted, was based in large part on free will. Wise, however, stressed only reason where Winthrop had also stressed love. Where Winthrop's emphasis on conscience included the exercise of justice and mercy as necessary for the establishment of a righteous polity, Wise was able to claim that "the chief End of Civil Communities, is, that Men thus conjoined, may be secured against the Injuries, they are lyable to from their own kind" (1772: 30). In Wise's view, men were naturally social and politics was necessitated only by the injustices of man, "For none so Good to Man, as Man, and yet none a greater Enemy" (1772: 32).

Wise had admitted a new covenant. Volition in politics, as in religion, could not be denied. Yet, politics was coming into importance of its own right. Wise argued that the end of politics was, in effect, security. And though Wise argued that security was necessary to promote the betterment of men, his argument was closer to what the revolutionaries would insist upon in 1776 than it was to Winthrop. The new politics had its own language and its own purposes. Jonathan Mayhew's famous "Discourse Concerning Unlimited Submission," a sermon delivered in 1750, reflected the emerging order. Mayhew's sermon is instructive for while he justifies the role of religion in political affairs-"it is evident that the affair of civil government may properly fall under a moral and religious consideration"-he no longer recognized that religious and political ends were the same (Mayhew, 1965: 215). Mayhew's argument is intended to demonstrate that magistrates "are to consult the good of society as such; not to make laws for the government of men's consciences, and to inflict civil penalties for religious crimes." The "sole end

of government," he wrote, was "the good of society." Once Mayhew recognized that political and religious ends were wholly distinct, he admitted the possibility of rebellion when political ends alone were violated. The threat to the "City upon a Hill" could no longer be considered the result of a weakening of the covenant which bound men to the larger political-religious order. Indeed, that order no longer existed. The enemy was now conceived to be those from the outside who threatened either religious or political liberty.

In emphasizing the obvious distinction between religious and political ends in Wise's and Mayhew's thought I am not denying that they would have insisted that religious and political ends were, if properly understood, compatible. To be sure, a government which provided security and religious liberty might even serve a religious end by guaranteeing the conditions for religious worship. Yet since politics had its own end, it was no longer necessary for directing men to religious ends. This situation may have been tolerable to Anne Hutchinson and Roger Williams, but only precisely because it was opposed to the political-theological relationship which the Puritan fathers sought to establish.

## CONCLUSION

By the late eighteenth-century Winthrop's idea of voluntarism was hardly recognizable. It was not entirely abandoned, however, and it is worthwhile touching upon the transformation of the political-theological problem in the American Revolution. During the American Revolution support for the rightness of the cause was often demonstrated by an appeal to biblical texts. Moreover, revolutionary rhetoric on both the purpose of the Revolution and the right order of government often drew on the older religious sense of the voluntarism. Thus, we find side by side with assertions that the end of government is life, liberty and property, the recognition that the right order of government has a bearing on religious ends. Governor William Livingston's attack on the "boundless avarice" of the enemy, who were subverting "all liberty, natural, moral, and religious" is typical of revolutionary arguments that sought to expose the great horror in those who were intent on "blaspheming God" (Livingston, 1876: 195). The revolutionaries willingly accepted the idea that politics was a means to improving human character. Thus, it is not surprising that the Massachusetts Declaration of Rights recognized that "the happiness of a people, and the good order and preservation of civil government, essentially depend upon piety, religion, and morality" (Thorpe, 1909, vol. 3: 1889). Massachusetts was no exception. Even the Virginia Bill of Rights acknowledged that "it is the mutual duty of all to practise Christian forbearance, love, and charity towards each other" (Thorpe, 1909, vol. 7: 3814).

Yet the parallels between Puritan and Revolutionary rhetoric can be driven too far. With the American Revolution the distinction between private conscience and political authority resulted in a new understanding of man's relationship to his social and political orders, and of the relationship between public to private life. Now that government was freed from pursuing religious ends in a manner that shaped every aspect of private belief, a new national purpose came into being, a purpose sanctioned even by those whose charge was the care of God's flock. Of course, the disparity between Lockean and the older political-religious ideas was not evident to most people. However, if the religious language of an earlier epoch continued to be reflected in revolutionary rhetoric, its meaning - and the meaning of the voluntarist ideal - changed. The purpose of politics was no longer to secure man's place in accordance with God's larger purpose. Though the voluntary ideal required a secure political order, this was not the order of Winthrop's "City upon a Hill." The chief purpose of politics was to secure life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Voluntarism was now understood to demand a limited politics, one that would serve the private order. The voluntarist ideal, by the time the Puritan experiment had run its course, assumed the subordination of politics and civic education to the securing of natural rights.

Perhaps by the end of the American Revolution the ideal of the Puritan founders had not wholly run its course. Yet I do not think it goes too far to suggest that the founders of the constitutional era sought to sever the dependence of politics on religion. This is not the same as saying that the founders denied that religion was important for the maintenance of a republican order. By severing the dependence of politics on religion I only mean that the founders denied that politics should serve religion, that is, they denied that the end of the state was achieved only insofar as it fulfilled a religious end. One may object that the founders believed that religion was necessary to maintain a republican government, and that therefore religion served the state. This is certainly true, yet it is also a reversal of the Puritan ideal.

One may accept Ellis Sandoz's declaration that the founders' separation of religious and political ends was a return to an older Christian wisdom in which "the notion of saving mankind through politics is, indeed, not only mistaken but ultimately disastrous." Yet if the founders idea of the proper relationship between religion and politics was only possible once the Puritan approach to the political-theological problem had run its course an alternative understanding is possible.

The Puritan drive to know God, and then to order the city according to this knowledge, was undertaken in light of a conviction that the world itself was sinful and disordered. Although the Puritan founders were confident that humankind had fallen, that very confidence led them to doubt their own efforts to establish a "City upon a Hill." Thus while the Puritans sought to overcome the distinction between the "city of God" and the "city of man" they were not entirely sanguine about their prospects. The Puritans believed that politics had a role to play in establishing a righteous city, but they also understood that politics was limited. Again, the Puritan approach to the problem of identity and political order is comprehensible only within the context of the problem which Christianity introduced into political thought with its principled distinction between "the things which are Caesar's" and "the things which are God's." The Puritan attempt to establish a "City upon a Hill" is one voice in a rich tradition struggling to locate the city in the relationship between divine grace and human faith.

The founders of the United States Constitution did reject in its entirety the idea that politics had any role to play in the salvation of humankind. Yet it seems to me that instead of returning to an earlier Christian wisdom the founders thought that they had finally settled the political-theological problem. This solution can only be compatible with an older Christian wisdom if that older wisdom accepts that the distance between the "city of God" and the "city of man" was as far apart as the founders had thought. If we are to settle the matter we must determine whether the founders are closer on this and related issues to Augustine or Pelagius.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Locke's claim that the jurisdiction of civil authority "neither can nor ought in any manner to be extended to the Salvation of Souls" is one of the classic liberal statements on the distinction between political and religious ends. See his *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, Indianapolis: Hackett, 1985, 26. John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty* offers another classic liberal statement on the relationship between religion and politics. Although Locke and Mill are similar in the way they conceive of the relationship between religion and politics Locke bases his argument on natural rights and Mill bases his argument on the principle of utility. For a discussion of related issues see Harvey C. Mansfield Jr.'s "The Religious Issue and the Origin of Modern Constitutionalism" in *How Does the Constitution Protect Religious Freedom?*, Robert Goldwin and Art Kaufman eds., Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute, 1987.

<sup>2</sup> Sacvan Bercovitch, *The American Jeremiad*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978. Bercovitch argues, against Perry Miller, that the Puritans never lost sight of the original mission "and if anything they grow more fervent, more absolute in their commitment from one generation to the next" (p. 6). Yet when Bercovitch considers the substance of later Puritan rhetoric he qualifies his argument and recognizes that the self-assurance of later generation sets them apart from the fathers.

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, John Schaar "Liberty/Authority/Community in the Political Thought of John Winthrop," in *Political Theory*, volume 19 No. 4, November 1991, (pp. 493-518), and Joshua Miller, *The Rise and Fall of Democracy in Early America, 1630-1789*, University Park, Penn: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991.

<sup>4</sup> The claim that the Puritans "may almost be considered as Jews and not Christians" was made by James Truslow Adams, *The Founding of New England*, Boston: The Atlantic Monthly Press, 1922, 80. The Puritans were themselves aware of the danger of too close an identification with the people of Israel and disputed claims which portrayed them as seeking to replicate Jewish law. See Andrew Delbanco, *The Puritan Ordeal*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989, chapter 3.

<sup>5</sup> In Blumenberg's terminology, early Christianity sought to provide a position that would "reoccupy" the place of the Law in Judaism. However, Blumenberg does not recognize this and he confuses what is only an effect of the "reoccupying" of the Law with the cause of the Christian dilemma. Blumenberg argues that Christianity began with an attempt to "reoccupy" Jewish eschatology and finally, in order to confront the world once it became evident that the Second Coming was not imminent, ended up with a "secularization by eschatology." What Blumenberg fails to appreciate is that the problem of eschatology only became an issue when Christianity claimed that Christ had fulfilled the Law.

<sup>6</sup> Eric Voegelin argues that when Christianity "de-divinized" the world it made gnosticism possible by opening up the whole question of the relationship between the human and divine. According to Voegelin, Puritanism is a Gnostic religion since in seeking a "re-divination" of the world, or "imminization of the eschaton," it eliminates the distinction between the strictly human and transcendent realms. Eric Voegelin, *The New Science of Politics*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952. It seems to me that Voegelin way overstates Weber's rather subtle thesis that modern capitalism is a result of the psychological crisis introduced by Puritan ideas of predestination. Weber never makes the mistake, however, of equating Puritanism with gnostic or capitalist doctrine. See Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1976. Cf. Ralph C. Hancock, *Calvin and the Foundations of Modern Politics* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989.

<sup>7</sup> Although one should be wary of Winton Solberg's misrepresentation of the meaning of the Jewish Sabbath, his *Redeem the Time: The Puritan Sabbath in Early America*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977 offers a useful analysis of the Puritan struggle to interpret and apply the idea of the Sabbath to the Puritan experiment.

<sup>8</sup> See Miller's *The New England Mind* for a fine discussion of Puritan covenant theology. Puritan covenant theology is very complex and many scholars have rejected Miller's characterization of the Puritan idea of covenant. See Andrew Delbanco and Sacvan Bercovitch for alternative views.

<sup>9</sup> Winthrop's comments in "Arguments for the Plantation of New England" in the *Winthrop Papers* offers some insight into the economic turmoil in England and how that turmoil helped to justify the New England venture. (See pp. 111-150).

<sup>10</sup> The recognition that the success of the mission was not assured was reflected in the writings of the major figures. In addition to those mentioned above see Richard Mather, *Church-Covenant*, New York: Arno Press, (p. 9).

<sup>11</sup> Cotton denied that he called upon men to ignore works, Hall 149. See his defense of New England and the importance of works in "The Way of the Congregational Churches," p. 409.

<sup>12</sup> During the first trial Cotton refused to acknowledge that she was a heretic.

<sup>13</sup> Hutchinson was careful not to publicly charge any of the ministers with practicing a covenant of works. See "The Examination," (pp. 317-319).

<sup>14</sup> John Wilson as cited by Winthrop in "A Report of the Trial of Mrs. Anne Hutchinson before the Church in Boston," in Hall (p. 384).

<sup>15</sup> See Robert Baillie's argument against New England in "A Dissuasive against the Errours of the Time," London: 1645.

<sup>16</sup> Williams' discussion of types and anti-types may be found in *The Bloody Tenent of Persecution*, in *The Complete Writings of Roger Williams*, volume 3, ed. Samuel L. Caldwell, New York: Russell and Russell, 1963. Williams' nominal foil was John Cotton. Williams argued that the unity of material and spiritual power in ancient Israel was specific to the Hebrews, and to the time and place. The only proper anti-type for his contemporaries was spiritual and not confined to people, place or time. See *The Bloody Tenent*, (pp. 311-425).

<sup>17</sup> Roger Williams, "Queries of Highest Consideration," in *The Complete Writings*, volume 2, ed. Reuben A. Guild, (p. 26).

<sup>18</sup> Although a public profession of faith was test of regeneration it was not considered infallible. It was accepted that some members of the "visible church" might not be truly saved.

<sup>19</sup> This oversimplifies a varied and complex issue. Not all the colonies approached the matter in the same way. My assessment is only meant to put forth the general problem See Pope for a better treatment.

<sup>20</sup> I follow Thomas Hutchinson in assuming that the most significant change is the adoption of the Half-Way Covenant. See his *History*, volume 1, (p. 230).

<sup>21</sup> Compare my interpretation in which I side with Perry Miller's thesis that the late seventeenth century Puritans were far removed from the mission of the first generation with Sacvan Bercovitch, *The American Jeremiad*.

<sup>22</sup> Hutchinson provides a list of the sins the Puritans believed contributed to their punishment and the means by which they sought to repent. His comment on the list is insightful for it suggests the superficiality of the effort. "For most of these offences I have not seen any instances of prosecution...the multiplying of laws, with such penalties, in any government, tends to lessen the weight and authority of the penal laws in general" (p. 271).

<sup>23</sup> See Hutchinson, chapter 2 for an account of these events.

<sup>24</sup> For an alternative view of Mather see David Levin's "Essays to do good for the glory of God: Cotton Mather's Bonifacius," in Sacvan Bercovitch, *The American Puritan Imagination*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1974.

<sup>25</sup> Cotton Mather, *Essays to do Good*, Johnstown: Asa Child, 1815. Originally *Bonifacius An Essay upon the Good that is to be Devised*, 1710.

<sup>26</sup> The consideration given politics in Mather's *Essays* is confined largely to "proposals to Magistrates." Compared to the effort in any other portion of the text Mather gave little thought to politics.

<sup>27</sup> Consociations of churches tried to reassert some measure of political authority but admitted the inability of politics to order the whole. See Miller, *The New England Mind: From Colony to Province*, chapter 16.

<sup>28</sup> See also Mather's 1714 sermon "The Savior With His Rainbow," in *Days of Humiliation*, ed. George Orians, Scholar's Facsimilies and Reprints, Gainesville, 1970, (p. 227).

<sup>29</sup> For a different assessment of the corruption of the Puritan model see Schaar's article cited above. In this wonderful defense of Winthrop Schaar argues that "The Puritan paradigm, in Kuhn's sense of the word, did not disintegrate from within. Rather, it fell under the assault of external forces and especially the promise of material abundance." Although Schaar's claim may be correct, it is doubtful that Winthrop would have approved.

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